

**GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
48 Warren St, Warrenton, GA 30828
May 23, 2023**

The GDA Board of Directors held its regular meeting on Tuesday, May 25, 2023. The board met in person at the Warren County Extension Agency. President Fowler called the meeting to order at 11:04 am.

The following Board Members were in attendance: President Jeffrey Fowler, Vice-President Emily Hopkins, Past-President April Norton, Mr. Jason Ford, Ms. Velinda Hardy, Ms. Abbey McLaren, Ms. Tonya Parker, Ms. Suzanne Roberts, Mr. Taylor Smith, Abigail Strickland, Ms. Kendrick Ward, and Mr. Qaijuan Willis.

Secretary/Treasurer Aundi Lesley and Mr. Mathew Hill were absent.

The following GMA/GDA Staff Members were in attendance: Ms. Renee Coakley and Cindy Eidson.

Ms. Sharon Collins, Ms. Emily Davenport, Mr. Chris Higdon, and Ms. Sadie Krawczyk were absent.

The following Partners were in attendance: Ms. Ellen Hill, Mr. Scott Purvis (virtual), and Ms. Jessica Worthington.

Mr. Danny Bivins, Ms. Elizabeth Elliot, Mr. Dan McRae, Ms. Kaitlin Messich, Ms. Ebony Simpson, and Mr. John VanBrunt were absent.

Review and Approval of the Minutes: The April 25th minutes were reviewed. Ms. Strickland made a motion to approve. Mr. Smith seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of March Financial Report: Mrs. Coakley presented the March financial report. She noted that the first silent auction donation had been collected. Additionally, expenses had been paid for the March board meeting lunch in the amount of \$571.70 and printing "Save the Date" postcards to promote the conference at the legislative meeting and GMA convention. Ms. Norton made a motion to approve the March financial report. Ms. Parker seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Committee Reports

I. Executive Committee (Internal Operations)

- a. *Board Position/Election Results:* Ms. Coakley reported that the election results had been tallied for the vacant board seat and Kira Harris-Braggs won the election. President Fowler noted he would reach out to Ms. Harris-Braggs to welcome her to the board.
- b. *Edge Scholarship Application Review/Vote:* President Fowler announced that Jennifer Harrison from Hoschton submitted a scholarship application to attend the Georgia Downtown Association conference. Ms. Strickland noted that she is in full support of Ms. Harrison's application and clarified that registration for the conference would be comped rather than paid out of the scholarship fund. President Fowler confirmed the registration would be comped. Ms. Strickland made a motion to approve Ms. Harrison's scholarship

application to attend the 2023 Georgia Downtown Association conference in Canton as a comped registration. Ms. Norton seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

c. *GDA Webinars*

- i. *Cost structure:* Ms. Coakley reported that GDA received an overwhelming response for conference session proposals. Only 9 spots were available for conference sessions and 31 proposals were submitted. The review committee suggested offering some of the submitted sessions as webinars after the conference. Webinars would be offered in November, February, and March. Similarly, Ms. Coakley reported that Paige with DCA would also be willing to offer a historic preservation webinar during Preservation Month instead of at the conference. Paige has already confirmed that she would offer the webinar in May 2024. Ms. Coakley proposed offering the webinars for free to anyone who attended the conference and charging \$25 to those who do not attend the conference. This would create an added benefit and incentive to attend the conference. Ms. Strickland asked if there would be any cost to offer the webinars and Ms. Coakley confirmed GDA would incur no additional cost. Mr. Willis made a motion to offer the four webinars for free to conference attendees and at a price of \$25 for those who did not attend the conference. Ms. McLaren second the motion. All were in favor. The motion carried.

II. **Education and Training**

- a. *CDP Update/CVIOG Contract:* President Fowler reported that the development of the CDP classes is now complete and the Education Committee is moving into the implementation phase. President Fowler received the contract from Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) on Friday. President Fowler reviewed highlights from the contract including the annual contract fee of \$38,000, which covers the costs of CVIOG facilitating 14 classes each year. The contract will be paid annually in 4 equal payments of \$9500 and the service period will be from July 1 to June 30. The contract can be canceled with 90 days' notice. Classes for the certification will take place during GDA's annual conference and throughout the rest of the calendar year. Mr. Fowler read directly from the contract the expectations of CVIOG, the GDA board, and GMA staff to coordinate the program annually.

The board engaged in a robust and lengthy discussion about CVIOG's contract and how the certification program will be implemented. Board members asked numerous questions and President Fowler clarified several points regarding the implementation of the certification program:

1. Instructors, room fees, and travel are not covered by the \$38,000 contract fee.
2. The break-even point for the certification program is \$108/attendee per class.
3. 25 people must take each class at \$108/class for GDA to break even. Staff believes charging \$200/attendee per class will create a buffer to break even.
4. The cost to complete the certification at \$200/class would be \$2800 and it is anticipated to take two years.

Several board members noted that a cost analysis is necessary to determine the pricing of the program. Several board members also agreed that CVIOG is the appropriate partner for implementing this program due to the credibility and weight behind the University of Georgia. Ms. Eidson reported she is also working for this certification program to count

towards training credits for elected officials. Due to the hearty discussion, President Fowler asked for all board members to review the contract and send questions to him or Ms. Coakley by Thursday, May 25. President Fowler noted that the contract will freeze on June 30 so the board needs to move swiftly. Ms. Coakley also noted that two CDP classes are scheduled to take place during the conference and registration opens June 1.

Ms. Hopkins made a motion to delay offering the CDP classes at the GDA conference in August and instead, use the conference as a marketing opportunity for the program by building in a session preview into the conference schedule. Ms. Hardy seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

- b. *Regional Meetups*: Ms. Coakley reported regional meetups had been scheduled for the fall. The meetups will take place all over the state of Georgia to make it possible for members to easily attend.

III. Marketing & Membership

- a. *Marketing*: Ms. Strickland reported that the social media platforms currently have 2608 Facebook followers (up 37 from last month) and 848 Instagram followers (up 9 from last month).
- b. *Membership*: Ms. Strickland reported there are 185 paid members and 32 unpaid invoices. Ms. Strickland noted that members with outstanding balances have been contacted.
- c. *Swag*: The marketing committee has decided to purchase a Stanley Cup-type of mug, a slim can koozie, and a nice tote for purchase. The committee is working to finalize the t-shirt design but Ms. Strickland noted the shirt will be black. The committee will also order stickers and lip balm to giveaway and some sort of bag for conference materials. The committee is working to finalize a bundle price for all swag items.

IV. Legislative

- a. *Legislative Update*: Mr. Smith reviewed the committee's legislative update that was provided in the board's packet. Mr. Smith noted that the Truckway Bill has been signed by the governor, which gives new allowances for log and agriculture trucks with limited options for local municipalities to overrule.

Mr. Smith went on to note GDA needs to be a strong advocate and voice for Georgia downtowns. The legislative committee has developed an advocacy agenda that includes advocating for the continuation and changes to the Rural Zone designation; incentives for creating new housing, including more understanding around the Georgia Rural Workforce Housing Initiative; and small business incubation. Additionally, the committee is establishing a list of state partners and re-establishing the legislative body relationship. The committee would like for GDA to participate in Cities United and have the entire GDA board in attendance.

V. Conference Committee Update

- a. *Keynote*: Ms. Hardy reported that she recently heard the mayor of Dublin speak during a Georgia Main Street training and believes he would be a phenomenal keynote speaker. In addition to Dublin's mayor, the committee has a list of 8 potential keynote speakers. The committee expects to have a keynote speaker confirmed by the next board meeting.
- b. *Sponsors/Exhibitors*: Ms. Coakley reported 9 sponsors have been confirmed for a total of \$15,500 in sponsorship income, which exceeds the projected budget of \$15,000. She continued that \$1000 has been collected from exhibitors but more exhibitors need to be

secured to meet budget. Ms. Ward suggested having sponsorship forms at the GMA convention and Ms. Coakley noted that she will have postcards to help recruit exhibitors.

VI. Policy & Procedures

- a. *Policy & Procedures Manual and Bylaws*: In Mr. Hill's absence, President Fowler reported no updates.

VII. Other Business

- a. No other business.

VIII. Staff Updates

- a. Ms. Eidson reported that the Georgia Cities Foundation is a CDFI with SSBCI funds available. She asked the board to share this resource with their downtown partners. Ms. Edison reported that she and staff will offer several sessions during the GMA Convention. Ms. Coakley asked for board members to help staff GDA's table during the convention. Ms. Edison went on the report that she is working on the opportunity for city officials to receive credit hours for the completing CDP classes.

IX. Partner Updates

- a. Ms. Worthington reported Georgia Main Street will host the Switch to 6 training on June 6 in Macon and registration is currently open. The virtual training is live. All Main Street communities are required to complete this mandatory training.
- b. Ms. Worthington reported that Mr. John VanBrunt is leaving ECG. Ms. Strickland suggested Scott Berta as a possible replacement to serve on the GDA board as he is a supporter of Georgia downtowns.

There being no further business, Mr. Willis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.