

**GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
GMA OFFICE
JUNE 22, 2021**

Present

Board Members (In-Person): Mathew Hill, Ellen Hill, Aundi Lesley, (Virtually) Christian Hamilton, April Norton, Sadie Krawczyk, Kendrick Ward, Lynn Brinson, and Jeffrey Fowler

Partners, Staff and Guest (In-Person): Leigh Burns, Cindy Eidson, Chris Higdon, Janice Eidson, Emily Davenport, (Virtually) Jessica Reynolds, Elizabeth Elliott, Danny Bivins, Michael Cahill, John VanBrunt, Stephanie Russell, and Connie Tabor

Call to Order

President Mathew Hill called the meeting to order at 11:14 am

Review and Approval of Minutes

President Hill asked if everyone had time to review the minutes. Emily Davenport shared comments provided by April Norton. Ellen Hill made a motion to approve the minutes with the revisions and Aundi Lesley made the second. The motion was approved.

Committee Reports

- Internal – President Hill shared that there are 4 vacant / unexpired Board of Director seats that need to be filled. In order to serve on the board, several factors should be considered including being a GDA member. Several candidates were mentioned and it was decided to send Emily Davenport any recommendations so that she could confirm their GDA membership & representative district, then follow back with the board for a vote.
- Education –
 - o *GDDP Exam Update* – Ellen Hill asked Connie Tabor to provide a brief overview of the recent GDDP exam that was held at the GMA office on June 4th. She shared that 12 GDA members took the exam, which included a written and oral component, with 11 receiving passing scores. Jeffrey Fowler and Christian Hamilton shared some insight on recently going through the GDDP exam and it was recommended that a session be presented at the annual conference so people better understood the purpose, expectations, as well as promote the program. Ellen Hill reminded the board that the SWOT analysis will be on July 8th in Macon and that it can be discussed more at that time since the program will be reviewed and encouraged the entire board to attend that meeting. Aundi Lesley also shared that she had a great experience going through the GDDP exam recently; however, was not sure what to expect on the written portion and would recommend additional information / expectations, timeframes, and overall more feedback on what she could have done better to help prepare for Level II and III.
 - o *Mentoring Program* – Ellen Hill asked Lynn Brinson to provide an update on the Mentoring Program. Lynn Brinson shared that they have received 1 additional mentor / mentee partnership since the last meeting and recommended that we help encourage this program at the upcoming conference. Elizabeth Elliot said that she would send Lynn Brinson an updated list of the Managers after the meeting. April Norton asked if a mentor could serve for more than one year. Mathew Hill encouraged people to continue to work together even after the year mentorship ends to strengthen those relationships and April Norton shared how that had benefited her personally.
- Membership / Marketing – April Norton shared a brief update on the GDA website and social media. Since the last meeting Emily Davenport has provided some website designs / layouts to April Norton and Aundi Lesley to review and narrowed down the options. April Norton and Aundi Lesley also highlighted

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the increase in social media posts by Emily Davenport to help highlight our GDA cities and using the #gadowntowns, which helps to promote our cities. All board members and partners were encouraged to send ideas / options to either April Norton, Aundi Lesley or Emily Davenport so that we can help spread the word.

- Legislative – Ricky Clark (Not present - No report). President Hill did ask if anyone else had any legislative news to share. Leigh Burns did share that several around the state are waiting to hear back from Saving Our Stages funds. They have been actively requesting support at the local, state and federal level for this funding. So far there is a \$13 million request for Georgia theatres and she thanked everyone who helped show their support. Next year there will most likely be some casino legislation in regards to live entertainment so she will be reaching out about that later.

Annual Georgia Downtown Conference Discussion

- Award Nominations Review – President Hill shared how a review committee needs to be formed. Committee can be a board member as long as they have NOT submitted an award, as well as a partner. Leigh Burns and Chris Higdon offered to serve. Jessica Reynolds shared that Carmine Fischetti could serve on behalf of DCA and Danny Bivins recommended Clark Stancil on behalf of CVIOG. Steve Foster with Georgia Power was also recommended and Cindy Eidson offered to help if needed.
- Discussion of Keynote Speakers – President Hill brought up the need for a keynote speaker and a question was asked about the concurrent sessions. He explained that there were 15 session submittals and 3 were questionable so the review committee is going to find out more information. He also shared how Tara Bradshaw has suggested a session on historic preservation and Jessica Reynolds shared that she had already reached out to HPD. They are in and just working on the session topic / title. Ellen Hill gave a quick overview of the topics submitted which included filming, social media, master planning, parking, leadership, etc. and if anyone has any additional topic ideas, please send them in. As for a keynote speaker, President Hill shared that we need suggestions. Suggestions included Joe Minicozzi (Urban3), Ed McMahon (Urban Land Institute), Charles Marohn (Strong Towns), as well as someone who could speak on economic recovery. Eric Kromberg was also mentioned; however, he just spoke at a historic preservation training, plus DCA plans to have him at one of their upcoming events. President Hill shared that was four suggestions and to let Emily Davenport know if there were any others.
- Mobile Workshops – President Hill stated on the schedule there will be two tours; however, we have not heard back from Ellijay. Danny Bivins brought up that a connection Chris Higdon may want to make is with Bo Chance who is a friend of Georgia Cities. A shuttle service is also needed, so if anyone knows, please let Emily know.
- Other - President Hill mentioned that there has been discussion of Showcase My City, as well as a parade of flags, and wanted to know if this is something that we should do as part of the conference. It was discussed that while it's not a bad idea, many cities have had to reduce their budgets. Another option could be to bring their downtown popup banners.
- Silent Auction – President Hill explained that normally the scholarship winner from the previous year helps with the Silent Auction, which would be Jeffrey Fowler; however, he was not able to attend & use his scholarship due to COVID last year. It was decided to let his scholarship carry over from 2020 and allow another scholarship to be giving this year as well.

Partner Updates

- Georgia Cities Foundation – Cindy Eidson shared that they were recently awarded US Department of Treasury Community Development Financial Institution Rapid Response Program Grant in the amount of

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\$1,826,265, which will go towards their loan program. On July 15th, Leigh Burns will be their speaker as part of the Development Sessions Series and share information on theatres, economic recovery, getting people back into downtowns, etc. Currently working on the Renaissance and Star Awards, as well as working closely with DCA and the small business credit program for the next rollout. These funds will assist with more projects in downtown and provide a number of opportunities if received.

- DCA – Office of Downtown Development – Jessica Reynolds shared that they have their Design 101 Bootcamp that will start in July as a 3-part series with Randy Wilson. They will also be working with Eric Kromberg in September on a 3-part series on downtown housing. As an office, DNR moved their state historic preservation office to DCA so they are working together on a couple of initiatives, which include a virtual design program and to revamp their downtown booklet. They are also branching out to provide a broader approach and not just Main Street. DCA has a lot of money coming in from the federal government for rental assistance & utilities, so if any downtowns have residential components, landlords and tenants should reach out to DCA to ensure those funds are utilized.
- Fox Theatre – Leigh Burns shared that they will have \$250,000 in grant funding for the next FY and due to post COVID recovery they will not require a match. They also have a partnership with Southface Institute through their Gooduse Program where they will fund sustainability and energy update to historic theatres and you can match their money 1 for 1. In 2019, they started a 10 year visioning program for Fox Theatre. In 2029, the Fox will be 100 years old and they hope is to have helped save 100 theatres and will be reaching out for assistance. Leigh Burns also thanked everyone that has reached out with some of the recent challenges they have experienced (e.g. car going through the window, issues with the building, etc.) and wanted to offer anyone who would like to buy Hamilton pre-sale tickets to just let her know and she would send them a code.
- Electric Cities of Georgia – John VanBrunt shared that Michael Cahill will be moving more towards to the commercial aspect for their company, so he will be taking over as the Ex-Officio. No other update.
- CVIQG – Danny Bivins – No update.

Other Business

- GDDP SWOT – President Hill reminded everyone that the GDDP SWOT will be in Macon on July 8th and stressed the importance for everyone to be there. April Norton is still on a travel band and asked if a virtual option was available. Ellen Hill explained that Mara Register said that virtual was not an option since participants need to be able to interact with each other (e.g. within groups). President Hill asked that Emily Davenport resend the invite to encourage more to attend.
- 2022 Georgia Downtown Conference – President Hill and Ellen Hill announced that it will be in Macon for 2022.
- In closing, President Hill thanked Janice Eidson for all her help with GDA and wished her well on her retirement, as well as several others.

Adjourn

- With no further business, President Hill reminded everyone that the July 27th meeting will be virtual and adjourned the meeting at 12:27 pm.