

**Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
September 27, 2023**

Present

Michael Corbin
Drayden Dunn
Chelette Holden
Tim Huck
Kathy Malone (left at 5:18 pm)
Terry Moore (left at 5:37 pm)
Kyle Southard (left at 5:14 pm)

Absent

Staff

Liz Swaine
Janie Landry
Stacie Leng
Peggy Hellyer

Others Present

Mark Prevot, Prevot
Design
Beth King, Beth King
Real Estate

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm by Chair Michael Corbin.

II. ROLL CALL

Before roll call began, Drayden Dunn brought before the board the fact that Tim Huck has been absent from DDA board meetings a total of five times during the year, and the DDA bylaws state that after five absences the position is declared vacant and the director shall be removed (Article II, Directors, Item 5, Attendance). There were comments from several board members pointing out that all the monthly board meeting minutes show that the board approved of Mr. Huck's absences. Michael Corbin reported that the nominating organization, Downtown Shreveport Unlimited, has not submitted a nomination yet to the Mayor. Tim Huck stated that he has informed DSU that he wishes to be replaced. Ms. Swaine reminded the board that Louisiana law states a board member serves until a replacement is named. Tim Huck said that he would remain at the table but would refrain from voting on any matter during the meeting. Janie Landry noted that state legislation overrides the DDA bylaws, and that after DSU nominates an individual, the Mayor must approve and send the nomination to the City Council for confirmation which – at the time of the meeting- had not been done.

Drayden Dunn made a motion that Tim Huck's seat be vacated, and that Michael Corbin send a letter to the mayor stating the vacancy. Chelette Holden seconded the motion. The motion was not voted on and was later withdrawn.

Ms. Swaine reminded the board that the agenda must be amended before a motion can be made on any item not on the agenda. Kyle Southard asked what the difference was between the wording of approval of absences in the minutes versus the statement in the bylaws. Michael Corbin responded that the intent is the same, and that the absences were excused. If an absence was not excused, it would have been so noted in the minutes.

Drayden Dunn made a motion to amend the agenda to add vacating the seat of Tim Huck. Chelette Holden seconded the motion. The motion was not voted on and was later withdrawn.

Jerry Jones, DDA legal counsel, was consulted at this point in the meeting via telephone conference call.

Mr. Corbin briefed Mr. Jones on the issue being discussed. Mr. Jones told the board that the approval in the minutes means the absence was excused. He said it is a state statute that board members continue to serve until his/her replacement is named. He also said that even if board members refuse to attend meetings, they remain on the board until a replacement is named. The DDA board of directors cannot declare a seat vacant. Michael Corbin asked Mr. Jones if a board member who has asked to be replaced

can attend a meeting and abstain from voting. Mr. Jones replied that was possible and that board members can abstain from voting at any time. Michael Corbin asked whether or not the member would remain on the board if the board did not approve the absence. Mr. Jones replied that the individual would continue to serve on the board until a new member was appointed even if the board did not approve the absence. Mr. Corbin thanked Mr. Jones for his time and the conference call was completed.

Michael Corbin reminded the board that DDA's purpose is to make downtown a better place overall and to bring people and businesses downtown. He also requested that board members refrain from bringing personal issues into the meetings. He asked that with the board's approval he be allowed to continue with the agenda. All agreed, and the meeting continued.

Peggy Hellyer called roll.

III. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

There were no absences.

IV. AMEND AGENDA

The agenda was not amended.

V. WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS/ PRESENTATIONS

There were no introductions or presentations.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Swaine welcomed Mark Prevot of Prevot Design/601 Spring Street Event Venue and Beth King, Beth King Real Estate. Mr. Prevot said he wanted to thank the board for their efforts on behalf of downtown but also wanted to ask about economic development. He gave his opinion that many businesses are leaving downtown and said he is concerned about the value of his property. He asked what could be done and what is being done. Ms. Swaine replied that it is a national problem and other downtowns are facing similar problems. She said that though leases are still in place in the office buildings, not all employees have returned to their offices after the pandemic. She discussed the Restore Downtown Act (potential federal legislation) which is designed to help address downtown vacancies. Ms. Swaine and others are encouraging Senator Bill Cassidy to sign onto the proposed legislation which would make funding available to convert existing office buildings to residential developments.

Ms. Swaine also said that a recent survey revealed the perception that downtown Shreveport is a high-crime area. She said that it is incumbent upon the Mayor and other elected officials, DDA, DSDC, and the news media to inform the public that while there are issues, the perception of high crime downtown is not valid.

Mr. Swaine referenced the Riverfront Development Fund, created in 1996 when the casinos first arrived, and stated the fund was intended to be dedicated to downtown, economic, and riverfront development. Few dollars from the fund have been allocated towards downtown development. Some money has been provided to the Robinson Film Center, Sci-port Discovery Center, and a few other projects that could be termed 'amenities' but not to business creation, retention or development. Approximately \$8M - \$11M goes into the Riverfront Development Fund annually. Ms. Swaine noted that even a small percentage of that amount per year would have helped make downtown a far different place. Mr. Prevot asked where the money from the fund is directed, and Ms. Swaine responded that it goes to the city's general fund.

Michael Corbin gave his opinion that it will take everyone who has an investment downtown to advocate for Riverfront Development money to be allocated for downtown as originally intended.

Beth King said she is hearing that a number of lawyers and insurance companies are moving out of downtown. She suggested that a marketing campaign to battle negativity is needed.

Mr. Prevot reported that his property value has decreased and that he is unable to obtain needed business loans.

Mr. Corbin stated there is not a single answer and that it will be necessary to engage with the downtown council members and the administration.

Drayden Dunn said there is a need for public-private partnerships. He also stated his belief that the City Council would not direct money from the Riverfront Development Fund to downtown if the city is dependent on those funds. He said he believes that local and minority participation is needed on large projects such as the new state office building under construction on Fannin Street.

Mr. Prevot said that events such as the Revel draw big crowds and present a good opportunity to market downtown. He suggested that geofencing be used. Mr. Corbin asked Mr. Prevot for a bullet point list to give the board ideas for discussion and consideration. Ms. Swaine thanked Mr. Prevot and Ms. King for their input.

Ms. Swaine welcomed Travis Wilson, founder of the Louisiana Black Artists Institute who has recently moved to Shreveport from Paris, France. The institute will teach children about music, host music recitals, chess clubs and book clubs, and then transition to live jazz in the evenings for adults. He has a five-year contract on the space at 620 Texas Street and will reside upstairs. Board members thanked Mr. Wilson for his commitment to downtown.

Mr. Wilson introduced his Vice Chair, Craig Lee, who is also a board member with Dads on Duty at Southwood High School and a former board member of the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau. Mr. Lee commented that the city needs to remedy the vacant building problem. Ms. Swaine reported that DSDC is currently working with the city on one very high-profile vacant building. Mr. Lee said the state building is a good step for downtown but suggested the bigger issue may possibly be a branding perception. He then made several comments regarding the need for pedestrian areas downtown, attracting entrepreneurs, and reasonable rental rates.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes

Ms. Swaine asked for a review of the August 23, 2023, regular meeting minutes and for any revisions.

A motion was made by Drayden Dunn to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2023, meeting. Kyle Southard seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

August 2023 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement

Ms. Swaine reviewed the August 2023 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement. She stated that income and expenses are as anticipated. A portion of the reserve fund was transferred to a money market account and a CD, earning 3% and 4% respectively. The money was previously in a non-interest checking account. It was noted that the ability to write checks was retained.

A motion was made by Kathy Malone to approve the August 2023 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement as presented. Drayden Dunn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. REPORTS

A. Director's Report

1. State Building Construction, 500 Fannin St.

- Work is beginning.
- Phase I
 - Asbestos abatement of all asbestos containing materials on site.
 - Complete exterior and interior demolition of the main building. Only remaining items will be floor slabs and steel structure
 - Demolition of existing parking garage
 - Gill Industries in Shreveport will oversee Phase 1 and use Lloyd Nabors Demolition for the major demolition.
 - This portion of the project is scheduled to take 300 days, with estimated completion July 14, 2024.
 - Overall completion - late 2025 /early 2026

2. Uneeda Biscuit Lofts, 711 Milam Street

- 32 Units – 50% artist/50% market rate
- Move in has begun.
- Possible ribbon cutting Oct. 5

3. Downtown Updates

- The Noble Savage (no longer 'Tavern') celebrates one year - 417 Texas St.
- Ashley's Tiers of Love debuts lunch menu - 420 Marshall St.

4. PPG Building, 525 Cotton Street

- MPC approved spot zoning change.
- To City Council, Oct. 10
- Ms. Swaine has met with new owner Granger Harriss. Storage use does not help downtown. Perhaps mixed use. Property is a 5000 sq foot building. She has referred a potential tenant who does light manufacturing. Kyle Southard reiterated that that storage is not a good use. Ms. Swaine reported that the challenge relates to the property next door that serves the homeless and said it is difficult to find tenants who will tolerate the vagrants, etc. She tried unsuccessfully to get MPC to delay. Michael Corbin asked if Council could add amendments under the Master Plan. Ms. Swaine will research that possibility. Councilman Brooks is very aware of the issue and is seeking advice.

5. I-20 Construction

- Impacts to downtown
- 2-1/2-year project
- Handout

6. ICC Meeting, Tues., Oct. 17, 3:30-6:30 pm, Shreveport Convention Center

- Alternate Route 3A
- Opposed by nearly all; important to get comments into the record
- Comments can be left at the meeting or emailed 10 days after

7. 47th Red River Revel- Sat., Sept. 30- Sun., Oct. 8

- 100 artists
- New VIP balcony section
- Stellar music lineup
- Digital wristbands
- Downtown shuttle

8. Pink Friday- Friday, Nov. 17

- Prior to Black Friday
- Earlier push for Christmas/holiday shopping

B. Parking Report

In the essence of time, the parking report was bypassed this month.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Downtown Security and Homeless

Ms. Swaine reported that cameras were purchased for SPD, and a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement given to the department. The Agreement, which requested an inclusion for maintenance of the cameras, has not yet been signed.

Ms. Swaine did a walk around with representatives of Property Standards. They addressed a number of the items the following day. Michael Corbin reported that he has located a space for a downtown patrol office but has not heard back from SPD.

B. Trees / Downtown Amenity Fund / Downtown Lighting Grants

Ms. Swaine reported on self-watering planters from EarthPlanter. There was a brief discussion of color selection. Peggy Hellyer will make a mockup for distribution to the board to show potential colors of the pots in the actual locations.

C. Security Cameras

See item A above.

D. City-wide Bond Issue / Riverfront Development Fund

Ms. Swaine showed the board a 2013 architectural drawing of a proposed downtown parking garage that was to be located behind Southern University. She has been invited to make a presentation to an upcoming Bond Committee meeting. She will cite data from a previous downtown parking demand study. Ms. Swaine noted that the city owns only 11% of all parking in downtown and said that cities the size of Shreveport typically own 50% of downtown parking.

In 2012, the cost per parking space was \$25K. The cost now is approximately \$33k per space. A 300-space garage, at an estimated \$10M, is the current ask.

Curtis Stout, a supplier of electrical and lighting services, will meet with Gary Norman, the city's Director of Public Works, and Michael Corbin to reconfigure the downtown lighting to make the light reflect to the ground, instead of the reflecting up with the current globes.

Drayden Dunn stated his opinion that it would be a good idea to include office space on the first floor of the garage. Ms. Swaine said a new garage would unlock 600K feet of existing vacant office space without parking. Michael Corbin said he agreed, and that the possibility could be part of the discussion. He also said it would be unlikely that the numbers would work. Drayden Dunn suggested the office space could add excitement to the project. Ms. Swaine noted that a garage would require agreements with developers and potential tenants.

D. Street Directional Conversations

There was no discussion on the street directions.

E. Vacant Property Ordinance

There was no discussion on the vacant property ordinance.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Noise Ordinance / Crime Initiatives

Ms. Swaine gave a review of a handout detailing the locations of downtown residential locations and night clubs. She noted that there are no buffer zones downtown and buildings share common walls and public spaces, so it is necessary to be aware of downtown residents. She reviewed a copy of an email from the property manager of The Standard Apartments. Residents tell the manager that they would not have signed a lease if they had known about the level of noise on the weekends. Other residents have broken their leases to move. The noise problem has negatively impacted businesses resulting in thousands of dollars in losses. Property damage has occurred from club patrons, and cars blocking The Standard's parking garage entrance have had to be towed away.

Chelette Holden stated that there were four clubs that were already located in that block of Texas when the Standard was converted to apartments. She said that, as a business owner, she is more concerned about Black people dying all over the city.

Ms. Swaine stated that while she certainly understands the concern, DDA can only focus on downtown. Ms. Holden remarked that it feels as though her club has specifically been targeted by officials. Ms. Swaine agreed that Haze was there before the Standard was converted to apartments, but other residential units were in the 200 block of Texas prior to Haze. The complaints have increased just in the last year regarding noise, loitering and litter complaints. Ms. Swaine showed photos of the trash in surrounding parking lots.

Michael Corbin said Chief Smith stated that what goes on inside the clubs is not heard outside. Mr. Corbin commented that he travels frequently and there are rooftop restaurants and bars in other cities, but those cities do not have the same noise problems currently happening in downtown Shreveport. In downtown additional problems occur with people not going into the clubs but rather hanging around outside and fighting or drinking.

Drayden Dunn stated in his opinion there are two problems, loitering and noise. He said he believes the two should be addressed separately.

Ms. Swaine reminded the board that the noise ordinance is citywide and not just focused on downtown. She said she expects some noise to occur on Friday and Saturday nights, but the residents of downtown must be considered also.

Tim Huck stated that 65 decibels until 11pm and then 55 decibels after 11pm has been in place from the previous ordinance. The new ordinance has pushed the hours back an hour, but now it is enforceable by an SPD officer who is trained in decibel levels. The previous ordinance had to be enforced by an engineer who only worked Monday through Friday.

Drayden Dunn said that he wants the ordinance to be solution based, and there must be give and take such as sound dampening at Haze. He also stated his opinion that the DDA board should agree as an organization and come to a consensus overall as to what they stand for.

Michael Corbin stated that loud cars, motorcycles etc. are also contributors to the downtown noise problems. He asked Ms. Holden to be a resource for the city.

Ms. Swaine said that Korner Lounge had a huge party recently, and it was very loud until 2 am. The Missing Link has also had heavy metal grunge bands that can be heard from blocks away. Ms. Holden stated in her opinion complaints about the other clubs do not come before City

Council.

Mr. Corbin stated that it is important to remember that downtown needs a solution that works for everyone, including the clubs and residents.

Ms. Swaine suggested that a third-party sound engineer meet with Ms. Holden and make recommendations for the sound system. Tim Huck responded that the problem lies with the hired DJ who brings in his own system. In Mr. Huck's opinion, that system causes the problems.

Michael Corbin reminded the board of the offer to bring in a sound engineer. Ms. Holden stated she would welcome a review by a sound engineer. Mr. Corbin said it might be a good idea to arrange a meeting with the City Attorney and sound engineer. Ms. Swaine said she would speak with an engineer.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

There were no public comments.

XIII. ADJOURN

With no further business to address, the meeting adjourned at 5:48 pm

Kyle Southard, Secretary