

**Draft Minutes from the East Town Business Partnership Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 11, 2020, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**  
**Via Zoom Conference**

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Present: Carina Aleckson, Jacquie Berglund, Charlie Boeckenheuer, John Campobasso, Daniel Gumnit, Vanessa Haight, Brent Hanson, Tom Jollie, Richard Kiemen, Julia Lauwagie, Brian Maupin, Deborah Moses, Michael Noble, Kelly Stenzel, Reid Struck, Carletta Sweet

Staff: Dan Collison, Christie Rock Hantge

Guests: Valerie Dole, Sherman Associates  
Paul Forsline, City of Skate

Absent: Cyndy Harrison, Theresa Pesch, Beth Shogren

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**I. Call to Order and Introductions**

Carina Aleckson called the meeting to order at 11:32 a.m., welcomed the 2020-2021 Board members and guests, and explained this is her first meeting as the new President for this year and will be terming off next spring. She works [as the Community Development Program Manager] at Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cruhlandt/>). Then she called upon everyone to introduce themselves.

**II. Consideration of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as submitted (JC/CS).

**III. Consideration of Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda was approved as submitted which included minutes from the May 7, 2020 Board meeting; Treasurer's report for May which included F2020 Budget vs. Actual as of May 31, 2020, and Wells Fargo bank statement for the period ending May 31, 2020; Director of Downtown Partnerships for Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District and Executive Director for East Town Business Partnership and NūLoop Partners' report for May 3-30, 2020; and Executive Coordinator's report for the period 5/1/2020 to 5/31/2020 (CS/BH).

**IV. Presentations**

**A. Elliot Skate Plaza 2020.** Paul Forsline, President at City of Skate (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paul-forsline-41b07912b>), explained they're a nonprofit skatepark advocacy group that has been working for 10 years with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board on a comprehensive Skate Park Activity Plan ([https://www.minneapolisparke.org/news/2018/01/04/minneapolis\\_park\\_and\\_recreation\\_board\\_approves\\_skate\\_park\\_activity\\_plan/](https://www.minneapolisparke.org/news/2018/01/04/minneapolis_park_and_recreation_board_approves_skate_park_activity_plan/)) to build first class skateparks in Minneapolis.

Currently they have 20+ designated skate spaces throughout the Park system (<http://www.cityofskate.org/skateparks>), and the ESP will be the first. Each will be custom built and range in size from a 1,500 square foot skate spot to a 75,00 square foot skate park along the riverfront that will draw competitors from around the world.

As an example of how one small space can be utilized for skate boarding, he noted in 2019 they partnered with Juxtaposition Arts to design the JXTA Skate-able Art Plaza (<http://www.cityofskate.org/juxtaposition-arts-skatepark-north-minneapolis>); it's been a huge success and is also being used for art exhibits and sales, and musical performances. A partnership with the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization allowed three connected rain gardens to be integrated (<https://www.mwmo.org/projects/jxta-skate-able-art-plaza/>).

Forsline described the current uninspiring state of the ESP which already draws a diverse community to the site; the modern skate elements by California Skateparks (<https://www.californiaskateparks.com/>), which is also designing and building the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Skateboard Facilities; and landscaping that will make it more vibrant and welcoming. Groundbreaking will hopefully occur in July. Then he gave a shoutout to the partners who made this project possible.

For more information about this project, visit <http://www.cityofskate.org/elliott-minneapolis-skatepark> and [https://www.minneapolisparke.org/park\\_care\\_improvements/park\\_projects/current\\_projects/elliott\\_park\\_improvements/](https://www.minneapolisparke.org/park_care_improvements/park_projects/current_projects/elliott_park_improvements/). As Forsline considers skateparks as a cultural asset to the community – they've hosted the X Games for the past 3 years (<http://www.citypages.com/news/x-games-2020-canceled/569928571>) – he encouraged everyone to continue to support the activity.

- B. EastTown Food & Hospitality Re-Open Collaborative.** ETBP Executive Director Dan Collison explained before COVID-19, the ETBP Marketing, Membership and Communication Committee pivoted to a task force focusing on the advancement and enhancement of food and hospitality organizations in recognition of the changing experiences in EastTown post Super Bowl LII, NCAA Men's Final Four activities.

In light of COVID-19, this task force reframed and expanded its work to become the Food & Hospitality “Re-Open Collaborative/Coopetition (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coopetition>)”, to establish vitality in the bars and restaurants in EastTown as quickly as possible as things begin to open up. They are constantly tracking the list of bars and restaurants to ensure they’re doing everything they can to cross promote; the conversation is dynamically tied to real needs and the challenges owners and operators are facing. They’ve been investing the last 3-4 weeks and will invest another 3-4 weeks on collaborating around operational best practices and then pivot back to strategy. Consequently, he asked Valerie Dole, VP of Marketing & Communications at Sherman Associates (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/valeriedoleman>) and a member of this task force, to come and talk about the high level conversations they’ve had on when it’s time to pivot and get focused on marketing the area.

Dole explained they started this conversation a long time ago because they were concerned about the long-term viability of restaurants in EastTown, particularly because of the residents they have coming downtown. Because EastTown has so much to offer, they wanted to create the coopetition and build awareness with a single voice and shared communication points to the community. It’s simple to do and doesn’t require a lot of investment, just organization and coordination of a shared purpose, and a communication plan. They’ve learned it’s easy to build a virtual community and there’s not a lot of cost; hence, they came up with both a short- and long-term community building strategy where all the retail and hospitality organizations could come together with one shared voice and one shared social media outlet for communicating in order to position EastTown as a food experience. They want to create a cooperative environment and catalyze on the shared audiences they have in each restaurant, hotel, and business. The benefits to the ETBP members is an elevated awareness and exposure to best practices which is Collison’s focus right now, drive destination dining, build confidence in the walkability of the neighborhood, and ability to have a fantastic experience and taste of Minneapolis in EastTown.

The short-term plan would be to gather everyone together, formalize a communications program, brand this collaborative, get everybody on board, and establish a social media channel. Then long term to agree upon communication points and create a formal way to organize and cooperate. The primary tactic would be a social media launch; imagine it has a name and all the district restaurants and hospitality groups can share their posts on this social media channel and this organization will create original content but share posts as well.

SA can be heavily involved with creating this single social media channel where you can generate original content and share posts. They have a great team of social media influencers they work with, they activate quickly, and stay dynamic in planning and actions. Eventually it could turn into some event building, e.g., a virtual food walk or food tour or block party or picnic, that we could all promote on social media. The nice thing is within the ETBP membership, there is access to built in audiences from existing social medial channels, and with SA’s resident base, apartment, and office buildings, they can expand this quickly if consistent with their messaging. The goal is to get existing restaurants and hospitality open and running, and then long term build viable channels to communicate, build awareness, and create a shared experience in this market.

Collison commented this will require continued outreach to the operators and owners, and a systematic approach to let them know we care about their business and want to do whatever we can to assist them as they open. Because everything is dynamically tied to where COVID-19 and governmental restrictions go, they probably will have the opportunity to launch the [social media channel] in the next 30 days. Jacquie Berglund thanked Dan and Valerie for leading this charge and commented as soon as she can get the doors open to get her operation stabilized, she’ll be happy to jump in with door knocking and whatever else they need. Dan then he acknowledged Cyndy Harrison, Owner/General Manager at Sawatdee Thai Restaurant who was unable to attend the instant meeting, as an operational guru across their five brick and mortar stores, huge plus to some of the smaller restaurants, and a great coopetitioner.

- C. Roundtable on Impact of Police Killing of George Floyd on Organizations and Employees.** Dan, who believes this goes well beyond policing and a larger construct is at play, encouraged everyone to share their thoughts and resources, and explained why the June 18th business forum topic changed to *Listening to Our Leaders of Color*, i.e., to engage with and listen to how the business community can be present in this moment.

Carina also asked to hear how their organizations are talking about systemic racism in the wake of this, and shared that CC's racial equity and social justice committee (<https://www.cctwincities.org/what-we-do/racial-equity-and-social-justice/>), comprised of employees from top to bottom, has been hosting conversations about systemic racism and what they can do within their own organization to make change and move in a more equitable direction.

After receiving input, she thanked everyone for engaging in this conversation and encouraged them to explore how to move to the next step of being antiracist; there are plenty of resources available to move into that space.

## V. Action Item: Confirm Slate for Executive Committee

Carina advised last month the Board voted on the Officers for 2020-2021: herself as President, Carletta Sweet as Vice President, and Julia Lauwagie as Treasurer, all of whom will serve on the Executive Committee which has two At-Large positions to be filled. The proposed At-Large candidates are Vanessa Haight and Cyndy Harrison. Thereafter, the slate for the EC was approved as recommended to serve a 1-year term (JC/BH).

## VI. Updates

**A. Executive Director Monthly Overview.** As a follow on to his earlier announcement of the change in business forum topic on June 18th, Dan explained he's had the privilege of coordinating and organizing a group of about 40 professional Diversity, Equity and Inclusive leaders that came out of the Inclusive Downtown Think Tank (IDTT) he helped facilitate with the YMCA's Equity Innovation Center. All the business forum panelists were a part of IDTT.

**B. Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association.** Carletta Sweet deferred to Christie Hantge who advised the DMNA Board meeting is on Monday, June 15th, and Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher will be in attendance to undoubtedly discuss the City Council's support to dismantle the MPD in light of the recent killing of George Floyd.

Christie also noted the Land Use Committee continues to be active, e.g., it approved the Reuter Walton residential project at 200 12th Avenue South (<https://www.tdtmpls.com/news/tag/Reuter+Walton+Development>), and is engaging with Sherman Associates on two of its developments: the mixed-use project on the Thrivent Financial property at 500 South 7th Street (<https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/download/Agenda/383/500%20S%207th%20St.pdf/39812/1498/500%20S%207th%20St>), and the Planned Unit Development at 240 Portland Avenue/500-530 South 3rd Street (<https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Board/Agenda/CPC-COW/1423>).

Dan added he's having great conversations with DMNA Board members, e.g., Matt Erickson is serving on the Food & Hospitality Re-Open Collaborative; and Erickson and Kevin Frazell will be meeting with him and Steve Cramer to look for meaningful ways for the DMNA Board to continue to engage with the business community.

**C. Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.** Vanessa Haight excused herself for an appointment.

**D. Minneapolis Downtown Council-Downtown Improvement District.** Dan explained one of the goals under Advocacy and Resourcing in the 2018-2022 Strategic Framework (<https://easttownmpls.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ETBP-StrategicPlan-2018-2022-Approved.pdf>) has been to support new, small, and under-represented business development in East Town, all of which has been pursued and implemented in partnership with the MDC under the Chameleon Consortium (<https://www.chameleonconsortium.com/>) brand.

Currently the focus has been on bringing these diverse businesses to vacant retail spaces in the Central Business District through a private-public work group comprised of property owners and real estate professionals with project management and outreach assistance from Impact Hub MSP (<https://minneapolis.impacthub.net/>). To create a more conducive environment to and remove barriers from moving into downtown vacant retail spaces, they've asked property owners for concessions, e.g., a percentage of sales in lieu of leasing, and the CC is a relevant way to put hands to the steering wheel and bring about change.

Lastly, he reported on what programs they've implemented since inception and what they plan to do.

## VII. Committee Reports

Carina advised anyone who wishes to channel their energies to match their skills and interests, to feel free to reach out to her or Dan if they wish to participate on any of these Committees.

- A. Executive.** As the new President, Carina will lead this Committee and schedule a date and time to meet.
- B. Board Development.** John Campobasso, former Board President, will lead this Committee through the end of his term.
- Dan noted the only seat currently open is the one vacated by Marita Albinson who resigned because her position at the Guthrie Theater was eliminated.
- C. Business Forum Development.** Carina noted this Committee is a fantastic place to jump in and lend creative ideas and get more connected to the work of the ETBP.
- D. Membership, Marketing and Communication.** Carina reminded everyone that with the refocusing on the Food & Hospitality Re-Open Collaborative/Cooperation, this Committee, formerly led by Chris Fleck who laid a lot of groundwork, no longer exists and Christie will continue to track membership and report on it at each Board meeting.

Christie advised she's been in communication with Dan about the 2020-2021 membership drive that will begin in mid-July and are sensitive to how they approach it due to COVID-19. Membership information is already available online at <https://easttownmpls.org/etbp-membership/>, and not that all levels and fees remain the same.

#### **VIII. Announcements**

Dan advised the EastTown Apartments are open and there'll be a virtual Grand Opening Ceremony on Wednesday, June 24th; he'll forward the links (<https://youtu.be/OpR9Dbbjvg>, and <https://www.facebook.com/1stCovMpls/>).

#### **IX. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m. (CS/BH).