

Hoboken Business Alliance, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Video Conference – January 10, 2023 4:30pm

Present: James Runkle, Edyta Espasa, Pratik Patel, Hany Ahmed, Dave Jacey, Mario Fini, Chris Mazzola, Catherine Willhoit, Anthony Pino, Councilman Phil Cohen, Director Jennifer Gonazlez

Absent: Jenny Davis

Also Present: Roxanne Earley and Larissa Szilagyi

Call to order - 4:37 pm

R. Earley welcomed everyone and asked **L. Szilagyi** to read the Open Public Meetings Act statement. **L. Szilagyi** read the statement of compliance with Chapter 231 of the Open Public Meetings Act noting that adequate meeting notice was provided.

The minutes from the November 1st 2022 meeting were reviewed. **Motion to approve the November 1st minutes: P. Cohen. Second by P. Pratik. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

In addition to the minutes from November 1st, the minutes from January 18th 2022 were reviewed due to audit preparation. **Motion to approve the January 18th 2022 minutes: P. Cohen. Second by E. Espasa. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

Treasurers Report

P. Pratik provided the financial report and reported that the Statement of Financial Position shows Current Bank Assets on 11/30 of \$860,123.42, which accounts for uncleared transactions of \$121,988.40. The Reconciliation Report shows a November Bank Statement ending balance of \$982,111.82, which corresponds to the uncleared transactions in the Statement of Financial Position. Finally, the Activity Statement shows revenue to date of \$740,881.59 and expenditures of \$683,402.03. Also, the HBA received our second assessment payment from the City on December 12th in the amount of \$666,264.91.

Executive Director's Report

R. Earley shared a presentation updating the board on November and December events including the *Mission 50 Business Event, Passport Program, Tree Lighting, 12 Days of Hoboken Giveaway, Holiday Extravaganza, and Santa Float*. **R. Earley** also shared the success of the launch of *Tom Fruin's Home in Hoboken installation*. **R. Earley** noted HBA's advocacy efforts included securing holiday discounts for downtown parking and working with the city to address no-parking regulation issues to improve customer access to businesses on 1st street on December 18th.

R. Earley further previewed January and February programming including the upcoming FY24 Budget Process, Vendor Renewals, restart of Committee Meetings, upcoming Board of Director trainings, and the review of bylaws.

R. Earley also mentioned the Bistro Lighting Pilot. During this discussion, **M. Fini** inquired about the logistics of the lighting. **J. Gonzalez** discussed the pilot would run from 10th to 11th on Washington Street and will require demonstrating the projects weather safety and resiliency to PSE&G. **R. Earley** noted she will circulate the specifics about this pilot to the board.

Lastly, **R. Earley** noted the continuation of the CitiBin Pilot Program. **M. Fini** inquired about the success of the pilot, especially in relation to rodents. **R. Earley** noted there were several issues to address including disposal of trash that did not belong to businesses, new locations for the installation of bins, and trucks backing into bins. **R. Earley** noted that the new addition of dividers within the bins has helped with bins with shared businesses. **P. Cohen** noted he received good feedback from businesses at Washington and 12th Street. **C. Willhoit** mentioned HBA should speak with Saku about their rodent issue in correlation with the CitiBin program and **M. Fini** mentioned he could touch base with Saku as well. **M. Fini** asked if CitiBins had a locking mechanism, which **R. Earley** said there was no locking mechanism currently installed but there has also been no proven issue without locks. If the bins will be locked in the future, **M. Fini** recommended the Fire Department be granted key access in the event of a fire in the bins. **J. Gonzalez** will be meeting with sanitation about their feedback.

Program Updates

Business Services

Facade Emergency Assistance

Mile Square Framing:

R. Earley discussed emergency façade funding for Mile Square Framing, located at 326 Washington Street, which was damaged after disorderly conduct outside its storefront. After discussing it with the owner, it was determined the financial impact on the store was the replacement of the storefront are \$7909.56, with an estimated \$22,500 in business interruption expenses, and an additional \$27,900 in damaged property (artwork). **J. Runkle** expressed his support with assisting businesses with façade improvements as it helps the city with upkeep. **P. Pratik** suggested if we propose to pay 50% of expenses for businesses that there should be a financial cap. **A. Pino** and **M. Fini** inquired about insurance. **M. Fini** asked if we would get reimbursed if insurance covered the cost and **A. Pino** asked if the business applied through their insurance. **R. Earley** noted the business' insurance could not cover the entire damage and she was consulting with a SID lawyer about specifications for future funding. **H. Ahmed** noted concerns about opening the HBA up to potential hardship funding precedents, like paying rent and suggested creating a hardship fund. **R. Earley** noted, under SID law, we are allowed to assist with storefront improvements, and that this would be different from assessment, and would not extend to things like rent or other hardship. Lastly, **P. Pratik** suggested a cap of \$5,000 that can be modified in the future.

Motion to cover 50% of expenses related to façade replacement at 326 Washington Street and explore a façade improvement program as well as a financial assistance cap of \$5000. Motion: C. Willhoit. Second by: P. Pratik – 9 approved and 2 abstained.

R. Earley opened discussion about staff reviewing option about what HBA’s role is in emergency response, especially due to the Brooke & Bell fire. **P. Cohen** co-chaired a Hoboken Relief Fund in 2020. P. Cohen believes there is remaining money in the Hoboken Relief Fund and believe it would be beneficial to roll this fund into the HBA. **J. Runkle** believes this would be a great collaboration as the Hoboken Relief Fund has experience in review process for funding while HBA has the staff to connect businesses and manage the fund.

Events & Promotions:

Park Concert Series:

L. Szilagyi informed the board that there were two proposal for a concert series: a three part Jazz Series in Shipyard Park and a three part Latin + Jazz in Sinatra Park. **H. Ahmed** suggested the vendor and related costs should be offset by the City of Hoboken’s partnership to the HBA is not responsible for the entire budget. **J. Gonzalez** provided additional information on the ability for the City to partner with HBA. **H. Ahmed** and **M. Fini** believed there should be support to complete this concert series, including corporate sponsors. **L. Szilagyi** provided further information about food trucks and alcohol. **D. Jacey** asked about the option to find additional sponsors for events so residents are not burdened with paying for other expenses like public safety via tax. **R. Earley** proposed we choose the Jazz & Latin festival, which would incorporate not only music, but also fun programming like dance lessons.

Motion to accept the proposal from RiverviewJazzFest for a three-concert series of Latin and Jazz in Sinatra Park: M. Fini. Second by: A. Pino – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

St. Patrick’s Day & Irish Heritage

R. Earley provided an update on next steps for future Irish Heritage and Saint Patrick’s Day events. Through the Nixel platform, a survey was released and showed overwhelming support for a Parade. **R. Earley** recommended the board pursue a test event with Cliffhanger productions that could lead to a larger production in 2024. Originally, **R. Earley** proposed a \$50,000 budget for this event, including the \$10,000 deposit already paid to Cliffhanger Productions. **R. Earley** noted the \$10,000 deposit has already been used for prep work done by Cliffhanger Productions, which includes talent. **C. Wilhoit** was in support of this event only if it was family friendly and believed a scavenger event with gift cards from Hoboken businesses would be a great program for this event. **J. Runkle** believes the float should begin and end in a central location. **P. Cohen** believes the end location could be in collaboration with the Elks Club. **D. Jacey** believes, due to many hurdles to a full parade, this proposal would be a great first step. **D. Jacey** also believed previous bands would come back during the first week of March, despite the parade not taking place for years. **D. Jacey** believes other NJ cities have their parade dates set and we should use our original date from several years ago. Lastly, **D. Jacey** believes the original budget should be lowered to \$30,000, including the \$10,000 deposit.

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Motion to approve not-to-exceed a budget of \$30,000 to produce Irish Heritage programming in March 2023: P. Cohen Second by: D. Jacey. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

R. Earley proposed that the HBA should create a committee with key stakeholders facilitated by a third party in order to revive the parade tradition in 2024.

Motion to approve the formation of a Parade Planning Committee to include representative of the community and provide recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding the 2024 Parade: P. Cohen Second: C. Wilhoit. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

Administrative

2023 Contracts review and approval

Lenox Consulting

R. Earley discussed Steve Lenox's contract which provides coverage for HBA initiatives and events, assistance in shaping HBA's response to media questions, support in developing community outreach brand awareness efforts, provides government affairs, preparing policy positions for issues that HBA may be asked for comment, such as cannabis dispensaries, development projects, and quality of life issues. The fee for these services would be \$2500 per month. **J. Runkle** inquired if this contract is a month-to-month service as the HBA is in the process of hiring a Director of Marketing and Communications. **R. Earley** confirmed this contract is month to month and will be re-evaluated once we onboard a Director of Marketing and Communications.

Motion to accept the proposal for Lenox Consulting: J. Runkle Second: A. Pino. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

David Gergis/ Everyday Accounting

R. Earley discussed David Gergis, our accountant from Everyday Accounting and his importance in 2022 through his assistance in financial procedures, like inputting invoices, deposits, and other transactions into Quickbooks. **R. Earley** mentioned that David Gergis also provides assistance with bank reconciliation, preparing 1099s, and auditing preparation. David Gergis' fee is \$512 per month. There was no discussion among the Board of Directors.

Motion to accept the proposal from Gergis Accounting for accounting services in 2023: E. Esposa Second: H. Ahmed. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

COI

L. Szilagyi discussed that each year the Board of Directors are required to sign a Conflict Interest form that ensures all directors, officers, employees, and volunteers of HBA identify situations that present potential conflicts so HBA can proceed to appropriately manage conflicts in accordance with legal requirements as well as ensure accountability and transparency. **L. Szilagyi** asked the Board of Directors to review and sign the COI policy by Friday, January 20th at noon.

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Check Signatures on < \$5,000 or less transactions

L. Szilagyi discussed authorized check signature procedures for transactions under \$5,000. **L. Szilagyi** discussed the current policy that requires every check to be signed by two of the three individuals: the President, the Treasurer, and the Executive Director. **L. Szilagyi** noted that the Board of Directors approved an increased spending limit to \$5,000. **Therefore, L. Szilagyi** proposed, to make timely payments to vendors, checks \$5,000 or less should only require one signature. There was no further discussion from the Board of Directors.

Motion to accept a proposal to require a single signature on checks under \$5,000: E. Esposa. Second: J. Runkle. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

Resignation of Mark Stehli

R. Earley noted that Mark Stehli is no longer working with Iron State and expressed interest in remaining on the board and request for the Barry family to consider designating him as their representative at large. **R. Earley** noted the bylaws to not mention this topic of designation of representatives. **R. Earley** will be speaking with legal counsel regarding this issue as well as further SID topics. Since the current bylaws do not note designating representatives, **R. Earley** recommends accepting Director Mark Stehli's resignation and, if counsel permits, later allowing a designated representative.

Motion to accept the resignation of Director Mark Stehli: E. Esposa. Second: J. Runkle. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

FY24 Budget Planning

R. Earley discussed the FY24 Budget Planning process has commenced. **R. Earley** notes the City requested HBA prepare a submission to City Council in April, which requires the Board of Directors to approve a budget in our next meeting on March 7th. **R. Earley** discussed that staff are currently reviewing current programs, scheduling meetings with vendors, preparing RFPs for FY24 projects, and reviewing that our assessment is accurate to ensure we are providing services in an equitable manner. **R. Earley** also noted staff will be meeting with members of the administration to identify partnerships and reaching out to each member of the City Council. **R. Earley** will be scheduling meetings with each committee to find out their priorities for different aspects of the budget. Lastly, **R. Earley** discussed the timeline of the budget process: the draft and approval of a budget will be in March, staff will appear before the City Council in April and May for readings and hearings. **R. Earley** requested board members to be available during these hearings for testimony and support. **R. Earley** also asked to better understand the Board of Directors' priorities and goals to pursue in the draft.

Old Business

No old business was noted.

New Business

Updates from Government Partners:

P. Cohen updated the Board of Directors on the last City Council meeting. During this meeting, **P. Cohen** was unanimously voted to be their representative for the HBA Board of Directors. **P. Cohen** believes this vote reflected the City Council's views that HBA has been great work. **P. Cohen** discussed that the City Council would like HBA to continue to focus on art. **J. Gonzalez**

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asked on behalf of the City to focus on the following areas: 1. partnership with permanent public art and temporary public art, especially with local artists, 2. Public Art Master Plan, which had money allocated by EXCA , and 3. Our support to share the RFPs for the Café Concession operations in the spring and the Winter Season operations, including the Ice Ring.

Public Session

R. Markle discussed her frustrations with the HBA's work. **R. Markle** believes the HBA should focus more on connecting with businesses on ensuring they are thriving, rather than on public art. **R. Markle** believes many of the programs created by the HBA takes away events that were already managed by City entities, like cultural affairs and sanitation. **R. Markle** was frustrated that she was not only paying despite not being a business, but also that the fees are going to programs, like concerts and noted she is against the SID Assessment. **R. Earley** discussed the important role of arts and culture as economic development drivers and asked **R. Markle** about her ideas on how HBA can improve. **R. Markle** asked for the HBA to focus on going to each business and inquiring on if and why they are struggling. **R. Earley** noted there was already a survey in the process of being created, which would evaluate each business and their needs. **R. Markle** noted that she will be going to the City Council with her thoughts on the HBA.

Motion to adjourn **J. Runkle** Second: **E. Espasa**. 6:35 pm - Approved

Next Board Meeting March 7, 2023 @ 4:30 PM