

Hoboken Business Alliance, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Video Conference - April 5, 2022 4:30pm

Present: James Runkle, Edyta Espasa, Pratik Patel, Mark Stehli, Hany Ahmed, Dave Jacey, Jennifer Gonzalez, Mario Fini, Catherine Willhoit, Anthony Pino

Absent: Jenny Davis, John Nastasi, Chris Mazzola, Phil Cohen

Also Present: Daniel Ackerman, Chris Bernardo, Rose Marie Markle

Call to order/Roll Call Announcements- 4:35pm

J. Runkle welcomed everyone and asked **D. Ackerman** to read the Open Public Meetings Act statement. **D. Ackerman** 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 January 4th, 2022, and March 1, 2022 meeting were approved. **Motion: P. Patel. Second by E. Espasa. All approved with no opposed or abstentions.**

President's Report

J. Runkle welcomed new Board Members Catherine Willhoit and Anthony Pino noting that the Board looks forward to their involvement and sharing their perspectives as business owners and active community members. **J. Runkle** updated the Board on the Executive Director search process after meeting with Waverly Partners in January to revisit the job description they have completed their initial search and we should receive some candidates soon.

J. Runkle shared that the HBA has previously discussed changing its fiscal year to simplify the annual billing process by having the HBA bills go out with the City and County tax bills. This change will require the HBA to resubmit its budget for a 1st reading in May and a 2nd reading and hearing in June. This change will also require us to file a short tax return and our auditors are aware of this change. **H. Ahmed** suggested that we clearly communicate the administrative reason for this change to all council members and make sure that we are prepared for a hearing, noting that this could confuse some people. The board decided on a further discussion with the City to determine the need for this and then to come back for approval.

J. Runkle noted that a few Conflict-of-Interest forms are outstanding and asked all Board members to check their email and get their forms in.

Treasurers Report

P. Patel reported that there is a bank account balance of \$308,661.20 as of February 28th. The balance sheet has uncleared checks in the amount of \$8,694.34 leaving a balance of \$299,966.86.

MOTION to approve the Treasurer's Report: J. Gonzalez Second by: E. Espasa – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

D. Ackerman presented an update on the proposals received for bookkeeping services. The HBA received a total of 4 proposals with 3 of them coming from Hoboken-based businesses. **D. Ackerman** recommends that the HBA move forward with Everyday Accounting. The firm had great references, has been extremely responsive, the proposal was well-priced at \$499 a month and their office is also located in Mission 50.

MOTION to approve Everyday Accounting for annual bookkeeping services at a cost not to exceed \$7,000 a year: E. Espasa Second by: P. Patel – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

Committee Reports

Visual/Capital

E. Espasa asked **D. Ackerman** to deliver the visual and capital update. **D. Ackerman** noted that the board approved the purchase of 96 new planters for the Terminal, Waterfront, 1st and 14th districts at the February meeting. The proposal for review and approval today is for the initial setup of these planters and then the summer, fall and winter flower arrangements. The proposal provided by Hufnagel is for \$67,240.

MOTION to approve the Hufnagel proposal for \$67,240: E. Espasa Second by: J. Gonzalez – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

D. Ackerman discussed the importance of frequent watering to make the planting program a success. Watering will be done by Hufnagel for the planters, the hanging baskets, new trees and newly planted tree pits. **D. Ackerman** noted that in the long term we need to think of ways to reduce our watering costs, possibly by doing it in-house. **D. Ackerman** asked for a budget not to exceed \$55,000 based on the proposal submitted by Hufnagel.

MOTION to approve the Hufnagel watering proposal at a cost not to exceed \$55,000: E. Espasa Second by: J. Runkle – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

D. Ackerman shared a proposal for repairing and painting the fence on Hudson Pl. We received two separate proposals and we recommend acceptance of the lower cost proposal with stabilization and repair done by Challenger Fence for \$5,750 and painting by John Tamborra for \$1,400.

MOTION to approve the fence repair at a cost of \$7,150: J. Runkle Second by: J. Gonzalez – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

Art Mural

D. Ackerman reported that the Art Mural met twice in March to review locations and artists for the 2022 program. The HBA budgeted \$180,000 for 2022 with a goal of completing 10 new murals to build on the success of the Beau Stanton mural. The committee has created a list of possible locations with a focus on Garage B and the ACME wall at 614 Clinton Ave as goals for early and impactful installations. The next steps will be to identify target properties and reach out to property owners and artists and then the committee will come back to the board as we get closer to proposed projects. **E. Espasa** asked about the expected life of murals. **D. Ackerman** responded that the goal is to have them up as long as possible but that the property owner has the ultimate say.

Marketing

J. Runkle reported that Qualls Benson was notified that we will not be renewing their contract. Included in the packet today was a proposal from GLM. GLM is a Hoboken based multi-platform media marketing agency with significant experience working with associations and driving sponsorships. **D. Jacey** asked about the contract terms and cost of the proposal. **J. Runkle** informed the board that we would have our standard terms including a 30 day out and the all-inclusive cost is \$8,000 a month. **M. Stehli** asked if they will have boots on the ground and connecting with businesses. **J. Runkle** noted that their local presence on 1st Street will allow them to be more engaged, active and organic with the marketing.

MOTION to approve GLM for annual marketing services at a cost not to exceed \$8,000 a month: M. Stehli Second by: A. Pino – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

Events

The HBA is formally creating an events committee to continue discussion on a number of new events that will require planning. Previously discussed ideas were bringing back the St. Patrick's Parade and Irish heritage week, car shows, food and wine Festivals, World Cup or other viewing events, concerts, fireworks, among others. **D. Jacey** and **M. Fini** have agreed to co-chair the events committee and **H. Ahmed**, **M. Stehli**, **J. Gonzalez** and **A. Pino** expressed their desire to join. **D. Jacey** asked how marketing would be handled and **J. Runkle** said that we will need to discuss this. One thought is that the marketing and promotion of events is logical for this committee and branding, business support and district identity being separate. **H. Ahmed** mentioned getting away from gift card-based promotions.

J. Runkle recommends a sponsorship of \$5,000 for the Taste of Hoboken in order to leverage that event and make an impact for businesses throughout the city. The HBA will be the sponsor and provide support for the silent auction. **A. Pino** asked if the HBA is considering giving away any promotional items and suggested making it more meaningful for fewer people than giving something to everyone. **J. Runkle** said that we haven't come to a decision on any extra promotional items and that would be on top of the \$5,000 sponsorship level.

MOTION to approve \$5,000 sponsorship for Taste of Hoboken: E. Espasa Second by: J. Gonzalez – All approved with no opposed or abstentions.

J. Runkle introduced two additional proposed ideas in the interest of doing some short-term activity while we plan long-term for new events. The Hoboken Highlight of the Month would focus on a different industry each month and drive foot traffic with marketing, discounts and promotions. This promotion would include gift cards to incentivize interaction and activity through social media. **H. Ahmed** shared his concern with picking businesses to participate and receive gift card buys and this might make some businesses feel left out. **H. Ahmed** asked how we would monitor the success of this program. **D. Jacey** asked about understanding the analytics with a firm's social media followers – how do we know how many users are active users and not just registered accounts? **C. Bernardo** recommended that we work to define expectations and scope and we can look at this again in the Events Committee meeting.

J. Runkle shared the First Friday proposal for encouraging businesses to stay open late, promote new products, have wine tastings – essentially any add-on to help draw a crowd. The board asked for this to be looked at in the next Events Committee meeting.

H. Ahmed mentioned that, in the past, the HBA has done programs with reduction in parking fees and asked about exploring ticket validations and reductions in fees as a way for us to have a measurable date point for some of our programs.

Parking

No committee report

Old Business

None

New Business

The Board discussed coming up with a plan to meet in person. **C. Willhoit** shared that as a new member she thinks there is value to meeting in person in real time. The Board decided to remain flexible on this but expressed a desire to get together in person soon.

H. Ahmed asked about a previous discussion about giving out garbage bags to businesses. Is there a way to do this and prevent businesses from getting fined? **J. Gonzalez** mentioned the results of a waste survey and that she believes the cost prevented the HBA from moving forward on this.

Public Session

Public Guest Rose Marie Markle asked why the HBA is doing things that she believes the City should be doing. She brought up things like beautifying the City and repairing the Hudson Place fence. In regards to watering plants, she remarked that it is quite a bit of money and asked if we have received competitive quotes. **D. Ackerman** replied that it is important to have the landscaper who installs the plants also care for the plants. Based on work in other districts, **D. Ackerman** believes this is a competitive price again noting that a long-term will need be devised.

At the end of the Public Session the Board went into closed session to discuss personnel matters.

Motion to adjourn E. Espasa, Second by J. Runkle: 6:02pm – Approved.

Next Board Meeting May 3, 2022