



Summit Downtown, Inc.

18 Bank Street, Suite 14

P.O. Box 1502

Summit, NJ 07902-1502

908-277-6100 or 6101

F. 908-273-9256

www.summitdowntown.org

To: Summit Downtown, Inc. Board of Trustees

From: Kevin Smallwood

Date: April 4, 2013

Re: Summit Downtown, Inc. Board of Trustees
March 27, 2013

Members Present: Dave Bomgaars, Bob Conway, Chris Cotter, Lori Dahl, Ellen Dickson, Gregory Drummond, Detlef Felschow, Don Geddis, Toni George, Rich Lorensen, Doris Schneider, Kevin Smallwood, Susan Taylor, Mark Wadmond, Robert Weakley, Beth Welsh, Marin Mixon (staff) and Susan Petrow (staff).

Guests: Sandra Lizza, Republican Candidate, 2nd Ward Common Council
Michael McTernan, Republican Candidate, 1st Ward Common Council
Steve Pardee, Resident
Joe Steiner, Suburban Chambers of Commerce
Susan Stewart, Silver Lining

Kevin Smallwood opened the meeting at 8:05 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Lori Dahl and seconded by Mark Wadmond to approve the February 2013 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Report – Kevin Smallwood

Kevin Smallwood reported on the two recently held Mini Town Hall Meetings with the downtown businesses. The meetings were well attended by the merchants and provided an excellent opportunity for SDI to re-introduce ourselves, obtain suggestions, event ideas and feedback on parking. Two more meetings are

scheduled: April 2, 8:30 a.m. at the Elks Lodge and April 4, 8:30 a.m. at Overlook Downtown. Susan Petrow will provide a written recap of the meetings at the next Board meeting.

Rich Lorensen commented that the meetings were very positive, bringing the community together to discuss events for the entire town and recommended holding the Mini Town Hall Meetings 2 to 3 times a year.

Marin Mixon stated that the Farmers Market Committee, consisting of Bob Conway, Mark Wadmond and Marin, has been getting approached by New Jersey vineyards to sell New Jersey wines at the Farmers Market. The vineyards are considered farms and have been selling New Jersey wines at other Farmers Markets in the state. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that there are too many roadblocks to consider and that SDI would not pursue bringing a vineyard to the Farmers Market.

City Administrator's Report – *Chris Cotter*

Chris Cotter complimented Kevin Smallwood on initiating the Mini Town Hall Meetings and updated the Board on initiatives before the Planning Board. City Council will propose expanding the Post Office lot redevelopment effort to include the Housing Authority parking lot attached to the Senior Citizens Housing.

The Planning Board has approved City Council's economic development project for the downtown that includes wayfinding, signage and possibly expanding the Special Improvement District. This project will be conducted by Burgis Associates.

Approval is needed from NJ Transit before proceeding with the Franklin Place project at the location of the former Infiniti Dealer. Once approval is received, the demolition work will begin and the work will be done on Sundays.

NJ Transit, the DOT and Union County have been in a debate regarding the ownership of the Morris Avenue Bridge which has delayed the beginning of work on the bridge. It is hoped that work will begin this fall.

Beth Kinney will be present at the next Trustee meeting to report on the Post Office Property and Downtown studies.

DeForest Lots – *Bob Weakley*

Bob Weakley reported that after attending one of the Mini Town Hall Meetings and meeting yesterday with the SDI Parking Committee, it is clear that the issue of the technology at the parking lots is attracting lots of discussion and a long term strategic plan needs to be developed. Any decisions that are made should be data driven and based on financial and vacancy rates. Chris Cotter agreed to get this data for the next Board meeting.

Based on demographics and the price issue, it appears people have voted with their feet and both customers and merchants do not like the new system. There has been a very strong response from merchants stating that their regular customers are not shopping in the downtown and the merchants have made an impassioned plea for a change to be made.

Marin Mixon stated that the office has received about a dozen calls from residents complaining:

- the technology is not user friendly
- ambassadors are not always available when shoppers need them
- drivers could not reach the machine and have had to put their car in park to submit their tickets to the machine
- the kiosk is small and if one person has difficulty with the equipment it backs everyone up plus there is no place to put packages while completing your transaction
- the pricing for parking for a small period of time is too high

There is also a plastic sleeve attached to the machine filled with tickets and a sign indicating that there is a \$20 fee for lost tickets, but an ambassador couldn't be found to answer questions about the sleeve and lost tickets.

Susan Stewart from Silver Lining echoed the fact that customers have complained about the fee schedule and technology and said that extending the complimentary parking time would be a huge improvement.

There was some discussion about disbanding the Free Summit Holiday Dollar Campaign and offering free parking instead but with 300 parking spaces in the downtown, the funds diverted from the Summit Holiday Dollars would run out quickly.

Kevin noted that he visited Apricot Lane Boutique to introduce himself and learned that the merchant had purchased the parking validation tickets to give to their customers but the tickets hadn't worked so they stopped using them. They still have the 25 tickets that they purchased.

The parking validation tickets have not been received favorably by the merchants. The concerns of the merchants regarding the validation tickets are that the merchant would need to maintain an inventory of the tickets to distribute, the price point of the tickets is too high and they would prefer to offer a merchandise discount instead of discounting the customer's parking.

Greg Drummond was asked how many validation tickets have been purchased by merchants and Greg said that he would find out for the next Board Meeting. Rita McNany, Parking Services Manager, will be at the next Board and Greg advised that changes to the parking regulations require a full council vote. He

would like to bundle all requests for adjustments (Seniors' Day, Girls' Night Out, Holidays, etc.) to the regulations and present them at one time to the Common Council. He expects that June would be the earliest that a resolution could be introduced and passed and confirmed that SDI would have the opportunity to learn what is being presented to council and have a chance to respond.

Chris Cotter commented that the City has been successful in pushing long term users out of the shopper lots and into the employee lots as well as eliminating the issuance of tickets. He advised that the Summit Parking Advisory Committee (SPAC) will be meeting next week.

Various comments were made that included:

- June is too late to make changes to the parking rates
- it is not just seniors that are complaining to the merchants
- merchants should be putting a positive spin on the fact that there is now parking available in Summit
- the price point of parking rates needs to be addressed immediately
- responsibility for advertising parking information and rates needs to be determined
- we should think about the SDI recommendation to 90 minutes of complimentary parking and defer voting until the next Board Meeting.

Beth Welsh made a motion seconded by Bob Weakley that the draft of SDI Parking Recommendations from our Parking Committee be presented to City Council for their consideration. A vote was taken and the motion passed. The 9 in favor were Bob Conway, Detlef Felschow, Don Geddis, Rich Lorensen, Doris Schneider, Kevin Smallwood, Susan Taylor, Robert Weakley, and Beth Welsh. The 6 opposing votes were Dave Bomgaars, Lori Dahl, Ellen Dickson, Greg Drummond, Toni George and Mark Wadmond.

Finance Report – *Dee Felschow*

Dee Felschow presented the February 2013 budget and made a motion to accept the report. Kevin Smallwood seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Events – *Mark Wadmond*

The All-American Fish Fry is scheduled for Saturday, May 18 with a rain date of Sunday, May 19.

The Mini Town Hall Meetings have been well attended and some of the event ideas offered by the merchants at the meetings are: include Sidewalk Sales all summer on Saturdays during July and August; schedule more activities on Bank Street; schedule more activities on the outskirts of town; create an employee

sales day event in October or November; create more events on Thursday nights with music.

Greg Drummond introduced the idea for a new event called Cars and Croissants and recommended Summit host this event on Father's Day, June 16 in the Bouras parking lot. Cars and Croissants is of a group of car enthusiasts who meet every couple of weeks at local venues for one to two hours on designated weekends. There are over 700 people on their mailing list and everyone is welcome at the event. Greg made a motion that SDI add Cars and Croissants as a new event. Dave Bomgaars seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously.

Bob Conway advised that the Farmers Market Committee is planning a celebration for the 20th Anniversary of the market and would like to hand out free T-shirts to visitors, farmers and purveyors. The T-shirts would cost approximately \$6 each and the committee would like to take \$7,500 from surplus to purchase the T-shirts.

There was some discussion about whether the \$7,500 could be better used to subsidize improved signage for the parking lots and it was also noted that, on the other hand, the Farmers Market generates a lot of income for SDI and because the market is so well recognized, SDI is spending less on marketing.

Bob Conway made a motion which was seconded by Mark Wadmond to approve taking \$7,500 from surplus to fund the T-shirts for the Farmers Market Anniversary. The motion was passed with a vote of 12 yes and 3 no.

Mark Yeager was unable to attend today's Board Meeting but wanted to let the Trustees know that the Vision Committee will be meeting in the next few weeks.

Office Report – *Marin Mixon*

Marin Mixon announced that The Meat House will be opening on April 6. La Bottega is under construction. A two story spa will be opening at 410 Springfield Avenue, a furniture store has passed inspection and will be opening at 376 Springfield Avenue next to Bella Ro and the muddy boot will be reopening soon.

Discover Summit Arts is a week-long celebration of Summit as an arts destination. It was spearheaded by Lyle Brehm and Janet Whitman and SDI's Festival of Fine Arts and Crafts on June 23 will serve as the kick-off for the week of celebrations. Culinary Arts Day is scheduled for Monday, June 24, and will feature free Sidewalk Samplings from downtown restaurants in front of their business from 2 – 4 p.m. and celebrity chefs at Twin Maples at noon and then at Mondo Summit at 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

A Breakfast Meeting was held at food on March 22 with the Greenmarket farmers/purveyors. Thank you to Jerry Rotunno and his staff for hosting the

event. Most of the farmers are new to Summit and SDI will develop a tri-fold handout with information about the market and its vendors to distribute mid-May. A new banner will be created featuring both the Farmers Market and Greenmarket and ads will be placed advertising the two markets. SDI will also look into having music on Thursdays during the Greenmarket and will coordinate with the City which hosts Movies on the Green on Thursdays during the summer.

Plans for Girls' Night Out on May 2 are moving along and Tracy Beckerman, humorist and columnist with the Independent Press will be our special guest at the Welcome Table.

Moya Solutions has met with Marin Mixon and Susan Petrow to suggest options for scanning SDI's financials and will develop the cost to have this done by an outside company and the cost of a scanner for the office. The office will look into online banking to streamline paperwork and record retention.

Adam Roberts, a college intern, has been in the office helping with maintenance projects while he is home on spring break.

Common Council – *Greg Drummond*

Wool & Grace, the new knitting store, will be coming to the City Council meeting on April 2. Mayor Ellen Dickson stated that it is a great opportunity for new businesses to introduce themselves to the community and that the Council meetings are televised and shown 3 times during the week.

Emi Havas is working on Meet the Merchants with Hometowne TV and this is another chance for new businesses to introduce themselves to Summit.

Dave Bomgaars announced that there is no increase to the Special Improvement Tax and that the City budget will include a 0.32% tax increase and the school tax increase is 0.8%. The City is waiting for the tax assessment from Union County.

Suburban Chambers – *Joe Steiner and Beth Welsh*

Joe Steiner advised that the Chamber will be printing Living In and that he is finishing ad sales this week. There will be an online version and a paper version which will be delivered to all homes in the area.

The First Friday meeting will be held at the Grand Summit Hotel and will feature a consultant who will discuss how to grow your sales.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The Next Board of Trustees Meeting is April 24, 2013