

Minutes of the GPA General Membership Meeting

January 28, 2024 at 4:00pm

at the Charlotte Square Community Room and on Zoom

Agenda

Guests: Galin Brooks, President & CEO, Rochester Downtown Development Corp. (RDDC) and Executive Director of Rochester Downtown Partnership; Rory Von Grol, owner of the Ugly Duck Café; and Bleu Cease, Executive Director/Curator of the Rochester Contemporary Art Center (RoCo).

Richard Rosen provided this link to the most recent BID proposal to the City Council: <https://partnershipfordowntown.org/s/DRAFT-District-Plan-Downtown-Rochester-BID-g2hz.pdf>

Richard clarified that the historic GPA area is NOT part of the BID area. Only the Charlotte St. side of E. Main St. is within the proposed district.

Rory von Grol stated that he is opposed to the BID proposal. However, as a small business owner who rents property, he cannot vote on the BID. Rory is concerned that the costs to property owners of participating in the BID will trickle down to renters and other non-property business owners. Downtown residents number @10,000 now – without a BID. Rory is concerned that if, say only 15 people own 40-50% of downtown properties, that they will have too much power over other residents who will have no voice.

He asked: what does the City do now that is also included in the BID proposal? Why is it necessary to have such duplication of effort?

Bleu Cease has been an advocate in the Arts Community since 2000. He is also opposed to the BID. He has concerns about the process as well as the BID structure. The BID seems the opposite of what is needed. He networks with 31 community advocacy organizations and unions that are also opposed the creation of a BID.

Galen said that the total annual BID budget is \$2,265,000. Assessments would be 25 cents per \$100. Residential property under 4 units won't be assessed. The 2023 redraft comments are being reviewed now.

Qs ensued from members and Galen addressed their concerns as follows:

If City Council approves the proposal, will there be a staff? What if the BID isn't approved for another year? How will City Council judge if the BID is successful? Could the \$10 million budget be for naught?

Will the BID help the new East End Green community neighbors engage in community activities? Galen said it's possible but she can't commit to anything now. If development is envisioned, there must be hearings – just like there were with Parcel 5.

Galen said the current proposal requires the creation of committees to address each area of concern, such as financing and marketing for the BID district as a whole. The BID would be reviewed annually and City Council would have the power to decide to dissolve the district. Each board member's term is set for 3 years for additional terms of 3 years, up to 9 total.

Who can be a BID board member? Appointments will be nominated by the Mayor, City Council. How will non-property owners have a voice and representation?

Will Not for Profits participate? The larger NPCs will have representation on the BID board. Galen was not sure about smaller NPCs.

When will Council vote on this? Within a few months.

Community Safety Concerns. The City Police Department moved away from its only downtown location. In the past, police had a presence at Richard's Restaurant, they would ride bikes around town and get to know residents. Galen said the BID proposal now is based on non-traditional options so there is nothing formalized regarding City Police obligations under the BID.

Property Management Issues. The City streets are constantly full of garbage. One member noted that the City only cleans up garbage in the morning. How will a BID improve that? The proposal includes only spot cleanup, landscaping.

Regular Business

Treasurer's Report (Richard McGrath). Balance on hand is currently \$11,106.40. The Holiday Party was a stunning success. Receipts were \$800 and the actual expenses were well under.

Zoning Alignment Project (ZAP) (Bob Keck). Bob presented GPA members a position paper, 20 people unanimously voted in favor to it. Public comments will be accepted until the Jan 31st deadline. However, there will be another public comment period later.

Written observations made by a group of residents August 8, 2023 were presented to the Executive Committee recently. Mark Wilson summarized the points need for action (below). Mark asked for members to volunteer to help with these issues.

1. Public safety and code compliance. Pam DiPaola is the chair/sole member of the Safety Committee.
2. Adopt a corner – VOC, Scio, University Ave. areas for trash cleanup. This is similar to suburban “adopt a highway” projects.
3. Block F maintenance. Volunteers are needed to meet with UR management to determine a plan for improvement. Mark has also started a tree replacement inventory. Please see Mark to volunteer to help on this.
4. Overall membership needs to increase significantly. Roz is helping to increase membership awareness and has encouraged people to join GPA. About six new members have done so.
5. Who will host the GPA member socials after the Feb. General Meeting? Brenda Porter volunteered for February. Rick McGrath said these are self-sustaining events.
6. GPA needs volunteers to monitor Gov. Hochul’s downtown gambling casino proposal, which was made without first informing Mayor Evans, who is opposed to it.
7. The Focus Pregnancy property has parking problems. We need monitors.
8. Who will update GPA history? Create historical tours to encourage residents to come downtown? Sally has volunteered. Who else can help her?

Bob DiPaola addressed the following:

Eastman School of Music residential building issues. ESM/UR is in the process of stopping large truck access at the dorm building. Their gate has been damaged and is being repaired.

At the October and Xmas party, many people took photos. Bob need members’ permission to post them on our website. There is a password protected section for photos that could be made accessible only to members.

Future use of the former Carlson YMCA building; outreach efforts. The sale to UR is on hold. Ernest Lamour, President and CEO, rejected both Bob D’s and Richard’s invitations to meet with us.

Safety Report and Code Enforcement (Pam DiPaola). Every other month there are supposed to be meetings with community members, the Chief of Police and his assistants. But many meetings have been canceled, so it's down to 2-3 times a year. They have become more of a staff development session. Pam is frustrated by this and she's talked to the Chief of Police. It's a disservice to the community who want to improve safety when there is no enthusiasm from the police. Pam is stymied by the system. Even the Neighborhood Service Centers meetings have turned into speaker events, which is not helping to improve safety. Mitch Gruber is working on Safety and Pam will work with him directly.

Suzanne said she is trying to schedule another Code Enforcement walk-through with Charles Reeves. She also mentioned that there could be a new GPA project, on a children's garden, and will send out a brochure.

Pam is on the Beautification Committee but only until May 2024. Who will take over?

Membership Committee. Roz reminded people to please send in their annual dues. Pam is creating a membership list of paid members. Only members can vote. Dues are \$30 per person. \$35 per business.

Nominating Committee (Bob DiPaola). Includes Bob, Roz, Scott Frame, Tom Fink.

Motion to adjourn: Sally; seconded by: Richard. Adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Loeb, Secretary