

**GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
ATLANTA, GA  
MARCH 22, 2022**

**Present**

Board Members - In-Person: Aundi Lesley, Ricky Clark, Abigail Strickland, Kendrick Ward, Emily Hopkins, April Norton. Virtual: Christian Hamilton, Jeffrey Fowler, Monica Rentfrow, Qaijuan Willis, Tonya Parker, Mathew Hill

Partners - In-Person: Cindy Eidson, Danny Bivins, John VanBrunt, Leigh Burns, Steve Foster

Staff - In-Person: Chris Higdon, Emily Davenport, Sharon Collins, Ellen Hill, Sadie Krawczyk

Other - In-Person: Larry Hanson

**Call to Order**

President April Norton called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 11:02 am.

**Review and Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the February meeting were presented. April Norton requested that two changes be made. First, Emily Davenport be notated as the individual who presented the financial report. Second, the officer nominations for Jeffrey and April to be moved up to Vice-President and President was voted on with Monica Rentfrow and Kendrick Ward motioning. The minutes were approved with a motion from Abigail Strickland and seconded by Monica Rentfrow for the February meeting. It was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors.

**Review and Approval of Financial Report**

Emily Davenport shared that Financial Reports for January and February were not ready and hoped that they would be by the next meeting.

**Update from Georgia Municipal Association**

GMA Executive Director, Larry Hanson attended the meeting to give a quick update and shared how important GDA is and how much GMA values it. He expressed his excitement to bring Sadie Krawczyk and Renee Coakley on board with GMA to assist Cindy Edison's team. As a result, they feel it is logical to move the management of GDA into the Community & Economic Development of GMA. They would also be transferring management of the association from Emily Davenport to Renee Coakley. They are excited to build a talented team to support GDA and the cities throughout Georgia.

**Committee Reports**

Internal – April Norton began the Internal Operations committee report with the discussion of filling the Secretary/Treasurer position and the open Board member seats. Emily Davenport explained the nomination process. It was decided with the Vacant Board seats Renee Coakley would be removed from the ballot due to being hired by GMA. Ricky Clark commented on the nomination procedures and issues with the By-laws. Ricky asked for his name to be removed from the ballot. Emily suggested sending separate ballots to each of the board members for (1) Secretary/Treasurer and (2) Vacant Board Members seats for districts 3, 11 and At-Large. Emily encouraged Ricky to reconsider removing his name from the ballot. Steve Foster gave comments on his perspective of the nomination process. April closed the discussion with agreement to vote by ballots through email. The Ex-officio positions were brought up and it was clarified that Ex-officio positions do not vote during board meetings but are allowed to vote in membership votes that are emailed or during general meetings.

Education – Jeffrey Fowler gave the update for the Education Committee. The Regional Meetups will be happening soon and we're excited to get those completed for the Spring. Future meetings will be hosted in the Fall, and those places/dates will be shared with the Board. We wanted to invite people who are not members, highlight the GDDP program updates, ensure the host community was allowed time to

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highlight projects, and give some highlights to the mentorship program. The GDDP program, Jeffrey did not have any updates on the program, and future updates would be given as the process continues. The mentorship program is going strong, and Jeffrey Fowler had made contact to all groups. He will continue to contact them throughout the year.

**Membership / Marketing** – April Norton gave an update on the website and showcased the new website. Several pages were shared with the Board, and it was exciting to see this project completed. April Norton commented on membership numbers and asked Board members to reach out to past due or new members through reports sent from Emily Davenport.

**Legislative** – Ricky Clark gave a brief overview of the current legislative session. The Casino Bill has been dropped for now and mentioned Georgia House Bill 1382 which would require yearly training on development programs. The Historic Tax Credits that are sunseting were also mentioned, and a new version was passed by the Senate Finance Committee and moved to the Senate Rules Committee. The issue with the new bill is added provisions. If anyone has contacts for the Senate Rules Committee, please reach out to see about the passing of the bill.

### **Staff Updates**

Emily Davenport expressed that the booklets would be ready by the next meeting and gave a personal thank you for the opportunity to serve GDA as the Business Manager as well as all the support with the unexpected passing of her father.

### **Partner Updates**

Danny Bivins expressed he felt the board was facing a lot of new challenges and gave updates on their program at UGA and staff changes.

Chris Higdon spoke to upcoming loan programs through the Georgia Cities Foundation.

Steve Foster gave an update that he will be retiring in June or July from Georgia Power.

Ellen Hill provided an update that Tara Bradshaw is leaving DCA to work for the City of Dublin.

Leigh Burns provided an update on behalf of the Fox Theatre.

John VanBrunt thanked Steve Foster for his time and service as well as Emily Davenport for her time assisting GDA.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business at this time.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned with a motion from Ricky Clark and seconded by Jeffrey Fowler.