

Summit Downtown, Inc.
Board of Trustees Meeting
June 28, 2023, 8:00AM
In-Person/Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Karen Schneider, Bob Conway, Beth Welsh, Antonietta LaVecchia, Greg Vartan, Claire Toth, Leslie Herman, Ray Merritt. Staff: Nancy Adams and Amanda Lynn

Members Absent: Michael Rogers, Lisa Allen, Tony Melchionna, Ray Merritt, David Bernat, Mayor Nora Radest.

Members of the Public: Diego Hoic

Chair Bob Conway called the meeting to order at 8:10am.

Approval of Minutes – Bob Conway

May minutes were presented for approval. Beth Welsh noted that she is not listed in the DCS/SDI section and she was in attendance. Nancy said she would correct the May minutes accordingly. The approval of the amended minutes was moved by Karen and seconded by Greg and unanimously approved.

Bob asked the member of the public to introduce himself. Diego Hoic stated he wanted to come see the Board meeting because he's running for Council as a Democrat and really admires the work of the organization and thanked the Board for all they do for Summit.

Bob noted that Lauren Decker resigned from the Board at the last meeting and recommended her colleague Kathy Cowan at the Co-Co to finish her term which ends December 31, 2023. Claire motioned, Antonietta seconded, all approved.

Bob noted that Nancy applied for a Main Street New Jersey (MSNJ) grant that had a limit of \$27,000 but she was able to get a grant for \$40,000. The grant will cover the Placer.ai for one year, the 2022 audit and part of the pay for the part-time Marketing Admin. The Board applauded the grant. Beth asked how we can access the data and wants to have this as a monthly report for the Board to look at the data at every meeting so that a year from now, we know what the information can do for us and our businesses. Greg noted that the data is one thing, but we want to understand how the information is being used by SDI and by the business and property owners. Amanda said we'd use them to analyze events, when they were held, where they were advertised, etc. Antonietta asked if this will be pushed out to all businesses, like could the businesses know how many people are in town on Sundays for example so they can consider opening on Sundays if they're not. Nancy & Amanda will get some training on how to use it and will play with it to see how to use it and report back. We think we could have an additional sign-in as staff to give the board email and sign-in.

COMMITTEE/PROJECT REPORTS

Financials – Claire

Claire reported that as of the end of May, our budget has been approved and we received the first two quarters of assessment so that will show up in June. We're ahead of expenses and the grant will enable us to beef up our reserves so we can do some more significant projects as the Board decides. This is an opportunity for SDI to think big, something for us to noodle on and take the opportunity of having funds to do something needed or to improve downtown. Bob asked for a motion to approve the financials, Antonietta moved it and Karen seconded, all approved.

Event Updates – Amanda

Amanda reported that we held Family Fun Night a week late due to smoke from the Canadian wildfires. It was very successful, it was a bit of a challenge to reschedule it. We were able to reschedule almost all of the acts because it was a Thursday, had it been a Saturday or a Sunday we wouldn't have been able to move the event successfully because we would have lost several of the acts and likely wouldn't have found replacements on such short notice. Two businesses and one entertainer couldn't be there, but it was a fulsome event even though it was a week postponed. Karen offered kudos to Amanda and Nancy for a great event. Antonietta noted that downtown was hopping and all the restaurants were packed. The week later also made it coincide with additional Street Sounds musicians and so town was hot. It was an amazing night for everyone, whether you were part of the event or just in town, which is an important fact that people often forget about events is what happens surrounding an event not just what happened at the event

specifically. Next year will be on June 6th, school will be out, Summit schools close early next year, so this will fall the day after schools close.

Amanda noted that Street Sounds is in full effect right now, the weather looks good, but we've had some cancellations this year due to storms. But overall it's going great.

Restaurant Week will take place July 20 – July 30th and this year it will be a virtual event instead of the set menu in restaurants event. Amanda and Robyn are working with the restaurants to get content and promote the restaurants then. Claire noted that Design Week was also virtual this year and wanted to know how that went according to the design businesses and offered kudos to Robyn for reactivating the Summit Design District social media. Amanda said they didn't get a lot of direct feedback, but on social we had a lot of interaction and a lot of new followers. Nancy noted that they met with a couple of restaurant owners for ideas for how to make Restaurant Week new and different, but they didn't have any ideas really and weren't really interested in doing prix fixe menus so we decided to go with more promotion that week. Beth asked if we've considered doing a sidewalk sale in downtown; Nancy and Amanda noted that in our experience elsewhere that the sidewalk sales were not as robust as they once were because stores don't have the backstock like years ago. The office will brainstorm about it to see if it's something we may want to consider.

DCS/SDI Updates – Nancy

Nancy reported that she, Tony, Mike Caputo, Aaron Schrager, Beth Welsh and Ray Merritt met via email updates because Aaron was away on vacation. Castlepoint worked on some 98 tree wells, wherever there's mulch there has been new plantings; those have all been done. Mike Caputo emailed that all trash cans downtown were power washed and the sidewalks underneath were cleaned, the crosswalk striping is beginning all over downtown, all sewer lines are being jetted and they're finding a lot of grease in the lines. Watering of plants began Tuesday and they will continue as needed in the early morning hours, milling and paving has begun on Morris Ave.

Aaron Schrager also filed a report via email:

SEWER - flowing downhill and no issues as of today. Knocking on wood.

GARBAGE - DPW did a trial night time collection of garbage throughout the CRBD. This was in response to the abundance of property owners that place trash out before 7pm leaving it subject to raids by rodents and wind damage. We are still analyzing the results but should we opt to proceed this would either require A.. Altering a shift of an employee to night time. B. employing a part time employee for this shift or C. doing this as overtime. All would have staffing and potential financial implications, but worth DCS continuing to analyze this.

SOLID WASTE ORDINANCE - tentative introduction at Council would be September. Though this details solid waste collection for the entire City, the portion regarding CRBD will require public outreach, education and a solution to trash being put out early.

SIDEWALKS - we did an assessment of all sidewalks in the CRBD. Seems to have some locations of raised, cracked, or shifted sidewalks that need some work to ensure they meet current codes. We had a cost prepared to repair and complete all this work and it was in the 20k to 30k. Some of these could be assessed back to property owners, but CAPS is open to the idea of completing the work collective and at once by the City. Is there any thoughts on that and or possibility of shared cost between SDI and the City.

UTILITY WORK - ongoing and no pavement schedule has been set.

CAPITAL PROJECTS - Summit Avenue was paved. A preliminary plan for the signal replacements at Maple/Springfield and Beechwood/Springfield has been reviewed by DCS and comments sent back to the designer. This project will likely take place in first quarter of 2024. No update on the buke shelter as the red tape we are working through in securing the permits from NJT and DCA is ever increasing.

PROPERTY INSPECTORS (Formerly Leon) Not sure if this was mentioned at last meeting, but John Redstone has filled the long vacant position and is doing an amazing job, and is 6 foot 10 and hard to miss. Continue to report any issues through the City's website or seeclickfix and he will promptly be on it. He was just educated on the sidewalk and outdoor dining processes so that will be in his rounds shortly. As you know, that position was vacant for 6 months.

PLANTS - DPW will continue to water any plantings. The Forester has identified some trees in need of removal sooner than later, but felt fall would be fine. For now, lets assume we can discuss the specifics at greater length when we meet in person since he has a memo prepared detailing locations and replacements trees, etc.

Design & Beautification – Cam Jam Kids has been approved for a façade grant; the Toy Division has also applied for an awning they already installed but also for upcoming window lettering and signage.

Summit Public Arts – Leslie explained that the outdoor installations are done and she's going to work on signage for the installations. Gala is the 22nd of September; Amanda said they'd promote it in the newsletter too.

Common Council Updates – Greg

Greg reported that we're under a thunderstorm warning. The city has applied for a grant that affects timing for traffic signals and for safe streets to school, with hope to improve sidewalks and walkability on Broad St and elsewhere. Updated peddler's licenses moving the administration of that from PD to Clerk's office with an administrative fee of \$27. This impacts nonprofits on public sidewalks, not inside businesses. The city has had complaints about the presence and aggressiveness of peddlers on Union Place, they're nice, but also aggressive. Peddlers must display their permit and renew after 30 days. Will have update on Broad St West at the next council meeting. On the city's radar is addressing 5G in the downtown. The utility companies can come in and put poles up with equipment on them, so the city is trying to figure out how to deal with it given that there are not utility poles downtown (above ground) and that's typically where the equipment gets installed. Beth asked about having them on the roofs of downtown buildings rather than have another pole. Bob asked about the homeless using vestibules to sleep and Karen concurred she has the same issue. Greg answered that we have to get these people connected to housing. The city is working with several groups, Bridges is going to have a social worker dedicated to Summit, the city is now part of the Union County Continuing Care group to work with other towns in Union County. They have made progress, but it's difficult, but the city is working on it. NJ Transit has started enforcing their rule that only ticketed passengers can be in the station, so that's pushing houseless folks into the streets. But, if property owners or businesses have someone blocking their door or hanging out in their vestibule, the advice is to call the police and not deal with it themselves.

New Business

Beth asked that Nancy provide the Board with updates on the Summit VISA Gift Card program; it would be a useful thing for the businesses to know.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58am.

The next BOT meeting is at 8AM July 26, at City Hall.