

**BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**October 10, 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  
Karolyn Egbert, Trefz Corporation  
Philip Kuchma, Kuchma Corporation  
Tony Sherwood, AMS Real Estate  
Andy Toledo, City of Bridgeport (Ex Officio)

**Staff**

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

**Guests**

Jason Chandersingh, City of Bridgeport  
Jonathan Delgado, City of Bridgeport  
Fred Frassinelli, AMS Real Estate  
Ira Jacoby, Felner Corporation  
Sue Purefoy

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Pires called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**II. RECOGNITION OF GUESTS**

Mr. Pires opened the meeting by welcoming guests Jason Chandersingh and Jonathan Delgado from the City of Bridgeport, Fred Frassinelli of AMS Real Estate, Ira Jacoby from the Felner Corporation, and Sue Purefoy.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Kuchma asked if his contributing donation to the CT Arts Alliance had been discussed at the prior board meeting. Chairperson Pires confirmed that was discussed.

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

**IV. TREASURER REPORT**

Treasurer Gross provided an explanation of the August 2024 financial report as provided by the bookkeeper. The Bridgeport DSSD ended the month of August 2024 with \$281,275 in assets, of which \$80,052 was cash spread across two bank accounts. Liabilities totaled \$183,946, encompassed by a mix of Accounts Payable and lease liability. Net Assets at the end of the month totaled \$97,329. The accrued revenue was \$148,216 – primarily City of Bridgeport tax payments. Expenses for the same period totaled \$162,780. Accrued expenses exceeded revenue for the period by \$14,564. Commissioner Kuchma made a motion to approve the August 2024 financial report. Commissioner Egbert seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

**V. REPORT FROM THE CITY**

Mr. Delgado spoke to traffic engineer with the city to have one more convo with DOT regarding the blinking light at the corner of State and Broad. Next step would be to bring in the delegation to speed things up. Another step could be the request a road safety audit for the state roads downtown. Commissioner Gross asked why we can't change it on our own. Mr. Delgado answered that we don't want to step on the State's toes, we need them as partners. Commissioner Heilmann asked if there's a way for the parking spots that create the poor visibility when the light is blinking could be blocked off temporarily, just until the blinking light us fixed. Mr. Delgado answered that it's possible they could work with the parking authority to

achieve that. Commissioner Kuchma expressed frustration over the lack of parking enforcement downtown, specifically tractor trailers that are parking downtown.

Mr. Delgado gave an update on tree trimming and said Bret Caufield who runs the Parks Department is awaiting scheduling with the tree company to come on a Sunday/Monday when its least disruptive. Mr. Delgado then shared that the City received a HUD award for downtown sidewalks and light improvements of \$1.6 million. The purpose is to focus on streets that don't have decorative light poles. Regarding the illegal postering by Soundside music festival, Mr. Delgado said he'd relay the message. He added that Lafayette Circle Redesign should be happening this year. Mr. Delgado said he's working on getting a report to the DSSD regarding a regular update of permits/development that are in the pipeline for downtown. Mr. Delgado announced that Public Facilities is doing a pilot on improving the streetlights, upped in lumens. The City would like to solicit feedback from downtown stakeholders.

Mr. Toledo then asked for volunteers to the various Boards and Commissions, including Parks, Fair Rent, Ethics, and WPCA. Mr. Chandersingh from SMBE office gave an update on Downtown district storefront improvement project. 26 business applied and \$200k has been distributed. The original deadline was June, but it was extended until July. Jason also promoted Bridgeport's Restaurant Week, which will be Nov. 3rd-9th.

## **VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Ms. Coakley Vincent shared that the partnership between public facilities partnership, OPED funding and design, with DSSD's design and placement achieved the new Big Belly trash receptacles downtown. Charlie shared that they're very helpful in terms of containing the trash due to birds, wind, or people.

DSSD President Lauren Coakley Vincent gave an overview of the Downtown Ambassador team's performance report for the month of September, which reflected an increase in sanitation instances over the past month (2%) and over the previous year (8%) due to the number of bills/stickers, alcohol containers, and trash bags removed. The team saw an increase in the amount of time devoted to beautification work from the previous month (4%) and from the same time period in the previous year (26%) due to the quantity of leaves removed and hours spent watering. The Public Safety category reflected a decrease from the previous month (4%) and from the same month in the previous year (7%) due to a drop in panhandling. Finally, there was a decrease in the number of interactions in the Public Engagement category from the previous month (7%) and from the same month in the previous year (3%).

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 September, including the Downtown Farmers Market, Skateport, Bridgeport Film Fest, PARK(ing) Day, and the kick off of Nature Nights outdoor movies and Downtown Salsa Nights. She noted that the City planned to host Bridgeport Restaurant Week from November 3-9, 2024, and asked for the groups assistance to recruit restaurants.

## **VII. REPORTS OF STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

### **A. Executive**

Mr. Pires reported on the Executive Committee meeting that was held on October 2, 2024. The Committee reviewed Commissioner board meeting attendance from fiscal year 2024 and the first quarter of fiscal year 2025, determining that all Commissioners were in good standing. The Committee discussed next steps for the municipal ordinance revision and the recommended community engagement plan from the Elections Committee. The Committee also discussed whether to draft a letter to the state and federal delegations regarding the Congress Street Bridge funding applications. The Committee finalized the agenda for this month's board meeting. Lastly, the Committee went into executive session to discuss a legal matter involving the DSSD.

## **B. Physical Conditions**

Ms. Coakley Vincent reported on the Physical Conditions Committee meeting that was held on September 27, 2024. The Committee provided input on the Downtown tree bed beautification project plan.

## **C. Public Safety**

Commissioner Iassogna reported on the Public Safety Committee meeting that was held on September 27, 2024. The Committee discussed recent safety incidents impacting residents and business owners, mainly homelessness and panhandling. Chief Porter highlighted a new task force created by the City's Director of Health to address homelessness in the city. In addition, the Committee discussed the projected impact that the Soundside music festival would have on the Downtown that weekend.

Ms. Coakley Vincent added that the police department is hosting community meetings in neighborhoods across the city and LCV will update the Board when it is held downtown.

## **D. Special Events and Marketing**

Ms. Coakley Vincent reported on the Special Events and Marketing Committee meeting that was held on October 1, 2024. The Committee reviewed the Colorful Bridgeport content for the past month, including the Downtown Farmers Market vendor features, Nature Nights outdoor movies, Downtown Salsa Nights, Bridgeport Film Fest, and What's Happening weekly event newsletters. The Committee brainstormed concepts for the annual Shop Locally, Give Colorfully holiday shopping campaign, including the possible creation of a sub-committee to focus on activating the Arcade Mall with events, strategic tenants, and other foot traffic incentives.

## **E. Elections**

Commissioner Heilmann reported on the Elections Committee meeting that was held on September 24, 2024. The Committee reviewed the City Council ordinance revision timeline, and strategized how to approach the key dates before the City vote on the ordinance revision. The Committee drafted sample testimony to be shared at the ordinance's public hearing by DSSD Commissioners. The Committee then discussed the internal engagement strategy and how to identify prospective board member candidates.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

The group reviewed the board expansion internal engagement strategy steps planned for October through December 2024. These included:

1. Each Commissioner and the CEO will identify 3 people who fit the "target audience" description and share their names.
2. We will reach out to these individuals to inquire about their interest in getting involved with the DSSD and discuss potential ways they could get involved.
3. Invite the recruits to a Special Meeting, where we will share who the DSSD is, what the DSSD does, and ways people can get involved - including how to run for one of the newly created seats.
4. Folks who attend the Special Meeting can indicate whether they are interested in joining a committee, running for a seat, or just staying up to date via email/social media.
5. Folks who are interested in running for a seat will be invited to a public training session in March on "How to Run To Become A Commissioner."

Ms. Coakley Vincent will send to the group the DSSD's current bylaws, new ordinance language, community engagement plan, and date for the special meeting. The Commissioners are to send back names of prospective new board candidates by end of day on Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Pires called for the meeting to be adjourned at 4:57 p.m.