



Peekskill Business Improvement District
Board of Director's Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 1, 2020 @ 6pm
Via ZOOM

Present: Brian Fassett, David Kaminsky, Matt Rudikoff, Larry D'Amico, Cynthia Del Rosario, Ivy Fairchild, Brendon Fitzgerald, Matthew Alexander, Vanessa Agudelo, Monique Michaels, Exec. Dir. Bill Powers. LaFern Joseph joined the call in progress. Guest: Chereese Jervis Hill, Events to Remember/Peekskill Farmers Market Manager.

Call meeting to order – Pres. Fassett called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and noted the meeting is being conducted via Zoom.

BID Member Public Comment – There were no BID member comments.

Resignation of Brendon Fitzgerald from the Board of Directors – Pres. Fassett announced that due to the selling of his property in the BID district, Vice Pres. Fitzgerald can no longer serve in the class-A position he was elected on the BID board. However, Mr. Fitzgerald remains a BID member because he has a commercial lease within the BID. Pres. Fassett thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for his service to the board and offered him the opportunity to speak. Mr. Fitzgerald said it was great to be on the board and that the BID has done a lot of great things. He encouraged the board to keep up the good work and keep making Peekskill better.

Peekskill Farmers Market Wrap Up – Chereese Jervis Hill noted that she forwarded a report which was forwarded to the Board. She stated that there were 26 vendors throughout the season, 15 of whom were new. Amid COVID, her team was still able to do four safe community events including thanking the vendors and the shoppers. ETR did weekly temperature checks of the vendors and of everyone on the management team keeping that information in logs, which is an NYS requirement. There were no fevers or COVID cases among the vendors or the staff, which was a blessing. She stated that she thought the Peekskill community was accepting of the social distancing guidelines and the mask requirements. There were a few who didn't want to wear masks, but that was mostly early on. With weekly attendance checks, she said there were an incredible 21,000 who came through the market. Rolling Ridge was set up to accept SNAP/EBT and they and Do Re Me were set up for the senior voucher program. About half the vendors utilize the online payment system and she thanked Exec. Dir. Powers for setting that up and noted that Exec. Dir. Powers was able to close out the accounting within days of the market's end, the first time that's been done in six years. She noted that we had great feedback, that the vendors and the market were a partnership, and that they all worked together to keep the community safe. Some of the vendor feedback is included in the printed report. The Farmers market Facebook page has grown from 70 to 900 to date and her goal is to get us back to the level we were at with the previous market FB page. She proudly stated that she completed her Farmer Market Manager certification; the board gave her a round of applause. She said she was pleased to have taken the course and that she learned a lot. She also noted that she had built a good base of volunteers and that she would be happy to answer any questions. BID Member Mary Foster stated she thought Rolling Ridge had done an outstanding job at managing the flow of customers at the booth. Pres, Fassett thanked Ms. Jervis Hill, her staff, and her volunteers, for an incredibly successful and safe year. Board Member Del Rosario also thanked Ms. Jervis Hill for doing a great job with having the protocols in place, noting that even though it was her first year managing the market, it was seamless. Board Member Rudikoff also thanked Ms. Jervis Hill and stated he was looking

forward to next year, especially in getting involved in the urban farm project at Lepore Park. Exec. Dir. Powers advised Ms. Jervis Hill about the project noting that the BID issued a letter of support for the project, indicating a way and a willingness to have the youth involved in the project to participate in the market in some way. Exec. Director Powers added that over 23 weeks, and 21,000 people, we did not receive any contract tracing calls back to the market and noted he thought that was outstanding.

Welcome to Matthew Alexander – Pres. Fassett introduced Matthew Alexander, the new appointee, from the City of Peekskill Comptroller's Office, to replace Ann Scaglione. Mr. Alexander is the new City Comptroller. Pres. Fassett asked for a motion to appoint Mr. Alexander as the BID treasurer. Board Member Fairchild made a motion to appoint Mr. Alexander as BID treasurer, seconded by Board Member Del Rosario, all in favor. Treasurer Alexander introduced himself as the Mayor of Wappingers Falls, NY for 12 years. He will be stepping down in a few weeks as mayor, and he runs his own business and is a CPA; he is a former CFO of a large manufacturing company. He likes the small urban areas in the Hudson Valley and is originally from Mobile AL. He's an Army brat who came to the Hudson Valley when his father worked at West Point. He said he is excited about Peekskill because of the positive things going on in the downtown and waterfront.

Filling the Vice President position – Pres. Fassett requested to fill the vacant Vice President spot, and made a request for nominations; being none, he made a motion to appoint Board Member Del Rosario to the position of BID Vice President, seconded by Board Member Fairchild, all in favor.

Request Approval of November 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes – Pres. Fassett advised the board that without enough time to review the minutes, he will move the request for approval of the November minutes to the next meeting.

2021 Election Committee Update – Pres. Fassett stated the election committee had not met yet but reminded the board that he, Board Members Rudikoff, D'Amico, Del Rosario, and Fairchild are on the committee; he further noted that a Chairperson has not been selected yet. Board Member Del Rosario asked what is involved in being the Chair. Pres. Fassett stated that the chair leads the meetings to plan the annual meeting, getting the balloting together, etc; this year will be different in that we will have to adjust the meeting because of COVID since our bylaws do not address this situation. The committee would have to meet a few times and then hand it off to Exec. Dir. Powers to complete the process. Vice Pres. Del Rosario asked Pres. Fassett to nominate himself, and then would second that and help him through the process; Pres. Fassett nominated himself, seconded by Vice Pres. Del Rosario, all in favor. Exec. Dir. Powers advised Pres. Fassett that the committee's priority is to set a date for the annual meeting since the BID usually send out solicitation letters in early January.

Harriet Tubman Statue – In the absence of Sec. Joseph, Pres. Fassett provided an update on the statue; the BID has received a few sponsors; the BID has a new microsite to promote the statue, www.harriettubmanpeekskill.com. Events, calendars, sponsors, etc will be kept there in one place so it does not get lost on our BID website. We have been working with the library, youth bureau, school district and he invited anyone who wants to join, there is a Zoom meeting this Friday. Pres. Fassett asked Exec. Dir. Powers to reach out to County Executive Latimer and Sen. Pete Harckham's offices and include the sponsor request. He thanked the City DPW for putting the platform in place and preparing the location for the statue's placement. The statue is arriving on 12/14/20. We are working on several virtual events, and the BID will probably be the sponsor of one or two of them including one involving the ancestors of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, and others involved in the Underground Railroad movement; he further noted that since the sculpture started touring the descendants have not participated in any such event. All events will be recorded and posted to the microsite. Pres. Fassett

noted that the city will remove one of the benches so that two bronze plaques can be installed as well. Pres. Fassett stated that the statue will be here through the end of February 2021, Black History Month. Exec. Dir. Powers said he traveled to Newburgh NY to see that statue and said it is impressive the detail is great and he expects people to want to take photos with the statue. Vice Pres. Del Rosario asked if we could start publicizing the hashtag #journeythroughpeekskill. Board Member Fairchild said she thought the hashtag was too long. Pres. Fassett asked if Board Member had a better suggestion and she said she would need to think about it; additionally Vice Pres. Del Rosario will send Board Member Fairchild the list of possible hashtags that were considered.

Secretary Joseph joined the call. She stated that she had just spoken with the descendant of Frederick Douglas, who is also a descendant of Booker T. Washington. He is excited about being part of the February 21, 2021 virtual event. Other descendants are also confirmed to participate including those of Harriet Tubman, John Rankin, Hawley Green, and others; Vincent DeForest, formerly of the US Parks Service will also participate and may moderate the panel. He will be working with Peekskill to make sure the Peekskill sites are properly landmarked with UNESCO. Vice Pres. Del Rosario will send the sponsor form to all on the call. Exec. Dir. Powers stated that he is planning on releasing a press release on the statue's arrival; he delayed it to see whether the area slipped into an orange or red zone designation before doing too much promotion.

Ambassador Program Discussion – Pres. Fassett stated he wanted to open up a conversation about an ambassador program that came up in conversations with the city manager to aid visitors in parking, directions, mask-wearing, etc. He admitted this is not a new idea and that there are a lot of pros and cons and that some cities with larger staffs do this very well. He opened the floor to ideas from the board. Sec. Joseph asked what the role of the ambassador would be. Pres. Fassett stated they would be volunteers that would act as “feet on the street” to answer any questions from residents or visitors. They would provide directions, answer parking meter questions, pass out free masks, or maps, have radios to communicate with police, etc. BID Member Mary Foster asked if the board members would be expected to volunteer? Pres. Fassett said the volunteers would not necessarily be BID board members, but community members. Board Member Fairchild asked the question, “who would manage them?” Pres. Fassett answered, “that's the question.” Board Member Fairchild said we would need to screen the volunteers, train them, and develop job descriptions and develop schedules. Exec. Dir. Powers noted that while he was at the farmers market, people did come up to the BID tent and ask questions, but he noted that he did not think there were similar needs on other blocks that required volunteers or staff to be located there. Board Members Fairchild and Joseph asked, “will the volunteers be roving?” Pres. Fassett said they could roam, or they could staff a booth at the gazebo for example. The plan would be to focus on weekends, and it may extend to other parts of the city like the riverfront, but that was at the suggestion of the city manager looking to address issues city-wide basis (like mask-wearing). Pres. Fassett said this might be better to roll out in the spring, depending on COVID, outdoor dining, etc. Board Member Fairchild volunteered to create a plan, training for volunteers, etc., and the board can review and decide what to do after that. Exec. Dir. Powers said he would check on the liability issues and Pres. Fassett said he would set up a call with the city manager to review the plan before too much more work goes into it. Board Member Fairchild said she will forward the plan before the end of the year. Board Member D'Amico asked if the chamber of commerce could act as a center. Vice Pres. Del Rosario suggested to start with a set location and then grow into more of a roaming effort.

City of Peekskill IDA Marketing Plans – Board Member Rudikoff said reaching out to the larger world to get people to come to Peekskill has been on his agenda since he started and he has been reaching

out to stakeholders like the BID and the chamber., trying to identify people who can work with him on this. He advised the board that the IDA funded a destination marketing campaign. He said the most vocal stakeholders have been the most supportive of this effort. He's looking to put together a working group of six or seven to help plan and execute a marketing campaign. He has been directed by the IDA to write an RFP to hire a consultant or group of consultants to handle a strong social media presence/web-based platform, handle content production, and handle public relations. He wants to see this go to a company with a local orientation. He is expected to set up this working group, have an inaugural discussion about how to get this rolling, get comments on the RFP, create a list of possible vendors, set up a budget, and what the future work will be. He sees the funding set aside by the IDA as a starting point not meant to be a full-year budget. He said Peekskill doesn't have major vacant sites for development, but he is looking for innovative business people to come and start businesses. Pres. Fassett said he would sit on a committee and he would like to see the RFPs or help form the RFPs. Board Members Fairchild and Del Rosario indicated they would also help review the RFPs. BID Member Mary Foster asked if the focus was on tourism or bringing in new businesses, but said it sounded like the plans are focused on bringing in new businesses. Board Member Rudikoff said it could be both, and Board Member Fairchild pointed out that those require two very different strategies and approaches. Vice Pres. Del Rosario said there was also a conversation about attracting new residents, especially those who are making an exodus out of NYC because of COVID. Exec. Dir. Powers will be the BID's point person on this initiative.

Executive Director's Report –

- **Peekskill Makes Me Merry/Holiday Tree Lighting/Holiday Plans** – Exec. Dir. Powers stated the Peekskill Makes Me Merry Campaign has started. There has been a shift in focus away from radio spots to more social media, noting that he and Pres. Fassett spent four hours taking photos with our Elf on the Loose and Frosty the Snowman making appearances at individual businesses and entities. He noted the Bucko has the largest number of people reached so far at 1,200 and that he has been focusing on retailers now, and then shifting to restaurants next. He noted that we gave out 270 adult masks and 90 kids masks at the Peekskill Farmers Market on the last day of the market; he is meeting with Juana Pinyol tomorrow to go over a distribution plan for the rest of the masks and the PMMM button. The chamber will be distributing them starting tomorrow as well. The City DPW installed the two free four-hour parking banners at the Nelson Avenue garage, and one at the James Street ramp. He further noted that Pres. Fassett donated more volunteer hours this week to decorate the gazebo, it looks great. He further noted that several performances will be recorded at the Paramount tomorrow along with holiday greetings from himself, Pres. Fassett and Chamber Pres. Deb Milone for roll-ins to the virtual tree lighting. Santa will also be making an appearance to reassure kids that Santa will be coming to Peekskill on December 25 to deliver toys and gifts safely. The tree will be lit sometime this week and recorded for inclusion in the virtual tree lighting TV program scheduled to appear on Saturday at 5pm on the government access channels in Peekskill.
- **Brighter Update** – Exec. Dir. Powers said he plans to pick six or so businesses to test drive the Brighter Travel app/map and if anyone is interested in volunteering to participate in the trial, let him know. Whiskey River (restaurant) and Fern Tree (retail), Monique (artist), Larry D'Amico (artist) volunteered to participate.

BID Member Public Comment –

Westchester County Health Dept. – Vice Pres. Del Rosario noted that the Westchester County Health Dept. was “coming down really hard” on all the Peekskill restaurants. The new inspector is visiting two to three per week, and that she has closed down five restaurants already. Some of the violations are in contradiction with what the previous inspector said, and some of the things she is checking on are COVID-related, but others are not. Some restaurants were closed down for a few days and at least one is closed until January 2021. Pres. Fassett said he would bring it up on the bi-weekly call with the City Manager and Board Member Agudelo asked if a list of the closed businesses could be obtained so proper outreach can be done to share resources with them to get them back open. Vice Pres. Del Rosario explained how her restaurant handles gathering information for contract tracing purposes if needed, but using a QR code and having patrons answer five short questions on their phone. Board Member Agudelo asked if we could put together a “lessons learned” training along with a Spanish language translator. Vice Pres. Del Rosario said she had brought in a consultant and that maybe the BID could bring him to offer a Zoom training class and while he specific to restaurants she thought he could make it generic enough for other businesses as well. Pres. Fassett asked Vice Pres. Del Rosario to find out what an hour seminar would cost for him to lead and for us to replay it or post it on our website, with or without passwords. Board Member Agudelo offered to go door to door to get businesses to show up. Board Member Rudikoff asked if this was county-wide and the answer was yes. Exec. Dir. Powers aid he was disappointed that we had not been informed of any sort of crackdown from the county or the city.

Appreciation – BID Member Foster thanked the BID for all the work it's done this year, noting that it has been a tough year, and thanked Pres. Fassett for decorating the gazebo, and that the board members have been great.

Adjournment – Sec. Joseph made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Vice Pres. Del Rosario, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:09pm.