

**GEORGIA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL
APRIL 25, 2023**

The GDA Board of Directors held its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 25, 2023. The board met virtually. President Fowler called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.

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

Past-President April Norton, Mr. Ricky Clark, and Mr. Jason Ford were absent.

The following GMA/GDA Staff Members were in attendance: Ms. Renée Coakley, Ms. Cindy Eidson, Ms. Sharon Collins, and Ms. Sadie Krawczyk.

Mr. Chris Higdon and Ms. Emily Davenport were absent.

The following Partners were in attendance: Mr. John VanBrunt, Mr. Scott Purvis, Mr. Danny Bivins, and Ms. Leigh Burns.

Mr. Dan McRae, Ms. Kaitlin Messich, Ms. Jessica Worthington, Ms. Elizabeth Elliot, Ms. Ellen Hill, and Ms. Ebony Simpson were absent.

Review and Approval of Minutes: The March 21st minutes were reviewed, with a note to correct the spelling of Kendrick's name. Mr. Smith motioned to approve. Ms. Strickland seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of the October and November Financial Reports: Mrs. Coakley presented the February financial report. She noted that the Scholarship Fund has been corrected to reflect the accurate balance of \$11,645.01. The reimbursements for the national conference are currently in progress and should be reflected in next month's financial report. Ms. Parker motioned to approve with a second motion from Ms. McLaren. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Committee Reports

I. Executive Committee (Internal Operations)

- a. *Board Position:* President Fowler shared the current bylaws attendance requirements. Because he has missed three consecutive meetings for January, February, and March, Mr. Ricky Clark is eligible to be removed from his position by vote of the GDA Board of Directors. President Fowler did reach out multiple times to give Mr. Clark the option to retain his position with no final response. Mr. Smith thanked Mr. Clark for his dedication and service to the city of Jonesboro and the GDA board. The consensus from the board was to relinquish the position to someone who had the time and willingness to serve. Mr. Smith made a motion to remove Mr. Clark from his position with a second from Ms. Strickland. All were in favor. Motion passed.
- b. *Workplan Review:* President Fowler reminded the board that the workplan was to be reviewed with updates at every other board meeting. Mr. Smith updated the action items for the Legislative Committee. The legislative letter was distributed and included a rack card with information about the GDA Conference in August. The committee will get together for a

comprehensive update of the latest session and will have those updates prepared by the May meeting. The updates will subsequently be sent to the membership following the board meeting.

Ms. Strickland updated the board on the Marketing & Membership action items. Ms. Lesley is coordinating an annual calendar for GDA Booths, Ms. Parker is coordinating scholarship testimonials, and Ms. Strickland is writing a “Thank you” and “Welcome” email template. Once the CDP Program is ready, Ms. Elliott will help coordinate marketing efforts.

President Fowler updated the board on Education action items. He reported the success of the Spring Regional Meetups which recently concluded. Mrs. Coakley shared that 110 people attended the meetups in total. The fall meetups are scheduled and will be held weekly to allow for as much participation as possible. President Fowler shared that CDP action item due dates are on track.

Mr. Hill reported that the Policy and Procedure updates should be ready to be presented at the July meeting.

Ms. Hardy reported for the Conference Committee, which meets monthly. President Fowler is working on a video to promote the annual silent auction. Canton is hiring a videographer to put together a promotional video for the conference. Ms. Burns is drafting a sponsorship letter. Mrs. Coakley is setting up the volunteer/board signup. A committee of board members will be reviewing session proposals.

II. Education and Training

- a. *CDP Update:* President Fowler reported that the committee met recently for a test review and will meet again in May. Two classes will be released at the GDA Conference in August.

III. Marketing and Membership

- a. *Marketing:* Ms. Strickland reported that the social platforms currently have 2571 Facebook Followers (up 118 from last month) and 839 Instagram Followers (up 10 from last month).
- b. *Membership:* There are 177 paid members and 39 unpaid invoices. Ms. Strickland presented a new membership structure to go into effect for 2024 membership renewal. 1-3 Member Organization is \$250 annually. 4-9 Member Organization is \$500 annually. 10+ Member Organization is \$750 annually. The Friend of GDA is a \$50 annual option available for students, retirees, etc. This level would not include discounted rates to annual conference or education sessions or voting rights. Mr. Hill made a motion to accept the new membership structure with a second from Mr. Willis. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.
- c. *Swag:* Ms. Strickland presented a new design option for GDA t-shirts with a “Meet Me Downtown” theme designed by our partners at Carl Vinson Institute. There was discussion of a second design spelling out the names of city members. Mrs. Coakley will ask CVIoG, but Eleanor is out of pocket until late May. Other swag options being considered for this year are a Stanley-type tumbler, slim-can koozie, stickers, and a tote bag to sell. Ms. Hopkins also suggested doing a window cling for GDA members. Ms. Ward also recommended going with Safeguard or a similar company that can make recommendations on popular swag items.

IV. Legislative: See workplan review for legislative updates.

V. Conference Committee Update- See workplan review for updates.

VI. Policy & Procedures: See workplan review for updates.

VII. Other Business:

- a. *Session Proposals:* President Fowler shared that there have been questions as to why session proposals are only accepted from members and not non-members. He suggested allowing non-members to apply but giving priority to members. Mrs. Coakley said there is an array of downtown professionals, economic development, and private business. There was discussion about pros and cons of having non-members present. There was some hesitation about having

sales pitches under the guise of an education session. Ms. Hopkins used the example of a presentation on codes in Macon, and that group was a sponsor to be able to present. She noted that it would help diversify the content being presented at the conference. It was suggested to have a presenter rate next year and allow non-members to present. The three that applied this year will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- b. *GMA Convention, June 23-27 in Savannah*: Mrs. Coakley will send out a sign-up for GDA booth coverage.
- c. *GDA 25th Anniversary*: 2024 marks the 25th Anniversary of GDA. Mrs. Coakley said to be thinking of ideas on how we can celebrate.

Staff Updates:

- Mrs. Collins said they are working to finalize venue contracts in Canton for conference and working on GMA Convention and looking forward to seeing everyone in Savannah.

Partner Updates:

- Mrs. Eidson reported that they have received SSBCI funds. Chris Higdon is managing the program and will be able to work with potential projects and answer questions. Mrs. Krawczyk reported that the Young Gamechangers program kicks off tomorrow in Columbus.
- Mr. Purvis reported on the CREATE program met recently for their third out of four sessions with six community participants. They are also conducting a Project Management 101 class with 25-35 participants. He and Mickey submitted their CDP session for review.

There being no further business, Mrs. Hardy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hill seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm.