

Approved May 2, 2023

**Hoboken Business Alliance, Inc.**  
**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Video Conference – March 7, 2023 4:30pm**

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

**Absent:** Jenny Davis, Dave Jacey, Chris Mazzola, and Anthony Pino

**Also Present:** Roxanne Earley, Larissa Szilagyi, and Erin Bush

**1. Administrative/Closed Session Call to order - 4:34 pm**

**2. Call to Order: 4:38pm**

**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.

**R. Earley** shared several updates with the Board:

**R. Earley** welcomed **E. Bush** as HBA's new Director of Marketing and Communications. **R. Earley** noted that **E. Bush** began her role on February 13 and comes to HBA with a significant background in marketing, communications, and small business support.

**R. Earley** noted that the staff spent the previous week canvassing door to door to address the water main break and emergency with businesses. **R. Earley** discussed that HBA is currently drafting a letter to PSE&G requesting relief funds be made for businesses seeking relief from the water break. **R. Earley** has been advising all businesses to keep in contact with HBA and keep documentation from the impact and damages of this emergency.

**R. Earley** shared with the board that the Celebration of Irish Heritage event was a success. **R. Earley** noted that hundreds of community members joined HBA and the Consul General of Ireland, their family, and the Deputy Consul General at the event.

Finally, **R. Earley** discussed how HBA is continuing to solicit community feedback through the HBA Community Survey. **R. Earley** noted that now, we have received 600 responses and encourages Board Members to share this among their community. **R. Earley** shared that the results will be presented in the May board meeting.

The minutes from January 10, 2023 were reviewed. **P. Cohen** believed there should be one edit regarding **M. Stelli**. **R. Earley** informed the board that **M. Stelli** would like to stay on the board but there are no further seats for his representation.

**Motion to approve the minutes from January 10, 2023. Motion: M. Fini Second: P. Cohen**

### **3. Treasurers Report**

**P. Pratik** provided the financial report and reported that The Statement of Financial Position shows Current Bank Assets on 1/31 of \$1,254,947.17 which accounts for uncleared transactions of \$38,217.53. The Reconciliation Report shows a November Bank Statement ending a balance of \$1,293,164.70, which corresponds to the uncleared transactions in the Statement of Financial Position. Finally, the Activity Statement shows revenue to date of \$1,410,578.66 and expenditures of \$960,688.08.

### **4. Presentation of FY2024 Budget**

**R. Earley** circulated a memo for the FY24 budget. In summary, **R. Earley** noted there is no increase in the assessment collected, except because of a marginal tax rate update. **R. Earley** explained the budget anticipates an overall expenditure of \$3,044,307 and closing the year with \$228,631 in reserve as a 3-6 month operating expense reserve. **R. Earley** discussed that the budget reflects new programs, like snow removal fund, and committee/stakeholder feedback, which included increases to seasonal decorations, street furniture, supplemental sanitation, and research for a market economic analysis. **J. Runkle** thanked **R. Earley** for leading the budget creation and thanked the public and committee members for their contributions to the budget.

**Motion to approve the proposed FY24 budget and send it to the City Council for review and approval? Motion: J. Runkle. Second: P. Patel. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

### **5. Updates:**

#### **Capitol/Visual**

**MOLA Ironworks Tree Pit Pricing:** **R. Earley** noted that this agenda item has been pulled in order to receive a detailed proposal to review.

**2023 Landscaping:** **R. Earley** discussed that the Capital/Visual committee reviewed two proposals for annual landscaping plans and recommends the board approve a contract with Hufnagel Landscaping due to their lower cost, good customer service, and proximal location as a Hoboken based business. **R. Earley** noted that with the approval, HBA will contact Hufnagel immediately to begin spring planting installation.

**Motion to approve the Hufnagel Landscaping proposal for \$161,075, and a not to exceed watering budget of \$50,000? Motion: E. Espasa. Second: M. Fini. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

**Update on Bistro Lights program:** **R. Earley** shared that PSE&G has completed its engineering review and it is confirmed we can proceed with the program. **R. Earley** noted that the HBA is waiting for a draft agreement, insurance requirements, and KPIs to determine the success of a proposal.

### **Events & Promotion:**

**Spring Banner Proposal:** **R. Earley** noted that Gates Banner provided a proposal to install 50 new Spring Banners for the cost of \$5,650. **C. Willhoit** inquired what the banners were for. **R. Earley** explained the banners are new HBA seasonal banners to be installed on light poles.

**Motion to approve an expenditure to produce and install 50 Spring Banners with Gates Banner for a cost of \$5,650? Motion: E. Espasa. Second: H. Ahmed. All approved with no opposition or abstentions.**

**Superfly Events Proposal:** **R. Earley** and Directors Gonzalez and Lezcano from the City of Hoboken met with Superfly to discuss event strategy for large-scale productions. Superfly has provided a scope of work that reflects HBA goals for a total cost of \$125K. Superfly has worked with major corporate partners and other municipalities like Norfolk in VA for similar events as well as created productions like the Friends Experience, the Office Experience, Prince Experience, etc. **R. Earley** believes this could open opportunities for not just concerts at Pier A, but also experiential retail which could benefit businesses from tourism. **R. Earley** noted that other companies that are similar to Superfly do not provide an all-encompassing approach as Superfly does

**M. Fini** asked questions about the recurring costs and cost sharing of the proposal, and the partners involved to ensure the resulting plans are realistic. **R. Earley** noted that the City is at the table to ensure a realistic plan, and that the this proposal doesn't include revenue sharing with the vendor as it is for conceptual research and process design and not event production. **M. Fini & J. Runkle** voiced support for an RFP and competitive process. **R. Earley** noted an RFP was not put out but the City looped HBA in with a conversation that was already taking place. **R. Earley** said HBA can put an RFP out but it may delay a Pier A event.

**H. Ahmed** asked about ensuring that the plan considers how to address incurring costs on public services through use of public spaces for events. **C. Willhoit** asked that the proposal ensure a focus on how local businesses are visible at and benefit from HBA event strategies. **R. Earley** explained that this would be a foundational part of the scope with SuperFly especially how to get individuals from Pier A to town, as well as if this is good for the community considering resources.

**E. Espasa** noted the vendor is an industry leader which is why this is a premium. **E. Espasa** believes we should invest in the best of the best so if we RFP, we need to pick the best company to put on a great event. **R. Earley** suggested a conditional approval pending the opportunity for the events committee to meet with the vendor.

**Motion to approve an expenditure of \$125k in concept and pending a presentation from the vendor to the Events Committee. Motion: M. Fini. Second: E. Espasa. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

**Petal & Co Flower Flash Proposal:** **R. Earley** noted that the Capital Visual Committee expressed a desire to expand experiential placemaking in the City and informed the Board that HBA received a proposal from Petal and Co. with a number of options from smaller/standard displays. Staff are seeking authorization to move forward with one of two options, both of which cost approximately \$20,000:

- Two standard flower flash designs, one for Spring and one for Summer.
- One large summer installation

**M. Fini** asked about specific locations for the installations and emphasized a desire to plan for maximum impact with adequate promotion. **R. Earley** explained the installation would be near the Path Station, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, or Pier A for the one large summer Installation, while the standard flower flashes could be put on any street corner. **J. Runkle**, **E. Espasa** and **C. Willhoit** believe this would be good for media impact and would be an artistic and beautiful addition to Hoboken. **H. Ahmed** asked how long the installations would be up for and **R. Earley** noted it would be for a day as the flowers are fresh as it would encourage people to take the plants home with them. **R. Earley** noted this would have people feel a FOMO (fear of missing out) moment to get there fast and take the plants home. **H. Ahmed** added it would be good to have it twice in case it rains. **C. Willhoit** asked if we could work with local florists. **R. Earley** noted the company would be open to it. **J. Runkle** asked if it could be coordinated with other larger marketing events. **R. Earley** said she can work with **E. Bush** and the Vendor on this.

**Motion to approve an expenditure for two spring or one large summer flower flash installation not to exceed \$20,000? Motion: M. Fini. Second: H. Ahmed. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

**Mile Square Theatre Proposal:** **R. Earley** explained that the Events Committee requested a proposal from Mile Square Theatre for outdoor theatre programming building on the successful Shakespeare in the Park event last year. **R. Earley** explained the program cost is \$30,000 inclusive of all costs and produced by the Theatre. **R. Earley** mentioned that Mile Square Theatre productions have attracted up to 400 visitors to similar events. **H. Ahmed** suggested if going forward, with any event, HBA should have a banner with a QR code to be linked to restaurants in the area. **H. Ahmed** suggested HBA should include in the contract that businesses need to have advertisements, like the QR banner. **R. Earley** noted **E. Bush** and herself are creating guides about businesses as well as adding **H. Ahmed's** suggestion. **J. Runkle** noted that this type of event happened last year, and we should make it clear we would have more control over our sponsorship.

**Motion to authorize a partnership to produce "On the Waterfront" with the Mile Square Theatre for \$30,000. Motion: C. Willhoit. Second: J. Runkle. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

## 6. Old Business

### 7. No old business was addressed.

## 8. New Business

**M. Fini** asked HBA to focus on utilizing the website as a directory where you can look for different categories of businesses. **M. Fini** asked if we could start a taskforce. **R. Earley** noted we could create a directory committee. **J. Runkle** noted that BoomLocal should be engaged to see if this is something they can do. **R. Earley** would like to start a review of the status of the website. **J. Runkle** noted its self-reported so it should be reversed in order for us to have control of the categorical information. **H. Ahmed** asked if landlords could also advertise their units so landlords can also benefit. **R. Earley** noted that the Downtown Alliance, a \$22 million BID, has a comprehensive system. **R. Earley** noted this goal should be in two parts: first to understand from an economic analysis on what needs to be done and second part to utilize the information in creating a comprehensive system

**M. Fini** followed up on an idea where there was going to be a streamline of how to open a business in Hoboken. **M. Fini** noted that Keansburg has a business coordinator to do this process. **M. Fini** would like to see that individuals can come to the office, and we can provide guidance on the feasibility of one's business idea in Hoboken. **M. Fini** believes it would be an important part of what we do at HBA. **R. Earley** noted the FY24 budget allocates money for the retail analysis that would provide us with information on how to provide this service.

**P. Cohen** mentioned current communication with PSE&G regarding the water main break emergency. **P. Cohen** believes there are no guarantees PSEG will give money to cover damages so HBA should strategize on how we can help businesses. **R. Earley** cited that businesses noted that their insurance did not cover this issue and/or they needed to be closed for three days or more. **R. Earley** further explained that HBA should research insurance options in order to provide education to businesses in case this happens in the future. **P. Cohen** noted that there might be some other type of insurance for lost inventory. **P. Cohen** suspects businesses will need support and the support should be on our website to see how we can help. **C. Willhoit** noted that the HBA should stay firm getting help for businesses and this is our opportunity to make our mark on the business community. **H. Ahmed** suggested we add disruption insurance information. **H. Ahmed** noted while the city has Nixle reports, we should have our own alerts to businesses. **P. Cohen** noted it was posted on social media and we should encourage them to follow on social media so they can have real time information. **R. Earley** noted in crisis, **R. Earley** directed people to the official accounts as information changes in real time. **R. Earley** noted that we disseminated information door to door but agrees we should try to find better ways to communicate. **R. Earley** noted that **E. Bush** is doing an audit of communication so we can understand the best way to utilize it to the public. **P. Cohen** noted that Jason Friedman was directly communicating to **R. Earley** with live updates. **R. Earley** noted PSEG had a community outreach with us. **R. Earley** noted that there was emergency operation meetings with special improvement district EDs but other meetings were conducted like business open town hall.

**H. Ahmed** asked about bistro lights and **R. Earley** noted that earlier we mentioned that PSEG signed on the infrastructure. If the permit goes through, then bistro lighting will go to seven blocks.

#### **9. Public Session**

**C. Adair** of Bike Hoboken noted that the ride series for 2023 is beginning. **C. Adair** was happy that HBA partnered on the last ride. Bike Hoboken will take place every last Sunday of the month and **C. Adair** will send the schedule to **J. Runkle** and **R. Earley**. **C. Adair** noted that Bike Hoken is doing the first bike valet for the Earth Day event. **C. Adair** is happy to be interfacing with the HBA more. **J. Runkle** noted that **E. Bush** should be cc'd as well as she is marketing.

**R. Markle** asked about the status of the FY2024 budget. **R. Earley** noted the assessment will remain the same. **R. Markle** asked if Hufnagel is a Hoboken based business. **R. Earley** noted that Val lives in town and the business is based in New Jersey. **R. Markle** noted that O'Bagel has the same display as proposed by HBA but they aren't fresh flowers. **R. Earley** noted that Petal and Co does those services at O'Bagel. **R. Markle** asked if the Mile Square Theatre event will be at Sinatra and asked if its free. **R. Earley** noted its free. **R. Markle** noted the banners are very expensive and maybe shouldn't be changed seasonally.

**Dian** mentioned the HBA is doing a great job. **Dian** noted a change happening in the marketplace where there is a whole shift from retail and office space. **Dian** explained that now, retail is the favored real estate asset. **Dian** believes that Hoboken is getting better every day, but office spaces are struggling. **Dian** asked how we can help keep office spaces full. **R. Earley** noted that this is a great question to be addressed by our market retail analysis and asked for **L. Szilagyi** to go through notes and highlight items that need to be in the RFP for the retail analysis. **R. Earley** noted maybe businesses could provide events where individuals are more inclined to work in person so they can go after work. **Dian** was happy to hear **R. Earley's** idea.

**10. Next Meeting: May 2, 2023**

**11. Adjournment: Motion: P. Cohen. Second: H. Ahmed 6:03pm**