

GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
VIRTUAL
September 28, 2021

Present

Board Members: Abigail Strickland, April Norton, Aundi Lesley, Christian Hamilton, Christopher Pike, Ellen Hill, Emily Hopkins, Jeffrey Fowler, Kendrick Ward, Mathew Hill, Qaijuan Willis, and Sadie Krawczyk

Partners: Cindy Eidson, Danny Bivins, Jessica Reynolds, John VanBrunt, Leigh Burns, Steve Foster

Staff: Chris Higdon, Elizabeth Elliott, Emily Davenport, and Stephanie Russell

Call to Order

President Mathew Hill called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.

Review and Approval of Minutes

President Hill asked if everyone had time to review the minutes, which were included in the calendar invite.

Qaijuan Willis made a motion to approve the August 19th minutes as prepared and Ellen Hill made the second.

The motion was approved.

Committee Reports

- Internal -

- *Vacant Board Member Position (District 9)*: President Hill shared that with Lynn Brinson taking a new position, she had to step down from the board and her position will need to be filled. Emily Davenport ran a report of the GDA members in district 9 and shared those names with the board. President Hill asked Emily Davenport to email the list of eligible candidates to the board & partners and then they can submit their recommendations and then talk to the top candidates.
- *Pictures for all Board Members* – President Hill shared that we need headshots for the newest board members and asked if they could send them to Emily Davenport. Once Emily receives them, she will update the GDA website. In addition, the board may want to consider having new headshots taken at the retreat in January so that they are all current & have the same background.
- *Upcoming Meeting Dates & Retreat* – President Hill shared that the Board Retreat will be held on January 10 & 11, 2022 in Macon. On the 10th, the board will look at the location & conference site and then the retreat will actually be held on the 11th, which will include the new version of the GDDP. In regards to the remaining meetings for 2021, President Hill asked how the board would like to move forward. Ellen Hill shared that it was her understanding that they would meet in-person in October, virtual in November, and no meeting in December. Everyone was in agreement and decided that the October meeting would be in Atlanta at the GMA office. Emily will reserve the room & send out a calendar invite. The retreat in January will take the place of the regular meeting for that month.

- Education -

- *Mentoring Program (Need Point Person)* – Ellen Hill shared that with Lynn Brinson stepping down due to her new job, this also means that they need to find someone to take her place as overseeing the Mentoring Program. She provided general details about the role and asked if anyone was interested to let her know. She will send out an email with a summary of the position & then follow up when we are in person.
- *GDDP* – Ellen Hill reminded everyone that the draft proposal from CVIOG has been provided for their review & we will do a deep dive at the retreat on this (e.g. classes, facilitation, etc.). President Hill & Ellen met with Mara Shaw a few weeks ago to discuss in more details as well as

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discussed creating a separate GDDP committee (e.g. board members, partners, membership & representative that had previously worked on the GDDP program). A lot of information will be covered, so everyone needs to be ready to discuss at depth in January. Steve Foster asked if there was anything that the board & partners could be doing now or items to discuss at the October so that we do not have to wait until January, as well as consideration to have board members tap into curriculum. Jeffrey Fowler suggested reaching out to Mara to see if there are any items that we can be working on now and better prepared for the January meeting.

- Membership / Marketing – April Norton shared that there are no major updates. Efforts are continuing to be made on social media to highlight members. Now that conference is over, we will begin working with GMA to update the GDA website.
- Legislative – No update. Leigh Burns did share that they are getting ready to start their coalition again about the casinos and arts & entertainment network around fighting the arts component of the casinos. If anyone has questions, feel free to contact Leigh. Elizabeth Elliott shared information on Rural Zones and clarification on the program (e.g. timeframes, extensions, etc.). John VanBrunt brought up some questions about the total number of cities that can participate (e.g. limited to 50).

Annual Georgia Downtown Conference Review

President Hill called on Jeffrey Fowler to go over the results from the Annual Conference survey. Of the 143 attendees, 81 responded and the overall feedback was really positive. For the two open ended questions, we received lots of feedback in regards to (1) What were your goals in attending this conference and (2) What would you like to see added at the Georgia Downtown Conference 2022”. The last question was in regards to whether they preferred to have the DDA training at the beginning or end of the conference and the overwhelming majority would prefer it at the beginning versus at the end. See Survey for more details. Several board members & partners thanked Jeffrey for a job well done on the survey.

Partner Updates

- Georgia Cities Foundation – Cindy Eidson shared that Stephanie Russell will be leaving to take a new job opportunity in northern Utah as the Economic Development Director for Weeber County, near Salt Lake. Stephanie will be closer to family, but will certainly miss working with everyone & encouraged them to continue their efforts (e.g. community involvement, economic development, sustainability, equity & inclusion, etc.). Cindy thanked Stephanie for all her efforts & shared about the next Development Session Series on October 7th at 11:00 am with Sherman Golden on New Market Tax Credits. All sessions are recorded and available to watch at a later date. GMA will be advertising for Stephanie’s position, so Cindy encouraged everyone to be on the lookout for that in case they know of anyone that may be interested.
- CVIOG – Danny Bivins had no update, but wished Stephanie all the best.
- DCA / Office of Downtown Development – Jessica Reynolds shared that they are done with trainings for the year, but will continue to have 3rd Thursday (Coffee & Conversation) for the rest of the year. They will also be bringing back Mobilized Main Streets in 2022 at the end of March. Jessica also shared how Stephanie has been a part of her main street journey from the beginning and wished her well.
- Fox Theatre – Leigh Burns shared that they are evaluating their grants, as well as Fox in Box, which is a virtual program offered throughout the entire state. Just finished Hamilton and brought in around 185,000 people, which was a huge success, and thanked everyone that has helped support them through COVID.

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- Georgia Power – Steve Foster shared that they just signed their contract with Placer AI (mobile marketing). He referenced that in the conference survey it was mentioned how to use data and he thinks this will be a great opportunity, especially for our smaller cities. He also wished Stephanie all the best with her new job.
- ECG – John VanBrunt thanked Stephanie for all she has done, especially with placemaking, and her friendship for the last 10 years. He was disappointed that he was unable to attend the GDA conference this year, due to a bus tour they had, which went really well. They are being hit hard by cryptocurrency, which is where a lot of their efforts are being focused, but looks forward to getting more involved with GDA.

Staff Update

Emily Davenport provided an update on the following post-conference items:

- Drafted and provided press releases to everyone who received an Award of Excellence and/or their GDDP certification
- Mailed all certificates to non-attendees (e.g. Mentor Program & GDDP Certification)
- Paid all outstanding invoices & waiting on finance to close out those expenses
- Thank you letters to all those who provided Silent Auction donation items
- Powerpoints have been loaded to the GDA website
- Social media posts for each Award of Excellence winners

Other Business

- No additional items

Adjourn

- With no further business, President Hill asked for a motion to adjourn. Ellen Hill made a motion and Christian Hamilton made the second. The motion was approved.