

HARTFORD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2006, 3:30 p.m.

MetroHartford Alliance
31 Pratt Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103

Board Attendees: D. Cocola B. Kaplowitz B. Baran T. Bickhardt O. Griebel
J. Lewis R. Morneault M. Algieri M. Marshall S. Manousos
M. Kuziak M. Grunberg H. Hoffman J. Hayes H. DeYoung
T. Luszczak M. O'Connell J. Gadomski for D. Jakubowski

Also in attendance: M. Zaleski

I. Welcome

Bert Kaplowitz, serving as temporary chair of the board, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Hartford Business Improvement District.

II. Introductions

As this was the first meeting of the new board, each attendee introduced themselves and talked about the property or interest that they represent.

III. Summary of HBID, Overview of Grand Central Partnership BID

Michael Zaleski provided a brief summary of how the business improvement district was established culminating with the successful referendum in October. He highlighted the conditions upon which the major property owners agreed to support the BID proposal and the significant work that had gone into convincing property owners to pass the referendum.

Zaleski then provided a review of the requirements and deadlines that need to be addressed in order to comply with the State Statutes and municipal ordinance.

The board was then shown a presentation about the Grand Central Partnership. The presentation was given at a MetroHartford Alliance breakfast in August. The presentation showed all of the diverse programs of the Grand Central Partnership in New York City. While certainly not a direct comparison to Hartford, the New York program provided board members with a good idea of what programs the new Hartford BID can produce and the significant results that the BID model can deliver.

IV. Brainstorming: Goals and objectives of the organization

After the GCP presentation by Zaleski, Kaplowitz invited board members to discuss the potential priorities of the Hartford Business Improvement District. There was significant discussion about a variety of issues facing the district and the potential ways that the BID could address those issues. Several of the core areas of discussion included public safety, cleanliness, beautification, marketing, image and promotion, business services and advocacy. The following is a summary of the discussion:

Public Safety

Safe, safe, safe – ‘top three priorities’ – the core service on which the BID was promoted
Most BIDs nationally start with ‘clean and safe’, meet with new Police Chief, develop relationship with District and Zone commanders. Lobby for additional police in district, Address increase in aggressive and intimidating panhandling

Cleanliness

Business district must be clean to be able to compete – another core service, Immediate removal of graffiti sends a message

Beautification / Appearance

Define the district with a distinctive, consistent look that is easily recognizable (flower planters, receptacles, streetscape), Well maintained flower planters, hanging baskets and beautification provide the impression that the district is cared for and a place, develop gateways to district, Pedestrian signage, Improve street lighting

Marketing, Image & Promotion

District as a destination for retail, dining, arts and entertainment, Promotion of district and its assets to 1st tier suburbs (Greater Hartford), Promotion of district to national audience, Joint venture / partnership with others (restructured Hartford Image Project initiative), Impression of visitors, marketability of assets
Visitor services (ambassador role, investment in Welcome Center?), Use the media to improve image of district and city, free press in particular (work with newspapers, television and other media to highlight positive), Marketing of parking options in district – work with HPA to make parking easier and affordable
District as a promoter of great unique things, Events – bring people in to the district, Holiday retail promotions (Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, other holidays), Gift certificate program
Support/help develop entertainment district

Business Services

Increase office and retail occupancy levels (market vacant space on web like Springfield BID?)
Utilize BID revenues to secure state and federal grants for city projects and programs (find other funding)

Advocacy

Utilize collective voice of owners in district, Lobby for pro-business, pro-property owner issues
Improve property owner/business relationship with City Hall, Lobby the City for / appropriate level of City services / advocate for additional police (new buildings have come on-line since Mayor's commitment in Feb. 2006, Ensure the City maintains its commitment to BID (BID is not a replacement for City services)
Encourage enforcement of existing laws and ordinances, Education of owners on their responsibilities
Challenge each owner to take responsibility for their building and its adjacent public area, Lobby for short term parking rates at surface lots and garages

Some other underlying themes included picking a defining issue to deal with and make an impression. What is the district's 'Squeegee factor'? In New York City, the crackdown on panhandlers offering to clean car windows with a squeegee and demanding money was swift and severe. The impact was very noticeable and instantly provided people with a safer, less intimidating environment. What is Hartford's squeegee factor?

Also, develop programs that ensure quality of life for existing residents, businesses and workers (those who are here) and market the district as an attractive place to live, work and play (those who we want here)

V. Form subcommittee to draft budget to match objectives

Kaplowitz asked for volunteers to serve on the Budget Subcommittee. Mike Algieri agreed to chair the Budget Subcommittee with Kaplowitz and Mike Marshall also volunteering to serve. Zaleski stated that Lee Erdmann, who was unable to attend the board meeting, also volunteered to serve on the budget subcommittee. Mike Algieri will set up a date and time to meet early next week.

VI. Review draft bylaws

Kaplowitz referred the board to a draft set of bylaws included in their agenda packet. Zaleski stated that the bylaws are based off of bylaws borrowed from the Stamford Downtown District. He noted that James Lotstein from Edwards and Angell in Hartford on behalf of Travelers had helped develop the draft that was included in the packet. Kaplowitz asked for volunteers for a Bylaws Subcommittee. Mike O'Connell agreed to chair the subcommittee. Tom Luszczak, Hank Hoffman and Bert Kaplowitz also volunteered to serve. Kaplowitz stated that Beth Judd, who was unable to attend today's meeting, was also interested in serving on the subcommittee. O'Connell will schedule a meeting of the subcommittee within the next week.

VII. Next meeting / meeting schedule

The board agreed that the next meeting of the full board would be December 13, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the MetroHartford Alliance.

VIII. Executive Session

Oz Griebel proposed that the board enter Executive Session to discuss management of the organization. Zaleski left the room and the board members entered Executive Session at 4:58 p.m. The board exited Executive Session at 5:08 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was passed to declare the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Zaleski