



**Peekskill Business Improvement District
Board of Director's Meeting Minutes-Draft
Tuesday, June 2, 2020 @ 6pm
Via ZOOM**

Board Members Present: Brian Fassett, Ann Scaglione, LaFern Joseph, Cynthia Del Rosario, Ivy Fairchild, Larry D'Amico, Vanessa Agudelo, David Kaminsky, Brendon Fitzgerald, and Executive Director Bill Powers. **Guests:** Chereese Jarvis-Hill and Barbara Gipps from Events to Remember/Farmers Market Management Team. **Board Members Absent:** Matt Rudikoff, Monique Michaels. **BID Member present:** Mary Foster, Scarlett Antonia, Eileen Sullivan.

Call meeting to order - President Fassett called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

BID Member Public Comment – Pres. Fassett asked if any BID Member wanted to speak on agenda items, there were none.

Peekskill Farmers Market – Pres. Fassett introduced Chereese Jarvis-Hill and her team member Barbara Gipps from Events to Remember. Ms. Jarvis-Hill gave a brief update on the Peekskill Farmers Market. The market currently has 12 vendors, some with double or multiple booth spaces, totaling 21 vendor spaces which will make the market look nice and full. She noted that she has built in social distancing so that each vendor will have an additional ten-foot space between them and the next vendor. She noted that Pres. Fassett created a great map of the market and asked that he share it with the board. Cheese, fresh produce and fruits, artisan bread, hummus, olives, pickles, various Greek foods (prepared), seafood, organic dog treats, handmade soaps (which is acceptable under NYS essential guidelines for markets); still looking for a coffee vendor and an organic meat vendor. She spoke about the Peekskill Farmers Market Facebook page and having added Peekskill Farmers Market event pages. When ETR started, the Peekskill market page had 73 likes, and as of this date, it is up to 177. We will host a ribbon-cutting at 1030am for this Saturday at the market. We mentioned the ribbon-cutting on Facebook, but we are not doing a lot of publicity because we don't want an influx of people at one time, we want to keep the attendance steady and manageable and be able to practice social distancing. She noted that we set aside the first hour for seniors and those with compromised immune systems where seniors and those with health concerns can feel comfortable. She noted that she, her staff, Pres. Fassett and Exec. Dir. Powers will be meeting with the Peekskill Police Department with logistics this week. She noted we are set with vendor restroom and hand washing station which is required under health department regulations. She noted that the middle section of Bank Street will be a shopping section and that there are two entrances, one from Bank Street, one from Main; the sidewalks are for through traffic and exiting the market. There will be a hand sanitizer station at each of the entrances. Free masks will be distributed to anyone without a mask since we are requiring market-goers to wear masks. She will be monitoring the number of market-goers; we want people to come in, shop and leave. She stated that she had received three phone calls since the press release just went out yesterday. She stated that she thinks the Peekskill community is excited to have the market back open. Ms. Gipps stated that she is still waiting to hear from a coffee vendor and a honey vendor. She stated that the market looks "solid" for this weekend. Pres. Fassett stated that the BID had been able to retain our staple vendors from past years. Exec. Dir. Powers noted that the BID is planning on doing the ribbon-cutting at 1030am on Saturday; the Mayor and Council and other elected officials have been invited and we plan to do a socially distanced ribbon cutting with the ribbon being stretched from Main to Park Streets; he joked that it would be the longest ribbon cutting

in the city's history; he further noted that this is the 30th Annual Peekskill Farmers Market.

Board Member Cynthia Del Rosario suggested that Ms. Jervis-Hill contact Hemlock Hills Farm—they are local and provide organic meats and another called Glenwood Farms. Ms. Gipps stated that she was on the Hemlock Hills website today checking to see if they do farmers markets. Board Member Del Rosario said Hemlock Hills has a store in Cold Spring and it's called Marbled. She does not know their price points or if they do farmers markets. Board Member Fairchild asked about the vendor that had previously offered organic meats, and dry meats. Exec. Dir. Powers noted that one of them had already been booked at another market because the process had taken too long to get our market re-established. Ms. Gipps concurred. Ms. Jervis-Hill thanked Board Member Fairchild for a useful discussion on SNAP benefits. Board Member Kaminsky asked what the process is for making sure people coming into the market are wearing a mask. Ms. Jervis-Hill stated that tables at each entrance will be staffed by her team. Her staff will offer masks to anyone coming into the market. Pres. Fassett noted that to decrease the friction of not having a mask, the BID purchased 1,000 disposable masks to give out to anyone who doesn't have a mask. Board Member Fairchild asked if we are asking vendors to put sanitizers on their tables. Ms. Jervis-Hill stated yes, among other requirements. Pres. Fassett noted that the detailed vendor guidelines are posted on the BID website under the Farmers Market page and we will see what works and what doesn't work this week and make adjustments as necessary. Board Member Agudelo asked if we had considered turning the market around and avoiding everyone gathering in the middle, and instead, having the market-goers on the outside. Ms. Jervis-Hill stated that the vendors will be set up similar to last year with the center area for market-goers, who will then exit via the sidewalks. Each vendor will have at least 10 feet and some up to 20 feet for their shoppers. [Pres. Fassett shared his screen of the market map]. Board Member Agudelo suggested that if we see a cluster of people gathering maybe we could put the vendors in the middle and have the customers come from the outside. She said she had seen this at another market that was held on green space and admitted that it may be more difficult to do in our environment. Pres. Fassett noted that we had looked at that configuration but that the vendors need to park their vehicles behind the tents. Pres. Fassett noted that we will look at the configuration again, and added that by moving the vendor vehicles offsite, we could have more room. Board Member Agudelo asked if there would be some way to hold back people from coming into the market if it is too crowded? The answer was “yes” and Ms. Jervis-Hill noted that staff will be positioned at each entrance to control crowds. Ms. Gipp's concurred, and noted that with the ten-foot spacing if there is a crowd at one booth, they can line up around the side of their booth and still maintain social distancing. BID Member Sullivan asked about crowd control measures at each booth. Ms. Jervis-Hill responded that chalked x's will be placed at each vendor booth for people to stand on until waited on. Pres. Fassett noted that we are doing a walk-through with the police and that they have offered to be around and available during the market should there be any issues. He further noted that he and Exec. Dir. Powers will be there all day Saturday to make sure everything runs smoothly. Pres. Fassett invited all the board members to attend as well. Board Member Del Rosario said she would be there to help if needed and asked if there were any contingency plans if there are protests on Saturday so vendors can pack up and leave safely. Pres. Fassett noted that we will address that with the police during the walk-through.

Peekskill Farmers Market/SNAP Program – Board Member Fairchild reported that she had done the research into SNAP which the board had requested. She stated that the board would need to decide if the BID would have the market certified as a SNAP market which would require us as market managers to manage all the accounting between customers and vendors; or have the individual

eligible vendors become SNAP vendors and they do their own accounting; or, we can have a hybrid model with both. We would have to determine if the BID wants to take on the liability is if there is an issue. Someone would have to handle all the transactions. Pres. Fassett stated that he would like to have the vendors become licensed SNAP providers and have the responsibility for the accounting, stating that we do not have the appropriate staffing to handle all this and that he wants to make sure we do not fail at providing SNAP benefits. Pres. Fassett asked Treasurer/City Comptroller Scaglione about her thoughts on the BID handling the SNAP program accounting. The City, she announced, would begin accepting SNAP for their senior nutrition program and that in so doing the city had to sign up with a credit card processor. Treasurer Scaglione asked why we wouldn't look for vendors that have the certification already. Board Member Fairchild stated that having certified vendors would be best, but if we want to get started right away, we should be the lead and become the certified SNAP agent, or we should help our existing vendors through the process so they can individually be certified to accept SNAP. Treasurer Scaglione stated that the city had a lot of hurdles in setting up the SNAP program and she expects that the BID would have the same hurdles. Peekskill is doing this as a pilot program with Westchester County. Board Member Fairchild stated that there are about 8500 markets in the US, that only 3500 are licensed to accept SNAP, and that only half of those are using their license to accept SNAP. The BID has to decide whether we want to accept the risk and liability and whether we have the staff time to commit to this. Exec. Dir Powers stated that only one vendor is certified to accept SNAP at our market. He further noted that the reason why we did not seek certification in the past as a market was because of the staffing and accounting requirements. He further stated that before we do anything we should survey the vendors to see who else is already certified, and if they even want to participate. Board Member Fairchild noted that the certification is not difficult, but the management of the benefits is cumbersome. She further stated that we should have vendors who are certified already or assist those who want to apply; that there is funding available for vendors to get the EBT devices needed to process payments; that we could get funds to help promote the SNAP program. Ms. Jervis-Hill said she thinks we should promote the farmer that accepts SNAP. Board Member Agudelo wants to have a measurement of how many vendors we want to have to accept SNAP and incentivize them to sign up. Pres. Fassett asked to make sure that Rolling Ridge post signage that they accept SNAP benefits. Ms. Jervis-Hill and Ms. Gipp were excused.

Request Approval of May 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Pres. Fassett was not able to hear Sec. Joseph at this point, so he moved on to the next agenda topic.

Hanging Flower Baskets – Pres. Fassett reported that the hanging basket program has started, that the BID had purchased 100 hanging flower baskets and 50 double brackets. The DPW assembled the planters, planted the flowers that the city purchased, and started to hang them. He wanted to thank the City DPW for all the work they have done to get the hanging baskets started. We need a few weeks for the planters to start flourishing; the city is watering them at city expense. Pres. Fassett noted that the next thing is to start removing the large ground flower barrels; some he said could potentially be moved over to Esther Street as part of the Peekskill Walks proposal as barricades, which the group plans to submit to the City Council for review soon. Pres. Fassett said he would make a map for the City DPW of barrels that can be removed to get that process started; he asked the board if they know of anyone who wants to keep, adopt, plant and love their barrels to let him know. There are about 50 barrels left on the street, after having donated and removed about 50 last year. Board Member D'Amico stated that he wants to keep his barrel.

Harvest Festival/2020 Event Planning – Board Member Del Rosario said she and Vice Pres. Fitzgerald met and she thinks that we need to be prepared for events as we go from Phase 1 to Phase 3 very

quickly. She stated that she and Vice Pres. Fitzgerald would like to put an event together for the end of August as well as October. June and July are not being considered for events because of the COVID 19 restrictions. She wants to know if the board is comfortable in putting together these events, which would not be as big as we have done in the past. We'd have to plan the spacing of booths, etc. Vice Pres. Fitzgerald stated that he wants to bring people back into the downtown; he does not want to do a full-scale event; something low key, with the stage and showmobile and maybe just one band or DJ and he's hoping things are more relaxed by then. He asked if the board wants to do this, yes or no. What are we comfortable doing? Or do we just postpone until October Fest. Exec. Dir. Powers stated that the other BIDs around the state are not doing any large scale outdoor events for the summer. He stated that there was concern that the Governor would not lift large scale outdoor events before the fall. He also cautioned that a lot of other groups that had spring/summer events pushed them all into the fall, so that if we held an event, we would be competing with other communities. He further added that he thought an August event might be premature. Board Member Fairchild agreed, noting that her firm which is involved in many events, all of the events she is associated with have been canceled until next year. Board Member Del Rosario stated that we need to help struggling businesses some way, even if it is not with events. Pres. Fassett suggested that whatever we do, maybe it should be hyper-local, and only allow Peekskill businesses to have booths, food service, etc. Board Member Agudelo liked that idea and cautioned that we may be seeing waves of this pandemic if we are planning on any events in the fall. She added that she would need more specifics as to what any event would like and we would have integrate the COVID 19 safety precautions. Board Member Del Rosario stated that the Farmers Market will give us a good idea of how people are going to behave; that we can put together plans to review and decide later if we want to move forward. She said the goal is to bring more people into the downtown and bring in more money into the city. Board Member Fairchild asked, if not events, what can we do? Marketing? Board Member Del Rosario responded that we also have to help the other non-restaurant businesses as well. Pres. Fassett noted that the BID is in discussions with the city to close down some streets or parking spaces and suggested that we wait and see what happens with that before we make any decisions. Board Member Del Rosario still would like to start planning some events and modify as we go along. Pres. Fassett summed up the agenda item and said we should avoid the word "event," see what other communities are doing and plan for something later in the fall. Exec. Dir. Powers noted that other communities are doing self-guided art and history tours so you don't have to worry about crowds gathering in one spot, but that it still brings people into downtown for a reason. He added one of the BIDs is starting a one mile and five mile walking loop to get people to come into downtown—walking/exercising in the downtown as opposed to the riverfront.

Executive Director's Report – Exec. Dir. Powers reminded the board that he is participating in weekly calls with the BIDs and DMAs from around New York State. He said that upstate had reopened and the phrase used was that it was "organized chaos." He noted that many upstate businesses just reopened regardless of the guidelines and the phases and advised we should keep an eye on this as well here. He further noted that the Westchester County Executive appointed a working group to help businesses move into Phase 2 with Louie Lanza on the task force. Exec. Dir. Powers also noted that he and Brian sent a letter of support to Connor Green and Peekskill Walks giving general support for the Esther Street project; Mr. Green also requested a letter of support for a grant from AARP, which we also supplied.

Preparing for the reopening of downtown – Exec. Dir. Bill Powers advised the board that he, Board Member Del Rosario, Pres. Fassett and other business owners have been meeting with the city

manager on a weekly basis about reopening the downtown. He said he had spoken to the city corporation counsel and she advised him that to expand the footprint of restaurants would require both actions by the city and by the SLA. He said the corporation counsel stated that as long as the city gets a permit request, that liability insurance is in place and that it includes a discussion about clean up, that the city can move forward with some kind of arrangement. The SLA may have some say in this, and the state BIDs are still trying to pursue some of the statewide waivers we spoke about previously including how the restaurants can serve alcohol adjacent to their properties or possibly away from their properties. This would have to be a statewide waiver because there is no way the SLA can handle each waiver individually in time. Board Member Del Rosario said that the plan would be for customers to do take out of food and alcoholic beverages and go somewhere off-premises to eat and drink, in a location such as the K Lot. Her main focus is to get more people into all of the businesses, not just restaurants. She is focused on guidelines and what businesses need to be filling out including the NYS form that shows that a business is COVID prepared. She is also focused on what other closures may be needed, ie., parking lots, parking spaces to be used by businesses for outdoor dining and retail. The City Manager wants to know how the city can help. Pres. Fassett noted that the BID is working with a marketing team to come up with a campaign; he declined to share the campaign at this time; basic signage package so that we are on the same message for mask-wearing and social distancing. We are also looking at additional signage. Board Member Del Rosario stated that John Sharp had some additional ideas. She had restaurant owners meeting a few weeks ago and the restaurants had some specific issues that they wanted to be addressed by the city. She is hopeful that we can get the city open again for business. Pres. Fassett also advised the board that he had spoken to the city manager about some things that were in the city code that may be problematic like not allowing stacks of chairs or not allowing outdoor heaters; those things may need to be reviewed. Pres. Fassett noted that it's not just downtown represented on the committee, there are representatives of the west side of Peekskill.

DRI Update – Pres. Fassett stated that there is no update in regards to the timing of the DRI grant process. Awaiting for the state to come back and finish the local process. Pres. Fassett asked for input regarding the Peekskill Pavilion initiative, spearheaded by the former farmers market manager, noting that there is no one at the helm of the project any longer. Absent any clear sponsor for the project, it looks like the consultants will suggest to the planning committee that it be dropped from consideration. Pres. Fassett stated that he did not think that we had the staffing to take this on, nor do we have the funding, nor do we have the time. He asked for comments from the board. Board Member Del Rosario asked if the Pavilion was among the top contenders and Pres. Fassett said it was not, and in fact, it was on the chopping block, but he advocated the DRI committee to at least let it go through to the survey process. The project had been cut essentially but got put back on for consideration at Pres. Fassett's request. Board Member D'Amico stated that there was always a bit of grandiosity to that project that was beyond what we are ready to deal with. He stated that he was happy to see the project go away. Pres. Fassett stated that it was easily a million dollar project and that there were no apparent matching funds to cover some of the cost. The board agreed with Pres. Fassett to remove the pavilion project from consideration and report that to the local planning committee. He thanked the board for their support.

Request Approval of May 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Pres. Fassett, still unable to hear Sec. Joseph, made a motion to accept the May 5, 2020 meeting minutes; seconded by Treasurer Ann Scaglione. All in favor, Board Member Agudelo abstained and raised her concern about the legitimacy of the meeting because it wasn't open to BID members in accordance with the open meeting law. Pres.

Fassett indicated that there is no clarity regarding whether BIDs are required to be held to open meetings laws. The Committee on Open Meetings issued an opinion, it is not a legal opinion; it is an opinion. NYCOM has indicated, and it is their opinion, again not a legal opinion, that BIDs are excluded from Open Meetings Laws. Exec. Dir. Powers stated he believed that the BID had always tried to adhere closely to the open meetings standards, and that we have been open and transparent. He stressed that it was an opinion, not a legal opinion, indicating that there is no case law on the subject. Board Member Agudelo stated that she found it hard to believe that there was no guidance. Pres. Fassett encouraged Board Member Agudelo to reach out to her contacts and provide that guidance to the BID. Pres. Fassett indicated that we have exhausted our contacts and in fact, we have asked Board Member Kaminsky to research it more to make sure we are doing what we need to do. Board Member Kaminsky stated that he had provided some detailed information, but that it was in sync with what Exec. Dir. Powers was saying. He said he did not have the information at his fingertips but that he would provide a statement for the next meeting. Exec. Dir. Powers reiterated that there was no case law regarding BID meetings and that there are two opinions, and that neither is legally binding. Pres. Fassett noted that when we reached out for guidance on the first zoom meeting, we were advised that we, as a board, needed to decide the policy on how to proceed and that is what we did with the board at that first meeting. Board Member Fairchild said that there was some information from the State Assembly that stated that since BIDs were not public bodies, we are not subject to the state's open meeting law. She will see if she can find it. Exec. Dir. Powers noted that the key concern is that BIDs do not approve the legislation. Board Member Agudelo said she would do some more digging and look into the issue more closely; she noted that she had seen the advice from the state agency. Pres. Fassett stated that the meeting minutes were approved and will be posted.

BID Member Public Comment –

Flea Market - Scarlett Antonia asked about the flea market. Pres. Fassett stated that the flea market is not on the list of approved events and is not currently allowed. Board Member Agudelo asked if the BID manages the flea market, and Pres. Fassett said yes; we have a manager for the flea market who is eager to get started.

City COVID 19 Weekly Zoom Call - Board Member Agudelo re-invited the BID to come on the weekly stakeholder zoom call for COVID 19. Exec. Dir Powers indicated that he was not available this Thursday from 930am to 1030am and offered to go on a future show and indicated that it might be nice to have some of the businesses on as well. Pres. Fassett said he had a conflict for this week, but he said he would try to clear his schedule, which he said he should be able to do. Board Member Agudelo invited Chereese Jervis-Hill as well. Pres. Fassett said he would reach out to her as well.

Downtown Business Survey - Board Member Agudelo asked if we had sent around a survey of downtown businesses to see what needs they have; might be a good way to increase engagement, she said. She offered to help put the survey together and because she's not a business owner she would want someone to help orient her around what questions to ask. Pres. Fassett indicated that the chamber had done two surveys so far and that they are to present their second survey findings tomorrow. Board Member Kaminsky said it was a good idea and that he would be willing to help Board Member Agudelo. Board Member Fairchild requested that we do the survey in Spanish as well. Board Member Agudelo said she would reach out to Board Member Kaminsky this week to follow-up. Board Member Del Rosario offered to handle the survey through Survey Monkey in order to help tabulate the results and the data. Exec. Dir. Powers asked if she only needed the email addresses of BID members and she said yes. Board Member Agudelo said they could talk about how the questions

would be asked, indicating that she preferred less multiple choice and more substantive information. Board Member Fairchild cautioned that the more open-ended the survey, the less likely businesses are to complete it. Board Member Agudelo said she had experience with more open-ended surveys and that the respondents went on and on and looked to vent. Board Member Del Rosario said that Survey Monkey can be set up to have open-ended questions and that we need to decide what the goal of the survey is, and what kinds of questions do we want to ask and how we ask it. She said we need to make it short and aim for a 5 minute or less survey.

Pres. Fassett said he supports the survey.

Pres. Fassett asked for a motion to adjourn and was made by Board Member Del Rosario; seconded by Treasurer Scaglione; all in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:11pm