

Board Meeting Minutes
Hoboken Business Alliance, Inc.
April 7, 2020
Zoom - 4:30pm

Call to order/Roll Call Announcements- 4:37pm

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

Adoption of March 3, 2020 Minutes: C. Swift, Second by – H. Ahmed

Presidents Report

Loan Assistance: **E. Flinn** mentioned that there has been some talk about hiring someone to assist with navigation of the government loan process. He mentioned perhaps having a hotline listed on our website for people to call in and ask questions or seek assistance in completing applications. Board discussed and they do not feel this is something the HBA should get involved with. We are providing them with the links that they need on our website. Everyone should be able to get through this process following the links. There was some idea about perhaps looking for an attorney to be on the HBA board. All feel having an attorney on the Board will be very beneficial to all.

Landlord Tenant Relations: There was a lot of conversation on this topic. The concern is that there is not enough help or enough of a voice protecting the Landlords. Tenants that have the means to pay rent during this time should do so.

It was asked for **S. Koperweis** to work with the Mayor's office on behalf of the HBA. It is important that the stakeholders know they have our support. All the programs and concerns are going towards small businesses. We do not want this to turn into something where people feel the Landlords are the "bad guys". It was noted that Landlords have bills too and are still responsible for all of their taxes, mortgages, insurance, etc. **S. Koperweis** suggests that we have a conversation with the Mayors office first and then follow it up with a letter. **That will be done within the week. Will coordinate.**

Relief Fund: **E. Flinn** has asked that the HBA Executive Committee is informed before we engage in any requests with the City. This issue in question has to do with the conversation **S. Koperweis** had with Councilman Phil Cohen. There is confusion regarding the Hoboken Relief Fund efforts that the City is putting together. One issue is whether or not the HBA would be a clearing house for the fund. **S. Koperweis** spent a lot of time clarifying the practicality of how the fund would be set up and operate. It was suggested that we should change the process of how these requests are handled. We want to show some real progress in this crazy time.

Councilman Cohen has replied that they are looking for a member from the HBA board to volunteer to be on the Board for the Relief Fund. They have an initial donor of \$ 35k. This is to

raise funds for businesses that are suffering through this crisis. We need to determine who we should put from our Board on the Relief Fund. **E. Flinn** believes this a great idea. Board would like to volunteer **C. Swift** to be the representative of the HBA to the Relief Fund. The City hopes to raise over a million dollars for this fund. All agreed **C. Swift** would be a good fit. **E. Flinn** thinks is wonderful that they asked us to be a part of it.

MOTION: to select C. Swift to represent the HBA on the Relief Fund – D. Fini, Second by G. Dell Aquilla. Approved.

Treasurers Report

S. Koperweis advised that we are still waiting for Quick Books to update services, and should have a report by next month.

Marketing

Website update: **C. Mazzola** informed everyone that he asked Branding Shorts (BS) to put together a summary as to where we currently are. He shared his screen and went over the slides. They are still working on the website as outlined in the 90 day plan... making it robust. Typically, they work between 60-90 days but we have accelerated development. He went over stats and information.

C. Mazzola also mentioned the pro bono video that Branding Shorts has put together to support the City: #HereforHoboken. He asked that everyone take a look at the video by way of Social Media (SM). He encouraged all **to Like the pages on all SM platforms** as well as share all the content. The more we all do that the more engagement we will have on our pages. **C. Mazzola** will send BS a message to share the video with Hoboken Girl. He will also ask BS to put together and email showing everyone how to share on SM.

There were a couple questions about the URL regarding the www.HobokenAlliance.com that has been established versus the board desire to use the www.hobokenbusinessalliance.com. **C. Mazzola** explained that at the moment it will not be changed due to continuity with social handles and messaging. BS wants everything uniform and when the IG handle of ownership issue is resolved they will change the website. It is their expert opinion that we keep it as www.hobokenalliance.com. There was much conversation on this topic.

RMA-Buxton: There was conversation as to whether or not we should go ahead with this at the moment. Board reviewed the minutes from the March 12, 2020 meeting. **C. Mazzola** feels we should put this on hold for now.

**MOTION: to accept RMA Minutes from March 12, 2020 D. Fini, Second by: G. Aquilla
Abstain: J. Gonzalez**

There was a March 23, 2020 marketing conference call to review several items.

MOTION to accept March 23, 2020 Marketing Conference Call C. Mazzola, Second by: E. Flinn – Abstain: D. Fini, J. Gonzalez

D. Garban asked to have the minutes from all meetings earlier so there is enough time to review.

Gift Card Giveaway: **C. Mazzola** noted that **S. Koperweis** has been discussing an option proposal from Lokel group to run a Gift Card program. We would work with restaurants that are still open and the HBA would purchase gift cards from each restaurant that wanted to participate, and we would then donate them to the first responders. The cost to run this program would be about \$ 6,600. We would use the funds from a line item in the Marketing Budget, where we could allocate about \$ 60k. After conversation about this topic all feel, though it's a great concept, there are groups in town such as "Flag Group" that are already doing this. We should not duplicate efforts, and we do not know about Flag Group so we should hold for now.

C. Mazzola mentioned **S. Koperweis** is doing a lot to come up with ideas for programs to assist businesses during this time. He also stated that in the future that these items will be discussed in the marketing committee first and then report back to board. He asked that the committee meet more frequently. **G. Dell Aquilla** asked to send out dates/times for the Marketing Committee to meet.

E. Flinn feels we should continue to work on marketing things so that when we come out of this we can hit the ground running. We should not pull the trigger to spend money now but should still be working on these items within committees.

Visual/Capital

S. Koperweis mentioned that there has been several emails and conversations with the City regarding landscaping and trees. **E. Flinn** suggested that if **S. Koperweis** is not willing to do all the work because he is not getting his full salary right now, he will volunteer to assist with these items.

S. Koperweis responded that the meeting of the 23rd was to suspend all spending, particularly for capital and visual improvements, which is why he offered to reduce his salary. However, he is continuing to work on them because he knows he cannot just let them stop. Things such as Landscaping, Utility Boxes, Trees, etc. need to be followed up on in order to have them ready when needed. **D. Fini** asked how it is for him now regarding the HBA being a new SID; is it more or less more work than expected. How is his time being spent, does he have the time? **S. Koperweis** answered that for a new SID he was as busy as he expected to be. In terms of timewise, he and **N. Chape** have been working 7 days a week since virus crisis. He continues to work at his expected work load, albeit on his reduced salary.

E. Flinn and others suggested we should discuss this later by going into Closed Session to review decision on contract. All agreed.

Old Business

Office – **G. Dell Aquilla** gave his understanding of the virus/crisis situation regarding the board decisions of the past few weeks. We were in a place of panic and fear and a lot of uncertainty and the actions taken were somewhat like a pause. Thus, here we are a month later and now we at least somewhat stabilized. We have more certainty now.

All agreed with his insight and that we are all in a better place to have that conversation again: Where do we want to go as a Board (as the HBA) and what things do we want to start backup?

Therefore, regarding the office lease/rent, **G. Dell Aquilla** mentioned his previous statement: last month we were tightening up strings. The HBA lease with Mission 50 is a month to month. April rent was paid and April 30th would be terminated, as was decided. Now, based on our new assessment of the situation all agreed we should maintain the lease and continue.

MOTION to continue with space and pay rent to Mission 50 H. Ahmed, Second E. Flinn; G. Dell Aquilla abstained.

Hardship reviews were postponed to next meeting due to time constraints.

New Business

A. Luis sent a letter of resignation. The Board needs to accept **A. Luis** resignation letter. After discussion it was agreed to accept his resignation, noting his exceptional service; and to replace him as Secretary of the Board with **G. Dell Aquilla**.

MOTION to accept A. Luis resignation: D. Garban, Second C. Swift – Approved.
MOTION to nominate G. Dell Aquilla as Secretary H. Ahmed, Second M. Lukin – Approved.

MOTION to go into Closed Session @ 6:33pm to discuss Economic Development Strategists, LLC (EDS) contract: G. Dell Aquilla, Second D. Fini – Approved.

C. Swift reported back a summary of Closed Session; which ended at 6:50

The Board unanimously decided to have EDS continue working at full agreement capacity; noting they are all pleased with what has been getting done.

MOTION to wire S. Koperweis full amount for April 1st: H. Ahmed, Second D. Garban – Approved.

Minutes from the closed session will be sent by **C. Swift**.

E. Flinn thinks this was one of our most productive meetings.

S. Koperweis will send zoom invites for all meetings that are coming up.

MOTION: to close meeting–H. Ahmed, Second by: D. Fini

Adjourned: 6:56pm

Next Meeting April 21, 2020