

GROVE PLACE ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 21, 2023

Charlotte Square Community Room and on Zoom

Attending in Person: Richard Rosen, Bob Keck, Richard McGrath, Judy Loeb, Linda Reiley, Bob DiPaola, Pam DiPaola, Hannah Russell, Sally Millick, Suzanne Mayer, Gloria Weyerts, Tom Fink, Alan Harris, Brenda Porter, Barbara Wager, Sandy Shapiro, Brian McLaughlin & Gloria Naurocki, Roz Goldman, Dexter Frank (new member), Marc Siewec.

Attending on Zoom: Ed Saphar.

AGENDA

Galin Brooks, guest speaker. She spoke about the proposed Business Improvement District (BID), including benefits and possible costs to homeowners. She discussed community outreach efforts and passed out a handout “Downtown Rochester Business Improvement District Effort”. The City Council has been advised of their efforts and the Council emphasized the need for community engagement.

Highland Planning end of 2022 is helping with community input. BDS Urban Design also helping the proposal for the BID district.

In 2020 with Roc the Riverway one of the projects proposed was to create an entity to promote and activate the projects there. The City did a study which resulted in a recommendation to create a Business Improvement District BID.

Galin has conducted walk-about, and was available during her monthly office hours in the B&L Building. In the Fall of 2022 she received 500+ responses to an online survey. In March of 2023 the first round of public meetings started. Two more public meetings, another survey and some summer events are planned as well.

Successful BIDs require strong leadership, sustained marketing and promotions, economic fundamentals, design and development principals. A BID would be charged with filling in gaps in City provided services.

Galin’s handout describes various BIDs in the USA.

Pittsburgh PA has a BID downtown. Galin will send a link to its website.

Philadelphia PA instrumental in district development, outreach to people in need.

Geneva, Auburn, Ithaca also have BIDs.

Washington DC (where Galin formerly worked) has a BID sponsoring many services to help the homeless population.

Berkely CA has a BID created in the 1990s. Also one in Seattle WA, which sponsored public art, small retail support.

See the Handout for descriptions of Potential BID Services, BID formation process, petition procedures for community businesses to approve the district.

Common Issues: free municipal parking, tax caps on property taxes if there's a BID (which requires monetary obligations for members of the district). Likely capped at 2%. BIDs don't usually assess individual single family homes. There may be assessments for some condominiums depending on size.

BID services are SUPPLEMENTARY, not to be used to take over required City services.

What is Galin's relationship with the University of Rochester? She has contacts and she receives input. UR is a large landowner and part of the downtown community.

There is no geographical plan yet for the BID proposal.

The City does have grants for small businesses. Gaps that need to be filled may include promotions for events, advocacy for additional grant programs, façade improvement, street frontage and oversight of areas that aren't taken care of by owners. There are 19 entertainment organizations and over 100 restaurants within the Center City so there's lots of activity here.

Roz commented - She is concerned about the condition of the city streets full of detritus and garbage. Streets are dirty and many potholes are not fixed. It's not a welcoming look for visitors. Marc S. said there are more relocations to Rochester. Brenda said the City is trying to hire more people for road improvements.

Suzanne M. worries about vandalism – for example, at the Main St. and Scio building which the City boarded up. Similarly, windows in other places near the Mercantile have been boarded up for way too long - to the extent that it can be considered neglect impacting minority citizens. Brenda said that some of the boarded up windows are not because of vandalism but due to owners going away for extended periods.

The City needs to be more transparent in addressing these issues – and transparency will be crucial for any BID.

So how will Rochester's BID be different? Galin said: BIDs are part of a democratic process – legislation must be enacted, City Council must annually approved BID budgets. BIDs are governed under NYS laws and are subject to FOIL requests and open meetings.

BIDs will likely not have private policing.

Go to www.Partnership for Downtown.org for more information online.

OTHER BUSINESS

51-55 Windsor St. Marc Siewec presented a summary of his revised proposal for the parking lot at 51-55 Windsor St. that he owns. His proposal is currently before the Preservation Board on June 14th.

The parking lot will not be black-topped; it will remain gravel. Members commented that every time it rains, mud will be sliding into the street. GPA members can request that the lot be paved. There's also a lot of dust.

Landscaping across the front of the parking lot will be improved with a 5ft wide berm with plantings of evergreen shrubs. Tenant in the sixth spot must own a compact car. Marc proposed changing the size of the parking spaces from 9 ft. to 8 feet 6 inches for each parking space. Remaining issue: the enclosure for garbage receptacles. Marc's proposal – move the garbage enclosure to the rear of his property. Install a 5 ft high enclosure with two gates, with a sloping roof that will abut Bob Keck's property. The garbage totes should go against his garage. (Bob D. objects and discussed alternatives). See photos – the top photo shows totes against Bob's property.

Bob D. requested that the back of Marc's enclosure be separate instead of abutting his property. Also, snow storage on Marc's property abuts Bob's property and he's concerned that the plows will knock down his fence.

Marc quoted \$35,000 to make the improvements and changes described. He has also hired a new property manager and maintenance worker.

MOTION: by Bob Keck seconded by Pam DiPaola. "GPA adds to its current request that the trash enclosure be moved to the position shown on his presented showing the autos and greenery photo and that the trash enclosure be reduced in width and request that the lot be paved." Motion approved and passed.

Fun Committee – Brenda and Sally, co-chairs, suggested having a taco party in July. Details will follow.

New Planters - Roz Goldman thanked Pam DiPaola for organizing and purchasing the new planters.

East End Green. Richard Rosen reported that City construction equipment currently is creating a grass open space 160' x 150' at the corner of Charlotte Street, N. Union Street, and Pitkin Street, which we shall call "The East End Green". Note that we haven't called it a park, because Mayor Evans was clear that if a proposal for development should be received, it will be given consideration. That may sound familiar: "Parcel 5" on the site of the former Midtown Plaza was not designated as parkland until citizens demonstrated that the land would be put to good use for concerts, festivals, and other seasonal events. That means it's up to us residents to secure the activities that will enrich both the East End neighborhood and the City, and hopefully resulting in making this a permanent park.

We are asking for volunteers to participate in drumming up interest. We hope that by this time next year we will have the Green booked for events, as well as used by residents for play and leisure. The City will maintain the grass, and may add benches, trash receptacles, doggie bag dispensers, and other available materials that are on hand. Please provide your name and contact information either to Rory, owner of The Ugly Duck or texted to Richard Rosen, President, 585-415-3448.

What could volunteers do? First priority is to engage those that live close to the site and find out what they would like to see. The apartment houses that flank the site have virtually no outdoor space. This may generate helpers.

New website and email have been created: www.groveplace.org/greenspace and email: EastEndGreen@groveplace.org

MOTION: by Richard Rosen. Bob Keck seconded. That we name the property "The East End Green". Approved and passed.

Treasurer Update: Balance is approximately \$11,171.65.

Meeting adjourned at 5:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Loeb, Secretary