

Rock Island Downtown Alliance Board of Directors Meeting Minutes May 16, 2023 – 4 p.m.

Present: Arron Sutherland, Brandy VandeWalle, Greg Stecker, John Chow, Ben Fawks, Brett Hitchcock, Steven Ratcliff, Amanda Wood, DeAnna Freeman-Foster, Raja Krishnamurthy, Todd Thompson, Erica Williams

Absent: Nicole Watson-Lam

Guests: James Blackwell, Ald. Judith Gilbert, MindFire Communications | **Staff:** Jack Cullen, Jennifer Walker, Brietta Collier, Kyle Carter

Call Meeting to Order, Approval of April Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Brett moved to approve the minutes. Erica seconded. Motion passed.

Advocacy & Promotions

MindFire RIDA Logo & Style Guide Presentation

Jennifer Walker, Chamber VP, Marketing & Sales, introduced Amy Behning of MindFire Communications, who presented their process for creating a logo for RIDA. Board members will receive an input form by June 1 to influence the creation of the logo. The form will seek input on possible uses of the logo, target audiences, desired energy/vibe/uniqueness, sample logos, etc. Board members will have until June 9 to complete the form. A follow-up input session is scheduled for June 16, and any Board members interested in being part of the process are encouraged to contact Jack. This group will provide feedback on designs and select two logos to take to the full Board. The full Board will be presented with two logos at the June 27 special meeting and will be asked to select one and provide further feedback, including any additional edits to the final logo.

Governance & Finance

Draft Work Plan & Budget | Special Meetings in June

Jack and Brie Collier, Chamber VP, Finance & Administration, presented the draft work plan and budget, split into three primary areas of work: Business & Economic Growth, Infrastructure & Livability and Advocacy & Promotions. Board members discussed the differences between taking a diversified and concentrated approach to servicing downtown. One Board member asked if there are too many initiatives for the first year and whether we should invest resources in fewer buckets to provide more value. Another Board member expressed concern that if the organization is too concentrated in too few areas, RIDA's work and impact may get lost on some stakeholders.

Most of the discussion centered on Infrastructure & Livability, including cleaning and public safety initiatives. The draft work plan calls for working with a staffing agency to hire two full-time equivalent (FTE) Cleaning Ambassadors. Due to staffing challenges, a Board member asked about the possibility of contracting with a small business to provide cleaning, beautification and maintenance services. It was discussed that one major benefit of having RIDA Cleaning Ambassadors is more control over their daily work duties and schedules.

The draft work plan proposes a multi-pronged approach to addressing safety concerns via tactical design changes, enhanced Police patrol, a pilot Community Navigators program and enhanced boots-on-the-ground control and maintenance of public spaces. City Manager Todd Thompson confirmed there is not a Police officer assigned to the downtown beat. Due to Police staffing shortages and concerns of officer burnout, RIPD Chief Richard Landi recently told RIDA he does not intend to assign officers to the downtown beat anytime soon. However, RIDA has an opportunity to fund and incentivize overtime Police patrol hours at a rate of about \$60 per hour. Todd also noted the possibility of having a downtown substation. Board members asked for additional details about current patrol practices, and Todd agreed to coordinate a meeting with Chief Landi to get more information.

RIDA will have the flexibility to reallocate funds throughout the year based on needs and opportunities, and specific variance requests for the operating budget will be deferred to Todd. Board members will receive

updated documents with more details about individual budget line items and are encouraged to send additional questions or concerns to Jack prior to final review, edit and approval of the work plan and budget at a special Board meeting June 1.

Infrastructure & Livability

Rebuild Downtown Revitalization Project

Design & engineering firms Veenstra & Kimm and Streamline Architects will present updated renderings and ask for input on the direction of the design at a special Board meeting June 27.

Other Business

City of Rock Island Business/Property Owner Financial Assistance Programs

The City of Rock Island is launching two financial assistance programs to support business and economic growth: Commercial Property Enhancement Program (PEP) and Growing Rock Island Together (GRIT). Please contact Jack for more information.