

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes

June 4, 2015 – 8:00 A.M. – 5th Floor Conference Room B – City Hall

Members Present: Jimi Allen (at large), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank), Kim Granholm (at large), Benjie Hughes (at large), Karen Kramford (at large), Eva Luckinbill (Aurora Public Library), Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino), John Nachtrieb (at large), and Bob Reuland (ex-officio)

Members Absent (Excused): Dan Hites (at large)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: None

Meeting Highlights

Call to Order and Chair's Remarks

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

Approval of Minutes

Doug Cheatham made a motion to approve the May 7, 2015 minutes. This was seconded by Terry Michels. The motion was unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said we've got the balance sheet on the front. We've got over \$200,000. I deposited the check from the city and we also got the \$10,000 deposited from the Casino. We probably have about as much cash as we've had at any one point in time that I recall. For the month, we are well over budget thanks mostly to those deposits. I think every category/major subtotal heading is under budget. Retention is a little over. Other than, everything is well within budget. On the last page are the checks and deposits that were done during the month. Nothing too unusual there except for the extra \$10,000 deposit.

John Nachtrieb made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. This was seconded by Benjie Hughes. The motion was unanimously approved.

A discussion then followed on Aurora Downtown getting a debit card versus a credit card for purchases that might need to be made.

Old Business

None.

New Business

a. Hesed House: What is our role? How do we want to help?

Kim Granholm said I know that we talked a lot with the police about homeless on the street and how to solve some of that problem. I've kind of asked Jimi to think a little bit on that and just kind of get a conversation going as to how maybe we can help alleviate that problem. I know we talked about a van and a driver. Obviously, the problem is a lot more wide than just picking people up and dropping them back off at Hesed House, but I feel like that is a step maybe in the right direction. I just want to have some conversation about that.

Jimi Allen said I just want to bring up some topics that might spur this. We are talking about alcohol abuse. That's the main issue. So who are they? How many are they? What are their names? The biggest question, I guess, is how would we most want someone else to handle this if we were in their situation? Is Aurora the root cause or are they? Do we want to directly just deal with or lobby in a good will manner the liquor stores with perhaps looking at the statistics around ambulance ride costs, the jail costs, the police costs and the perception? It is a systemic issue. We can, not just Band-Aid it, we could throw some money at it and solve some of the perception issue or we could maybe use it as an opportunity to be seen as a very large city who is inevitably going to have issues like this and creating some type of ongoing look at it, so use it as an opportunity. I wonder how many people, if we could get an analysis of how many people are we talking about here. Is this 7 regular people because that's different than if it is 100. I would just put it out that way.

John Nachtrieb said so what we are looking for is probably information from either Hesed or the police or both with names and then we want to drill into what those individual situations are. Is that right?

Jimi Allen said that's what I'm proposing.

Doug Cheatham said I wasn't here last month, but what are we trying to do?

John Nachtrieb said we are trying to really help. We are trying not to just push them off so we don't have to look at them.

Jimi Allen said I've called an ambulance dozens of times for people. What is the cost here? It is one thing to not have developers want to look at Aurora because there are homeless or somebody that's drunk on the street. It is another if there is a cost factor. I guess we just need to weigh what is the actual issue here. Is it a cost thing? Is it something that is a burden on us as downtown businesses because of perception? It is probably a big perception issue.

Benjie Hughes said what was the impetus for this being brought up in the first place?

Kim Granholm said last month when the police were here, there was concern that there were more and more drunks on the street it seems like then there ever has been in years past and we don't feel like there was a great police presence. Of course, as soon as we brought it up I feel like they did come out full force. I have noticed too that there is more homeless. I don't think the ones that I'm even seeing are really all that drunk, so I think there is a double problem there. You have just homeless people that are homeless. So that was kind of the spark of the conversation is perception, I think, is how it started. We can buy a bus and have them shipped back to the Hesed House, but my concern is that that doesn't solve the problem over the long run for downtown. We are still going to continue to have those problems unless we do something.

Karen Kramford said perhaps we need to talk with Hesed House to see what they are doing and then what are the next steps that need to be taken to help alleviate that problem. It is a huge social issue which we will not be able to deal with and until we know what is going to come out with the budgets, we don't even know what services are going to be available to individuals. But we do have funds that we can work with right now that perhaps we can help Michael with to get the program started or to get some rehabbing started.

Kim Granholm said I wonder if we shouldn't meet with Michael and the police because didn't Tracey say that they were meeting regularly with Michael from Hesed? So maybe we should join one of those meetings. That's a first step. Then we say we are willing to help so tell us exactly what you need and then we can figure out whether or not, at least in the short-term, we can help with that.

Doug Cheatham said I think most of what we can do is provide some money, but we want to do that in a way that is directed and effective. We don't want to just dump it into a big pot and not know if we are doing any good or not.

Jimi Allen said what we can do is think about programs like NFTE, which is an entrepreneurship program that started 20 years ago. They have an office in Chicago and it is about teaching kids, under-resourced kids, entrepreneurship business, marketing and economics. What if Michael identified people that were entrepreneurial that were looking for opportunities and we matched them up with businesses downtown. There are plenty of people that have college degrees or graduates there that they need a bridge and if we're the business community, we need to bridge them into that, so creating a program where we just allow him to identify people that are upwardly mobile that just need an internship or an apprentice opportunity to raise the money to get a new set of clothes to interview or whatever is.

Karen Kramford said I think it is going to take both money and people willing to work with it. We need the data to know how we are going to put the resources to it.

Kim Granholm said should I invite the police and Michael to the next Executive Meeting or do you think that should be separate?

Karen Kramford said why would we not create a task force to help get the information together to present to the Executive Committee?

Kim Granholm said does anyone want to volunteer for that before the next Executive Committee meeting?

John Nachtrieb said I will try.

Karen Kramford said I will try as well.

Benjie Hughes said well what if instead of trying to fix homelessness, which Hesed is already doing, what if we tried to fix the business community's discomfort with homelessness because they are not going anywhere. You are never going to get everybody fixed. What if it became a place where every business owner knew the name of every homeless person that they saw hanging around? Then it is not a weird scary place. That's a vaguer approach, but if we could create that kind of community it is more about education and connections and things like that.

Karen Kramford said I think that's what I would have expected to see coming out of that task force is the individuals talking about the problem.

Eva Luckinbill said when I worked with Ryan Dowd when he was the head of Hesed House, he had told us many times that the chronic homeless, of which is about 20% of the Hesed House population, are what we need to focus on. Everybody else is there for 2 or 3 weeks or maybe 2 months until they get on their feet. It is that 20% that need that extra attention.

Benjie Hughes said Aurora Downtown should not start an organization to get people off the street.

Doug Cheatham said we are not a social service agency. What we need to do is see what we can do for our part, whether it is educating downtown merchants or whether it is providing directed funds to one of the existing agencies. We are trying to figure out what we can do, but we don't need to change the nature of Aurora Downtown fundamentally.

John Nachtrieb said is business attraction and retention for me and that's why I'm interested in it. It is an underutilized resource.

Kim Granholm said I think this is good for downtown if we can develop some education and some relationships.

b. New Logo/Branding of Aurora Downtown

Kim Granholm said Bob and I kind of talked about the new logo and the branding of Aurora Downtown, mostly because we know that Benjie is leaving and he kind of had started a process. It is definitely something that we want to move forward with.

Consultant Report

Bob Reuland said I'd like to bring up something that we have sitting that we aren't quite aware of and that is our Friends of LaSalle Street as a group are sitting on \$75,000 worth of Aurora Downtown money. That money was, at one time, earmarked for development of bump outs and new street lights and brick crosswalks and so forth and nothing much is happening with that.

Jimi Allen said I think the bump outs make a lot of sense, but not the lights. LaSalle has so much potential. Everybody has seen that for years. If we could give it one or two more meetings, I'd love to bring a real clear here's where it is all moving and what do you guys think.

Bob Reuland said the city has purchased the street lights for LaSalle Street. They are already there. I agree with you. I don't think they are necessary.

Jimi Allen said that's a substantial expense, but the bump outs, if it is just cozied up. Cozy up the block. It is a nice preserved street that can be developed rather quickly, I think, if we get the technology that we need there and some of the things that are moving forward. If we can wait one more meeting, I would be very anxious to say that would be great if we could even put a brick ribbon just to designate it as something unique.

Kim Granholm said how about we put it under old business and we talk about it and if there is not a plan or if we don't have some sort of timeframe, then we can revisit getting the money back and using it for whatever we want.

Jimi Allen said I would love it to be put into LaSalle Street. I think we have a lot of potential there. There is a lot of interest.

Kim Granholm said we'll just keep talking about it as it moves forward.

Committee Updates

John Nachtrieb said the BAR Committee had a good meeting last month. Our next meeting is going to be a week from today at 3:00 p.m. At the last meeting we approved 2 new projects for rent subsidy and business development.

Jimi Allen said I wonder if on the marketing side we could do something for them. That's probably their biggest deficit. Nobody knows they are there. Our entire community is on Facebook. If we did a 30 second commercial spot for them that was super focused and just pushed it for a few hundred dollars on Facebook, then our community would know they are there.

Kim Granholm said and maybe in the next year's budget for all the money that we do spend with these businesses we spend 10% on marketing for them. That seems like that would kind of ensure their success and then it would be one less thing that marketing would have to meet about.

Karen Kramford said the Legislative Committee met. We do have the final version for the 4:00 a.m. liquor license. Part of what the Building Department is doing with their phased-in projects for building permits as well as Seize the Future with their new programs and with what the BAR

Committee is doing and our resources in downtown to help businesses, I have proposed a workshop that brings all these entities together for the businesses and the building owners for downtown. We are looking to do this in the fall. We also have been focusing on what has been going through committees within the city itself on the different committees and taking a more proactive role in what's going on to try to catch some things earlier.

Benjie Hughes said for Marketing, First Friday is tomorrow. You are going to see 3 musicians wondering and playing on the streets at the trolley stops and other places. In July, the First Friday is going to be very big because of the fireworks and everything else. We've also started measuring First Fridays. So far we've measured our artists and we've measured our venues. Our venues are very happy. The artists are mostly happy. But we are looking at now how are we going to measure the patrons who show up, which will probably be a multi-month process. We are spending much of our marketing meetings talking about First Fridays. It might make sense to split the two and have separate committees, one just to run the First Fridays event and then another one to do the other marketing.

Kim Granholm said for Parking, Fred has his first meeting on the 18th at 3:00 p.m. at the Chamber offices.

Karen Kramford said the Float Committee is at a milestone that we have to get through with materials at this point and after that things should be moving quickly.

Announcements

Kim Granholm said Paint the Town Blue is going on right now. It is going with the Blues week.

Eva Luckinbill said we are opening the library with a ribbon cutting grand opening on Sunday, June 14th. We are moving in as we speak. It will be from 1:00 to 5:00 with lots of things to look at. We will be gathering on the west side of the building. The city parking is ready. There is a new sculpture by Jim Jenkins that is phenomenal. There is some art inside that you will want to see, as well as library stuff. Come out and join us.

Adjourn

John Nachtrieb made a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Eva Luckinbill. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.