

**Summit Downtown, Inc.**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**October 26, 2022, 8:00AM**  
**In-Person/Zoom Meeting**

**Members Present:** Bob Conway, Kimberly Hamilton, Lauren Decker, Karen Schneider, Mayor Nora Radest (zoom), Antonietta LaVecchia (zoom), Tony Melchionna, Leslie Herman, Claire Toth, David Bernat, Councilwoman Lisa Allen (left at 8:25), Ray Merritt.  
Staff: Nancy Adams and Amanda Lynn (zoom)

**Members Absent:** Councilman Greg Vartan, Michael Rogers

**Guests:** Council President Marjorie Fox. Residents to speak at public comment on Maple St: Christine Bennett, Jim Bennett, Dorrie Gagnan, Bonnie Morrison, Sarah Curiale, Shawn Feeney, Alexandra Kilby (Silver Linings), Alison Chieffo, Dorothy Burger, Delia Hamlet, Lorie Combias, Brianne Tamaro, Davin Czukoski (Robot Revolution), Kathryn McKeever, Helen Diab, Nancy Tamaro, Elliot Fishman, Tom Walsh, Colleen, Betsy McCeney, Sarah Roberts.

Chair Bob Conway called the meeting to order at 8:05am.

**Approval of Minutes – Bob Conway**

September minutes were presented for approval. The approval of the minutes was moved by Karen and seconded by Ray and unanimously approved.

**Financials – Claire Toth**

Claire reported that we are on track with spending and have recently spent on murals and public art. Budget subcommittee meetings are beginning and hoping to have a budget for 2023 by January; the city has to approve it though and that typically doesn't happen till late spring. Approval of financials was moved by Karen and seconded by Ray, unanimously approved.

**Audit – Claire Toth, Jim Wood**

Claire introduced Jim Wood who has been working on the audit with local accountant Robyn Roberts and Nancy. Jim presented the audit and stated that SDI has a clean bill of financial health. Some highlights of the report include that SDI should consider moving some money out of the operating account at Regal Bank to Haven Bank so that all money is FDIC insured (currently about \$35,000 is over the FDIC insured limit of \$250k), SDI should hire a bookkeeper to review the books monthly to ensure internal controls are solid, gift card sales are an expense but used for promoting over 150 businesses in the city; there were no questions for the auditor. The Board accepted the audit as reported. Nancy will submit the audit to the State as required.

**Board Elections – Bob Conway**

Bob reported that we're coming into Board election season, there are four seats up for election this year. Claire's seat as nonretail is up and she's interested in running again, retail space seat held by David Bernat is up and he's interested in running for the seat to which he was appointed, 2 property owner seats are up, and Karen is interested in running for her seat and Kimberly's not planning to run again. So, if anyone knows someone who is interested in running, get in touch with Nancy at the office by end of day on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Beth Welsh has submitted her name for a property owner seat. Ballots will be sent to the printer for printing and mailing next week. Results will be shared at the December 6<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

**Orange Bollards and Barricades Downtown – Bob**

Bob reported that many of these have been taken down. Marjorie Fox reported that they are going to be doing more enforcement because the city has been getting many complaints about how ugly they all look and Tony added the best way to deal with the safety issues and illegal parking is to have enforcement, not lots of bollards.

**Bylaws – Ray**

Ray reported that there have been no additional comments or questions received from Board members after the last meeting about the Bylaws, so Claire moved that the new Bylaws be adopted, David seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**Event Updates – Nancy Adams**

Nancy reported that Fall Summit Street Sounds will end this Friday and was, again, well-received by businesses and downtown visitors alike. She reported that Sunday Funday Family Photo Booth was a big success with a regular stream of people coming to get photos taken; Graham and Marin made the Booth really nicely decorated with hay bales, pumpkins, and the backdrop we purchased to hang from the tent. The annual downtown Trick or Treating will be on Halloween, Monday, from 2:30 – 4pm. Holiday events are pretty much set up for Small Business Saturday and then Horse & Carriage rides every Saturday through December 17<sup>th</sup> including holiday carolers and some Street Sounds musicians playing a mix of their music and holiday music 1-4pm on Saturdays; Celebrate in Summit is Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> and will include all of those plus a ice carver at the promenade and Santa on the horse & carriage.

## **COMMITTEE/PROJECT REPORTS**

### **DCS/SDI Updates – Tony, Nancy**

Tony reported that the sewers are running okay still, the power washing downtown was completed last month, DPW will be doing leaf removal downtown on Mondays and Fridays. There's a new pizza box garbage receptacle at the promenade now instead of the ugly barrel that was previously there. The fountain looks great when it's on with the new artist installation. DPW will be removing the parklets downtown by November 2<sup>nd</sup>, along with opening Maple St. There are a couple retirements at DCS including the code enforcement officer. Claire asked if the alley between Summit Ave and Beechwood could be paved; Nancy said she asked Aaron if he could tag it onto an existing road project if there's extra money; Marjorie said she'd talk to him about possibly having DPW do it inhouse.

### **Design Committee Updates – Claire**

Two façade grants are recently given to Maison 53 and to Sweets to Crave.

**Summit Public Arts –** Leslie reported that the same artist who did the fountain installation at the promenade has done the 3 balls in the City Hall courtyard to stay there for another year. Signage for the fountain will be installed and is partly funded by a grant from Union County; the plaque will include Summit Downtown, Inc. as a prominent contributor to the fountain art installation.

**Common Council Updates –** Marjorie gave an update that Maple ST will reopen to cars and trucks on November 2nd. Parklets and the process and fees are currently being planned and the thought is that restaurants that have ample sidewalk space not be able to have a parklet. Rules still being drafted, and it will be shared with SDI when it's ready. Firehouse is slightly delayed but moving forward.

**New Business –** None.

**Public Input -** Before going into public comment, Bob made this statement:

For those who don't know, SDI is the organization that manages the downtown special improvement district. We are an elected, all volunteer board comprised of and representing the property owners, retail, and nonretail businesses; we also have one seat held by a Summit resident. Our mission is to support and manage the SID, we are self-funded with a special assessment on the businesses and property owners of the downtown. We also raise additional funds through events like the Farmers Market and grants when available. SDI receives no tax revenue from the residents of Summit, as we receive no money from the city's general fund.

I want to state the facts and hopefully clear up any untruths or misconceptions about the role of SDI regarding Maple St. SDI did not initiate the closure of Maple St. That decision was made by Council and any future decisions on Maple St will be made by Council NOT SDI. In January, the Board voted 12-1 to hire a consulting firm to study Maple St with no pre-conceived outcome, and everything on the table from never closing, seasonal closing, or permanent closing. We also hired an engineering firm to conduct a traffic study to evaluate the impact of closing the street has on traffic. The consultant and traffic study are being pad for by a grant from the State at no cost to SDI. The consultant's survey had responses from almost 1400 residents, 53 businesses and 5 property owners. Surveys were sent via email and were also available at the library and city hall. Additionally, 2 focus groups were held, one with property owners and one with business owners. The intent of the report is to provide Council with as much input and information before they make any decision regarding the future of Maple St. Each person's opinion who took the time to reply to the survey counts, whether they are here this morning or not.

The report will be presented to Council at an upcoming meeting before the end of the year. No one on this board as seen any raw data or any preliminary report. My recommendation is to the council meeting and listen to the presentation.

We will start the public comments with the stakeholders of SDI then any residents and try to allow as many of you to speak as possible. Each person will be allowed to speak for 3 minutes. If you go over your allotted time, you may deny another person the opportunity to speak. As many board members have businesses to get back to, the meeting will adjourn at 9:45. If you don't have the opportunity to speak today, you are welcome to come back to our December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting; we do not have a November meeting.

Alex Kilby: Closure of Maple St has become a concern for safety on Beechwood with extra cars and speeding. Ease of driving has taken people to other towns. Should follow what Millburn does, close it for the summer but when school is in session do weekends only.

Helen Diab: Barricades dissuade people from finding parking in the garage; google maps doesn't say it's closed and so when patients use their GPS, they are late for appointments. Not only are they late, but they want to get in and out quickly which is bad for downtown. Not opposed to tables & chairs, but just wants the closure seasonal.

Elliot Fishman: Speaking on behalf of parents who are trying to get to the middle school or the train; traffic gridlocks downtown during rush hours. The city is a grid and closing Maple St is the worse street to close because it creates gridlock. Loves permanently closed Church St in Montclair but doesn't think it will work in Summit. Has several degrees and doesn't trust traffic studies because they're not done correctly.

Jim Bennett: Expressed concerns about a permanent closure of Maple St, made sense during the pandemic but not anymore; hurts non-restaurant businesses. We don't know what's going to happen on Broad St, but we know something is going to happen there and closing Maple St will be bad for traffic.

Dorrie Gagnan: Wants a compromise and not negative and heated in disagreements. Some people hate it, some people love it. Thanks for taking away some of the orange cones, agrees with SDI Board that they are ugly, and something should be done more tastefully. Lost 16 parking spots and the parklets will take more spaces; Maple St closed causes havoc. Come up with solution that is better for everyone and there's too much stress downtown. Don't know who the consultant is, the surveys went out to so many people, the questions were awful, Maple St is always closed, and no one is sitting there, Danny O'Sullivan really didn't listen to some of the residents and businesses, where's the common ground.

Bonnie Morrison: Agree with what everyone else is saying. She is one of the residents that is going elsewhere to Berkley Heights or New Providence. The street isn't even being used this time of year.

Shawn Feeney: Thanks SDI for timeline of study and presentation, asks that when the date is decided we publicize it. Supportive of seasonal closure, not permanent.

Alison Chieffo: Resident of Summit, closure of Maple makes driving around awful. I ride my bike a lot, and I can't even ride my bike down Maple to the Farmers Market, it's ridiculous. Not enough bike racks in town. Is on historic preservation committee, doesn't understand why the flashing pedestrian lights are on such ugly poles instead of like the ones at Union Place and Maple.

Dorothy Burger: I am opposed to the permanent closure for a variety of reasons, many have already been said. Some nights on Thursday or Friday, you can't even walk on the sidewalk; some entertainers downtown were set up in the handicap parking spots and it's offensive and want something done about that. Rerouting is stressful and inconvenient. Like the closing on weekends and all summer.

Delia Hamlet: When was the last time a traffic study was done on Morris Ave. How many people have 3 or 4 children in different schools, impossible to go to all those schools. Parklet near Starbucks is a disaster, the cones, people double parking in front of Starbucks. Accidents waiting to happen on Beechwood. Needs to be taken seriously because she has 3 kids who have to go to sports after school; there are only 3 roads that go through town. Love it during the summer. Bollards come up out of the street in Red Bank, those are beautiful, let's raise money to do that here.

Lorie Combias: Lives on Maple St, trucks are parking illegally all over; the barricades look horrible and it's like a construction zone in front of her house. If Maple is only in the summer, there needs to be something done in the area where the barricades are between closure and Union Place because it's very unsafe. Why not compromise, can we just widen the sidewalks on both sides of Maple St keeping the street open so restaurants can use the sidewalks. Take the parking spots and add that space to each side of the street's sidewalks. Restaurants need to have nice tables, tablecloths and no plastic tables and plastic flowers.

Brianne Tammaro: Owns No. 18 Boutique with her mother, Nancy. It's killed their business to have the street closed, agrees with the safety issues. People have moved here during the pandemic, didn't even know her store was there because they couldn't drive by, they walked into her store and asked how long she's been there, and she says 6 years and they didn't know she says because they can't drive by. Looks really ugly too and should be done seasonally.

Katherine McKeever: 500% opposed to the closure, doesn't want it ever. Eating outside, has seen mice and rats and it's not getting cleaned. Didn't choose to live in an urban area, this is not a small town in Europe, we drive big cars and SUVs and from her side of town not being able to get across downtown to CVS is impossible. She says she doesn't get her coffee downtown anymore; she doesn't go to your businesses anymore.

Nancy Tammaro: Co-owns No. 18 Boutique; closure has impacted their business. Safety issue because mothers are harried and getting upset in their cars to get through. Happy the restaurants were able to use the street during the pandemic, but it's over and need to keep it open. The town is a mess with all the orange and barriers and lights everywhere, it's not the Summit that she moved here for. Still loves the town but not in favor of closing Maple.

Tom Walsh: Bringing the perspective of a pedestrian, walks to school every day. They transition across Maple St every day for three years. Using pedestrian rationalization for closing is folly. Don't use pedestrians as an excuse as to why you close the street.

Betsy McCeney: Resident, important to travel routes during peak traffic times. Traffic is awful and it's impossible to get across town; Summit Ave is backed up over the train tracks. Traffic is getting pushed into residential neighborhoods that didn't use to get such traffic and it's a result of the closure. Closed summer months or evenings is better.

Sarah Roberts: Agrees with everyone's comments on cones, barricades. She lives on Maple St, and they are cut off from the entire town because of the barricades. Please leave the town the way it is.

Bob thanked everyone for their comments but wanted to reiterate that the decision is the city's and not this Board's but appreciate your comments. The consultant wasn't tasked with any specific goals like to close Maple St. permanently and everyone should go to the council meeting where the presentation will be given.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26am.

**The next BOT meeting is at 8AM December 7th, at City Hall.**