



MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS COMMISSION

Thursday, April 26, 2024, 9 AM
114 North Main Street

Board Members Present: Benjamin Orgel (Chair), Williams Brack (Treasurer), Ray Brown, John Zeanah (for Mayor Harris), Elizabeth Low (Secretary), Janice Banks, Ashley Cash (for Mayor Strickland), and Ed Stephans III

Board Members Not Present: Surayyah Hasan, Victoria Young, Lauren Stimac, Commissioner Mickell Lowery, Senator Raumesh Akbari, and Councilman JB Smiley

Staff Present: Chandell Ryan, Christine Taylor, Brett Roler, Penelope Springer, Milton Howery, Tori Haliburton, Lauren Bermudez, Lawrence Green, Sam Caldwell, and Halle Novarese.

Guests:

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Due to an unconfirm quorum the minutes will be moved to the end of the meeting.

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item III: Chair's Report

Chairman Orgel gave a big shoutout to Brett Roler and Tori Haliburton for bring the 2024 IDA Southeast Urban District Forum to Downtown Memphis, May 1st – 3rd, thank for your leadership. Brett gave a brief description of the program which is a regional conference focused on making connections and learning from your peers in the industry and also gives us a chance to showcase things we're working on Downtown. We are expecting about 150 guests. We are all excited about the upcoming conference.

Chairman Orgel asked board members that in the future that we would love to start having in-person meetings again back in the DMC board room. We will definitely come up with better ideas and decisions. So, moving forward if you're able, we would love to see you in person, apologies for not being present myself.

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item IV: Financial Update/FY 25 Budget

Penelope Springer presented the financial update and highlights for each board (DMC, CCDC, CCRFC, and DMA), also a quick review of the approved CCDC commitments. Brett Roler answered board members questions regarding CCDC. Penelope answered a question regarding parking fee study from board member Ashley Cash. She feels there's an opportunity to increase parking fees, followed by a brief discussion on parking, including fees and marketing.

Chandell Ryan gave a brief presentation on the FY25 Budget Focus before going before the County Commission and the City Council. The budget will be focused on Safety, Clean & Green, Community Building, and Marketing & Activation. Would like to present to the board to hear your feedback & thoughts.

Before moving to the President's Report Ray Brown commented that he was thinking about change, we have a new President and a new Mayor, and Downtown is changing, I've been associated with the DMC for 28 years and now Downtown's across America are redefining themselves in different ways. How do we (DMC Board) want to respond to these changes? He has 2 suggestions, the first is at each meeting as Penelope has done for us today, summarized current conditions regarding our financial outlook, the state of active and proposed development projects and changes in business activity. The second is that the board, with staff, institute a process to carry out a review of our goals and to adjust them to the current market conditions that we face. I'm asking the board and staff to consider these suggestions. Chandell Ryan responded that DMC is looking into having a meeting this upcoming fall to discuss strategies.

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item VI: President's Report

Chandell Ryan updated the board on DMC activities including the Downtown Spring Clean Up that will be held today at 1pm – 5pm “More Grind Less Grit”. This is not a one-time event; we plan to have more upcoming cleaning events in the future. She introduced the new Vice President of Marketing Milton Howery. Milton brings over 18 years of experience in marketing, communications, and events. Milton made a few brief comments and is happy to be a part of DMC.

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item VII: New Business/ Adjournment

Seeing no other business, the meeting was adjourned.