

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Minutes

November 19, 2015

8:00 a.m. – City of Aurora Training Center, 5 E. Downer Place, suite H – City Hall

Members Present: Jane Abe (Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce), Jimi Allen (at large), Lulu Blacksmith (WCC), Rory Bolen (at large), Cort Carlson (AACVB), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank), Clara Diaz (at large), Keith Gerald (at large), Kim Granholm (at large), Fred Harrison (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Kimber Howard (at large), Karen Kramford (at large), Melissa Mercado (at large), Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino), Helen Nowak (at large), Megan Paul (at large), Bob Reuland (ex-officio), Daisy Porter-Reynolds (Library)

Members Absent (Excused): John Nachtrieb (at large),

Members Absent (Unexcused): Harish Ananthapadmanabhan (at large), Katie Arko (ACCA), John Galles (at large), Eva Luckinbill (at large), Jorge Pacheco (at large)

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Gina Moga (COA), Birnie Harper (Wayside Cross), Michael Cobb (Hesed House), Jennifer Rauch (If These Walls Could Talk)

Call to Order and Introductions – Kim Granholm

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

Approval of Minutes – 10/15/2015

Daisy Porter-Reynolds said I see I am unexcused absent, which is true for last month, but I did send my Deputy Director. I don't know if that counts.

Kim Granholm said I believe that you can send a proxy in your place, so we'll make a note of that in the minutes.

Doug Cheatham made a motion to approve the October 15, 2015 minutes. Dan Hites seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said as far as the financial statements for month end, we have \$110,000 in the bank thanks to the deposit of our quarterly check from the city that went in during the month. The third page shows all the disbursements during the month. All of these business support payments are the usual monthly payments.

Dan Hites made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Terry Michels seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

a. Friends of LaSalle Street Grant Update – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said Kim and I met with Sandy Spang and Joe Dispensa and they understand the \$75,000 that they have is not going to be used in the near future for their plan to remodel and rejuvenate LaSalle Street, so they've agreed to return the \$75,000 to Aurora Downtown by the end of this year. I told them we would be happy to hold the money, but it is ours.

Doug Cheatham said we can set it up on our books as a liability. It is something we are eventually going to owe back or not. I think that would be the decision of the Board.

Kim Granholm said we commented that we would do our best to use it for LaSalle Street, which I would like to make good on, but I don't know if we want to just set it up as a line item. That can be further discussed at another time.

Dan Hites said we could work it into the BAR Committee and they could do a special incentive program specifically for LaSalle.

Kim Granholm said that's a good idea, have a project that is dedicated to LaSalle Street. That's a nice way to probably compromise on that.

New Business

a. Budget for 2016 – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said we have received word that our payment from the city will be \$25,000 less next year. We ran a negative budget in 2015 because we decided after the fact to allocate \$30,000 to First Fridays, so between the \$25,000 reduction in income and having to make up that \$30,000 in order to get back to a balanced budget, we had to make up \$55,000 in expense reductions for the 2016 budget. We reduced Marketing by \$11,000, Business Retention and Development by \$10,000, Landscaping by \$10,000, and the Hesed House project was eliminated. Those were the biggest ones.

Further discussion followed on why the funding was cut to Hesed House and what the possible effects might be.

Jane Abe said a lot of non-profits are really struggling with this whole state and the budget. I hate to see them have more struggles by us cutting completely this amount of money instead of maybe weening it down over the next 2 years so they can properly start to really ramp up more of their fundraising efforts instead of being blindsided by this cut.

Kim Granholm said I would also suggest that if we approve the budget as is we can certainly make adjustments if needed, but we all personally try to support the Hesed House, do their walk, and participate in their events. We can make probably a bigger impact in that if we collectively support them as a group as well if we do cut their budget.

Karen Kramford said Jane your point is well made because other organizations have also made the comment that they normally give, especially something this large, they normally give at least a year's warning to the organization, so I think your comment is well made.

Joe Hopp said he wanted to make a comment on the landscaping. Historically some of the Aurora Downtown budget was for maintenance and infrastructure. Even though we did make budget cuts, anything that we may cut I'm going to absorb in my downtown budget. We're not going to not have flowers. I'm always going to make sure that our Aurora downtown is beautiful. It is a shared expense. What most of the \$50,000 does go for is going to be all the trimming, grass cutting and sidewalk pots.

Dan Hites made a motion to accept the budget as is. Doug Cheatham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Kim Granholm said Bob and I will meet with Michael from Hesed House and let him know that we still support him, although not financially. Maybe we'll do the Hike for Hesed this year and some of the other events that they have throughout the year. We do have a really good working relationship with Hesed House. Their HEAT program, they come around and help us with the vacant window project and that sort of thing, so I hope that that will continue and we can try to support them in other ways.

b. Vision for 2016 – Jimi Allen

Kim Granholm said we hired Bureau Gravity with Benjie Hughes and he is kind of facilitating this whole vision. We are really trying to come together and focus and have a charter document to make our decisions off of. I just want to read something quickly from Benjie. He is going to write up a formal charter document, which is going to serve as our guideline for whatever is next for 2016, so that's what we will be basing our decisions off of. Benjie did phone interviews, he did an online survey and we also had a meeting with the Executive Committee on Tuesday. We learned about the history of downtown and we will be sharing that with you at the annual meeting.

Jimi Allen said I felt like the meeting was good. We came to some agreement. I think what we are trying to do is lead a consensus, not force consensus. The next write up will put it in black and white and we'll take that to the next stage of do we agree on these points. We went into a history of the SSA and understanding its function. It might lead to eventual focus training of new Board members so we can stay on point and understand how to be really effective.

Consultant Report – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said the ballots are out for the election. I have not received any ballots back yet. They are all due by 5:00 o'clock next Wednesday afternoon. At that time we are going to count the ballots and determine the winners. All of the Christmas decorations were put up over the weekend. We also have repairs to the star and the Christmas tree on top of Leland Towers. We've done nothing to the Christmas tree or the star in the last 5 years, so we have an expense that we are going to incur there, but I think it will be worth it and it will be good for another 5 years.

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

Bob Reuland said for Business Attraction and Retention at the last meeting we gave out our last \$10,000 to Karademas Management for the Blue Bird Note Café. They qualified for it. We've spent our entire budget this year. We intend to continue on with rent subsidies and with Business Attraction and Retention grants. We would like more participation.

Karen Kramford said for the Float Committee the procession for Winter Lights is coming along. We have characters. We are well within budget as well. We have elves, we have a polar bear, we have a snow princess, we have Olaf, we have the Grinch and we will be part of the procession. This is the last year for the Float Task Force to be independent. It is moving into the holiday group.

Melissa Mercado said for the Holiday Committee, the lights are up and I guess we need to have a conversation about electrical issues. A discussion then followed on the holiday lights.

Helen Nowak said the Legislative Committee had their first meeting with me as Chair yesterday and I think it went really well. It was more of a roundtable discussion more than anything. There is a momentum building in the downtown area and there are lot of us here who believe in the same vision, so we discussed a lot of those issues. In Aurora we have no business licensing. We wanted to talk to Mike Saville to see what we can do because the Police Department is having a hard time regulating some of the businesses as far as if they have people after hours. Lulu brought up identifying the issues that we need to address and how we bring them to our Alderman. We want to build a relationship with our Aldermen and have them come and talk to us so that we have more dialogue. We are meeting again in January.

Rory Bolen said the Marketing Committee is winding down for the season. We are prepping for next year regarding the marketing calendar and creating a list of projects and budget accordingly. December 11th is our First Friday quarterly meeting that we are having with the venues.

Kimber Howard said we had our kickoff meeting back in September with all the venues. We pretty much have most of the schedule put together for 2016 through most of the venues. The venues decided that they would love to meet every quarter to not only talk about the marketing initiatives, but also kind of enhancing the actual event itself. Again, the meeting is going to be at the Metropolitan Co-Working facility on December 11th and it starts at 10:00 o'clock.

Fred Harrison said the Parking Committee is taking a different direction. Bill, Bob and myself met on Monday to brainstorm on a new direction for us to take. The first thing we are going to

work on is collecting data for a parking survey. The second thing that we are going to work on is trying to establish some proposals for parking after the survey. The committee will be meeting every other month. I do think we have an agreement to where we may have the potential of attending the city parking meeting as well, so we do plan to tie into that.

City Department Updates

Bill Wiet said Fred is correct. I think probably a January meeting with our internal committee we'll invite Fred and Bob. Since the last meeting we have done several things. We did a week-long parking count of the downtown. We have the data. Our next step will be that we take a look at those special times. We'll do some parking counts during the next Broadway series and other events that bring large numbers of customers. We began enforcement of overnight parking on the island Sunday at midnight. We do have the ability for overnight permits. Overnight permits by themselves are just \$5.00. However, that is after the close of enforcement. If you wish to get a permit that allows you to park in a lot during the day and overnight it is \$5.00 tacked on the monthly pass. Say for a remote lot it is \$15.00. For \$20.00 you get to park there day and night. We have been looking at an employee discounted parking pass program for the majority of businesses on Downer because that seems to be one of the more stressful locations for parking between the River and Lake area to Broadway. We changed some parking hours at the new library to try to help the library patrons and also those that wish to park there all day. We also mapped out every block and where a logical 15 minute loading and unloading zone could be. The New York reconstruction project is open. The Mitchell Road Bridge is going to be open this weekend. We've had a delay in the mast arms and the poles for allowing us to do the actual New York and Galena two-way conversions until probably the next 2 to 3 weeks. There's been some interest in some downtown buildings, some that have been vacant for a number of years. We are proposing to move forward a vacant and abandoned building ordinance to Council soon so we can work with owners of vacant buildings to get them occupied in a faster manner. We are very close to having an overall city permit value of close to a half a billion dollars in 2015.

Gina Moga said just to recap, last Wednesday was Veterans Day and the parade and ceremony went really well. Winter Lights is tomorrow. I want to thank Aurora Downtown for their participation in the parade and Karen with the floats and the costumes because it is a very small parade and that really enhances it and helps us out a lot with making the event more festive. The parade kicks off at 6:30 from right behind the Fire Museum at Spring and LaSalle. We'll light the tree about 6:50 and then we are going to have the fireworks at about 7:20. We have 14 vendors as part of the pop-up shops. It is going to be a really great night. We are pretty well over 29,000 subscribers now to the Paramount and set to really hit that 30,000 mark this year, which will make us the second largest subscription based theater in the United States. The next season of Broadway shows have all been decided upon and next season is going to be absolutely amazing. There are 4 big acts confirmed for RiverEdge Park next summer already and they are working on getting some good things for the 20th anniversary of Blues on the Fox.

Announcements – Everyone

None.

Adjourn

Dan Hites made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jane Abe seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 a.m.