

Adopted April 30, 2024

Board of Directors Meeting
March 26, 2024
4:30 PM



Present: James Runkle, Edyta Espada, Mario Fini, Mike Guglielmo, Tara Mullins, Hon. Ruben Ramos, Miguel Goncalvez, Director Jennifer Gonzalez, Mark Stehli, Hany Ahmed, Luca Infantino, Kennyth Montes de Oca, Anthony Pino

Absent: Catherine Willhoit, Dave Jacey, Mike Ozolnieks

Also Present: Roxanne Earley, Larissa Szilagyi, Jenna Stein, Leah Mulartrick, Erin Bush, Larisa Ortiz, Emily Morin, Jordyn Leon, Tony Soares, Emily Jabbour

1. 4:30 -- Call to Order:

A. **J. Runkle** 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.

James R. offered brief remarks on the passing of P. Patel and how he will be dearly missed by the the HBA and the Hoboken business community.

2. Adoption of Minutes:

B. The minutes from December 5, 2023 were reviewed with no remarks or corrections

Motion to approve the minutes from September 12, 2023: E. Espasa. Second: M. Fini

Motion passes unanimously.

3. Finance

A. **L. Szilagyi** provided the financial report and the statement of financial position showing current bank assets. On January 31st, 2024 of \$1,359,605.50, which accounts for uncleared transactions of \$202,625.60. The reconciliation report shows a January bank statement ending balance which corresponds to the uncleared transactions and the statement of financial position. Finally, the activity report shows revenue to date of \$1,335,487.46 and expenditures of \$1,574,917.70. Please note the HBA is anticipating their Q3 and Q4 assessment fees to be deposited after this board meeting. Thank you.

Motion to accept the Finances as reported: M. Fini. Second: A. Pino

Motion passes unanimously.

4. Updates:

a. Presidents Report

J. Runkle provided information regarding the activities of the Executive Committee while the board was not in session. The executive committee approved expenditures of funds for the Hudson River Showcase, and negotiated a rain date for the Earth Day Celebration as per board feedback from our last meeting in December.

b. Governance Committee

J. Runkle provided a report on behalf of the Governance Committee regarding the review and recommendation of a slate of new Trustees. Following a competitive review process, the Governance

Committee met on 3/6 to discuss the results of board member evaluations and tonight are pleased to bring forward three votes on new Trustees, and the election of new officers to the board. A packet was circulated in advance of this meeting with detailed information about the process and the candidates.

J. Runkle thanked Catherine Wilhoit for her service, as she steps off of the board to focus on the expansion of The Hive, and all of the candidates and committee members for their patience and dedication throughout the vetting process.

J. Runkle also noted that two requests for proxy votes were received in writing, and he will submit proxy votes on behalf of **D. Jacey** and **C. Wilhoit**.

i. Election of the 2025 Slate of Trustees

Motion to approve the election of James Runkle, Mario Fini, Hany Ahmed, and Tara Mullins to the Class of 2025, serving until December 2025: E. Espasa. Second: A. Pino. Motion passes unanimously.

ii. Election of the 2026 Slate of Trustees

Motion to approve the election of Edyta Espasa, Michael Guglielmo, Kennyth Montes de Oca, and Mark Stehli to the Class of 2026, serving until December 2026: M. Fini. Second: A. Pino. Motion passes unanimously.

iii. Election of 3 Trustees into 2024 Vacancies

Motion to approve the election of Michael Ozolnieks, Miguel Goncalves, and Luca Infantino to fill three vacancies in the class of 2024, serving until December 2024: H. Ahmed. Second: E. Espasa. Motion passes unanimously.

J. Runkle offered his congratulations to all the candidates, Please note that you may vote on the remaining items in our agenda!

iv. Election of Executive Officers

Motion to elect James Runkle, Edyta Espasa, Michael Guglielmo, and Mark Stehli to fill the roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer respectively until December 2024: A. Pino. Second: M. Fini. Motion passes unanimously.

v. Review of Committee Assignments

R. Earley explains that the work of the HBA is divided into a number of committees: Executive Committee, Public Realm Committee, Program Committee, Finance Committee, Audit Committee, Governance Committee, and a Strategic Planning Task Force, which includes non-voting members who have been providing support and assistance to the Hoboken Business Alliance during the Strategic Plan development and which will be re-named the Community Advisory Board. Every Trustee is asked to serve on at least one committee, and assignments are based on interests, skills, and organizational need. Comments are due back from trustees by Tuesday April 2.

c. **Strategic Planning Task Force**

R. Earley provided a presentation summarizing the Strategic Plan, which was circulated for board review. The effort, led by **M. Fini** and **H. Ahmed** included six months of outreach, data collection, and collaboration with leaders in the business, civic, and governmental community of Hoboken. The plan is practical, tactical, and actionable to help guide the investments of the HBA over the next five years. The plan proposes 17 projects organized into five guiding principles that will help the HBA move forward as a driver of economic growth and development across all sectors including office and retail, by building organizational capacity, growing the awareness of Hoboken as a competitive destination in the region, improve the organizations value proposition for members, supporting existing and attracting new

tenants, and investing in our public realm environment to remain competitive with the nearly 11 Million SF of regional retail.

Q/A about some of the details and data follow, with the vendor Streetsense offering clarifications.

R.Earley noted that HBA staff have already started work to reposition a number of HBA services to better reflect the findings of the Strategic Plan, specifically with regard to the positioning of paid ads in the region. Trustees focus on the need to balance investments to Washington Street and downtown with the desire to support commercial activities off Washington Street, in particular the neighborhood scaled retailers that are often independent and serve local needs. **R.Earley** noted that the HBA will continue to support these businesses through marketing and branding support, access to events and workshops to connect and strengthen the business community, and a new event strategy focused on citywide ambient entertainment.

M. Fini offered thanks to HBA staff and the Streetsense team for their work on the project, and stresses the importance of this year-long undertaking as a milestone for the HBA. **M. Fini** believes that this will help the HBA transform Hoboken into a more vibrant dining, retail, office, and events destination by encouraging everyone to live, work, stay, and play in Hoboken.

In closing, **R.Earley** noted that the next step is implementing the plan and continuing to build buy in for key priorities. Directors of City Hall have been briefed to ensure the plan is actionable. City Council is next.

Motion to Accept the HBA Strategic Plan: M. Fini. Second: A. Pino. Motion passes unanimously.

d. Public Realm Committee

R.Earley summarized a proposal to increase the budget allocation for the Street Furniture & Lighting line in order to implement the permanent expansion of the Bistro Lighting program along Washington Street. The proposed project budget includes negotiated parts and labor cost under \$100,000, significantly lower than initial estimates. The annual cost for the project is around \$5,000. There are a few estimated costs still to be determined with the City based on the required installation plan and the use of Temporary No Parking, this ask includes a conservative estimate for those fees, and staff will work closely with the City to bring these costs down.

T. Mullins asked about ongoing maintenance lines and replacement of burned-out bulbs.

R. Ramos asked about installation timelines and how to speed up deployment and ways to reduce costs from the City to the HBA. He offered to help negotiate this project fees if helpful. **R.Earley** thanked him and noted installation times depend on when we are permitted to conduct work, but may take over a month, and that maintenance will be included in ongoing budgets for the life of the project. **J. Gonzalez** reiterated the City's desire to partner on expediting this project and finding ways to reduce costs.

Motion to approve the project costs for the Permanent Bistro lighting program which will increase the annual allocation to the Street Lighting and Furniture budget from \$130,000 to \$160,000: H. Ahmed. Second: M. Fini. Motion passes unanimously.

e. ED Report

R.Earley provided her report to the Board, including the welcoming of new staff and board members, information about board orientation, policy updates regarding outdoor dining and e-bikes, public safety updates. Programmatic highlights for the HBA since December include the successful opening of the Electric Dandelions art installation, new regional high traffic advertising campaigns, new Citibins, and the development of a formal public art mural program. Recent benefits for businesses include the issuance of the Water main Break Grant Funding, the spring storytelling business networking event, and the Irish Heritage citywide event. Our Marketing and Advertising program continues to produce results and expand outreach with new visitor and entrepreneur facing campaigns that have been demonstrating

high performance with tourists and potential new businesses, and the HBA's press coverage has expanded significantly since bringing our new PR firm online. The HBA is excited to welcome 8 new businesses to Hoboken and is eagerly tracking additional openings coming online soon.

T. Mullins asked about ad performance and direction. **R. Earley** and **E. Bush** clarified that right now the direction is to our newsletter subscription but in the future as we build out the content of our redesigned website, we anticipate being able to direct click through to more targeted info pages.

5. Old Business

R. Ramos discussed the e-bike legislation as a sponsor and participant on the task force, reiterating the goal of helping improve street safety and encouraging a county-wide approach to e-delivery regulation.

R. Ramos also flagged the City's postponement of the Southwest Fest, and the significance of the HBA's involvement in activating the Southwest portion of town for stakeholders and businesses there. **T. Mullins** asked about filling the gap, but there are significant costs with a large event like this that are greatly deferred by partnering with the City.

H.Ahmed reiterated HBA support for festivals and events like Southwest Fest, and also mentioned the need to elevate and improve the annual Arts and Music Fest – both to promote and provide new opportunities for local businesses but also to provide elevated programming to drive foot traffic and visitors in Hoboken.

R.Earley flagged that she had pushed the City for more information on Southwest fest scheduling and production, and that the HBA will be ready to participate when things get moving again. In the meantime, the HBA can explore other programming and promotional ideas in the southwest portion of town like the recent Celtic music in Southwest Park. Further, the HBA continues to negotiate with the City to produce large scale events and festivals in Pier A park, and to provide better ways to integrate the Arts and Music fest with the existing business community who have historically felt excluded from the event by competing out of town vendors.

6. New Business

7. Public Session

T. Soares was glad to hear what the HBA was up to, and so excited by the Strategic Plan and specifically its focus on regulatory reform and business support to help improve and expedite approvals and opening with respect to permits and zoning. He flagged that the zoning and planning boards can take so long to approve a project that it takes 18 months just to open which is unsustainable for a business, and this may be why businesses then choose to locate elsewhere.

Multiple Trustees offered anecdotes about the difficulties in opening a business in Hoboken, particularly of a use that requires conditional permits, or where signage or other approvals from zoning and construction offices are required. **R.Earley** reiterated that a goal of the Alliance is to ensure a clear, transparent process that reduces barriers businesses face to open, operate, and grow in Hoboken.

8. Adjournment

Our next board meeting will be April 30th, for approval of the Annual FY25 Budget. Can we have a motion to adjourn?