

City of Birmingham
Birmingham Shopping District Proceeding
Friday, May 8, 2020 - 8:30 a.m.
ZOOM Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of the Birmingham Shopping District Board held Friday, May 8, 2020, at 8:33 a.m. via ZOOM Meetings

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL OF BOARD

PRESENT: Astrein, Eid, Fehan, Hockman, Kay, Lundberg, Pohlod, Quintal, Roberts, Surnow, Valentine

ABSENT: Solomon

ALSO PRESENT:

ADMINISTRATION: Tighe, Brook

2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Motion by Astrein, seconded by Pohlod to approve the minutes dated April 15, 2020.

VOTE: Yeas, 11 Nays, 0 Absent, 1

4. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Valentine shared that the Maple Road reconstruction project has started and is progressing well.

5. REPORTS

a. FINANCE REPORT – TIGHE

Tighe reported that the large variances that appeared in last month's reports have now corrected themselves as approximately 94% of assessments have been collected. We also received \$125,000 from the parking advisory committee, which brings us back up to well over million dollars. We are now two thirds of the way through the fiscal year.

b. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - TIGHE

Tighe thanked board members for their time and availability for meetings as we work to develop a plan to help our downtown businesses with COVID19 relief efforts. We are working with the city to develop a comprehensive plan. Meetings have been held with our local congresswoman and state representative to advocate for businesses. Tighe is continuing to meet with Oakland County and the Michigan Downtown Association weekly. This is a great opportunity to share best practices. People have been very helpful and willing to work together which has been very positive.

In addition, the work with Oakland County has included being involved with the distribution of loans and grants for small businesses. The county was broken up into twelve districts and our district was made up of Franklin Village, Bloomfield Hills and Bloomfield Township, Beverly Hills and Birmingham.

Our group had almost 700 applications. The group went through and we awarded 40 grants to that group. Then an announcement was made about 2 weeks later, that Oakland County received something from the CARES Act. For the second round, our district received almost a million dollars. The group has been working all week going through the remainder of the 700 applications. Almost 250 total grants to our district were made.

Tighe relayed that she felt that Birmingham was well represented and they had a lot of applications. Many of the salons, retailers, and restaurants who applied received something. Oakland County did a nice job of steering the metrics and the process that was very fair and equitable among the businesses.

The last thing Tighe wanted to mention is that there is a crowd funding initiative for Oakland County. They are working with a third party that will allow every community a crowd-funding website. Oakland County is providing \$4000 to 25 of it's downtown communities. We will be able to promote this for all small businesses in the city, not just the BSD.

Hockman thanked Tighe for her work and shared that he was glad that Birmingham was well represented, as 22 grants went to Birmingham businesses in the first round. He also shared that The Community House has made a \$5,000 contribution to the BSD to help with relief efforts.

c. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

SPECIAL EVENTS - ASTREIN

Astrein reported that the Farmers Market has kicked off a drive through market with a very limited number of vendors. Tighe shared that we had received good feedback overall and that we will be working on promoting the market more. Brook added that we will be expanding our offerings for the coming week. Therefore, she thinks that we will have an even better response.

Astrein continued that other events are up in the air. Although he expects most will be canceled. Valentine shared that he had been a part of a meeting with city managers. He said that each community would decide how they would handle the Dream Cruise, but as it stands now, it does not seem safe to hold the event. Therefore, unless something big changes, that event will be canceled.

MARKETING & ADVERTISING - POHLOD

Pohlod updated the board that the committee is evaluating the Birmingham Magazine next year. They are looking at producing videos. Renaissance Media is willing to work with us and can have a quick turnaround. Some other advertising may also be moved around so that some funds can be used for Quarantine Cash.

The committee also had meetings with website RFP finalists and decided that they were not seeing any products that are significantly better than the current site. So, instead of selecting one, they will do another RFP.

MAINTENANCE/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS - QUINTAL

Quintal shared that they have decided to cut the snow removal contract in half. They will also eliminate power washing the sidewalks this year. Planters, hanging baskets, and holiday lights will move forward as usual.

Complimentary construction valet is currently on hold. The flag signs identifying businesses in the construction zone have been hung.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - SURNOW

Surnow said that the committee is looking at how they can help support businesses. They are also encouraging Cindy to keep reaching out to potential new businesses. The committee is excited about Quarantine Cash, which differs from Bonus Bucks because shoppers do not have to spend to earn them. It is basically free cash. The group is looking forward to getting that program started. The committee is also looking into bringing speakers to upcoming Merchant Meetings.

Tighe added that Johnny Was still intends to move in to their new location and inquiries from warm leads have not stopped. Valentine wondered about the challenges that malls will be facing and if we can promote downtowns as an alternative – if people have reservations about going to the mall, they can try our downtown instead. Pohlod responded that she thinks that that is a good idea and can be incorporated in promotions.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT

No report given.

d. PARKING REPORT - ASTREIN

Astrein reported that free parking would continue through the end of July. The city is losing approximately \$700,000 per month from parking revenue (\$500,000 from structures and \$200,000 from street parking).

Renovations on the N. Old Woodward structure are going well. They are also working on updating the elevators in all of the structures and looking into new technology to enter and exit the structures.

Tighe added that construction valet is ready to go, but there is a concern about whether or not the consumers will be comfortable with valet. This will be monitored month to month.

Astrein asked where we are with supplies as it is very difficult to get gloves, hand sanitizer and masks. Valentine responded that he has reached out to suppliers and is working on getting resources so that the city can help get them to retailers at low or no cost.

Pohlod added that she has a designer who is making masks and sanitizer and may be able to help. Valentine said that they are also putting together a resource guide for shields.

Tighe said that she would compile a list to send with the next BSD newsletter. Surnow wondered if we might want to develop a guide to reopening for businesses with best practices. Tighe responded that we started that at the last merchant meeting, but that it would be good to follow-up with more detail.

Roberts added that Oakland County has an economic recovery group that is putting user friendly, best practices information, on their website. He also shared that the Michigan Restaurant Association is frustrated with the administration and the lack of a plan. So, they developed their own plan that will be presented to the governor and the media today. The plan would be to start opening on the 29th. The National Restaurant Association also has a pre-opening guide. They would like to get 50% occupancy.

Valentine indicated that the city is looking at putting tables outside to allow for more diners. Surnow said that he thinks that that is something the BSD can promote and show that Birmingham is a leader.

Valentine also wanted to thank Lundberg for being on a call with Congresswoman Haley Stevens that triggered the idea of how we get PPE for businesses to help them reopen.

e. CHAMBER REPORT

There was no report from the Chamber.

f. COMMUNITY HOUSE REPORT

There was no report from The Community House.

6. APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

MOTION: Motion by Astrein, seconded by Kay to approve the vouchers, as submitted, dated May 8, 2020.

VOTE: Yeas, 11 Nays, 0 Absent, 1

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Resolution to approve BSD Amended Budget

Tighe shared that committees met and identified what needs to continue and what can be trimmed down. Everything would directly support businesses. This would be done with bold programming while remaining flexible.

Our objectives based on these goals would be to allocate \$50,000 in Quarantine Cash and \$50,000 to expanded marketing efforts. The committees identified \$109,000 and worked on 30-day, 90-day and 180-day plans. We will continue working on retention and working with Cindy. Marketing will also continue with Quarantine Cash and social media and producing a video. Maintenance would continue with planters, flower baskets, and holiday lights, but would cut snow removal to half of the normal season.

Under events, the staff has opened the farmers market and will work on a Back to Birmingham campaign. In addition, we will work to support things like patio dining and using the parks and open spaces for exercise classes.

Hockman asked Tighe to explain Quarantine Cash. She said that there would be an identified group of loyal shoppers. Those shoppers who are identified by retailers and restaurants will be sent electronic \$50 gift certificates. The hope is that they will spend two or three times that amount.

This program will be supported by Yiftee. The BSD will collect names from all retailers and restaurants and will remove duplicates and look at zip codes. Hockman asked what the timeline would be for this program. Tighe said that ideally they would be sent at the end of May to be used in June.

Hockman asked how this would affect Bonus Bucks. Tighe responded that she is looking at running that program later as more people come out to shop.

Hockman added that the other part of this motion is to authorize the use of an additional \$75,000 from the reserve as a contingency. Adding those together will amount in \$184,000 budget reallocation for this.

MOTION: Motion by Astrein, seconded by Fehan to approve the resolution to adopt the BSD COVID19 business relief initiatives and amended budget in support of these efforts.

VOTE: Yeas, 11 Nays, 0 Absent, 1

b. Resolution to Support the City's Preliminary Economic Proposal

Hockman shared that the city has a relief plan that will be going to commission next week and the BSD is being asked to support it.

Valentine agreed that we are all in this together and the city is working to offer assistance and relief as things return to a more normal state. Ways that they will do this include delaying invoices and collection of special assessments for water, sewer and sidewalks (not BSD assessment). Penalties on delinquent bills will be waived through the end of the year. Annual fees for outdoor dining will be waived. The fee for valet licenses will be waived as well as liquor license renewal fees. No permits will be required for temporary signage. Parking meters will be enforced during business hours but will be free after 5 p.m. The parking structures will be free throughout the summer and the fee for a business license for a new business will be waived.

Discussions will continue and new initiatives are expected. In addition, there are some operational initiatives to make sure that it is a safe environment in the shopping district. Sanitation stations will be added in parks, playgrounds, bus shelters and parking structures. Businesses that typically have indoor classes will be able to use city parks to allow them more space. Online transactions will be encouraged. They are looking into modifying outdoor dining areas, which may mean some street closures.

Valentine continued that the city is asking for the BSD's support. This initiative will be going to commission on Monday. Kay asked if restaurant valets could be directed to not use street parking spaces. Valentine responded that they could be required to use the structures.

MOTION: Motion by Astrein, seconded by Surnow to approve the resolution to support the City's preliminary economic proposals in anticipation of the reopening of the State to commerce.

VOTE: Yeas, 11 Nays, 0 Absent, 1

9. INFORMATION

a. Retail Activity

b. Announcements

c. Letters, Board Attendance & Monthly Meeting Schedule

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Valentine mentioned that although there is no charge for monthly parking in the parking structures, it seems that the invoices were mailed. A note also went out saying that they did not need to be paid, but there has been some confusion.

Hockman thanked the board and committee members for their work. He said that things have come together quickly. He complimented Tighe and the staff who have done a great job. It is a big task to implement the new programs. He also congratulated Eid on his recent wedding and his recognition, by GQ, as one of the top sixteen restaurants in the country

11. ADJOURNMENT – 9:35 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Jaimi Brook (back-up notes on file)