

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Minutes

May 21, 2015

8:00 a.m. – 5th Floor conference Room B – City Hall

Members Present: Jane Abe (Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce), Jimi Allen (at large), Harish Ananthapadmanabhan (at large), Lulu Blacksmith (WCC), Rory Bolen (at large), Cort Carlson (AACVB), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank), John Galles (at large), Keith Gerald (at large), Kim Granholm (at large), Fred Harrison (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Benjie Hughes (at large), Karen Kramford (at large), Eva Luckinbill (Library), Melissa Mercado (at large), Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino), Ellen Mueller (AACVB), John Nachtrieb (at large), Helen Nowak (at large), Megan Paul (at large), Bob Reuland (ex-officio),

Members Absent (Excused): Katie Arko (ACCA)

Members Absent (Unexcused): Kimber Howard (at large), Jorge Pacheco (at large)

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Joe Hopp (COA), Gina Moga (COA), Clayton Muhammad (COA), Cadence Peterson (Seize the Future), Birnie Harper (Wayside Cross), Kaye Mason, Clara Diaz (Balderas Beauty Salon), Marissa Amoni (Aurora Downtown), Fernando Castrejon (Leland Tower), Peter Aguilera (All-A-Electric), Judith Dawson (Scale Up Aurora), Anissa Lampley (Spectrum Paradigm Consulting), David Hilliard (I.D.E.A.S.)

Call to Order and Introductions – Kim Granholm

Kim Granholm called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes – 4/16/2015

Melissa Mercado made a motion to approve the April 16, 2015 minutes. John Nachtrieb seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said for some of you, this may look like a new format and that's because it is. We are now on Quick Books. I've inputted everything starting January 1st to kind of start over. We kind of had a false start with using an outside accountant. That proved to be inefficient. It is easier to just do it ourselves. I have our budget input here on the second page. I've got the month, the year to date, and then on the far right hand column is the full year budget. I did try to time out some things. In April, I have our quarterly payment from the city, but we didn't get the check until after May 1st, so it shows us as being under budget there. Everything else, I pretty

much just divided by 12 to spread out the budget. The last page are the transactions for the month of April. At this point, we are well within budget.

John Nachtrieb said Doug, one of the things that you expressed probably late last year when we were looking for another accountant was your concern about accountability, the possibility of a problem by doing this ourselves.

Doug Cheatham said that was just in full disclosure. Obviously I'm writing the checks and I'm also producing the financial statements. Normally an organization wouldn't do that. You would have separation of duties. That would not be the normal practice is all I was trying to say. When we started to go with an outside accountant, that would have been sort of a check and balance. I never write a check that I don't have a piece of paper for, whether it is an e-mail or an invoice that one of you has given me. In addition to the detailed transaction list on the 3rd page, I could give you a copy of every one of those to document what that went for. I try to document it as much as I can in case anybody ever asks me, but I just want you to know I'm not trying to hide the fact that we don't have internal controls the way you would in a real business.

John Nachtrieb said we discussed it at the last meeting and I think that's on the record and you weren't here. I asked the question because I wanted to hear you on the record to make that response. I think we are all satisfied with that as a safety.

Karen Kramford said do you think there is a need for like a year-end audit or year-end review by an independent firm?

Doug Cheatham said I guess that's up to all of you. The records I have are available anytime you want to see them. I could attach copies of invoices every month if you want me to.

Bob Reuland said at the end of the year when we do our 990 tax return, the accountant has to go through all 12 months of accounting to make sure that he can make an accurate statement to the government regarding our expenses and our income. I think we are in good shape.

Karen Kramford made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. Eva Luckinbill seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

a. Update on Accounting Transition – Bob Reuland

Kim Granholm said I'm going to ask Bob to talk about the accounting transition with Joe Zu.

Bob Reuland said Joe is a hard man to understand. I think we stumbled a little bit with him as far as what we expected of him and he expected of us. He still thinks he works for us. I've tried to make that perfectly clear that we've made a transition and that we are moving forward. We are getting a new accountant. I have tax returns. They were filed on the exact date they were do, so this year we filed at the right time. It didn't work out. We had a lot of problems as far as communicating and getting in touch with one another. I appreciate Doug taking this back. It is a

little bit different format, but it is something we'll get used to and I think it is going to be just fine, so we are moving forward.

b. Memorial Donation in Honor of Hal Beebee – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said we had a lengthy discussion at the Executive Committee meeting. We're talking about a \$5,000 donation to the public library. In that, there would be a plaque that would mention Hal Beebee, but there would be room for additional names on the plaque, so it is not like we are spending \$5,000 on Hal himself. I think that it is appropriate. We haven't given any money to the library and I think that it is appropriate that we do. They are in our downtown area, they are in our SSA, and we appreciate having them here. I would like someone to make a motion to give the library \$5,000. It would be in the honor of Hal Beebee and future participants from Aurora Downtown.

Dan Hites made a motion to give the library \$5,000. Doug Cheatham seconded the motion.

Terry Michels said did you have a conversation with them? Are we going to put it with the tree or in the garden?

Kim Granholm said I spoke with Laura Stoney. I don't think the Gathering Tree is available anymore, but there is a garden where they actually have little houses in the garden and she made a suggestion that we can have a plaque that says Aurora Downtown and then each house could be the Hal Beebee House or the Terry Michels House or that sort of memorial.

The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

a. Appointment of Open Board Seat – Clara Diaz, Balderas Beauty Salon

Kim Granholm said as you know, we have been talking this year a lot about the attendance requirements that we have and we've had to, unfortunately, put that into place and we've asked Charlie Zine to step down. He did receive a new position and wasn't able to make the meetings anymore. We had discussed appointing Clara Diaz, who we have here this morning from Balderas Beauty Salon. I just want to welcome you to the Board again. This is her second term on the Board and we look for you to do great things over there on Broadway. So welcome.

b. Aurora Police Department – Tracey Archer

Kim Granholm said I've been putting them on the agenda. They did come to the Executive Committee meeting and we had some nice discussions. I had asked them to participate on a monthly basis so that we can get some feedback from them about what's going on on the streets downtown. I didn't bring it with me today, but he did produce a report from the last Executive Committee meeting that says calls are actually down in the downtown area. He wants us to know that he is willing to work with us. They've also been in talks with Hesed House about maybe helping relieve some of the problem that we are seeing on the street.

c. City of Aurora New Branding – Clayton Muhammad

Kim Granholm said I know we have all been waiting for quite some time for the new city logo and the rebrand so Clayton has offered to come and tell us some of the findings and update us on where we're at.

Clayton Muhammad first gave a timeline on the process for the rebranding from the RFP to the selection of the firm North Star to do the rebranding and all the steps the city went through to get to the new brand that we have today. There was a soft launch at the Mayor's State of the City address. It was rolled out on April 16 and the following week it was presented to the Council and they gave their thumbs up and this is where we stand today. Clayton then gave an update on the process and all the meetings that were conducted before they came up with the new brand. It is now time to see Aurora in an entirely new light. It is still the city that we love. He then handed out a flyer that describes how the new logo evolved and answered questions on the rebrand.

Consultant Report – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said last month I gave you the talk about showing up for coming to the Committee meetings and I have to say there has been an improvement, so I want to thank everybody for stepping up and showing up. This is where the decisions are made. We are going to be getting a new logo for Aurora Downtown and this is the perfect opportunity for us to work with the city and to move forward in this. I think that this is the guidance that we have been kind of looking for, so I'm real happy about that too.

Committee Updates – Budget/Bar/Holiday/Landscaping/Legislative/Marketing/Nominating/Parking/First Fridays

Bob Reuland said for the BAR Committee, there will be a meeting at 3:00 o'clock today. A number of decisions will be made. We have applications for rent subsidy. We have a pending application for a \$10,000 business retention grant. Things are moving along.

Melissa Mercado said we received a \$10,000 check from Hollywood Casino. With that \$10,000 check, we will be replacing the displays on New York Street. We are signing off on the decorations for Temple Display for the coming year.

Joe Hopp said for Landscaping we are in full swing right now. Riley is out there trying to keep up with the grass. Most of the gardens are getting refreshed. All the flowers are up. Today we will finish up putting the hanging baskets up on the bridges, but all the sidewalk pots are out there. We might do some adjusting as the season goes along. We try to put them in no parking zones so people see them. Other than that, we are in full swing right now with landscaping.

Joe Hopp said real quick on my Aurora side with the maintenance downtown, we did replant the grass over at the Millennium Plaza. We put a special sod in. It is really a fescue. We have a lot of 4 legged friends in the downtown, which is neat to see, but we have to get the owners to

maybe pick up a little bit better. Because there is a little bit of a lack of green space, I would say, for how many dogs we may have, we did put a special fescue in that is supposed to be a little more hardy and also draught resistant, so that should help over there. We do have a Horticulturist that we hired this year, so you may have seen her. She has planted over 1,000 new plants in the central business district. It really has been noticeable. Her efforts we will probably be seen for many years to come. She has really done a great job with a lot of the green space downtown. You will be seeing some concrete work starting up with about \$30,000 worth of replacement sidewalks that we will be doing here shortly. That will probably get started in the next month.

Karen Kramford said the Legislative Committee met last Friday. We are in the final stages of the Economic Benefit Study that's being put together for the 4:00 a.m. liquor license. Our plan is to bring it before the Board in June. We are also working on relationships with the City of Aurora and elected officials and we are now able to look forward to workshops that we are just starting to talk about for the fall. Our next meeting will be June 12th.

Benjie Hughes said the Marketing Committee has begun measuring results at First Fridays, which has been really beneficial. That's kind of leading some of our decisions, so one of the ideas we are going to explore in more detail when we meet up a week from today is actually sending someone out to help the individual venues with marketing and sort of do some consulting with them to help them promote First Fridays, but also to help them promote their businesses in general. We are also adding musicians on the streets. You will see some people outside playing as you walk around at First Fridays and we will have guides on the trolley who will be pointing out sort of interesting architectural tidbits about Aurora as well as promoting other things that are going on downtown.

Karen Kramford said the Float Committee is at a little bit of a hold up right now. We are moving along. We met last week. Our application is in. We are well within budget. We are waiting so that we can do our final material purchase. We have a volunteer organization to update the float that is actually going to work with us to put the materials on the float. We have our characters all together. We have our truck and our driver. The next big step for us is doing the flyer and getting that together and also the t-shirts.

City Department Updates

Gina Moga said I'm going to start with the Paint the Town Blue Decorating Seminar that Waubonsee is sponsoring. Fernando is here. He is going to be the one that is doing the workshop.

Fernando Castrejon said it will just be similar to the holiday workshop I did. It is next Wednesday from noon to 2:00. As Gina said, it is sponsored by Waubonsee. I will just be covering my take of Paint the Town Blue. I will put together a kit and each merchant will be required to use their creativity.

Gina Moga said I've got some of the flyers here. As part of that, that of course is our prelude to the Blues Week in Aurora, which we have the schedule finalized here. As part of that, on the

First Friday in June, on June 5th, the Fox Valley Music Foundation is sponsoring a free concert in the Paramount Grand Gallery of John Primer. He is one of the few legendary great blues players left around. As part of that, in the upstairs gallery Melissa is installing an art exhibit of Rex Bohn who has done the Blues posters for the last 10 years. All of his posters will be on display. The Memorial Day Parade is Monday, so we are working diligently on that. I think we have about 1,200 to 1,500 kids that are participating. We have 6 Aurora High School marching bands that are going to be here. I wanted you to keep in mind that July 3rd, fireworks this year are July 3rd. On that Friday night July 3rd not only will we have the fireworks and the entertainment at McCullough Park and RiverEdge Park and the shuttle busses coming from all areas of the city, but it is also First Fridays and the Veterans Advisory Council is doing a huge car show in Lot W over where the YWCA used to be. It is going to be craziness down here. We are redoing the Poetry in Public Places project that I talked to you about a couple of months ago. For the month of June it is Blues related.

Bill Wiet said we are actually going to be using this new brand out at the Aurora Airport. We are working to get the sign replaced and it would be including the new logo. Maybe starting today you'll see the old Randy's Auto and the law offices start coming down. The demolition plan is to get the fence around the properties and get the buildings demoed. You will still see the slabs. We are not ripping all of that up because there still has to be a lot of testing going on there in the next month as well. The fence will remain. Nothing will go inside this area during this season. You will notice out on Lake the construction project with the inceptors actual moved more off of Benton and moved toward Downer, so that project is slowly moving to the north. You have noticed that we took the barricades away from the area around the Hobbs building. They did actually stabilize the onion dome that was failing. They did a lot of work in the inside of the building in terms of stabilizing that particular corner and the west wall, so a lot of work was done to that building. We are working with the property owner for a permanent solution. I did go to Rockford to speak at a Senate hearing on the River Edge Redevelopment Zone for tax credit extensions, which are very important to the 5 river edge towns. Speaking of vacant buildings, the city is actually moving forward with a Vacant Property Ordinance. We have put together a Vacant Property Ordinance that is basically a registration similar to our apartment or rental licensing program and it starts the clock running on these vacant buildings. We are initially putting a 48 month date on the registration. We are completely able to give extensions to that. Seize the Future has agreed to hold some community forums or business forums on that. We want to try to get it done this summer.

Further discussion followed with updates on projects that are going on in the downtown area.

Announcements – Everyone

Ellen Mueller said I want to introduce the Executive Director of the Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cort Carlson.

Dan Hites said I just wanted to mention our design got a national award.

Kim Granholm said I did want to mention that I had a meeting with Brett from Seize the Future. They are doing on Fridays kind of like a meet and greet and they are interviewing business

owners. I would definitely encourage you to reach out to them and give some feedback. He is going to speak at the next meeting about some of the findings of business owners and what some of the concerns small business owners have.

Eva Luckinbill said May 23rd the library is closing their doors to the public. As part of the ceremonies, we're looking to gather a crowd outside the building at 5:00 o'clock for a large group hug that's going to be memorialized by a drone going around with a camera and that will be put in the time capsule that's going in the new building. We will be closed for business that day and open up the new main library on June 15th. June 14th is the dedication and ribbon cutting at the library. We hope you all will attend. The ice cream vendor on Lake and Middle Avenue is being demolished as we speak and that will all be clear and part of the additional parking for the library.

Helen Nowak said the Elks Club building is moving right along. We are progressing. We poured the concrete because we redid all the floors. We are waiting for the windows because we had to get the historic windows. We are making very good progress. We are still aiming for an end of summer opening for occupancy.

Adjourn

John Nachtrieb made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Doug Cheatham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 a.m.