

**BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
November 13, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

The DSSD Board of Commissioners Meeting took place at Bank Sports Bar, 102 Bank Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604. In attendance were:

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
Ira Jacoby, 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 Coakley Vincent, DSSD President
Charles Suarez-Penn, DSSD/SMG

Guests

Wesley Arbuthnott, 29 Markle Court
Margot B
Alicia Cobb, Art Simplified
Talyn Cook, HSW & United Way
Gemeem Davis, Bridgeport Generation Now
Chris DeAngelis, Cabezas-DeAngelis Surveyors & Engineers
Jonathan Delgado, City of Bridgeport
Pasquale DeMartino, Trattoria A' Vucchella
Thelmo Dondele, Forever Custom Tattoos
Carla Ford, Rum & Tequilla Fusion
Fred Frassinelli, AMS Real Estate
Ishalee Green, 29 Markle Court
Rebecca Legoute, 29 Markle Court
Lauri MacLean, Read's Artspace
Kathy Maher, The Barnum Museum
Lacie Malcolm, realtor
Lynn Mosher-Howell, Rapha Massage
Takina Pollock-Shafer, Skateport
Karin Smith, Kindred Thoughts Bookstore
Michael White, Bank Sports Bar & Brick & Barrel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pires called the meeting to order at 4:39 p.m.

II. RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

Mr. Pires opened the meeting by welcoming the guests noted above.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Kuchma made a motion to approve the Minutes of the October 10, 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 September 2024 financial report as provided by the bookkeeper. The Bridgeport DSSD ended the month of September 2024 with \$247,859 in assets, of which \$317,467 was cash spread across two bank accounts. Liabilities totaled \$148,717, encompassed by a mix of Accounts Payable, Refundable Advances, and lease liability. Net Assets at the end of the month totaled \$99,142. The accrued revenue was \$217,748 – primarily City of Bridgeport tax payments. Expenses for the same period totaled \$241,264 – primarily related to streetscape maintenance and creative placemaking activities of the organization (\$165,667). Accrued expenses exceeded revenue for the period by \$23,516. Commissioner Iassogna made a motion to approve the September 2024 financial report. Commissioner Gross seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

V. REPORT FROM THE CITY

Mr. Toledo announced that the City would be asking the Council to update the ordinance pertaining to public spaces and parks, with a focus on discouraging overnight loitering and

erecting structures in parks. He also shared that the Council approved a \$0.25 per hour increase in the fee to park in a metered space.

Mr. Delgado added updates on the Congress Street Bridge construction grant application, urging attendees to contact their elected representatives to support approval of the application. He further commented on the timeline for the Lafayette Circle Redesign timeline, noting that the City Engineer's office is waiting on the State to prioritize the construction, which is currently scheduled to begin this fiscal year.

VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DSSD President Lauren Coakley Vincent gave an overview of the Downtown Ambassador team's performance report for the month of October, which reflected an increase in sanitation instances over the past month (2%) and over the previous year (3%) due to the quantity of bills and stickers removed, as well as alcohol containers collected. The team saw an increase in the amount of time devoted to beautification work from the previous month (37%) due to the quantity of leaf bags collected, and negligible change from the same time period in the previous year. The Public Safety category reflected an increase from the previous month (59%) and from the same month in the previous (54%) year due to the number of panhandling diversions. Finally, there was an increase in the number of interactions in the Public Engagement category from the previous month (4%) and from the same month in the previous year (10%).

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 October, including the Downtown Farmers Market, Skateport, Nature Nights outdoor movies, and Downtown Salsa Nights. In addition, she announced the Bridgeport DSSD, in partnership with Groundwork Bridgeport, the Bridgeport Arts + Cultural Council, and the City's Office of Planning & Economic Development, was selected to participate in the CT Main Street Center's Main Street Accelerator professional and leadership development program.

VII. REPORTS OF STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES

A. Executive

Mr. Pires reported on the Executive Committee meeting that was held on November 6, 2024. The Committee made revisions to the DSSD's bylaws for review by the Commissioners at the monthly meeting. The Committee reviewed the agenda for the special meeting regarding board candidate recruitment. 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

Mr. DeAngelis reported on the Physical Conditions Committee meeting that was held on October 25, 2024. The Committee walked the district and identified specific areas for detailed cleaning, as well as provided detailed input on sites for beautification projects in fiscal year 2025.

C. Public Safety

Commissioner Iassogna reported on the Public Safety and Security Committee meeting that was held on October 25, 2024. The Committee discussed pedestrian safety, new lighting that has been installed on Broad Street, illegal parking, and how best to provide services to the different groups that congregate in Downtown public spaces.

D. Special Events and Marketing

Ms. Cobb reported on the Special Events and Marketing Committee meeting that was held on November 12, 2024. The Committee reviewed the Colorful Bridgeport content for the past month, including the final Downtown Farmers Market vendor features for the season, Nature Nights outdoor movies, Downtown Salsa Nights promotions, and What's Happening weekly event newsletters. After reviewing the DSSD's participation in recent

events, the Committee discussed plans for the upcoming Shop Locally, Give Colorfully holiday season promotions and events. Finally, the Committee provided input on how best provide educational videos to existing business owners and entrepreneurs seeking spaces to operate in Downtown Bridgeport.

E. Elections

Commissioner Heilmann reported on the Elections Committee meeting that was held on October 22, 2024. The Committee updated the internal engagement strategy section of the community engagement plan and set the agenda for the November special meeting regarding board candidate recruitment.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Pires presented the draft revision to the DSSD's bylaws, intended to align the document with the updated text of the municipal ordinance pertaining to board composition. He asked the other Commissioners for input and additional edits to the document. The Commissioners will vote on the revised bylaws at the December 2024 board meeting.

IX. DSSD BOARD RECRUITMENT

DSSD President + CEO Lauren Coakley Vincent gave attendees an explanation of why the special board recruitment meeting was being held, including the references to board expansion in the 2022 strategic plan, the initiative to revise the DSSD's municipal ordinance, and the role of the meeting in the DSSD's larger community engagement plan.

Mr. Pires then provided an overview of the Bridgeport DSSD's structure, governance, and services. Ms. Coakley Vincent gave an overview of the different ways to get involved with the Bridgeport DSSD, including to sign up for the What's Happening in Downtown Bridgeport newsletter, follow the Bridgeport DSSD on social media, attend DSSD monthly board meetings and community events, join a program committee, and run for an open Board of Commissioners seat.

Commissioner Heilmann walked through the process to get elected to an open Board of Commissioners seat. Ms. Heilmann outlined the qualifications for Downtown leaseholders, noted that an interest form would be made available in the early spring, and that there would be training sessions offered. She noted the following key dates in the elections process:

- How to run to become a Commissioner training session on February 18, 2025
- Candidate interest form opens on March 5, 2025
- Candidates and property owner meet and greet on March 12, 2025 after the DSSD board meeting on that date.
- Candidate interest form closes on April 2, 2025
- DSSD annual meeting on May 14, 2025 – elections are held at this meeting

The floor was then opened for question and answer with attendees. A robust discussion commenced regarding different ways to improve Restaurant Week to further benefit Downtown businesses. Additional recommendations were made about ways to activate the neighborhood on Sundays, identifying residents' needs and preferences with an assessment, and a challenge to decorate storefronts for the holiday season.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Pires called for the meeting to be adjourned at 6:28 p.m.