

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Minutes

June 18, 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), Katie Arko (ACCA), Lulu Blacksmith (WCC), Rory Bolen (at large), Clara Diaz (at large), Kim Granholm (at large), Fred Harrison (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Kimber Howard (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), Bob Reuland (ex-officio)

Members Absent (Excused): Harish Ananthapadmanabhan (at large), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank)

Members Absent (Unexcused): Cort Carlson (AACVB), John Galles (at large), Keith Gerald (at large), Jorge Pacheco (at large), Megan Paul (at large)

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Gina Moga (COA), Birnie Harper (Wayside Cross), Kaye Mason (Chek-Lab, Inc.), Judith Dawson (Scale Up Aurora), Tom Bartlett (Aurora Fastprint), Michael Cobb (Hesed House), Jim Schweizer (Aurora Preservation Commission), Daisy Porter-Reynolds (Aurora Public Library), Joe Dispensa (Friends of LaSalle Street), Sandy Spang (Friends of LaSalle Street), Juanita Wells (Friends of LaSalle Street), Alvin Landaverde (Aurora University)

Call to Order and Introductions – Kim Granholm

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

Kim Granholm said I'm passing along just a little poster for us to sign and give Benjie and we'll talk a little bit more about him a little later in the agenda.

Approval of Minutes – 5/21/2015

Lulu Blacksmith made a motion to approve the May 21, 2015 minutes. Dan Hites seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Kim Granholm said Doug is out of town today, but he did pass out the financial reports. There wasn't really much to note.

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

Old Business

a. Aurora Police Department Report – Tracey Archer

Kim Granholm said I e-mailed out the report. Tracey Archer was on vacation and asked one of the other officers to give a report for us and I did e-mail that out. It was a 27 page report, so I did not want to print that out and bring it to the Board meeting and I didn't have time to review it and put in into a one page document. We've asked the Police Department to make some reports like that so we are all familiar with what's going on and where the problem areas are. Surprisingly when they do make those reports, we have one of the lowest crime areas in the entire Aurora area, so that's always nice to see because I know we hear a lot of negativity about the downtown and the people walking around. Although it might be an eyesore, they are certainly not causing a lot of problems as far as the Police Department is concerned. Officer Archer will attend more of the meetings. We've asked him to be more of a participant in Aurora Downtown just to keep us up to date on what's going on and have more of a police presence downtown.

Further discussion followed on the homeless in the downtown area and the issues they are causing and what people can do to help alleviate the situation.

Eva Luckinbill said perhaps there is some sort of education for the retailers and the businesses downtown on how to interact with them.

Gina Moga said that's exactly with the COP officers are for. The Community Oriented Policing Officers are exactly here for that sort of thing and they will do the training for you.

Kim Granholm said we'll reach out to them and see if we can maybe put something together to have a training and have that happen.

Michael Cobb said if there is any type of training, of course, I would personally love to be a part of that. Now it is summer and it is getting warm. We are seeing much heavier traffic, especially during that lunchtime. We are still trying to work on our end to put together even more programs to try to give, especially those chronic homeless, some other option instead of just walking around the street, so we are still working on that part of it. I have no problem even working with the police in this area really just to kind of identify who is who and who might be more of an issue that we see having problems and that type of thing. I would like to be involved with any process the police would have in terms of us providing a level of expertise and just some insight and then stay in the picture as long as it is needed.

New Business

a. Aurora Downtown Parking Letter – Kim Granholm

Kim Granholm said if you have followed the parking agreement between Waubonsee and the city, it has gone back to the Finance Committee and they are reviewing that. The city and Waubonsee are looking at a one year extension of the contract. I've had a few Board members reach out to me and just say that we would like some input on the parking, not necessarily the contract, but just making some recommendations and we just want to make that known to the City Council and the two entities between Waubonsee and the city and just say as business owners and property owners downtown this is what we are experiencing and they can use it how they see fit, but we would like to just provide some education behind all that in a constructive and positive way so that they feel confident. City Council probably isn't downtown as much as we are and if they are making these decisions, we just want them to be educated on how we feel the parking situation is downtown and then they can feel more confident about what their decision is. I did draft a very, very rough draft letter. I've asked my partner, Tom Bartlett, to review it before I send it off to the Parking Committee and then I'll have them review it and then we'll make that recommendation or we will send that letter to the City Council.

Karen Kramford said I guess my question about that is are we going to do this for everything because the Finance Committee met yesterday to pass on a resolution for passing on fees? There is also the vacant building. Why are we choosing this topic when the Parking Committee didn't see fit to put it on the agenda? It was on the agenda for Legislative and was to go forward to Executive Committee. Why are we doing this now?

Kim Granholm said I'm going to speak from my personal opinion here. I know the Parking Committee hasn't met in a year. I think that they wanted to kind of re-establish what their goals were going to be going forward. The reason that we kind of jumped on this idea right now is that it is in City Council right now.

Fred Harrison said the reason that I at that time chose not to put it on the agenda is because I wasn't up to speed with what was going on. However, in the past couple of days, I've met with Bob and I've met with Kim to bring me up to speed with what was going with the City Council. After meeting with Kim and Bob, I'm up to speed with what is going on, so I will take it into the Parking Committee meeting today and we will address the part of what we should be addressing.

Further discussion followed on the parking issues.

Kim Granholm said it sounds like we are not ready to move forward with this, so I'm not comfortable moving forward unless we are all in agreement. What I'm going to suggest is that we have the Parking Committee review it. We can talk to business owners, but it is going to be a long-term plan then. I'm not comfortable pushing something along if there is pushback on the Board at this point. If it takes longer, it takes longer, but at least in the end if it takes us a year we'll still have our opinion out there and we'll figure out what exactly we want and it is not just going to come from 10 people. It will come from the whole Board. If you chose not to participate at that point, it is your own fault.

Dan Hites said I would request that the Finance Committee hold any decisions until they have the appropriate feedback from Aurora Downtown.

Kim Granholm said what would be Aurora Downtown's benefit from doing that?

Dan Hites said because what happens is the committees do not take testimony from anybody outside of their little group that goes up there, so Aurora Downtown really doesn't have feedback into that at any level until it gets to the City Council and by that time the decisions are made and everything else is pretty much done and you have to really push things to get any opinions changed. So it is better, before the Aldermen start taking their points of views, to get in there and talk to them and get some consensus. Once it goes to the Finance Committee or one of the other committees and it is passed along, those consensuses are already being made and you don't have as much leverage ability to do things.

Karen Kramford said I would like to make a comment to that. Part of the Legislative Committee is building relationships and some of the things we have talked about in the Legislative Committee is building relationships with our Alderman and one of the things we do look at are the agendas that come up and are online at the city's website to see what is coming before the various committees. The Finance Committee is on there. In building relationships and in talking with the individuals on the Finance Committee, we may not be talking before the committee per se, but we do have an opportunity to influence and to see what members do know and don't know and to start educating long-term. My questions is if this is important to this Board, what are we going to do between now and Tuesday to speak to those members of the Finance Committee to ensure that they have been educated on the issues? What are we wanting to do? What are we willing to do in this 5 days that we have?

Kim Granholm said this sounds like we need to bring it to the Parking Committee and discuss it in more detail at that point. Parking is always a hotspot for everyone and if we are not comfortable with where it's at, then it needs to go to parking and we can hash it out there.

Fred Harrison said right and we'll just make this the topic of discussion for today.

Benjie Hughes said I would trust the Parking Committee to decide what our opinion is if they want to still try to send a letter before Tuesday. I think that would be a better to place to decide that.

b. LaSalle Street Grant – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said last week I talked with Joe Dispensa about where we were on the grant, what was happening on LaSalle Street, when construction was going to happen and Joe was very frustrated and said that he had no explanation. Every year we talked about getting the grant and getting the construction going and nothing happens. I know that Kim has talked with Bill Wiet and Bill has some insights into this.

Bill Wiet said the ball definitely is in the city's court on this. The money that was set aside or granted toward the LaSalle project from Aurora Downtown has been sitting there for several years. Just to give the last 5 years of background, the LaSalle project was a pretty massive undertaking, a million dollar project with arches and brick streets and crosswalks, bump outs, historic lighting and this was annually. It went from year to year. The city was not in a position to fund \$800,000 on LaSalle Street at that particular time, so we had engineering plans done a

few years ago that redefined it to bump outs, crosswalks and the lighting. Then we looked into the ability for the LaSalle Street electrical vault to be able to serve an additional electrical load and it was not able to. It was the vault that actually serves LaSalle and part of the east side and it was in such terrible condition that there was about a \$150,000 fix necessary for the lighting. That evolved into the bump outs, crosswalks and then just replacing the existing lights that are there. During the 2015 budget round, we did allocate \$167,000 for the LaSalle Street project, so with the \$75,000 that LaSalle Street Partners have would lump together and do the more minimal bump outs, crosswalk and lighting project and then January 1st comes and we get the new Governor's proposed \$9.8 million reduction in the municipal funds from the state income tax, which until about 30 days ago, we didn't know if that cut was going to be realized or not. With that in mind, all of the TIF funds, all the funds we had budgeted had to be reviewed separately. Even though we got budget approval by City Council in January to allocate this money, it didn't mean we had the authority to spend it. For the last 2 months that was on hold for that particular reason. The last time I talked to Joe it was more about just getting the lights up, the 7 lights, replacing them with historic lights. They are about \$15,000 a light and the city would need another \$50,000 plus budget authority to be able to be able to add to the \$75,000 to get it all done. What I can get to you is that I can get a complete 100% concurrence that this project will be funded and will continue to be funded during 2015 and we can get the engineering completed and out to bid or this is going to be sat on until 2016. I want to make it very clear that it is not the LaSalle Street Partners inability to use these funds. It is completely on the city because there is much more needed to complete any phase of that project that is currently with them right now.

Joe Dispensa said we've moved forward and we've pushed very hard. Our LaSalle Street Auto Show is going to be double in size from what it was last year. We've pulled a whole group together for one purpose and that is to honor the Aurora Vets. All the profits that we raise from our silent auction and so on, everything is going to go to the American Legion of Aurora. I've got some flyers. I would like you to take a flyer. If you get a chance to come to our show, we would greatly appreciate it.

c. Recognition of Board Member Benjie Hughes – Bob Reuland

Kim Granholm said today it Benjie's last Board meeting. We're happy to say that you are stepping up with your wife and moving out to the East Coast, but would you mind telling everyone where you are going and what you are going to be doing out there?

Benjie Hughes said we are moving out to the Boston area. My wife, Amy, took a job as a Professor of Theology at a place called Gordon College, just north of Boston. We are heading out there. It is her turn to pursue her dream and it is my turn to figure out what my next dream is. I've been doing Back Third Audio for 12 years and I love it, but I'm looking forward to sort of letting that continue without me and going and finding something else to do out there. I don't know what that's going to be yet. I hope not to rush into it. I hope to take a few months and catch my breath and get a process.

Bob Reuland said the next Marketing Committee meeting is next Thursday. We are going to change it up on you a little bit Benjie and we are going to have it at Ballydoyle. As the sendoff meeting for you, we'd like to have it there. We'd like to invite you if you want to come to that meeting. It starts at 4:00 o'clock next Thursday afternoon at Ballydoyle and we can give Benjie

a good sendoff at that particular point in time. The meeting will go forward. We will certainly have a lot to talk about.

Benjie Hughes said I'll mention that we are going to do sort of an official farewell shindig at Back Third Audio on July 10th, which is a Friday evening, after work from 5:00 until whenever.

Dan Hites said a lot of people don't know it, but you and I go way back. Benjie is my longest tenant and he's seen a lot of changes here. He has put up with me longer than anyone else has. I just want to express that I'm sorry you are leaving. I'm happy for you, but we'll miss you.

Consultant Report – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said we've had a huge amount of things going on in this last 2 week period. I certainly stirred up the LaSalle Street people and for that I apologize, but you all showed up this morning, so that is a good thing. Your money is safe and God willing we will get those things done this year. The library opened. Everything was wonderful there. Our committees are functioning very highly. I'm very proud of the way that Aurora Downtown is working. We are in the summer doldrums and yet we are functioning at 100%. Keep up the good work.

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

John Nachtrieb said the BAR Committee met last Thursday. We approved another grant award, so our budget is 1 grant award away from being completed for the year. That does not end our work by any means. We've got 3 companies that are award winners from 2014 that we are monitoring and nurturing and asking if there are other things we can do for them, as well as the new award winners. We'll have the very same kind of work to do for them to track them and monitor them, so it looks like it has been another good year for the BAR Committee. I attended the pop-up shop meeting that Justin Root chaired yesterday. That is another activity that the BAR Committee is very much involved with. It looks like there is a building, a single venue, that is available for pop-up shops to occupy for, I think it is, the First Friday event in August. We think that it may house possibly as many as 5 little businesses in that building. This is an awesome way of providing an opportunity for a small business upstart or a business concept to try its concept with very little risk to see if the concept is a good concept and to see if downtown Aurora is a good place for it.

Karen Kramford said for Legislative Committee, the Amended Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Aurora and Waubensee was a heated discussion. We came up with that the Parking Committee should become part of the process. These are some of the things that came out of it. There was a request that the City of Aurora and Waubensee Community College admit parking errors, that the money due to the errors go to the Business Attraction and Retention Committee over a period of time and there were more items suggested and Dan was going to put a document together. I would assume that that is going to come through the Parking Committee at this point and not through the Legislative Committee. The next item was the Economic Benefit Study of Aurora Downtown Arts and Entertainment District of Extended Liquor License until 4:00 a.m. We approved the document. It is going before the Executive Committee next

month and that hopefully then with the Arts and Entertainment document will go on to Business Attraction and Retention. Our next meeting is July 10th at 52-54 W. Downer in the first floor conference room.

Karen Kramford said for the Float Committee, the application has been completed. We received the sponsorship letter. We will be reviewing that tomorrow at our committee meeting. We are within budget. For float itself, we have the truck. The t-shirts have been ordered. They will be available on Monday. The materials for the float have arrived. I've been in contact with Mike Cobb's group to try to set up a time to work on the float and to get the float moved to a location. We have 3 characters. We have Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Hites. We have Uncle Sam, Mr. Nachtrieb. We have the Statue of Liberty, Helen Nowak. We are finalizing the handout. The next thing is to get those printed. We're in good shape.

Benjie Hughes said the Marketing Committee meets next Thursday at 4:00 p.m. at Ballydoyle. We will have a couple of things to go over. The First Friday on July 3rd will probably be the largest we've ever had, so we are going to spend a little time talking if we are ready for that and if we need to do any upgrades or anything for that. We've been discussing how we can start measuring. We've been getting some numbers and some feedback from First Friday from the artists who have participated and from the venues that have participated. Now we are looking at a scheme to get feedback from the guests who come, which is a little bit more complicated. We are looking at doing some sort of passport where you would pick up a document and take it with you at every venue and get it stamped or something like that in order for us to measure who is there. We're going to talk about the questions we want to ask and things we want to learn from the guests. Another project that we have going on, we are going to start with a couple of venues that do First Fridays and help them develop e-mail marketing campaigns, auspiciously to market First Fridays better, but really also to just help them market better period.

Fred Harrison said the Parking Committee will be meeting today at 2:00 p.m. I do believe in getting as much feedback and participation is extremely important. We do have a structured meeting, so feel welcome.

City Department Updates

Gina Moga said we have a lot going on with the summer. The John Primer concert went really well in conjunction with First Friday earlier this month. I do have to say that the whole paint the town blue thing, last year we had a lot more participants. We are a little disappointed that more businesses downtown didn't participate. I know that when we did it at Christmastime we had about 20 or 25 business and I think now we just have a handful. As far as the 4th of July goes, for the 3rd of July fireworks, everything seems to be in order. We are obviously going to have the First Friday that night and the Veteran's Advisory Council will have a huge car show over at Lot W that day from 4:30 to 7:30 and then obviously the fireworks and everything that goes on with that. Then the parade on Saturday morning steps off at 10:00 a.m. We are capping it at 100 units. We've had a lot of interest this year. Blues on the Fox is tomorrow and Saturday. There are over 6,000 tickets already sold and that's without any walkups. I think it is going to be pretty successful.

Melissa Mercado said I would like to thank Aurora Downtown for their support of the Fox Valley Music Foundation and Blues Week in particular by putting their slider on the website. That's been very helpful in supporting our activities for Blues Week. Also the support through the vacant window project in allowing us to display our celebration of poetry in public places, which this month is a Blues themed poetry that's displayed in the kiosks and some of the vacant windows throughout the city.

Bill Wiet said Benton was opened last week to traffic and now it moved to Downer Place, so Downer Place will be closed for the next couple of weeks for the sewer project. After the work around Downer is completed, there will be no more closures to the north. I think the project ends just a little north of Downer. After the Downer project is completed, then they are going to be resurfacing all of the Lake Street area so we can prepare for the two way street. The city has yet to receive the IDOT actual permit to do the signalization work in order to do the two way conversion. Once we do get that permit, we will be doing that signal work and then we will be getting the jurisdictional transfer of River Street so we can convert that to two way. You'll probably see things happening in the next month and a half or so in terms of getting the two way streets happening in that part of town. Completion will be the end of summer. Also for the Galena two way, we are almost done with the sewer separation on Galena. It is on schedule. We are going to do a small project at Stolp and Galena. We are going to be doing a sanitary sewer across from the north side of Stolp to the south. That's going to start between now and September. As was mentioned, there is an abandoned building ordinance that's making its way through a public forum. There is one today at 2:00 o'clock at the Seize the Future offices. It basically is about registering vacant buildings and have a period of timeframe where a vacant building can be vacant. There is a registration fee associated with that. There is also abilities to get extensions to have a vacant building for more than 4 years. It is a city-wide project, not just necessarily downtown. Now some really good news was the city ranked 4th out of 25 projects for a very aggressive construction project at the Aurora Transportation Center. We went to City Council and we are going to get approval on Tuesday for a Phase 1 of engineering to do a lot more work in anticipation of receiving approval for this grant, which will be November. What we are looking to do is remove the Pulse Point in front of the Roundhouse. We plan on relocating the Pulse Point to the east side of the Transportation Center parking lot, which is along the tracks. We are going to remove a lot of the concrete and asphalt. We are still going to maintain a parking area, but it won't be any busses or shelters. We are also going to be relocating the signal that is currently at the very confusing intersection by the hotel. We are going to be moving that signal to the area right at the entrance to the Transportation Center. Included in this application was the construction of that bike/ped bridge across from Broadway to the west side. So we're hurrying it up and getting some stuff done and hopefully we'll find more in the fall.

Ellen Mueller said the Visitors Bureau had the privilege of working with the American Diabetes Association in Tour de Cure to bring in 1,300 registered bike riders finishing their race at Two Brothers. The economic impact was estimated at over \$150,000 last weekend. Aurora is hosting the Best Vegan Dish in a Culinary Champions Campaign. That's going to be at the Hamptons. It is a free event, so invite everybody you want to, but especially invite the downtown restaurants that have a veggie/vegan dish on their menu because we want them to win. If they win, they get \$3,000 worth of free advertising from our office.

Announcements – Everyone

Kim Granholm said I'd like to introduce Daisy, who is the new Director of the Library. We also have Eva, who we all know. We love the new library and we love that it is downtown, so I want to thank both of you for that. It is incredible. It's not just a library. It is really a community gathering place. I don't know if you have all been. But if you have not, you have got to see it. It is really wonderful.

Daisy Porter-Reynolds said the opening was fabulous. We had our Grand Opening on Sunday and we had about 2,300 people we think. All I hear are compliments. Whenever I walk around the building, I ask our customers so what do you think of the new library and they all say it is great. They are full of compliments. Among the many, many things you can do there is you can print something out on our 3-D printer. You can convert your VHS tapes to DVD. You can check out books, you can check out e-books, you can download e-audio books, and you can watch streaming video from your home with your library card. You can bring children to story time. Virtual reality is one of the most amazing things that we have. You can put on this headset and you can explore the total virtual world and I tried it and it feels like you are going to fall off a cliff. I would like to offer the library as a meeting space for this group if you are able to meet places besides this room.

Eva Luckinbill said that is one of the things I would have added on and now that we have the bigger space with a lot of meeting rooms and conference rooms, if we run up against a problem with the Marketing, don't forget about the library. We want to be more present in the community. I'd like to add on to what Daisy said about the 2,300 people there on Sunday, the number of people that came waiting for the doors to open at noon on Monday was all wonderful and very gratifying and satisfying to me. I walked through yesterday, and there was more of the general library users coming into the building and it was still so gratifying to see people use the building the way we had always anticipated that it would be used. Thank you all for your support. We have the gardens coming later in the summer and it will be another time for celebration.

Gina Moga said this time last year, the Paramount subscription number of sales were 19,000. Right now we are just about at 26,000. The first one doesn't open until September. We anticipate by this time next year to be about the second largest subscription based theater in the United States.

Dan Hites said what is the status of the old library and what's the status of the VNA?

Daisy Porter-Reynolds said for the old library, we have some interest, but there is no real news on it. We are working with people to try to make that happen.

Bill Wiet said for the VNA there is a development agreement in the works that would provide for demolition of that building as well as a potential RFP to develop between Downer and Benton, including our parking lot and the Building and Permits building as well. As you know, Building and Permits always thought of that as a temporary location because I think there could be a better

use along the river than a city facility, so we would be looking at moving that out and getting that area right for redevelopment.

Kim Granholm said there is a show at the Paramount on June 27th, which is also a salute to Veterans. It is \$40.00 per ticket. It is called the Brett Show and it is a family friendly event. Mr. Luckinbill asked me to just announce this. I have some flyers I'm going to pass out for you if you are interested. I've never seen the show, but I've heard it is incredible.

Judy Dawson said I would like all of you to congratulate John, who graduated from the second cohort last Wednesday. Thank you to Kim, the guinea pig in my first class, and thank you for your support inviting me here and introducing me to John. I would also like to thank Lulu and Waubensee for hosting both of our graduations. Because of this, the Small Business Administration has extended our contract for another year, so we have another class starting on September 8th, so we are accepting applications. Any business owner who wants to take their business over a million dollars, there are all types of support. You can talk to Kim and John and get the real skinny on it. Thank you very much and congratulations John.

Juanita Wells said I have tickets to sell for the Aurora Township Youth Foundation. We are having our annual Faye's barbeque sale and that's Monday, June 29th from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. All the funds go toward helping our seniors. We've got the senior services at 900 Lake. We have our youth center down on Gale Street. We help the young people and we help our seniors. Those groups really, really need our assistance. So we are selling barbeque tickets and they are \$13.00 for one or two for \$25.00. You get 2 pork chops, or a half a chicken or a combination. I would appreciate it if you all would help me with these tickets.

Birnie Harper said have scheduled our dedication and Open House for July 24th. It starts at 10:00, but it will run all day. It will also be a Saturday where you can come in and look around. Just as soon as we get all that in, then the most interesting project to watch is going to be tearing down the building next door. It is a really nice building and it is a really nice place for people that need a nice place to stay while they try to transform their lives.

Michael Cobb said next Wednesday evening between 7:00 and 8:00 the Faith and Justice Alliance, which is the advocacy branch of Hesus House, is having a prayer vigil and it is centered around the proposed budget cuts that many of us need to pray that they don't come across as they are right now. So we are going to gather some folks on Wednesday. We'd love for you to be there. I know that on July 23rd we will be hosting the Chambers After Hours event over at the CRC, so we'd love, again, to see all you guys there.

Lulu Blacksmith said today is the last day, at noon, to register for the Futures Summit, so if you haven't registered please do so by noon.

Adjourn

Eva Luckinbill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dan Hites seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 a.m.