



Peekskill Business Improvement District
SPECIAL Board of Director's Meeting Minutes-Draft
Thursday, May 7, 2020 @ 6pm
Via ZOOM

Board Members Present: Brian Fassett, Ann Scaglione, Matt Rudikoff, LaFern Joseph, Cynthia Del Rosario, Ivy Fairchild, Larry D'Amico, Vanessa Agudelo, Monique Michaels, Executive Director Bill Powers. BID Member in attendance: BID Member Sue Sheridan. Absent: Brendon Fitzgerald and David Kaminsky. Mr. Kaminsky provided Pres. Fassett with a proxy.

Call meeting to order - President Fassett called the meeting to order at 6:04pm and noted that the BID was meeting via Zoom and will be following the guidelines established by the City on how they conduct their meetings. He noted that written comments can be submitted to Executive Director Bill Powers up to three hours before the meeting via email.

Pres. Fassett asked Ex. Dir Powers to read any correspondence received from BID members; none was received.

Board Member Del Rosario noted that she had received a note from Arne Paglia about this meeting; Pres. Fassett acknowledged that he received the same note.

Report on BID Board of Director's Executive Session held on May 5, 2020: Pres. Fassett stated that the BID Board held an executive session on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 immediately after its regularly scheduled board meeting; the Executive Committee voted not to continue negotiations with Ms. Corinna Makris as farmers market manager. After Board discussion, a motion put forth not to continue discussions with or hire Ms. Makris as market manager. The vote was one abstention, one to continue negotiations and six votes to end negotiations. The motion passed to end negotiations. There were no questions from the board.

Recommendation by Executive Committee for the hiring of Peekskill Farmers Market Manager: Pres. Fassett stated that the board received three applications for the farmers market manager's position. There was one proposal that clearly stood out, and the Executive Committee set up an interview with this party at 12:15pm on May 6, 2020, the Executive Committee met via Zoom and reviewed the proposal submitted by Events to Remember, speaking with President and Founder Ms. Chereese Jervis-Hill. ETR is a full-service event and management and public relations firm. Their strengths are handling press releases, social media, event promotion, and market strategy, and have over 10,000 contacts in their marketing outreach database. They work with many non-profits, corporate entities, and municipalities. Much of their work is business building, large expos, and smaller private events. They have been in business for 16 years, they have four full-time staff and they laid off one person due to the pandemic. Ms. Jervis-Hill has been to our market before, has some fresh ideas and would like to improve the layout; she likes the vendor selection. She is fully aware of the necessary safety precautions that are needed in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. She will become a certified market manager over the course of time. She will also look into SNAP payments and Board Member Fairchild is working on this as well. She seeks to maximize social media and other avenues. She understands that we are the client and she is open and transparent with her communications. She is ready and willing to do a walk-thru of our location and is willing to start planning immediately. The Executive Committee offers Events to Remember to fulfill the position of farmers market manager. The motion must include that the city of Peekskill must approve our street closure permit to proceed with the hiring.

Board Member Agudelo asked how many staff will be committed to the market. Pres. Fassett stated that ETR will have all of their staff there for training and then decide at a later time how many will be needed going forward. Board Member D'Amico stated he had met with Wilfredo Morel and he had indicated that there was marketing money available to promote farmers markets from New York State.

Motion was made by Board Member Del Rosario to hire ETR as farmers market manager as long as the City of Peekskill grants the proper street closure permit, seconded by Sec. Joseph. Board Member Agudelo asked to open the floor for discussion.

Board Member Agudelo stated that she was concerned the board was considering outsourcing this farmers market to a firm that specializes in marketing, private events. She stated that it was her opinion to hire someone with farmers market experience, or background in healthy foods, or some connection with the agricultural world. She stated that ETR does not meet these criteria, especially during the pandemic, and that any other time ETR could have learned how to run the market, but that this is not the time. She stated that the community and the vendors are relying on us to get this right immediately, and she thinks it is a mistake to hire someone with no farmers market experience. Board member Ivy Fairchild asked Board Member Agudelo if she had any other suggestions on how the BID could manage the market for this year and she stated that she would go back out and find someone with the experience. Board Member Monique Michaels asked how long the position has been open and available and how much more time do we have to make a decision? Executive Director Powers noted that the open position has been out for several weeks and that we are very late in the process in hiring someone because Ms. Makris delayed our process for hiring someone, and he noted that the other farmers market managers that we could have gone to see if they wanted to run our market are already booked at other markets and have their hands full with the COVID 19 requirements. He noted that ETR is our best option and further noted that the market is a 15 to 20 vendor event and ETR has extensive experience in dealing with vendors; he further stated that if the board goes back to find another manager, there will be no farmers market this year. Pres Fassett noted that ETR has managed farmers markets as part of larger vendor events in the past. Board Member Agudelo expressed concern that ETR would not be exclusively managing farmers markets, but that they would be taking on other events throughout the year and may be stretched thin and their sole focus will never just be the Peekskill Farmers Market. She was sure that ETR would run the market successfully, but she does not think this is a winning situation. Board Member Ivy Fairchild asked how long the contract was for, Pres. Fassett answered that the BID could terminate the contract at any point. Treasurer Scaglione stated that she had been in the interview with ETR and she noted that she liked the termination portion of the contract if we were not satisfied; she stated that she was very impressed by the professionalism of Ms. Jervis-Hill and how she talked about having held seventy events annually with different municipalities, and how she would use social media to promote the market, and how she would get additional coveted vendors, and how with ETR's experience with larger events they would be able to design a layout that meets all the new social distancing guidelines. She liked that ETR was planning to bring their whole team there to think everything through and make sure we had all the precautions in place. For these reasons, Treasurer Scaglione thought ETR would be a good choice. Pres. Fassett wants to add to the contract that ETR must become a certified market manager, not merely suggest it. Treasurer Scaglione agreed that that would be a good thing to add to the contract.

Board Member Michaels asked if ETR had discussed adding any new vendors and Pres. Fassett indicated that ETR had discussed bringing in healthier food vendors and less on the sugary/sweet vendors or non-food vendors as space permits. Pres. Fassett stated that the BID has been in touch with the farmers who had been in the past and they are all planning to come back. Board Member

Del Rosario asked if the compensation is based on a flat rate or commission. Pres. Fassett stated that the contract with ETR is a flat rate, payable over months. Board Member Del Rosario stated that without that incentive, there is no incentive to go out and get new vendors. Board member Del Rosario wants to include some goals. Board Member Fairchild stated that we should be cautious because what ETR might do in a normal year may not apply this year because of COVID 19 and that ETR may not be able to get a lot of new vendors this year, nor may they be able to promote it in ways they'd like to to maintain market-goers' safety. Board Member Del Rosario would still like to see some goals even they are not tied to ETR's compensation. Board Member Agudelo asked if ETR would be starting from ground zero and Pres. Fassett stated that ETR has 16 years of vendor connections and that Exec. Dir. Powers pulled together a list of previous vendors and can provide that list so ETR can reach out to them immediately. Board member Agudelo questioned again if ETR had cultivated relationships with vendors or farmers, and Secretary Joseph stated that ETR had such relationships. Board Member Michaels stated that Farmers Markets are run by passionate individuals and that's what makes them successful that teams, corporations or marketing event planning companies, it's people that love and breathe and live for farmers markets. Exec. Director Powers stated that he had been in touch with many of the previous vendors and that we have a database of farmers, and farm market type vendors, and he stated that ETR would start there and then look to add or complement those vendors. He went on to say that the BID should look at the market as a fresh food option for the downtown, not focus on non-food vendors; two of the farms and Picklelicious who have been in previously have already reached out and are intending to come into the market. He noted that those three are critical pieces and with them, we can build a market around them. He added that timing-wise, we need to move on a decision. Board Member Fairchild stated that we can keep the market going and regroup later to establish a strategy for moving the market forward for next year. Pres. Fassett stated that Board Member Kaminsky wanted to see a small farmers market committee formed to help support the market forward. Pres. Fassett also stated that, "To speak to Chereese's passion, I have never met someone in the short interview that we had done with her, that has been more passionate about what they do. She is a very passionate and a ready to hit the ground running person." Secretary Joseph agreed. Board Member Agudelo did not question Chereese's passion, but that she does not live and breath farmers markets, in these troubling times. Pres. Fassett noted that we do not have an applicant that meets Board Member's Agudelo's standards and requirements. Pres. Fassett stated that Ms. Makris is not a viable option since she is not willing to work with the BID. Board Member Agudelo corrected Pres. Fassett and stated that the Board voted not to work with Ms. Makris, and that Ms. Makris intended to work with the BID. Pres. Fassett stated that her characterization was not the case. Board Member Agudelo stated that Ms. Makris was asked if she was willing to negotiate and her answer was "yes." Board Member Fairchild stated that Ms. Makris stated that she could not work with Exec. Dir. Powers or Pres. Fassett, so "who would she work with?" Board Member Agudelo stated that Ms. Makris did not state that. Then added, "Privately, she was not willing to work with Bill (Powers)." Pres. Fassett emphatically stated that Ms. Makris stated that should would not work with Exec. Dir. Powers in the meeting. Board Member Agudelo stated she did not know whether Ms. Makris was willing to work with Pres. Fassett or not. Pres. Fassett stated that now is not the time to restructure the BID. Board Member Michaels stated that Ms. Makris wanted to work with the BID, that she does not want to work with Bill. Ms. Michaels stated that we have had an ad out for two week's, most take applications for a month and that we should consider going back out there and have a talk with Ms. Makris to be fair; she stated that we are in dire hard times right now, especially for somebody that has the passion to do this job as Ms. Makris did. Board Member Michaels stated that she felt we were "throwing Ms. Makris under the bus for no reason." She stated

that “we were so quick” to close this market during Coronavirus and now we are quick to get it running again. She stated that she is against a hasty vote.

Board Member D'Amico stated that he had run a farmers market in Ossining for a couple of years and he said he handled the market administratively, but the farmers were the ones that had the passion for selling fresh fruits and vegetables; he questioned whether we needed someone who was super skilled to run the market; ETR has good marketing skills he said and he added that if it doesn't work out, we have a cancellation clause. Sec. Joseph stated that bouncing back and forth with Ms. Makris is not a good idea. The Board already made the decision and voted not to continue negotiations with Ms. Makris and everyone expressed their opinions at the last meeting; then the board interviewed someone and Sec. Joseph said Ms. Jervis-Hill is very good for the position based on her passion and work experience. She stated that if we go back, we will not get the farmers market open on time. She stated, “We need to move on. Everybody loves Corinna, she's a good girl, but we have gone in another direction.”

Board Member Fairchild made a motion to hire Events to Remember as the market manager with the provision that the city will issue us a permit, seconded by Cynthia, with Pres. Fassett, Board Members Rudikoff, D'Amico, Joseph, Scaglione, and proxy from Board Member Kaminsky held by Pres. Fassett in favor of ETR, voted yes; Board Members Agudelo and Michaels voted no.

Policy: Post ZOOM meeting recording or printed minutes to website: Exec. Dir. Powers reported that BIDs around the state are discussing how to hold meetings and that the BIDs are getting conflicting guidance. In terms of records retention, Exec. Dir. Powers asked how the board wanted to retain the minutes to the meetings, either posting the videos of the meetings, or having transcripts done, or having minutes done. Pres. Fassett expressed concern that by posting the meeting video, he is concerned that we will always have to do that even when we get back to in-person meetings. Board Member Michaels was in favor of having the meetings posted on video saying that video is much more transparent than minutes; Treasurer Scaglione stated that it was a positive to have the video. Board Member Fairchild stated that the BID still has to keep written minutes; Pres. Fassett made a motion to post the video to the BID website, all in favor, except Sec. Joseph who abstained.

Pres. Fassett opened a discussion on whether to have transcripts of meetings versus minutes. Exec. Dir. Powers stated that as long as the BID is posting the videos of their meetings, he saw no need for a transcript too. Board member D'Amico stated that minutes are better because it abbreviates the meeting notes, but if someone wanted to view the whole meeting, they can still do so. Board Member Agudelo stated that she would abstain and prefers that the BID poll its members to see what they prefer. Pres. Fassett acknowledged that and suggested that the BID approve written minutes over transcription. Pres. Fassett made a motion for video posting and minutes, all in favor, except Board Member Agudelo who abstained.

Sec. Joseph made a motion to end the special meeting at 6:41pm, seconded by Board Member Del Rosario. All in favor.