

DOWNTOWN FRESNO PARTNERSHIP

Marketing & Business Development Committee

December 6, 2023
1P.M. – 2P.M

Downtown Fresno Partnership
2020 Tulare Street

MINUTES

Location: Downtown Fresno Partnership, 2020 Tulare Street
This meeting will also be accessible via video at the following:

[Zoom Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 816 7933 0792

Password: 996964

Present: Beth Wilkinson, Madison Beard, Matt Napoletano, Phil Kliewer
Staff: Elliott Balch, Lara Agulian, Marissa Arreguin, Gloria Valdovinos

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 1:03pm.

We did a round of intros before getting into the meeting.

II. Recent & Ongoing Events

- a. **Christmas Parade Recap:** People were impressed with the parade. We have had a meeting about it internally to recap it as well. There was a bit of chaos in the execution, but we will learn and grow over time. Sergeant Van White reached out to Balch to tell him that the parade was well run and he was really pleased with it. He was supportive and wants to work together more directly to make things better for next year. He was impressed with Arreguin’s leadership. Balch was in a meeting today where Mayor Dyer also commented positively on the parade. We had about 13,200 people in attendance, double of what it was for the last parade in 2021. There were 93 participant groups in the parade.

Beard was one of the participants, part of the Donaghy float. Beard also felt it was a great event from Tioga’s perspective as well. Napoletano has observed that every event DFP threw this year helped Tioga with attendance as well. Balch brought up the Placer.ai tool, which will allow us to track numbers of people coming to Downtown. We had a quick demo on it earlier today. We could see how many people come to Tioga on different event days. Napoletano said that Tioga is interested in data like that. DFP is working with the EDC on this too to do comparative data.

Arreguin mentioned that we had to tow a car before the parade started. The owner of the car left it there overnight as she had been drinking and wanted to be safe. She did not see the signs stating not to park there, though they were out. Arreguin wondered if Tioga would put up signage before event days letting people know again not to leave their cars overnight. Beard agreed that this is a good idea and something they should do for their own events as well. We hate to tow the cars of

people trying to be responsible when drinking, but we had to move the car out of the street before the parade. If there are ways to avoid this, we should try.

- b. **City Tree Lighting Recap:** There wasn't too much work from DFP's side for the lighting. We were there to support and did have our snow blower out there.
- c. **DFP Open House:** Balch mentioned that we should have the snow blower out at the open house as well. It is happening Wednesday, December 13. We have both DFF and DFP board meetings before the open house, which is from 5-6:30pm. Balch emailed 1,800 people inviting them to the open house, so we do expect a good turn out. We are prepping and ordering food this week. Valdovinos said that we are looking forward to showing the new office to everyone and things that are possible in here.
- d. **ArtHop:** We have had conversations at DFP of what the night market of ArtHop would look like if it was a managed event. Balch was at an administration meeting with the City earlier today where ArtHop was a topic at the end. We brought a proposal of what we think a managed ArtHop would look like to Mayor Dyer. He believes that ArtHop should already be a beat for the PD. The outcome was that they want to create a smaller committee to keep working through ArtHop. DFP has had confrontations that have been uncomfortable with ArtHop vendors so we need reassurance that Code Enforcement and the City will be taking some of that responsibility. We won't start enforcing anything until after elections in March, but that does give us time to flesh some things out.

Napoletano sees the benefit of having the areas surrounding Tioga get busy with vendors and more. It creates more foot traffic. He also understands that from Fresno Street Eats' perspective, having more vendors might take away from theirs. We just have to find the balance for safety. Balch says that closing the street could be part of the event for safety reasons. Napoletano has observed busier ArtHops all throughout the year versus only in the warmer months. ArtHop attendance just keeps growing.

Arreguin mentioned that the Mariposa Plaza will be going under construction. She wonders how it will affect those vendors and where they will go. Gloria mentioned that vendors come very early in the morning to claim their spot and even set up their tents in the meters. Having someone manage the event takes that aspect out as well creating more safety. Tioga and DFP have both observed people trying to scam vendors at ArtHop as well. In the areas that are not managed, others are trying to have vendors pay them, claiming they manage it. It has become a bigger issue on the Warnors side.

Beard asked about the trolley program, how we think it is going, and how it might affect ArtHop. Balch wanted to know what Beard sees. She sees the City ambassadors out there and sees the trolley around town, but from Tioga, they can't see the trolley stop to fully know the impact. They are working to track those who use the trolley coupons to have better data on that. Different businesses around downtown agreed to give coupons to trolley riders. Valdovinos mentioned that South of Shaw see the impact of the coupons. We will continue doing those as long as businesses are interested. Valdovinos will keep checking in. Beard is

interested in starting an event in support of the trolleys. Valdovinos will see if she can get the stats for the amount of trolley riders.

III. Coming Events

- a. **2024 Plan:** Now that the parade is behind us, we have been planning for and budgeting for next year. We have some new ideas, such as bringing back Cinco de Mayo. We have been talking to the Fresno Metro Black Chamber and the Historical Society about a barbeque event. This is an event that has been done at Kearney Park before but would make sense to bring Downtown as the Historical Society headquarters is moving to Kern Street. We are also looking ahead to an Ice Rink at Mariposa Plaza for 2024. The Plaza is supposed to go under construction this month, though Balch learned in an earlier meeting today that there is talk of delaying the project. They were working around a delay in an electrical transformer, but they may just wait to start until that is available. If the Plaza is physically ready, but the Ice Rink needs to run on a generator next year, we have approval to do that.

Arreguin talked to Tioga about the BBQ event, Burn on Kern. It may extend into the Brewery District, but there is no solid layout yet. Beard mentioned that we should consider Smokin Woods in the planning on this. Even if the street closure doesn't extend to them, they would be willing to hold an event to tie in with ours. Arreguin also wants to separately discuss Fulton Street Party with Tioga along with the possibility of extending their alcohol license. We do have to consider the Mariposa Plaza construction when thinking of all of our events next year. We are planning to use Tulare St instead for most staging and will have Mariposa be our back up plan if it does end up being available. Balch believe that Tulare and H will still be closed next year so it won't be too hard to close Tulare St.

The Fiestas Patrias event next year will likely be the weekend of September 14-15. Historically Oktoberfest has fallen on the same weekend. Beard says that they are planning on changing how they do Oktoberfest. In 2024, Oktoberfest is technically on September 21. Tioga is open to embracing Fiesta Patrias and doing something to match that event. Balch asked if Tioga plans to do a Cinco de Mayo event. Napoletano said it looked hard to do as the Savannah Bananas are going to be here that whole weekend. Tioga does have a mini festival for alt music on May 4th. Agulian mentioned that the Fresno Urban Run will be on May 5th so streets will be closed that morning around Chukchansi Park and on Fulton. Balch said that all of these events would have different audiences.

Beard brought up FresYes Fest. There is no date set yet as they are waiting to see when a Mexican soccer league will have a game at Chukchansi. They do not want to have it on the same day. It will be either March 16 or 23. They are internally discussing layout shifts. They want to have more intention with where vendors, entrances, exits, and more located. They improved the beer lines this year and want to keep that going through all the aspects of the event. They will reach out about how to hire help with trash and support.

Balch mentioned that we are possibly looking to shift committee structure. We have talked mainly about events at this meeting, but there is a lot of marketing

and business development to discuss as well. Balch thinks that an event working group would be helpful to stay ahead of what everyone has going on. Beard makes more of a point to come to these meetings when she sees that more events will be covered in the agenda. She would find an event working meeting beneficial. Balch says there is room for a separate Brewery District meeting that talks about more logistical items, but also a greater events meeting. Arreguin mentioned that we had done a large events meeting with all the downtown organizers when Jordan Sanchez was interim CEO. We had planned to do more of these either quarterly or twice a year, but never were able to get back to it. These meetings would open up more coordination and collaboration and would allow for more feedback on events.

Balch was in a meeting last week with the administration from the City and the owner of Modernist. It was mainly about employee parking regularly and during special events. Validation stickers are one way to handle it for now, with parking in the Spiral Garage, but those are not valid during special events. There was talk of allotting Lot 6 as employee parking on special event days. We still need to figure out how this would work. It is possible that DFP would function as a mediator, selling permits, then either having signs and ticketing those who don't have a permit or having ACE manage the lot day-of. Napoletano says it has been an ongoing issue for the Brewery District so they are open to ideas. We will discuss this more at the first Brewery District meeting we have coming this month.

- b. **State of Downtown 2024:** This will take place March 15, 2024, at Warnors. We have our first internal planning meeting for this event next week.

IV. Economic & Business Development Update

- a. **City Façade Grant partnership with Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation:** Valdovinos spoke on this. Half of the money from this grant has been given away as part of the first phase of the grant. Businesses who were part of the first phase must complete their projects before the second phase can begin. We believe we are a few weeks away from phase one completing. A big portion of Fulton has gotten their new signage and lights so that is exciting to see.
- b. **Parking Validations:** This was already discussed under the 2024 event plan earlier in the meeting. Balch added that they are studying and will likely change the parking master fee schedule as part of the upcoming update cycle in about April 2024. He wants to get ahead of that and propose some things so that they don't raise the rates too much.

On tomorrow's City Council agenda, they have a change to the master fee schedule. The City is currently allowed to charge up to \$30 for parking and they are increasing that to \$50. The Grizzlies seem to be able to charge what they like when they have control of the garages, so they are not bound by the City's rules. It is a concern to Tioga if the City can charge up to \$50. The City charged parking for the Saturday of Oktoberfest and raised the pricing from normal. Tioga already paid to shut down a parking lot and some meters, it feels unfair that then their customers also have to incur a higher cost to attend the event. Balch mentioned that at the meeting about parking with the City, it also came up that their might be

a solution to those coming downtown on event days that are not attending the event. Maybe the meters can still charge a normal price for two hours, but then charge more if you want to park there all day. The other option would be to still honor validations in some way on event days in the garages. DFP wants to be ready to advocate for better conditions and have the community and businesses engaged to be in sync. Valdovinos feels that advocacy and creations of action plans can be a way this committee meeting is used.

- c. **Retail Master Plan:** Balch spoke on the vacancy spaces downtown. It tends to be the larger spaces that are harder to lease and thus remain vacant. We are creating a strategy to figure out how to sell these larger spaces as a group. We have a lot of different ownership for the different buildings, so we have that disadvantage compared to Fashion Fair, which is all managed together. Bigger spaces need a national store or brand. Having that would also benefit the smaller stores as it would generate foot traffic. We are looking into all the uses that we need and how to get the broker power we need to build out the vision of tenants. These tenants would have to be complimentary to our demographics and fit in with our existing businesses.
- d. **Kresge Foundation/Inclusive & Sustainable Development:** DFP received a grant from Kresge. With this grant, we will hire a new position that will help with development, such as the retail master plan. We haven't really engaged our property owners in this kind of way, but we do get called a lot on this issue. The City is working on an RFP for consultants to do some of the planning work related to the infrastructure that the state money is for. They are encouraging us to be part of that.
- e. **Placer.ai Subscription Now Active:** Placer.ai was discussed earlier as well. We do now have access to data on numbers of visitors downtown.

V. Marketing and Communications

- a. **Campaign Update – Engagement Data:** Agulian gave an update on marketing. DFP has gained 265 followers on Facebook and 1,254 on Instagram in the last two months. Our Tik Tok went from 52 to 87 followers. Our demographics have remained steady with more followers who fall between 25-44 and who identify as women. Visits to our Facebook have gone up 170% and on Instagram it has gone up 35% since last month. Our highlight posts have been the interviews we have done with small businesses leading up to Small Business Saturday.
- b. **Community Engagement Conversation with City:** We have discussed our engagement with the City throughout this meeting, such as with parking and infrastructure.

VI. Comments

DFP is looking into having a way to communicate with downtown employees and businesses through texting. We now utilize email blasts, social media, and in-person ambassador visits to get information out, but with those, we don't always get the information out to the correct people, and it can be a slower process. With SMS, we can send important information in a timely manner. Beard says that all the staff at Tioga would be interested in this and in the newsletter. She asked what it would entail. It would

be short reminders about special events, street closures, and those kinds of timely, important things. We are trying to better connect and get information out.

Valdovinos will reach out to the Brewery District to set up that meeting soon. Balch mentioned the alcohol open carry idea within the district. Beard knows Nora Monaco is working towards this but does not necessarily see how it would work with all the businesses. Beard is on board if it can work and if it makes sense with safety and security. They want to see the plan before they agree to anything. Balch mentioned that we may see more clubbing businesses taking shape north of the Brewery District so not sure how this would work through the whole entertainment district. Valdovinos said that it would make sense for events and make the flow of events easier. Balch mentioned the California IDA conference taking place in San Diego next year. He would love to talk to other downtowns about this topic and see what they have done and how. We want to know the different experiences with ABC. Tioga has noticed a difference in ABC between Fresno County and Merced County since they have breweries in both.

VII. **Adjourn** – This meeting was adjourned at 2:07pm.

Next Meeting – 2024