

**BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 12, 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
Jason Cohen, Bordentown DB, LLC
Fred Frassinelli, AMS Real Estate

Staff

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

Guests

Alicia Cobb, Art Simplified
Chris DeAngelis, Cabezas-DeAngelis Surveyors & Engineers
Ira Jacoby, Felner Corporation
Sarah Lopez, Office of U.S. Senator Chris Murphy
Kathy Maher, The Barnum Museum
Karin Smith, Kindred Thoughts Bookstore

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pires called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

II. RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pires opened the meeting by welcoming guests Alicia Cobb of Art Simplified, Chris DeAngelis of Cabezas-DeAngelis Surveyors & Engineers, Ira Jacoby from Felner Corporation, Sarah Lopez from the Office of U.S. Senator Chris Murphy, Kathy Maher from The Barnum Museum, and Karin Smith of Kindred Thoughts Bookstore.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Iassogna made a motion to approve the Minutes of the August 14, 2024, DSSD Board Meeting, as presented. Commissioner Gross seconded the motion. Commissioner Ceja abstained. It was unanimously approved.

IV. TREASURER REPORT

Treasurer Gross provided an explanation of the July 31, 2024, financial report as provided by the bookkeeper. The Bridgeport DSSD ended the month of July 2024 with \$246,061 in assets, of which \$80,569 was cash spread across two bank accounts. Liabilities totaled \$138,991, encompassed by a mix of Accounts Payable, Refundable Advances, and lease liability. Net Assets at the end of the month totaled \$107,069. The accrued revenue was \$93,941 – primarily City of Bridgeport tax payments. Expenses for the same period totaled \$98,765 – primarily related to streetscape maintenance and creative placemaking programming expenses (\$69,092). Accrued expenses exceeded revenue for the period by \$4,823. Commissioner Frassinelli made a motion to approve the July 31, 2024, financial report. Commissioner Iassogna seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

V. REPORT FROM THE CITY

Mr. Toledo was not in attendance to present a report from the City, so this agenda item was tabled to the next board meeting. DSSD President Lauren Coakley Vincent shared updates sent via email from the Office of Planning & Economic Development:

- State Street blinking light letter follow up with ConnDOT: **Just a reminder that we recently went through the Road Safety Audit (RSA) process with ConnDOT for East Main Street. We are about a month away from a draft report with thought on how to mitigate the issues on that state owned road. Based on the conversations we've had with The state, this is the preferred path for eventual changes in operation or**

street design. We can maybe get started on an application or wait until we see what comes of the east main one. Ultimately Engineering will have to be involved in an app and it would be prudent to involve MetroCOG.

- Tree trimming and sidewalk repairs - Bret Caulfield said late September/early October.
- Infrastructure project updates/Congress Street Bridge construction: Regarding the USDOT RAISE application for the project, we asked for roughly 24MM against 12MM in City Capital, and 12MM in State DOT funds through the local bridge program. While we were not awarded funding, we did receive high grades on the application and had a debrief meeting with staff of each member of our federal delegation where it was reiterated that it was a highly rated project and that it made it all the way to the Secretary's desk. Ultimately, they were oversubscribed and it did not make the final cut. The good news is that the application will AUTOMATICALLY roll over as a highly rated project in the next round that will be due early 2025. We will be tweaking the application to increase its competitiveness and submitting those revisions to USDOT. I ask that if there are supporters of the project, please contact your federal and state delegation and make your voice heard. Our representatives will be the difference in being awarded.

VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Coakley Vincent gave an overview of the Downtown Ambassador team's performance report for the month of August 2024, which reflected a sustained level of sanitation services over the past month and the same time in the previous year. The team saw a decrease in the amount of time devoted to beautification work from the previous month (19%) and from the same time period in the previous year (31%) due to a drop in the amount of time dedicated to watering thanks to more rainfall. The Public Safety category reflected a small increase from the previous month (8%) and from the same time period in the previous year (8%) due to panhandling. Finally, there was a small increase (6%) in the number of interactions in the Public Engagement category from the previous month, and decrease (4%) from the same month in the previous year.

Ms. Coakley Vincent then provided a recap of the Colorful Bridgeport content in as well as the events that the DSSD either led or supported in the month of August, including the Downtown Farmers Market, Downtown Thursdays free concert series, Skateport, and the Mayor's Backpack event. She noted upcoming events, such as the launch of the Nature Nights outdoor movie series in partnership with Groundwork Bridgeport and Sovereign Land Trust, as well as PARK(ing) Day and Downtown Salsa Nights.

Ms. Coakley Vincent proposed that at the October board meeting, Commissioners join in making a "hello video" that will convey that all meetings are open to the public, held in DSSD office, where to check for dates/times/agenda, etc. The board agreed.

Commissioner Heilmann suggested maybe we take an informal survey of where families are coming from to the movie nights to see how many are downtown/district residents. Ms. Coakley Vincent said she'd bring her counter.

VII. REPORTS OF STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES

A. Executive

Mr. Pires reported on the Executive Committee meeting that was held on September 4, 2024. The Committee discussed drafting a scope of services to distinguish the DSSD's supplemental work as distinct from the City's obligations. The Committee then reviewed the municipal ordinance revision timeline. 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 August 30, 2024. The Committee walked the district and identified specific areas for

detailed cleaning, as well as detailed input on sites for beautification projects in fiscal year 2025.

C. Public Safety

Commissioner Iassogna reported on the Public Safety Committee meeting that was held on August 30, 2024. The Committee discussed recent safety incidents impacting residents and business owners, mainly homelessness and panhandling.

D. Special Events and Marketing

Ms. Cobb reported on the Special Events and Marketing Committee meeting that was held on September 3, 2024. The Committee reviewed the Colorful Bridgeport content for the past month, including the Downtown Farmers Market vendor features, Downtown Thursdays concert promotions, parking video, and What's Happening weekly event newsletters. The Committee discussed upcoming events, and particularly the importance of holiday decorations and lighting during the holiday season. Finally, the Committee provided input on how best to reuse or upcycle the vinyl banners from previous years.

E. Elections

Commissioner Heilmann reported on the Elections Committee meeting that was held on August 27, 2024. The Committee reviewed the City Council ordinance revision timeline, and strategized how approach the key dates before the City Council and the Ordinance Committee. The Committee flagged sections of the DSSD's bylaws that will need to be revised so that the new document will be in keeping with the purpose and goals of the engagement plan. The Committee made then revised aspects of the engagement plan's purpose, timeline, and tasks to ensure that the process is inclusive, welcoming, and expansive enough to achieve the DSSD's strategic goals.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance Revision Timeline

- City Council Meeting – September 3, 2024 // COMPLETED: The ordinance revision referred to the Ordinance Committee.
- City Council Ordinance Committee Meeting – September 24, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. // SCHEDULED: Ideally, the revised ordinance will be approved to go back to the City Council for a public hearing and approval vote.
- City Council Meeting – October 7, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. // ON CALENDAR: The revised ordinance will be submitted for a vote by the City Council, preceded by a public hearing.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Coakley Vincent proposed that the DSSD join as a member of the CT Arts Alliance membership. The invitation came from David Green, who used to lead the Fairfield County Cultural Alliance. CT Arts Alliance is an organization primarily focused on advocacy at the state level.

Ms. Maher said that the Barnum Museum is a member and that it is a good organization. She also emphasized that there is a lot of advocacy coming up, including funding for and coordination of the nation's 250th anniversary.

Commissioner Frassinelli inquired how would it benefit the DSSD and the downtown. Ms. Coakley Vincent stated that it could help the DSSD and downtown partners secure more state funding and grants for more creative placemaking, especially since the state has been cutting arts funding.

Commissioner Gross stated that since there is minimal financial impact, there's no risk, and it would provide funding support and legislative support.

Commissioner Gross made a motion that the DSSD join as members of the CT Arts Alliance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Frassinelli. It was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Heilmann then asked that Commissioners start to think deeply about the “internal engagement strategy” for the recruitment of new people into the DSSD, including potential candidates for the new Commissioner seats. The goal is up to 3 folks who they would want to recruit as possible new Commissioners.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Pires called for the meeting to be adjourned at 4:36 p.m.