

**Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
June 26, 2024**

Present

Michael Corbin
Drayden Dunn
Chelette Holden
Tim Huck
Kathy Malone

Absent

Terry Moore
Kyle Southard

Staff

Janie Landry
Stacie Leng
Lauren Davidson
Lorenzo Lee

Others Present

Vickie Case
Lt. David Heaser
Lynn Vance
Tony Neal
Tamer Knight
Miracle Garrett
Tommy Coward
Orville Hall
Councilwoman Tabatha Taylor
Craig B. Lee
Cassandra Montgomery
Gerod Durden
Councilman Gary Brooks

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 pm by Chair Michael Corbin.

II. ROLL CALL

Kyle Southard and Terry Moore were absent.

III. AMEND AGENDA

The agenda was amended to include a sponsorship request from Social Circle. The request was added to new business.

A motion was made by Tim Huck to amend the agenda to include a sponsorship request from Social Circle under new business. Chelette Holden seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IV. WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS/ PRESENTATIONS

Travis Morehart & Associates Audit Report, Vickie Case

Ms. Case presented the 2023 DDA audit report. There was one finding this year, and it was not really against the DDA, but the legislative auditors require this to be included in the audit as a finding. Someone not associated with the DDA ran checks through the DDA account and the bank let the checks clear but reimbursed the funds. DDA is now using Positive Pay, which should prevent this in the future.

Ms. Case noted the following: Budget Schedule - page 25 - shows the actual results for the year. The fund balance increased by \$256K. The ending balance is \$1.9M. Property taxes were comparable to the year before, and expenses were somewhat lower because the bond debt was paid off last year. Pages 19 & 20 show the property tax abatements of \$59K. Page 12: Income statement. –increased fund balance by \$193K. She reminded the board to be mindful of rising costs during the next budgeting process, but said she knows DDA is usually conservative with its budget. No issues were reported during the audit process.

Drayden Dunn asked for clarification on the restricted vs. unrestricted amounts shown in the net position. Ms. Case said that the restricted amount is for the trees, wayfinding signage and mural UV coating funds from the City.

Michael Corbin asked if there are any accounting reasons why language could not be added to the contract regarding how much vacation time can be accrued. Ms. Case said there was not an accounting reason that would prohibit that from being included. She said she would encourage the board to make that part of the Executive Director's contract.

Drayden Dunn gave his opinion that there was a good net change in the surplus noted on page 10. Ms. Case directed the board's attention to page 12, which is a better indicator of the yearly income. The difference in the surplus is a result of paying off the bond debt early.

A motion was made by Drayden Dunn to accept the audit finding report as presented by Ms. Case. Chelette Holden seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Orville Hall - Update on G-Unit Downtown Purchases and Planned Uses and Upcoming Events

Mr. Hall, who has 35 years' experience in marketing and once worked for Hurricane Chris (a rapper from Shreveport), began his comments with the reasons why he felt Shreveport was a good location for G-Unit. He stated when he learned Shreveport had several casinos, he began to take a strong interest in the city. He said casino cities are special. He pointed out downtown's assets including a Hilton Hotel, two casinos within walking distance, many clubs, the Red River District, Festival Plaza, and existing film facilities.

It also pointed out that vacant buildings are very visible to visitors coming downtown. Mr. Hall discussed how Shreveport was once the most popular film destination in the country, but that all changed when the state tax credits were reduced or eliminated. He spent some time talking about the fact Shreveport is on the "shrinking city" list and how much that hurts economic development opportunities. He said after realizing Shreveport's assets, it became his mission to get Shreveport in front of the world.

He created an idea called DENTS: Decrease crime and violence; eliminate abandoned property; need to create opportunities; treatment of mental health and depression; and strengthen the economy. He said within a 160-mile radius of the city there are 6000 adjudicated and blighted properties. He gave a brief description of how 50 Cent's plan would revitalize Shreveport. Hall said it will begin with the "I Love Shreveport" plan to bring back hope and follow with "Make it in Shreveport." He said Shreveport is one of the most highly educated cities in the nation per capita.

Mr. Hall introduced G Unit's real estate broker - Gerod Durden, Durden Property Group. Mr. Durden said they are in phase two of property acquisitions. 513 Commerce Street is under contract. 401 and 301 Spring Street, 308 Commerce Street, 205, 218, and 611 Texas Street have closed. There are several more in the works currently.

The dome, which is in transit to Shreveport, will be located at 302 Spring Street. This will be a temporary dome that will be installed by August. Construction will begin as soon as permits and approvals are completed.

Curtis Jackson, according to Mr. Hall, is investing approximately \$20M to renovate Millenium Studios, and he intends for the project to ultimately become a major tourist destination. The plan also calls for redevelopment of downtown gateways. Visitors will see a beautiful downtown with a sphere like Las Vegas. Hall wanted DDA board members to see the plans to understand the scope of the project and what it can mean to downtown and Shreveport.

Mr. Corbin stated that government can only do so much, and that it will take a public / private partnership to revitalize the city.

Kathy Malone said that she thinks Mr. Jackson has made citizens excited again about Shreveport.

Drayden Dunn also thanked Mr. Hall for briefing the board and said he would like to make sure the lines of communication remain open. Mr. Dunn also stated Mr. Hall and his counterparts are welcome to attend the board meeting at any time. Mr. Hall replied this is a partnership and that all are welcome to participate.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items).

There were no public comments.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes

Mr. Corbin asked for approval of the May 22, 2024, meeting minutes.

A motion was made by Tim Huck to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2024, meeting as presented. Chelette Holden seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

B. May 2024 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement

Ms. Landry reviewed the May 2024 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement. She stated that estimation for property tax revenue for the budget is usually very conservative. With a June payment of approximately \$4K, the budget is now \$3200 more than the original estimate. She said that 2024 is a reassessment year and that the millage rate would be adjusted if necessary to ensure the level of revenue remains the same.

Parking and Streetscape contracts are paid for May and June. The 12-month CD will mature in September. Ms. Landry believes the budgeted amount of \$70K in interest will be correct. She noted that nothing is out of the ordinary relative to expense. There is no salary for the executive director currently, but there was the vacation payoff earlier in the year.

Drayden Dunn asked about \$3K allocated under dining and entertainment. Ms. Landry pointed out that only \$313 has been spent to date. Mr. Dunn said the marketing and publications line item has an allocation of \$14K. He would like the board to consider investing in marketing for the Humor and Harmony Festival and any other ancillary events that are downtown. The event will give downtown businesses an opportunity to create events and programs so that they can benefit from the influx of people. He gave an example of creating physical directories that can be placed around the city. He said banners on the website, radio ads, targeted marketing, geotargeting and social media might be good tools to promote. He stated his belief that there should be a parking plan in place for the festival. It was noted that there has been a huge uptick in vendor applications at the city.

Mr. Hall met with the Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourism (Visit Shreveport Bossier). Festival organizers hope to have buses coming in from Dallas, Houston, Little Rock, Jackson, New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Mr. Dunn stated his belief that there could be retail directories for those in the busses and in every hotel room. All the A-list celebrities will be staying downtown at Sam's Town, Bally's and the Hilton, so the hotels are an option for tourist information also. Ms. Landry will reach out to the Tourist Bureau.

Ms. Landry said DDA had previously transferred marketing dollars to DSDC, so there are funds available through DSDC also.

Mr. Corbin said he is concerned about the parking issues, and that DDA should get involved in conversations about parking as well.

Mr. Hall said the phrase “all roads lead to Shreveport” will be used on buses, bicycles, and around the city.

Mr. Corbin wants to be sure the downtown restaurants are well informed, open and staffed.

Mr. Dunn suggested increasing the hours of the Streetscape crew for that weekend, perhaps working around the clock. Tim Huck suggested some outside services to assist with cleanup as well.

Mr. Hall said there would be a workforce call and an effort to build a database of workers who can assist with the event weekend and others like it in the future. He is also working with SporTran to get parking lots outside downtown to participate for shuttle bus service. It will be critically important to know when parking is full and when additional visitors to the event must use the shuttle

A motion was made by Tim Huck to approve the May 2024 Budgetary Comparison Financial Statement as presented. Drayden Dunn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. REPORTS

A. Director’s Report

Ms. Landry reported that marketing is being done in-house now. She referenced the consultant who had been hired by DSDC to perform a market analysis and who was unable to do the work. The cost of that study was to be \$8K. Lauren Davidson has identified the database program the consultant was to use. Ms. Landry said that visits to the DDA website have increased by more than 1000 in just a short time. Staff has a method now to track visits to the website. Ms. Landry stated that she has tapped into the talent of the DDA staff and realigned some responsibilities. She said the changes have been very productive. One example she gave was asking Monica Rogers (Parking) to assist with Artwalk and Lunch on Us, as she has had previous experience managing large events.

Ms. Landry updated the board on the website redesign and the new “Find It Downtown” campaign. Another new idea Ms. Landry has initiated is “Block by Block” which will feature downtown businesses, residential and other entities on each block of downtown. DDA staff will visit business owners and entities on each block to gather information. Those businesses will be featured on the DDA website. The DDA is also compiling a business resource database to ensure effective communication with downtown stakeholders. She said that when the Artwalk began in April, staff had to reach out to artists to get them to participate. Now, the artists are reaching out to DDA asking to participate. Artwalk videos clips were shown to the board. Ms. Landry said feedback from the public indicates the videos are becoming popular.

1. Artwalk 2024

1st Wednesday each month April – December (except October due to Revel)

June 5, 2024 – Texas & Marshall Streets – Central Corridor; 5pm – 8 pm

June 5th was postponed due to weather.

Sketch the City with Misha Farrell and Downtown Tells with Robert Trudeau featuring Huddie Ledbetter. Will have a dance shuffle, hand percussion, and sing-along.

Ashley’s Tiers of Love – free cupcake samples.

Pop N Pizza specials.

Venue at 421 Texas will highlight newly renovated event space.
Noble Savage for specials.
Musicians along the way.
One Texas Center – first time participating.
July 10, 2024

2. Downtown Security Cameras
DDA donation of 4 cameras (\$12,203) to SPD.
City Council approved Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with SPD 2-27-24.
Working to coordinate purchase & installation with SPD. Sgt. Mike Jones, now liaison for this project upon Capt. Eatman's departure from SPD.
SPD ready for installation. JETT Business Systems – vendor will install. DDA will be billed upon completion.
3. Dees Building – 421 Market
Demolished; basement filled in.
Appraised for \$200,000 – Robert Russell
4. DDA 25-Year Tax Renewal
Current authorization period expires 12/31/27
Current millage rate 9.04 mills
Will work with City Administration/DDA Legal Counsel to determine best date to put proposition on city-wide ballot.
Property tax paid only by downtown property owners but voted on city-wide.
Will be a renewal; not new tax.
Developing plan of action to engage property owners/business owners.
5. Performed assessment of streetlights that are out downtown. 58 lights are out.
Texas – 18; Milam – 4; Travis – 10; Caddo – 4; Spring – 11; Fannin – 3; Marshall – 4; Edwards – 4
City Traffic Engineering on project now.
6. Petroleum Tower, 425 Edwards St.
Project still a possibility.
Investors met recently with city administration. Mayor agreed to support the project along the same lines as previously promised: property tax benefits, sales tax exemption during construction and these will be through support of application to NWLFA. City will also work with developer on traffic and parking adjustments for construction phase near the building. Ownership is pleased and moving forward with development.
7. Lunch On Us – August & September
Commitments from 13 restaurants as of this date.
8. Shop On Us – November and December
Designing an event similar to Lunch On Us to promote downtown retail.
9. Artspace – 708 Texas
SRAC requesting needed repairs at 708 Texas. Greg Solomon, GC, inspected property. Preparing projected costs. Roofing contractor said damage around windows caused by windows rather than roof issues.

10. Adopt A Pot
All planters are out. Sponsorship signs installed. Additional sponsors. Getting positive feedback.
11. Shreveport Common installing banners throughout the district. DDA Streetscape Supervisor assisting.
12. Marketing – Being handled in house. New campaign will play on existing Discover Downtown. New features – *Find It Downtown* and *Block By Block* to highlight businesses, organizations, residential in each block of downtown.
13. Research and demographic information – doing this work in house. Assembling information normally requested by potential investors/developers.
14. G-Unit Film & Television – purchasing vacant downtown properties. Jackson has spent \$2,020,000 to date to acquire several long-time vacant properties and vacant parcels downtown. Planning Humor & Harmony Festival in August. Expecting 60,000 attendees.
 - 218 Texas Street (purchased 5/31/24 for \$275,000)
 - 205 Texas Street (purchased 5/31/24 for \$345,000)
 - Lots 1-13 & ½ of abandoned alley – 301 Spring (purchase 6/13/24 for \$1,020,000);
 - 115 Texas, 119 Texas, 125 Texas, and 129 Texas (purchased 6/13/24 for \$281,250);
 - 611 Texas (purchased 6/28/24 for \$250,000);
 - 401 Spring (purchased 6/15/24 for \$150,000)
 - 308-310 Commerce (purchased 6/14/24 for \$76,872)
15. Staffing issues with downtown post office causing unexpected closures; causing issues for downtown businesses. Ms. Landry poke with Postmaster who was unaware of the situation. Rep. Mike Johnson’s office making inquiry.

B. Parking Report

Ms. Landry reported that the parking database is in the process of being updated currently. Mr. Dunn reiterated that a conversation with Douglas Parking before the festival is necessary to ensure that there are no bad experiences for festival attendees since the parking lots are still enforced after 5pm.

Lorenzo Lee reported that ticket revenue for the month of May was down somewhat, but meter and coin revenue was up. Total revenue is still up from last year. ParkMobile revenue was the highest month ever. Four vehicles were booted in May (highest boot was \$450).

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Search Committee – Executive Directors Position

Mr. Corbin stated that the executive director job is now posted, and the search firm is doing their job. He has heard that there were many people who have expressed interest.

Drayden Dunn said that the requirements listed for the position include a bachelor's degree. He noted that the previous director did not have a degree and gave his opinion that the wording should be “preferred” not required.

Ms. Holden asked how the requirement affects the four applicants whose names were forwarded to the recruiting firm. Ms. Landry said three of the four applicants indicated they had college degrees.

Mr. Corbin said the word preferred could be added, but noted that most of the ads have already been placed. The job closes on July 31st.

B. Downtown Security and Homeless: Lt. David Heaser (SPD Downtown)

Ms. Landry reported that years ago, an SPD representative regularly attended DDA board meetings. She asked Lt. David Heaser to attend meetings going forward.

Lt. Heaser introduced himself. He is a 26-year veteran of the police force and has worked downtown in various capacities since 2006. SPD has recently created the Downtown Coordinator position within the department, and he has assumed that responsibility. SPD will have an office at the AEP SWEPCO building on Travis Street, but it is not retrofitted for the department yet.

Drayden Dunn asked about coordination with other law enforcement agencies during the Humor and Harmony Festival. Lt. Heaser reported that they are working in conjunction with the Caddo Parish Sheriff's office and possibly State Police. There is also some discussion with the Bossier City Police Department. Private security may also be used.

Drayden Dunn asked if there was a best practices for private security that SPD could provide. Lt. Heaser will check on that and confer with Ms. Landry on his findings.

Tim Huck mentioned the homeless population and the issue of panhandling *downtown*. He asked if there was a way for Lt. Heaser to see that existing laws are enforced. Lt. Heaser said SPD is working to change the mindset of the officers to patrol outside their police car and be proactive. He said there was once a bicycle and a horse patrol downtown. Heaser said in day-to-day operations the bicycles are more effective than horses. There is an officer who is almost certified to be a bicycle instructor, so SPD can start getting the bicycle officers back on duty. The unit has brand new bicycles that were donated by the casinos before Covid and have never been used. He would like to deploy the downtown officers using the bicycles or horses. He also said that when the new office is set up, the officers will have workstations to use to complete their reports.

Tim Huck asked how the panhandler issue could be addressed. Heaser said during the day, patrol officers will have to come in from Allendale and surrounding areas to enforce. At night, the downtown officers will have to handle the panhandling issue,

or they will go back to patrol. Ms. Landry reported that the Saturday officers being paid by DDA were able to arrest the homeless man who has been damaging the downtown trees. Due to the value of the damage, it is classified as a felony, so he will be incarcerated for a while.

C. Vacant Property Ordinance

Councilman Brooks reported that the ordinance was on the Council agenda but was postponed.

D. Security Cameras

Ms. Landry reported that two cameras have been installed. Some power issues have held up installation of the other cameras.

E. Wayfinding Signage

Ms. Landry said that DDA staff has begun to inventory of the signage.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Lunchtime Free Parking Concept

Mr. Corbin reminded the board of the multiple discussions at previous meetings about how to better support downtown restaurants and requests received from restaurants for to-go pickup spaces or short-term parking. He asked Councilman Brooks to attend the meeting to help address the issues. Mr. Corbin asked Mr. Brooks if Council has to approve taking a space or spaces out of service for another use other than metered service and whether DDA could initiate the request.

Councilman Brooks stated it is his belief that the request would have to go through the mayor's office. He will investigate to determine the answer. Mr. Corbin has exchanged a few emails with the CAO regarding this topic, and also the fact that there may be loading zone spaces that are no longer needed. He would also like to determine if there is a reasonable way to support the downtown restaurants without creating an additional burden. He asked Councilman Brooks if he could follow up with the mayor and CAO about this issue.

Mr. Huck asked if Mr. Lee could look at loading zone spaces that could be converted and give the board a report. Ms. Landry agreed that could be done. Mr. Dunn suggested to preserve revenue and parking patroller positions, perhaps the restaurants could pay a percentage of the bagged meter fees for their dedicated space. Peak hours for parking downtown are during lunch.

Mr. Corbin suggested it would be a good idea for the downtown restaurants to include a link to the ParkMobile app on their to-go order pages.

Kathy Malone suggested that "how to use the ParkMobile app" would be a great idea for another video for the website.

B. Additional Downtown Security During Large Events

Ms. Landry said that Drayden Dunn had mentioned this topic previously, and Lt. Heaser also brought it up. She reached out to the Sheriff's and Marshall's office and learned that their offices have been in discussions with the city, particularly about the Humor & Harmony event. She said she relayed to them that DDA is particularly concerned that there be adequate officers on the street during any large event when crowds from those events overflow into downtown.

Lt. Heaser reported that Let the Good Times Roll festival did not have any issues this year as it has in the past. There were eight additional officers and outside security at the Tequila Fest at Cinco de Mayo. The special response team was also on site and briefly needed on the bridge when non-festival attendees shot some rounds. He said the situation was quickly contained. He also stated that the mobile command centers can be deployed as needed.

Drayden Dunn mentioned the open container ordinance and possible special event requests for open containers. Lt. Heaser responded that staffing for special events goes through headquarters.

Mr. Corbin said if the alcohol ordinance needs to be amended, it is a minimum four-week process. Lt. Heaser said officers will need to be informed on the proper enforcement of open containers for the upcoming event.

C. Sponsorship Request

Mr. Corbin presented a sponsorship request from The Social Circle of Louisiana for \$2K. The event, which will welcome out-of-town visitors to mix with local millennial and Gen Z professionals, will be held at Artspace and have DJs, craft cocktails, and wines. This event is planned to coincide with the Humor & Harmony festival.

Drayden Dunn said the event is an example of an ancillary opportunity for the festival. It is anticipated that all the downtown clubs will be filled that weekend. He gave his opinion that an event such as this will help mitigate the loitering and drinking outside. This company's most recent event was for 4k people at the Rose Garden, and they always have a large gathering at the Convention Center on New Year's Eve. Mr. Dunn has also been told that Rhino Coffee will be doing a Rhino at Night event, and Abby Singer's Bistro also plans to be open.

Tim Huck asked if The Social Circle of Louisiana is a non-profit agency. Mr. Dunn said that it is a for-profit business. Mr. Huck said he was not particularly fond of giving grants to for-profit businesses. He is also aware that Social Circle generally makes a healthy profit. Mr. Dunn said there is precedent for supporting for-profit events.

Mr. Corbin stated he understood Mr. Huck's concern and believes it to be valid. Kathy Malone said she appreciates the fact the event is at Artspace, and many people who attend may not have seen the venue before.

A motion was made by Kathy Malone to approve a sponsorship for the Social Circle of Louisiana event at Artspace for \$1,000. Drayden Dunn seconded the motion. The motion passed with Corbin, Dunn, Holden, and Malone voting in favor. Tim Huck voted in opposition.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Corbin reported that Kyle Southard had resigned from the board and noted that he is still a member of the board until his replacement is named. Mr. Corbin said it was his understanding that Council has a name on the agenda for the Council meeting in two weeks. However, it remains to be seen what action they will take.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

Craig Lee commented that the meeting was a good meeting, and Orville Hall gave a great presentation. He believes this (G-Unit's presence in downtown) is a golden opportunity and was happy Mr. Hall mentioned the fact that this is a stimulus for the city. He also said he appreciates that they have laid the foundation for the city to benefit from the partnership.

XII. ADJOURN

With no further business to address, the meeting adjourned at 5:28 pm.

Kyle Southard, Secretary