

**GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL
MAY 30, 2023**

The GDA Board of Directors held a special called meeting on Tuesday, May 30th via Zoom. President Fowler called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

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

Ms. Tonya Parker was absent.

Special Guests Mara Shaw and Crissy Marlowe were in attendance.

The following Staff Members were in attendance: Ms. Renée Coakley, Ms. Cindy Eidson, and Ms. Sadie Krawczyk.

The following Partners were in attendance: Mr. Scott Purvis, Ms. Jessica Worthington, Ms. Ellen Hill, Ms. Elizabeth Elliott, Ms. Leigh Burns, and Mr. Danny Bivins.

CDP Discussion:

President Fowler shared the CDP draft budget discussed previously in the Executive meeting. The classes were forecasted for \$250/person at 25 people/class. At that rate, the profit would be around \$10,000. There was discussion about offering lunches. Ms. Marlowe recommended at least a one-hour lunch. The goal of the Executive Committee is to plan classes around conferences that are already taking place like the GDA Conference, GMA Convention, GA Cities United, etc. The Edge Scholarship covers one in-state training, but the board could amend the scholarship to include specific language regarding the CDP training. Since there are concerns about covering costs, the CDP fees would have to be paid by GDA. President Fowler suggested reaching out to partners to create a new scholarship dedicated to CDP. Mr. Purvis conveyed budgetary cuts at Georgia Power so they would be unable to fund anything additional at this time.

Ms. Shaw sits on the Municipal Training Board with GMA and that body would need to consider any training to be offered in conjunction with Convention. She did state that the CDP would not count as credit for elected officials as part of the Harold F. Holtz Training Institute. Elected officials would still be welcome to attend the CDP training courses, and they often attend the other trainings that are offered.

For the new board members, Ms. Shaw recapped the last two years when the GDA board approached her and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to revamp the existing certification program. At that time, GDA, Georgia Power, and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government equally invested a little more than \$17,000 each for curriculum development. The new contract being discussed is for the implementation of the new program. The new contract fee of around \$38,000 is only covering costs for the CVIoG. Ms. Marlowe reviewed the responsibilities of CVIoG as outlined in the contract. She reiterated that the rigor of this program is very comparable to the Georgia Certified Economic Developer program and others.

There was extensive conversation about the feasibility of \$250/class for local managers. Adding food costs to the budget would alleviate that cost to the managers, but raises the break even cost for GDA from 18 to 24 people/class.

The question was posed if the classes did not break even, what fund would cover that cost? President Fowler said the general fund is currently around \$82,044.77 after scholarships and would supplement the cost.

Ms. Shaw, Ms. Marlowe, and Mr. Bivins left the call out of respect for the financial conversations amongst the board.

There was discussion about core classes versus electives and the possibility of splitting the classes into levels or multiple certifications. The way the program is currently structured is 60 hours of core classes and 36 hours (includes the capstone project) of advanced classes, with no prerequisites required. There was discussion of splitting those into two certifications with a basic and advanced level. Ms. Marlowe re-joined the call and said that is a possibility if the board decided to do that. It would not necessarily change the contract or cost additional fees if the class delivery was the same. The contract and/or fees would potentially change if the draft schedule was changed.

Mr. Smith suggested we add a member/non-member pricing option to incentivize people to join the membership.

The consensus was to constantly evaluate the program when it launches to make modifications if needed and be good stewards of the program and funds since the current board members will roll off in the next few years and leave another group of board members with the program. President Fowler mentioned the new policy and procedures will allow for non-board members to join committees with the intention of the Education Committee to remain involved and continue to guide the program.

Ms. Norton made a motion to move forward as presented offering the free classes at conference with consistent reevaluation of the program. Ms. Ward suggested reviewing after the classes are offered after conference and create a plan for marketing the program to kick off in January. Ms. Strickland suggested offering only one class at conference.

Mr. Hill seconded the motion with one class offered at conference. The June meeting will include a more robust implementation plan to be presented to the board. Motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Hill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Willis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:47 am.