

Board Meeting Minutes
Hoboken Business Alliance, Inc.
April 21, 2020
Zoom - 4:30pm

Call to order/Roll Call Announcements- 4:39pm

Present: Hany Ahmed, Greg Dell Aquilla, Edyta Espasa, Dian Fini, Councilwoman Tiffanie Fisher, Eugene Flinn, Donna Garban, Jennifer Gonzalez, Meghan Lukin, Chris Mazzola, Carol Swift

Also Present: Natalie Chape', Stuart Koperweis, Caleb Stratton

Adoption of April 7, 2020 Minutes: C. Swift, Second by – G. Dell Aquilla

Presidents Report

E. Flinn gave **C. Stratton** an opportunity to introduce himself to the Board. He informed everyone that the administration is working on tackling all the issues regarding the crisis and is in contact with the HBA. If there is anything the Board would like the Mayor to understand, he will be happy to share with him. He noted that he has been working with the City since Hurricane Sandy. COVID, is his second crisis he has had to deal with, but on a bigger scale. City has hired a third-party professional to navigate thru the process and they are starting to get a handle on everything that is coming from Government. He is aware of certain packages that Senator Menendez is working on for cities like ours. He does not have immediate information, but more help is coming.

COVID Update: **E. Flinn-** informed **C. Stratton** that a few HBA Board Members met with the Mayors office and spoke about an anxiety that Landlords are having with potential people that are not paying rent and the “messaging” behind the responsibility to people that they should pay the rent during this crisis and they do not have a “free pass”. Also we were told by the Mayor that he would look into forgiving or reducing fees, which would help small businesses. For the restaurant businesses, the two biggest fees are the liquor license and business license fees. The State pushed back the liquor till September.

C. Mazzola and **H. Ahmed** with **D. Fini** were putting together a list of talking points that the Mayor could use to explain issues as regards to the Landlords and Developers and paying Mortgages and if there is any relief there. There seems to be more help for tenants than for Landlords.

S. Koperweis asked if there is a way to put them on a moratorium. **C. Stratton** any waving of fees is being considered and Mayor has an appetite to grant relief if he is able to do so. **C. Stratton** stated all options are on the table as far as fees are concerned, not just the delaying them. They will be dealt with on a case by case basis. **J. Gonzalez** also stated she feels it also depends on the fee. **T. Fisher** stated we really are looking at the Federal Government to plug all revenue gaps. The City can't even put in a balanced budget until the Federal Government decides what it can push into the States to cover the short fall the municipalities have. **Councilwoman Fisher** stated, the best the City can probably do is delay them until we have a more identified

source of funding. All of this must go through Council first. **E. Flinn**-at the same time from the business owner's point of view, if they go out of business the City will not get anything at all. All agreed.

T. Fisher feels that it would be beneficial if the HBA sent a letter to Senator Menendez advocating for the small businesses in addition to what the City is doing. The HBA should be the voice of the business owners.

Executive Committee Meetings

E. Flinn informed the Board that the Executive Committee met last week and again this week. It is the intent of these meetings to help the Board Meetings be more organized and run more smoothly and timely. **S. Koperweis** advised everyone that there are minutes on the drive from those meetings.

Treasurers Report

S. Koperweis advised that Financials will be available for next months meeting.

Marketing

S. Koperweis- Branding Shorts (BS) has sent an update and it is in the google drive.
C. Mazzola stated there is not much of an update since the last Marketing update.

CitieSense Program - **S. Koperweis** explained that they are a firm who works with improvement districts particularly in NY regarding compiling a complete business list and then mapping for web site and phones. The question is do we want to pursue the idea of putting together a list? The Cost is \$ 3,000 for the year. They can have this up and running in 4 weeks, using a variety of different platforms.

J. Gonzalez does not know too much about what the Community Development Department is working on. She knows they are working on a list of businesses, but it is all very new, and knows we do not want to duplicate efforts but does not know enough about it yet. It is probably something we can work on together with the Community Development to augment each other. We will have to work with the City on keeping the list updated. HBA owns it and we will manage it. Proposal is on Google Drive.

Conversation was had on this topic. **E. Flinn**- recommends we go ahead with this program.

MOTION: to hire Citiesense D. Fini, Second by: D. Garban – Approved.

Visual/Capital

E. Flinn-informed the Board that he has asked **H. Ahmed** if he would like to take over and be the Chairman for the Visual Committee. **H. Ahmed** agreed and accepted position and we will get him up to speed on what we are working on. **E. Flinn** gave the background on how this change of chairs came about: The Executive Committee felt when there was an issue on the HBA's

involvement on the newly formed Relief Fund. It came to a head when **C. Swift** was talking with Councilman Cohen, and they felt that the way she was depicting why the Mayor was doing was he was doing was not to our advantage.

MOTION: to replace C. Swift as Chair of Visual with H. Ahmed: D Fini, Second by: C. Swift – Approved.

Utility Boxes: S. Koperweis- Bids are not out yet. We are still waiting on confirmation from the City on the 9 boxes. **J. Gonzalez** stated that the HBA should proceed with the Verizon boxes and the Arts Council with the traffic signal boxes. We are waiting for the Museum to give us options (art) for the Verizon Boxes. **S. Koperweis** will get RFP out this week for the 9 boxes to be shrink wrapped. **D. Fini** would like to run this by the Marketing Company before we make a final decision.

Trees: S. Koperweis- the RFP is out and is due tomorrow. **J. Gonzalez** noted the RFP was sent out to arborist and tree contractors who have arborist. The RFP is for someone to do an inventory and assessment on all trees and tree pits on Washington St. They are to provide recommendations on adding tree guards, enlarging tree pits, pruning hazardous trees or pruning for aesthetics, and planting new trees. It will give the board enough recommendations to make a decision on how they wish to proceed.

S. Koperweis- **Should set up a Visual Committee Meeting to discuss all of this.**

Streetscape: S. Koperweis- This was generated by the conversations we have had in the past of hazardous trip and fall concerns and non-uniformity of replacement. **J. Gonzalez** noted it was a good idea to put together a cohesive streetscape plan that includes sidewalks, street furniture and includes planters, colors, etc. that will give the guidance to the property owners. The City is going to give out violations and has to by law address any complaints

The fear was that we will get to the point where property owners will start to fix the violations without uniformity or cohesion. The property owners are going to have to make improvements to their properties whether or not the HBA has a grant program to address this. So, we want concrete standards and guidelines that the City requires.

Thus it was suggested we speak to a streetscape design architect. He is going to put options together for us. We are just starting with Washington St. This is not an entire streetscape project as that will cost millions of dollars and is the City's responsibility.

Communications

City Fund S. Koperweis-The City is putting together a fund to help with the Crisis. They have put together a separate Board and they wanted someone from HBA to be part of that committee as well. It had originally started as 100% of the funds would go to businesses in Hoboken; and it was changed to a 60/40 split and now is a 70/30 split. They also wanted to use the "Here for Hoboken" slogan and logo. **D. Garban** is working with them. They are looking for the HBA for guidance and support. They wanted the funded portion on our website using a link to PayPal. The concerns of the Executive Committee was that they do not use the Here for Hoboken strictly for Relief Fund purposes. **D. Garban** noted they agreed they would not use Here for Hoboken

Their board will include several members of the development community, council, HBA and the clergy to review the applications. It's a work in progress, they are setting up criteria and they have registered the bank account and entity. It should be moving pretty quickly. The Mayor is planning to raise more money by including individuals. All we are being asked to do right now is to put a link on our website for people to donate.

Conversation was had on this topic and we did say we would support them.

MOTION: to support the effort of the Hoboken Relief Fund by letting them use our website, and by putting a person on the board: D. Fini, Second by: G. Dell Aquilla; Opposed: C. Swift – Approved.

Old Business

Hardship Policy– Hardship Committee met with Rosemarie Markle on 3/12/20 and **D. Fini** explained we denied application because hardship was not proven. Does the Board want to offer anyone who has an owner-occupied building to have option of paying when they sell or refinance? All agreed we can work on one on one basis.

S. Koperweis-We also met with the “Elks Club” on 3/12/20 and it was determined after reviewing their documents that they were reclassified as a 15f as a non-profit and should not have been included. We have advised the City and will be corrected going forward.

MOTION to accept Minutes from Rosemarie Markle Meeting on 3/12/20: D. Fini Second by: E. Flinn – Approved.

MOTION to accept Minutes from Elks Meeting on 3/12/20: D. Fini Second by: G. Dell Aquilla – Approved.

T. Fisher asked if we are getting any pressure about transparency regarding the HBS Special Improvement District. And then asked if we are considering not collecting all the money this year? She has been questioned about this a few times. No one has heard anything at all about this. **S. Koperweis** has stated after meeting with Downtown NJ it is a concern statewide regarding SID budgets/assessments.

Our budget has been approved and assessment has been sent. The second assessment is not due till July. However, in order for assessment not to go forward the budget would have to be amended. **D. Garban** noted this should be a topic agenda item for next meeting. **S. Koperweis**- This should be a conversation on the Executive Committee level first, but probably will not be before next board meeting.

New Business

N/A

MOTION: to close meeting–T. Fisher, Second by: G. Dell Aquilla – Approved.

Adjourned: 5:54pm

Next Meeting May 5, 2020