



Peekskill Business Improvement District
Board of Director's Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 10, 2020 @ 6pm
Via ZOOM

Present: Brian Fassett, Brendon Fitzgerald, David Kaminsky, Matt Rudikoff, Larry D'Amico, Ivy Fairchild, Vanessa Agudelo, Exec. Dir. Bill Powers. **Absent:** Matthew Alexander, Monique Michaels, LaFern Joseph.

Call meeting to order – Pres. Fassett called the meeting to order at 6:07pm and noted the meeting is being conducted via Zoom, and further noted that there is no Executive Session tonight, that was an error on the agenda.

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

Interactive Map/App Presentation Brighter Travel – Exec. Dir. Powers introduced Brighter Travel's Nick Henkin and Matt Mason; they are producing an interactive online map and app for another BID in New York and they come highly recommended. Mr. Powers stated he and Board Member Fairchild listened to a presentation by Nick and Matt and felt confident enough to bring them forward for the board to hear their presentation as well. Mr. Powers noted that the BID had been looking for a company that offers this kind of service and thought a similar effort here in Peekskill would help our businesses since they have the background and are reasonably priced. Mr. Mason noted that the interactive map is just one component of their offerings. He shared a presentation on screen with the board. He asked the question: How do tourists and locals find interesting things to do and places to experience in Peekskill? Traditionally, people would do a Google search, or log into one of the many mobile apps that exist. Neither really is a true representation of what Peekskill has to offer. His goal to make searching more engaging and accessible. In building the Peekskill platform, Mr. Mason stated that they keep in mind the brand and that they will build a website with all Peekskill branding and it will be hosted on the BID's own URL. They will make sure it is optimized for the mobile website and will provide a complimentary mobile app as well for iPhone; they are also working on one for Android. They will also provide a QR code that will guide visitors to the BID website. The QR codes can be used on storefronts, in print ads, or even on hotel keys. This will help bring the BID's physical presence into the digital world. Mr. Mason moved on to "control" stating you need to control what you show to customers. The app allows businesses to pick from a wide range of Emoji, and not generic pins, which are instantly recognizable to provide a spark of inspiration to click on them. Additionally, instead of drab lists, the service allows us the BID to create custom collections, guides, and events. For example, in a Corona Virus world, which restaurants are offering curbside pickup, or take out? In terms of assistance, Mr. Mason stated that his company is here to help the BID through the process, but the BID is empowered to create these collections on its own without having to go through his company. There is no limitation on usage or creation. He wanted to emphasize that the BID is fully in control of Peekskill's app/map. Lastly, he asked how his company can represent and support Peekskill. His goal is to allow customers to find the most important information about a business as quickly as possible. Menus, reservations, take classes, etc can be included in the listing and have "action" buttons whether online or on their phone. Businesses can develop more revenue streams by offering real-time specials and they can do this thru Stripe (an integrated third-party app). The BID could generate some additional revenue as well this way and in other ways such as charging businesses a fee to host their listing or to manage their own listing, or to have the BID manage their listing. Mr. Mason presented

information on their firms' data dashboard that the Peekskill BID would have access to see how customers are interacting with the app and the map. He added that his company is currently working with eight other BIDs, downtown business associations, and chambers of commerce. Mr. Mason concluded his presentation with a view of his team and asked if there are any questions. Mr. Powers asked Mr. Mason to discuss pricing. He referred to Mr. Henkin. The product is structured in different tiers, starting at \$149 per month to \$849 per month. Peekskill should be around \$149 to \$199 per month, but it is based on the number of businesses being supported. Mr. Powers clarified that the charges are charged to the BID, not the individual businesses. Mr. Henkin reiterated that there are several ways to monetize the services including charging members a nominal fee to manage their own fee. Or a sponsorship for a top listing on the platform. Pres. Fassett stated that he thought that the service was one of the best he has seen and he congratulated Mr. Henkin and Mr. Mason on the service. He stated that he test drove the app and he thought it was intuitive and easy to use. He went to state that he and Exec. Dir. Powers discussed charging businesses outside the BID to be part of this, saying that the service is more powerful than just the BID. Board Member Fairchild asked if we would consider working with the chamber on this project and Pres. Fassett said yes. HVGCC Pres. Deb Milone stated that she thought it was a great product and that she wanted to speak to Pres. Fassett and Exec. Dir. Powers more about the service. Board Member Kaminsky asked if there was any sort of newsletter, window sign, or other material that could promote a business's participation with Brighter. Mr. Mason stated that the QR code is custom and could appear in the window of businesses or in print ads. He added that customers don't need to download the mobile app, they can use the website. Board Member Rudikoff asked about promoting the availability of the platform. Mr. Henkin stated that most of their partners have taken it upon themselves to promote the app and the website. Board Member D'Amico asked if there was a search function, and Mr. Mason said they are researching that now but stated that the Bid has control over creating "collections" and that we could use that as a search tool to guide people to just restaurants. Pres. Fassett stated that the BID would be responsible for getting the word out.

Request Approval of September 1, and October 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes – With the absence of Secretary Joseph, Board Member Fairchild made a motion to accept the September 1 and October 6, 2020, Meeting Minutes, seconded by Board Member Kaminsky, all in favor.

Extension of Executive Director's Contract – Pres. Fassett noted that the Executive Committee met on October 1, 2020 and the Board of Directors met in Executive Session on October 6, 2020, and the board was in unanimous agreement to continue Exec. Dir. Powers' employment with no salary increase due to financial limitations caused by COVID. Mr. Powers agreed to stay on at the previous year's salary. The board added some to-do lists as a guide for Mr. Powers to follow and are built into the contract. In addition, a yearly employment review was included in the contract renewal which was not done in the past. Pres. Fassett thanked Mr. Powers and said he was looking forward to working with Mr. Powers again this coming year. Mr. Powers stated he was looking forward to working with the board as well, noting that it had been a difficult year for everyone and that starting in March of 2020 the BID had to pivot and pivot again. He noted that the BID had accomplished a lot, noting that continuing the Farmers Market was key.

2021 Election Committee Appointments – Pres. Fassett noted that we have a new Board Member, Matthew Alexander, who is the city appointee from the Comptroller's Office. He is the new City Comptroller and Pres. Fassett suggested that he will take over the treasurer's role for the BID as did the previous comptroller.

He went on to note that the BID is required to create an election committee consisting of one C class member, and four other directors. He appointed out that in the next election cycle, Vice Pres. Fitzgerald will be leaving the board, up for re-election or nomination would be LaFern Joseph, David Kaminsky, and Monique Michaels. Pres. Fassett appointed Board Members Rudikoff, D'Amico, Fairchild and Del Rosario, and himself to the election committee to organize and produce this year's annual meeting, which we will not be able to do.

Meeting Dates 2020 – Mr. Powers asked for a motion to approve the meeting dates for 2021 which were distributed to the board previously since this is the month where the dates for the entire year are published on the website for the convenience of the board and the BID members. Board Member Rudikoff made a motion to accept the 2021 Board of Directors meeting dates, seconded by Board Member Fairchild, all in favor.

Harriet Tubman Statue – Pres. Fassett stated the statue will be arriving on December 14 from Newburgh, NY, with a police escort, and it will be delivered to be installed by Highland Welding, free of charge, by crane. Sec. Joseph is working on a series of virtual events associated with the statue. The BID has reached out to partners like the library, the schools, the youth bureau, Peekskill NAACP, and others. There will be a zoom meeting on Friday with all the partners, please let us know if we should add anyone else. Pres. Fassett noted that the cost of bringing the statue here is between \$8,000 and \$10,000 and that the BID is looking to raise some funds and possibly having an arrival ceremony on arrival day. There is a sponsor form ranging from \$10 to \$1,500 available on the BID website. Board Member Rudikoff asked who is coordinating with the city. Exec. Dir. Powers stated that he and Pres. Fassett has been meeting with the City Manager over the last few months about the statue and working through the logistics of transport, placement, insurance, etc. He noted that Pres. Fassett was coordinating the site with Dave Rambo and that all of us met at the site recently to go over our plans. Board Member Rudikoff said that the statue may be on the City Council agenda for discussion on Nov. 16 and that we should be on the call if it is.

Executive Director's Report –

- **Meeting with IDA re City PR/Marketing** – Exec. Dir. Powers noted that Pres. Fassett and he attended a recent IDA Board meeting to express the concerns of the business community that we would like to see more of an effort from the city to promote the city through a branding strategy, through social media and video production. The BID has agreed to participate in a working group that will move this process forward. Exec. Dir. Powers asked Board Member Rudikoff to add any other information on behalf of the IDA. Board Member Rudikoff stated that the IDA was interested in hearing what the BID and businesses had to say on this topic and that the IDA was interested in reviewing the current city PR contract, and looking to reallocate some of their contribution as well as additional funding for a business attraction or retention marketing campaign. It could also cover residential recruitment or tourist attraction as well. The IDA board agreed to allocate funding and directed Mr. Rudikoff to work with the BID and a small working group to see how those funds should be used, and issuing an RFP to develop content, handle PR, and manage social media outreach. He suggested that the BID could provide some level of funding to sustain the program. Exec. Dir. Powers noted a comment in the chat room from BID Member Mary Foster, adding that the plan was to initiate the marketing campaign and keep it going over the course of a year. He further noted that this developed because the current contract with the current PR firm focuses more on public relations and public information and not on marketing. The new RFP would require a different

skill set and different contract requirements. Board Member Fitzgerald asked for clarification, and Mr. Powers noted that the PR firm does mostly public information distribution to the media and social media, and less on PR and marketing the city. Board Member Fitzgerald asked how much the current firm is paid, and Mr. Powers said it was in the \$60-\$65K range and he also asked what the IDA was budgeting, and Board Member Rudikoff stated the IDA had approved \$60,000 for marketing and communications, but that's a wider package than the destination marketing efforts. He further noted that that amount was to launch and structure the initiative and it was not intended to be a full year's allocation. Board Member Agudelo wanted to clarify that the current PR contract also calls for the preparation of "a number of" press releases and press advisories and placing them in the local papers and media outlets. She added that the PR firm also publicized information about the Police Task Force and the DRI process and other initiatives. She also stated that she felt the city had gotten "the biggest bang for our buck," but their efforts are not just focused on social media. Board Member Rudikoff stated that the PR firm had an impressive list of placements, but he noted that the IDA and economic development need a more proactive marketing strategy. Pres. Fassett asked if the BID could obtain a copy of the PR firm's placements and Mr. Rudikoff said he will forward it to us.

- **Peekskill Farmers Market Update/Winter Market Update** – Exec. Dir. Powers noted that there were only two weeks left in the market, that we should be hitting the \$26,000 revenue mark for the market, which is the same as last year, and pointed out that is quite amazing under COVID. He also noted that the crowds are smaller after the end of October and we are seeing that again this year. He also anticipates receiving a new proposal from Events to Remember for next year. With regards to a winter market, we have had requests from customers about doing a winter market; he noted that in speaking with the vendors, none were interested in doing an indoor market because of concerns over COVID. Mr. Powers received a proposal from ETR for doing a winter outdoor market, and between staffing and other expenses, it would cost about \$10,000. Due to the reduced crowd and reduced fees we could charge, it is not financially feasible. He noted that the BID would lose about \$7,000 if we were to proceed. He noted that the Bid had looked at other options, like doing a monthly market, none of the vendors were interested in that, and doing a market every two weeks and while there was a little more support for that, there was not a lot. Board Member Kaminsky asked if we are concerned about losing money to put on the winter market and Mr. Powers asked the board if there is a better way to spend \$10,000 during the same time frame, especially under COVID. Board Member Kaminsky asked if it could be tried for a few weeks and if it's not successful to cancel it. Pres. Fassett noted that the BID presented the indoor market last year and stated that it is not well attended, and further noted that we are already seeing a decline in attendance. He said that under COVID, we do not have a safe indoor location, and doing a market outdoors is hit or miss. Mr. Powers also stated the vendors have said that we would need to spend a lot of money on advertising to get people to come to the market and that he had a hard time justifying spending more money to bring fewer people to the market. Pres. Fassett noted that if we book vendors and then cancel, we will have a problem since vendors have to book in advance for these kinds of selling opportunities. Mr. Powers stated that he was concerned that with the rising COVID cases in Peekskill, that we might have to shut the winter market down if we started one. Board Member D'Amico added that the winter market was not well attended and that trying it outdoors is risky. Pres. Fassett added that there is not a lot fresh produce

available in our area in the winter so the product offerings are more baked goods and prepared foods and not much produce.

- **Peekskill Makes Me Merry/Holiday Tree Lighting/Holiday Plans** – Exec. Dir. Powers stated that there will be a holiday tree and it will be lit, but that the city will likely not be doing a public tree-lighting ceremony. He noted that the plan is to do a virtual tree lighting and that Pres. Fassett will be working on decorating the gazebo to make it more festive. He said that he will be working with the city to record some performances, possibly at the Paramount, and include other videos from the Youth Bureau, and roll all of that into a virtual tree lighting to premiere on Sat. Dec 5 at 5pm on the government channel. Pres. Fassett and Exec. Dir. Powers have been working on a Peekskill Makes Me Merry logo design for 1,000 buttons and for the first time face masks for adults and kids. We are working with The Shop on the creative. He included a \$9,300 expense to repaint the city's trash cans over the winter and any other major expenses would be off budget; he projected \$42,000 in the reserve fund at the end of 2020. Board Member Fairchild asked about Brighter Travel being included and Mr. Powers said no, the expenses are not included in 2021 since no contract has been signed yet. He said there is some funding in the internet/website line item that could be used, but he noted that Pres. Fassett has been doing all the website updating and that Mr. Powers would like to move that responsibility away from Mr. Fassett in 2021; he also stated that he saw the Brighter initiative as an expense but also a revenue generator that will cover the expenses. Pres. Fassett asked what the next steps are for Brighter Travel. Exec. Dir. Powers said he would like to get a formal proposal from them and that he would like to put some revenue projections.
- **2021 Budget** – Exec. Dir. Powers explained that he kept the budget mostly the same as 2020, and that he kept in the June and Harvest Fest events; he noted as we get closer to those events, the Board can decide who not to move forward with them. He said he fully expects the BID will receive its \$100,000 from the BID tax assessment. He stated that he increased the Farmers Market income based on plans to adjust the vendor fees and to expand it; he reduced the income and expenses associated with the Flea Market, based on the impact of COVID. Board Member Rudikoff interjected that he was very pleased with the community farm projection at Lepore Park and was looking forward to how it integrates with the farmers market. Board Member Kaminsky made a motion to accept the 2021 budget, seconded by Board Member D'Amico, and all in favor.

BID Member Public Comment – BID Member Mary Foster asked if anyone had planned on attending the holiday market planned by the White Plains BID between Dec 3 and 13 which is being managed by a third party to see if it is something that we can do in Peekskill. Exec. Dir. Powers said he would attend. Board Member D'Amico stated that the PAA is planning to do a holiday boutique, virtually, and that he will send along the information. Pres. Fassett advised the board that there is a new retail store called Bucko that opened in the former Coop location operated by Peekskill residents Katie and Brian Orsi with home goods, gifts, and clothing. They are opening this Saturday.

Adjournment – Board Member Kaminsky made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Board Member D'Amico, all in favor, meeting adjourned at 7:14pm.