

**Georgia Downtown Association
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Virtual
March 26, 2024**

The GDA Board of Directors held its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 26th, 2024. The board met in Atlanta at the GMA building. President Emily Hopkins called the meeting to order at 11:03 am.

The following Board Members were in attendance: Emily Hopkins, Aundi Lesley (virtual), Suzanne Roberts (virtual), Jason Ford, Velinda Hardy, Abigail Strickland, Taylor Smith, Kendrick Ward, Jeffrey Fowler (virtual), Qaijuan Willis, April Norton, Abbey McLaren, Cassidi Kendrick, Tonya Parker

The following GMA/GDA Staff Members were in attendance: Ms. Renée Coakley, Ms. Cindy Eidson, Ms. Sharon Collins, Ms. Sadie Krawczyk, Latisha Gray (GMA staff guest), Nicole Brown (GMA staff guest), Kim Cavalcante (GMA staff guest)

The following GDA Partners were in attendance: Ms. Leigh Burns, Mrs. Jessica Worthington, Mr. Scott Purvis (virtual), Mr. Clark Stancil

Emily thanked a list of GMA staff for their support of GDA and its initiatives Larry Hanson, Rodline Africo-Prado, Ashley Bailey, Grant Bradshaw, Nicole Brown, Kim Cavalcante, Sharon Collins, Adam Confer, Emily Davenport, Korey Dickens, Cindy Eidson, Mark Elliot, Latisha Gray, Sadie Krawczyk, Chris Obenschain.

Emily shared the plaques that were received at Cities United in January. GDA was recognized as an Organization of Ethics and an Organization of Civility.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Approval of minutes – Qaijuan moved and Abbey seconded to approve the January 18, 2024 minutes. All voted in favor. Qaijuan moved and April seconded to approve the February 27, 2024 minutes. All voted in favor.

Review and Approval of the Financial Reports: The financial report was not ready in time for the meeting and will be reviewed at the April meeting.

Action Items: Adam Edge Scholarship – Cornelia (Noah Hamil) applied to attend the National Main Street Conference. Taylor motioned to approve and April seconded – Jeffrey commented that he is Noah's mentor and thought it would be good for him to attend National Main Street. Abigail Strickland asked that we make sure applicants know the difference in the organizations. All voted in favor.

Open board seat – The nominations committee met to propose a ballot with Lequrica Gaskins from Albany be the candidate. Action needs to be taken by board and then it goes out to the full body to vote. Tonya asked if we need to vote if there is one person. Abigail commented that it would be important to have someone from the Atlanta Metro area. Jeffrey from the nominations committee said they did take that into consideration when putting for the nominee. For clarification, Emily said we did need to take action even if there is only one candidate, but asked if we are comfortable with one person on the ballot. Abigail wanted to have at least one more person on the ballot, and another agreed. Abbey asked if Lequrica knew that she was on the ballot and she does. Jeffrey said she seemed interested and wanted to review the requirements. Several made comments of importance for someone from Atlanta to be

represented. Emily called for a motion to move forward. Jason asked if it was pressing that we make this decision today. Jason made a motion to ask the nominating committee to review candidates to see if there is someone else from the Atlanta Metro area to add to the ballot, if after that review if there is nobody that fills that requirement, let's move forward. Abigail seconded. Leigh Burns asked for clarification that the person should come from the City of Atlanta as they expand their Main Street presence. Emily answered affirmatively. Jessica Worthington said someone from an urban setting should be considered. All in favor. The names of the people who were mentioned in the discussion should be sent to Jeffery and the nominations committee.

Committee Reports

Workplan review:

Executive Committee – Set board meeting locations and dates

Annual review of contracts. – Executive committee will review contracts first week of April, review insurance at next meeting and discussing budget already so that any changes and updates can be done for next year. The committee will be conducting a scholarship review – new to policy and procedures review – hearing from that later in the meeting, and there are other updates that Renée does a wonderful job of handling. Taylor Smith – Welcome letter, it was requested to add a personal call to new managers. We will make the update.

Education and Training: Jeffery Fowler – Workplan – At our next meeting reviewing the mentor program. They will also be reviewing CDP marketing as well as working with UGA for internal marketing. There will be a CDP program review in June. We will have an exhibit at National Main Street and it is on track. – purchasing swag. Finally, they will be working on education strategies and a survey is being created.

CDP – Discussion with Renée to make a budget template to make sure CDP is meeting metrics. We want to be able to ensure growth. In August class there were 40 attendees, then in November 55, and March had 68. In June we already have 20 = 30% growth, On the budget side the program \$72,000 was budgeted for revenue as of Brunswick and June class we have \$34, 275 in revenue. If Atlanta matches Brunswick, we'll have \$48,275 but we would like a growth of 30%.

Expenses – Jefferey gave some reports on expenditures, and will be emailing a spreadsheet to the board. As it stands currently, we will be short of goal by a little over \$2,445.26.

Marketing and membership Committee Report – Abigail presented the workplan update. The first goal was to grow membership and it is happening. GDA will provide a presentation for the Cities Connect call in June. It will be when conference registration opens so we can promote our Downtowns of the Year from last year, as well as conference update. We need to build out a schedule for social media. We are currently working on a swag order and marketing videos will be done today.

Social Media & Membership – Social media numbers were given: Facebook 2902, Instagram is at 989, and LinkedIn is up to 235. Memberships are at 121 paid memberships and as of 3/22/24 we are at \$37,350 in membership dues. We do have a balance due and reminder notices are being sent. If all funds are collected, we will collect \$49,832.50 and so membership is looking great. Renée talked about

membership and with the changes was a little concerned with meeting the numbers, so seeing the increase we have already, we will pass the budgeted amount. She is really proud of that work.

Legislative – Taylor – Jason explained HB 1197 and its status. Jason and Kendrick went to the Senate Finance Committee and testified in support of the bill. The bill did not leave committee but was passed in a substitute bill SB 496 and is at the Governor’s desk. We need to start lobbying for next year to get the desired changes. The date will no longer set in 2027, but now in 2032. Taylor gave kudos to Jason and Kendrick for going to the capitol. We now have a better understanding of how things work down at the capitol, and it is exciting to see where we will be next year. Also in SB 496 Historic tax credits were also extended to 2029.

We can use the 2024 calendar for next year as a template. We are trying to be on the LPC committee calls going forward. We are going to update the general membership on some of the bills that have passed. We will try to send out a legislative agenda in November for our initiatives. In discussion with GMA we want to host a lobbying 101 class at conference in Thomasville.

Bill updates from Gold Dome – Kendrick told the board that the CHOICE act did not pass. Everything else is still slated for a senate floor.

Policies and Procedures: Abbey – The committee has been working on committee member onboarding updates. Those changes were emailed to the board and received comments. They are working on establishing committee structure and updating descriptions. New member and volunteer onboarding needs updating. At our next month meeting we will be talking about changes to the Adam EDGE Scholarship with eligibility selection and review. Emily updated that unless there are objections with committee onboarding, we will begin moving onboarding along.

Conference Committee: There is a lot of interest in the GDA conference based on the Third Thursday call. The conference committee felt like there needed to be a theme for the conference and they landed on Advancing Together: 25 Years of Impact. Marketing has updated the logo with the 25 years anniversary noted. Based on feedback from last conference, the committee is incorporating the ideas to have more training and education classes. There will be seventeen (17) concurrent sessions. Mobile Workshops and History tours are also scheduled. This year for the conference The Biscuit Company will be the home base, so there will be some moving pieces to set up for conference and exhibitors. There will be dedicated time for exhibitors including the opportunity to join the concurrent sessions and roundtable discussions. GDA is creating a promotional video for conference. Lodging is secured, and conference budget is in line. April 1st is when forms for educational session applications will be launched. Registration will launch June 1 and save the dates will go out this week. Leigh Burns said that she helped with the conference last year and is happy to do so again. Emily talked about updating how sponsorship/exhibitor participation will work. Jessica Worthington added that exhibitors could potentially sponsor a class and have their promotional materials in it. All locations for classes will have room to host an exhibitor or sponsor.

Renée demonstrated an online portal for applications and proposals. See step by step guide. Julie Griffin kudos for updating the online portal. Maybe on Third Thursday we can do a tutorial. Emily thanked Renée for working on it. The process should be intuitive. Abigail added to her report that we have a booth reserved at National Main Street conference and that there will be a sign up genius to schedule shifts to work the booth.

Partner updates: Georgia Main Street – Jessica Worthington had no updates but talked about the State of the Program update from the Third Thursday call. She is looking forward to Birmingham.

Fox Gives - Leigh Burns announced the rebranding of the Fox Theatre Institute as Fox Gives. She expanded that the relaunch helped them double their budget and investment. Two new programs were created; The All-Access Program which provides opportunities for students to experience the theatre and learn about job development. She also updated Fox in a Box would have a virtual version update including bilingual programming. They will be hiring for the education position. The Multiyear grant of \$500,000 was awarded to Hart County Community Theatre in Downtown Hartwell, Hart County Georgia.

Carl Vinson Institute of Government – Clark Stancil – added Carmine Fischetti has been added to staff and he will support community resiliency planning. Kaitlin in their office will be assisting Georgia Placemaking Collaborative.

Georgia Municipal Association - Cindy Eidson gave an update on the Heart and Soul workshop which will be in Suwanee this Fall. It has been 20 years since they did a design charette that helped to develop some space for what could be there town center. There will be new construction and some preservation sessions. Cindy was also able to do a trip to Thomaston and Leesburg recently for some projects there.

Sadie Krawczyk gave some updates on Georgia Cities Foundation and the Georgia Economic Placemaking initiatives, as well as the Young Game Changers program. Taylor Smith will be joining the class. New applications will be available in October. There will be a Georgia Forum (½ day forum) on power demands facing Georgia.

Georgia Power - Scott Purvis told the board that he has been given the green light to do the CREATE Program again. Matt Wagner at National Main Street will support the program again. There is an eligibility requirement of communities less than 50,000 residents.

Renée updated about potential locations for 2024 Fall regional meetups – Sandersville, Thomaston, Jessup, Cairo, and Locust Grove,

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Abigail and Qaijuan seconded motion to approve.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10.