

Draft Minutes from the East Town Business Partnership Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, April 1, 2021, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Via Zoom Conference

<https://zoom.us/join/0936259092>; Passcode: Usvz4m4)

Present: Carina Aleckson, Jacquie Berglund, Charlie Boeckenheuer, John Campobasso, Amy Carlson, Vanessa Haight, Cyndy Harrison, Tom Jollie, Julia Lauwagie, Brian Maupin, Deborah Moses, Rinal Ray, Reid Struck, Carletta Sweet
Staff: Dan Collison, Christie Rock Hantge
Guests: Mark Ruff, City of Minneapolis
Absent: Brent Hanson, Richard Kiemen, Michael Noble

I. Call to Order

President Carina Aleckson called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m., and because a guest was in attendance, she asked everyone to introduce themselves.

II. Consideration of Agenda

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

III. Consideration of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was approved as submitted which included: minutes from the March 4, 2021 Board meeting; Treasurer's report for March which included the F2021 Budget vs. Actual as of March 31, 2021; Director of Downtown Partnerships for Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District and Executive Director for East Town Business Partnership and NūLoop Partners' report for February 28-March 27, 2021; and Executive Coordinator's report for the period 3/1/2021 to 3/31/2021 (TJ/CS).

IV. Presentations

A. City of Minneapolis Overview. Executive Director Dan Collision explained Mark Ruff, City Coordinator (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/marktruff/>), is helping to bring about not just a new vision but a renewed vision tied to the history and needs of the east side of downtown. Dan has gotten to know Ruff over the years and considers him one of those people who really understands the City's enterprise, and he's sat in on many learning sessions when most of the City Council was new this last cycle and heard Ruff and other leaders present on how finances worked; he considers Ruff's role as City Coordinator as integral. A lot of times the tension gets focused and targeted on elected officials but the City is led by a cadre of incredible employees, so when he heard Ruff give a presentation on how staff sees all these incredible challenges they've been facing, he asked him to present to the ETBP Board.

Ruff highlighted it's been a difficult week for the community and the nation in many ways around the trial but it's been especially hard for their employees, e.g.: he oversees 311 (<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/311/>) and the number of phone calls they get from people angry at the City and wanting to vent has been incredible, it was harsh after May last year but this week there's been an uptick; traffic control agents who drive around with the City's logo on the side of the vehicle, many of whom are BIPOC staff themselves, have people yelling, screaming, and blaming them for issues that are in front of the trial and they feel the strain.

Being friends with a wide variety of people in the field who work at the City, Ruff requested we call one of those folks we may know/call 311/stop a police officer wearing a Minneapolis uniform and thank them for their work because right now all they're getting as employees is negative feedback and it wears on people. There's been a fair amount of turnover recently because of that, plus incentives on early retirement and people moving on in their careers. It's a challenge, however, his presentation has an upbeat forecast. Every elected official that he's talked with in public meetings still thank his employees and will give him thoughtful responses in dealing with these multiple emergencies they have had.

Ruff then reviewed the City's organizational chart noting that all of the elected officials – Mayor, City Council, Park and Recreation Board, Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) – are up for election this fall, and each of the 10 chartered department heads (shown in the grey middle bar) are nominated by the Mayor and approved by the City Council for a 2-year term. These departments operate independently and Ruff doesn't oversee any of them nor do they oversee him but they're a cooperative and supportive group of folks. Noticeable recent appointments include Fire Chief Bryan Tyner (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bryan-tyner-efo-60a45a106/>), Police Chief Medaria Arradondo

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medaria_Arradondo), and Community Planning and Economic Development Director Andrea Brennan (<https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/file/EX2021-00004> and <https://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-mayor-frey-nominates-his-interim-planning-director-andrea-brennan-to-stay-in-post/600019517/>) who persuaded Ruff to apply to the City 6 years ago.

Many of the departments that report directly to Ruff (<https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/coordinator/>) are inward facing (e.g., HR, IT, Finance), as well as external facing (e.g., 911, 311, Convention Center). The City Council has transferred all its Crime Prevention Specialists from the MPD into Neighborhood & Community Relations (<https://www.startribune.com/how-council-members-voted-on-each-piece-of-minneapolis-new-public-safety-plan/600000873/>), a big change that almost doubles the size of the department and presents tremendous opportunities in terms of what it wants to be in the future working with neighborhoods and nonprofit organizations.

Ruff then focused on the good news of how the City continues to invest in real estate both in the number of permits and the valuation of permits in private, nonprofit, and governmental development. One of the good transformational things that's been in the making even before he started at the City is the new Public Service Building (<https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/projects/cped/current-future/downtown-consolidated/>); a consolidation of employees spread over several downtown owned/leased properties into one place that will improve City services, and they've even spent \$2 million on public art (<https://www.fox9.com/news/minneapolis-to-spend-772000-on-sculpture-for-new-public-service-building>). They're open for business and he's taken Dan on a short tour over lunch last month.

Ruff noted although Minneapolis is the 15th largest region in the country, it has overachieved in the past and is undertaking a great number of initiatives, redevelopments, and policy changes modelled after cities that are twice or thrice its size while working with one half or two thirds the staff size. Knowing they have a Mayor and City Council who are *not* about staying status quo, the work they need to do in partnership with the nonprofit and private sectors to thoughtfully move these initiatives forward, e.g., redevelopment of the Kmart site and opening Nicollet Avenue (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaellisicky/2021/02/07/kmart-continues-to-serve-and-divide-a-south-minneapolis-community/?sh=6899ca545168>), is challenging.

Because of the impending transition, Ruff implored the Board to pay attention not only to the elections but also to the potential Charter Amendment moving forward from the shared power part of the enterprise that will impact the City dramatically (<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/boards-and-commissions/charter-commission/current-proposals/> and <https://www.startribune.com/a-guide-to-the-proposals-seeking-to-change-minneapolis-police/600036683/>). And because meaningful change will take time, we should be also cognizant of other regulatory and court processes taking place this summer, e.g., Minnesota's Department of Human Rights (<https://www.startribune.com/minn-officials-push-for-systems-change-at-minneapolis-police-dept/570958652/>) and the Department of Justice's investigation into the MPD's practices and conduct (<https://www.startribune.com/justice-department-to-probe-whether-minneapolis-police-have-pattern-and-practice-of-misconduct/600048448/>). Well before the death of George Floyd but even more since is this commitment by City employees towards equity and breaking down racist and sexist structures; they have embraced creating pathways for a more diverse workforce.

In closing, Ruff reminded everyone that quality service comes down to the people we're able to attract, and we're made better in our jobs by positive engagement in ways that is respectful in listening.

- B. ETBP 2021 Membership Survey.** Executive Coordinator Christie Rock Hantge advised the survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-DFQMB8M89/>), which focused on how we'll get back to business as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, was developed by Dan and the Executive Committee and approved by the Board at its February meeting. After receiving additional feedback, Christie placed it into the Survey Monkey tool and distributed it through eblast four times during the end of February and in March. Five of the questions were multiple choice, two were open ended, and interests in becoming involved was gauged; a total of 17 responses were received. The last time the ETBP sent out a membership survey was back in 2017 and it had different questions but also received 17 responses. The ETBP currently has 42 members and the email list has 400 addresses so the survey went to everyone in the database.

Responses to the survey revealed the top two issues businesses will focus on addressing as they emerge from the pandemic were (i) responding to the changing COVID-related rules and regulations; and (ii) drawing customers back to downtown. Cash flow, tax relief, and parking challenges were also cited.

The top two issues the ETBP will need to focus on addressing as it emerges from the pandemic were (i) drawing customers

back to downtown; and (ii) safety. The top two responses to ways the ETBP can make the district better were (i) hosting different kinds of events including outdoor events; and (ii) offering opportunities to have small / socially distanced in-person events. The top two responses to how the ETBP can collaborate with City staff were (i) safety, and (ii) parks, green space, and outdoor amenities. The top two responses to what the ETBP should advocate for were (i) homelessness, and (ii) MPD.

Dan noted since 17 responses are not representative of the more than 400 businesses, we need to treat the survey as one input stream and pay attention to all we've been talking about as a Board and hearing from constituents throughout the year to create an assessment of what we should focus on.

C. Draft Aspirations for 2021-2022. Executive Director Dan Collison cited the following overarching themes derived from the membership survey and stakeholder engagement from the past several months:

- Recovery from COVID impact in social service and hospitality sectors
- Drawing customers back to district
- Support DMNA and EPNI neighborhood association priorities
- Diverse, equitable and inclusive economic strategies
- Public realm and safety policies and practices

In addressing these themes, the ETBP aspires to:

- Communicate effectively through social media channels and advancing strategic customized video projects.
- Amplify broader downtown Minneapolis re-animation messaging via Minneapolis Downtown Council + Meet Minneapolis.
- Elevate the nuances of the East Town brand narrative – Vibrant, Multi-faceted, Connected – to better leverage connection to neighborhoods.
- Support and accelerate small and diverse owned businesses in the district.
- Engage all ETBP members on municipal election and public policy issues.

D. Annual Meeting Agenda Overview. After Dan thanked Charlie Boeckenheuer and the Minnesota Vikings for their sponsorship of the annual meeting on April 15th (<https://easttownmpls.org/etbp-annual-meeting-on-april-15-at-11-a-m-via-zoom/>), he reviewed the agenda which included outgoing Board members and Board elections. He and a few others will be broadcasting under COVID safe distancing from the stadium.

V. Action Item: Approval of 2021-2022 Board Candidates

After Dan cited the Board members who are terming off (Carina Aleckson, John Campobasso), resigned (Marita Albinson, Beth Shogren), dropped (Kelly Rice), and passed away (Kelly Stenzel), he announced the six candidates who make up the slate for election at the annual meeting on April 15th (listed alphabetically):

Lynn Burn, Realtor at Cynthia Froid Realty

Cassie Garner, Director at Gamut Gallery

Gina Licari, Senior Public Engagement and Marketing Manager for Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Eric Merriman, Director of Real Estate for Thrivent Financial

Aimee Robertson, Executive Director of Advancement at North Central University

Kirsten Walstein, Manager, Finance and Business Development at Kraus Anderson Construction

Thereafter the slate of candidates was unanimously approved (JC/TJ).

VI. Updates

A. Executive Director Monthly Overview, and Minneapolis Downtown Council-Downtown Improvement District. Reference Dan's report included in the Board package.

- B. Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association.** Reference Carletta Sweet's report for April on the Board Members Only page.
- C. Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.** Vanessa Haight reported they are working on hiring a safety patrol vendor for 4 months to help address issues along the Chicago Avenue corridor, specifically 15th to 17th Streets (https://www.elliottpark.org/patrols?utm_campaign=may_2021_e_news&utm_medium=email&utm_source=elliottparkneighborhood). Since they received a \$10,000 grant from the City of Minneapolis Great Streets Business District program (<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/great-streets/>), they need to raise an additional \$30,000 and welcome any additional support.

VII. Committee Reports

- A. Executive.** Board officers will be confirmed at the Board meeting in May.
- B. Board Development.** Reference the slate of candidates for the annual meeting.
- C. Business Forum Development.** Dan advised this committee will meet on Thursday, April 22nd.
- D. Food & Hospitality.** Dan advised this is an active group that will be having a re-grounding meeting in May. He's paying attention to a lot of channels and doing a lot of one-on-ones.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m. (JC/JB).