

BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
July 11, 2024
Meeting Minutes

The DSSD Board of Commissioners Meeting took place at the offices of the Bridgeport DSSD, 938 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604.

In attendance:

Commissioners

Phil Pires, C & W Associates II, Chair
David Iassogna, M&T Bank, Vice Chair
Eric Gross, John Broadcannon, Treasurer
Callie Gale Heilmann, Made in Bridgeport, Secretary
Javier Ceja, Downtown Strategic Group (by phone)
Jason Cohen, Bordentown DB, LLC (by phone)
Karolyn Egbert, Trefz Corporation
Philip Kuchma, Kuchma Corporation
Tony Sherwood, AMS Real Estate
Andy Toledo, City of Bridgeport (Ex Officio)

Staff

Lauren Coakley Vincent, DSSD President
Charles Suarez-Penn, DSSD/SMG

Guests

Chris DeAngelis, Cabezas-DeAngelis Surveyors & Engineers
Ira Jacoby, Felner Corporation
Marcella Kovac, The Bananaland
Kathy Maher, The Barnum Museum
Sue Purefoy
Karin Smith, Kindred Thoughts Bookstore
Constance Vickers, City of Bridgeport and 881 Lafayette Blvd. condos

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pires called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

II. RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pires opened the meeting by welcoming guests Chris DeAngelis of Cabezas-DeAngelis Surveyors & Engineers, Ira Jacoby from the Felner Corporation, Marcella Kovac of The Bananaland, Kathy Maher from The Barnum Museum, Sue Purefoy, Karin Smith of Kindred Thoughts Bookstore, and Constance Vickers from the City of Bridgeport and 881 Lafayette Blvd. condos.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Kuchma made a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 12, 2024, DSSD Board Meeting, as presented. Commissioner Egbert seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

IV. TREASURER REPORT

Treasurer Gross provided an explanation of the May 2024 financial report as provided by the bookkeeper. The Bridgeport DSSD ended the month of May 2024 with 262,797 in assets, of which \$217,171 was cash spread across two bank accounts. Liabilities totaled \$160,115, encompassed by a mix of Accounts Payable, Refundable Advances, and lease liability. Net Assets at the end of the month totaled \$102,682. The accrued revenue was \$964,352 – primarily City of Bridgeport tax and contract payments. Expenses for the same period totaled \$1,002,239 – primarily related to streetscape maintenance and creative placemaking activities of the organization (\$758,749). Accrued expenses exceeded revenue for the period by \$37,887. DSSD President Lauren Coakley Vincent noted that the DSSD invoiced the City for projects last fiscal year that wrapped this fiscal year, which is why there's a deficit. However, once those timing of payments were isolated, the fiscal year will likely end about \$1,300 in the black. Commissioner Iassogna made a motion to approve the May 2024 financial report. Mr. Kuchma seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Gross then presented the revised fiscal year 2025 budget, which was reviewed and approved at a joint meeting of the Executive and Finance Committees on July 3, 2024. The budget revision centered on increasing expenses related to streetscape maintenance, marketing, and creative placemaking as additional revenue was secured through restricted

grants. Mr. Kuchma made a motion to accept the revised fiscal year 2025 budget as presented. Commissioner Heilmann seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

V. REPORT FROM THE CITY

Mr. Toledo provided updates on the City's recent meeting with Avangrid regarding the UI monopole installation plan. He noted that the City made their position clear that Avangrid must put the wiring underground, as they did in Greenwich and Glenbrook. Mr. Toledo shared that Bridgeport has leverage because it is designed as an "environmental justice" community that has been impacted by a lot of development projects on our waterfront, in downtown, and with DOT Railroad to widen the tracks at Bridgeport train station to allow Acela service. If monopoles go up, these projects are in jeopardy. Ms. Maher referenced a \$2 billion federal grant to help with energy projects, which she sent to the City's Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED.)

VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Coakley Vincent gave an overview of the Downtown Ambassador team's performance report for the month of June 2024, which reflected decrease (14%) over the past month and over the same time period as the previous year (3%) in sanitation instances due to a drop in alcohol containers and trash bags collected. The team saw a decrease (39%) in the amount of time devoted to beautification work over the past month and over the same time period as the previous year (62%) due to a drop in the number of landscaping hours, number of locations watered, and block faces weeded. The Public Safety category reflected an increase (4%) over the past month and over the same time period as the previous year (12%) due to a slight increase in panhandling. Finally, there was a decrease (11%) over the past month and over the same time period as the previous year (10%) in the number of interactions in the Public Engagement category due to a drop in the number of Hospitality Assists.

Ms. Heilmann raised the issue of increased people sleeping and living outside in the neighborhood. She suggested that the DSSD create and Ambassadors hand out the social services card, with food pantry/hot shower information for each day of the week - similar to what they do in downtown Hartford. Ms. Coakley Vincent confirmed that there were funds in the DSSD's budget to implement this initiative.

Ms. Coakley Vincent then provided a recap of the Colorful Bridgeport content in shared in June, as well as the June events that the DSSD either led or supported, including a series of neighborhood walks focused on public art, business visits, Bridgeport Pride celebrations, and repainting of the Peacock Alley painted walkway. She reminded the meeting attendees that the Downtown Farmers Market season had started and encouraged them to remind their tenants about the farmers market dates. Finally, she shared that the new sponsored decorative light pole banners had been installed! This year a total of 76 banners were sponsored, along with seven beautification sponsorships and \$1,500 in Bridgeport Bucks for the Downtown Farmers Market, totaling \$24,000 in sponsorships raised.

VII. REPORTS OF STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES

A. Executive and Finance

Mr. Pires reported on the combined meeting of the Executive and Finance Committees meeting that was held on July 3, 2024. The Committees drafted a revision to the fiscal year 2025 budget based on updated revenue projections for the board's review. The Committees also discussed key questions to address in moving ahead with amended language to the DSSD's municipal ordinance pertaining to board composition. Lastly, the Committee finalized the agenda for this month's board meeting.

B. Physical Conditions

Mr. DeAngelis reported on the Physical Conditions Committee meeting that was held on June 28, 2024. The Committee walked the district and identified specific sites for beautification projects in fiscal year 2025, with special attention paid to tree beds and pocket parks

C. Public Safety

Commissioner Iassogna reported on the Public Safety and Security Committee meeting that was held on June 28, 2024. The Committee walked the district with Bridgeport Police Officer Roderick Doda and discussed recent safety incidents impacting residents and business owners. The Committee visited specific locations where quality of life issues, such as panhandling, public drinking, illegal parking, and excessive noise, occur regularly.

D. Special Events and Marketing

Ms. Coakley Vincent reported on the Special Events and Marketing Committee meeting that was held on July 2, 2024. The Committee discussed parameters for participation before hearing updates from Committee members on recent and upcoming activities for their respective organizations. The Committee reviewed the Colorful Bridgeport content for the past month, including the What's Happening This Week events videos, Pride Month collaboration with the Bridgeport Pride Center, and launch of the "A Day in Downtown" series of curated itineraries. The Committee provided feedback on the photography list for the DSSD's new website. Finally, the Committee discussed ways to utilize grant funding dedicated to Colorful Bridgeport projects in fiscal year 2025, such as revitalizing the alley way between the Arcade Mall, 39 Cannon Street, and 49 Cannon Street with public artwork and plantings.

VIII. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

The Board of Commissioners continued the discussion about how to approach amending the DSSD's municipal ordinance related to board composition. Mr. Kuchma expressed a desire for there to be greater inclusion of downtown residents and business owners within the DSSD prior to making changes to the ordinance. Commissioners discussed ways in which both things can happen simultaneously. Ms. Coakley Vincent proposed a timeline reflective of the discussion:

- Board approves new ordinance language.
- Board sends new ordinance language to the City Attorney.
- Board works with Ordinance Committee and City Council representatives to pass ordinance change.
- Board rewrites bylaws to reflect ordinance change.
- Elections Committee holds a series of events to engage, educate, and recruit leaseholders, who may be interested in running for the seats.
- These events/engagement build to the annual meeting in May when the seats are open for elections.
- New seats are elected on staggered terms.

Mr. Pires volunteered to draft ordinance language for the Executive Committee to review at their August meeting. In addition, the Elections Committee will meet before the next board meeting to outline and develop a tentative recruitment plan.

Mr. Kuchma raised the idea of DSSD taking over management of the pentway between 49 Cannon and 41 Cannon Street. Mr. Pires and Mr. Gross both articulated why legally that wouldn't be possible, it's a negotiation that the abutting owners need to agree to. Ms. Heilmann suggested that all the abutting owners hold a meeting to discuss pentway use and that the City be present to assist in any way; and then DSSD's involvement on improvements can be additive. Mr. Kuchma expressed a desire that the conversations move in the direction of making it a public pathway.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Pires called for the meeting to be adjourned at 5:07 p.m.