



Board of Directors Meeting
Aug. 23, 2023 – 4 p.m.
Illinois Casualty Company | 225 20th St., Rock Island, IL

Present: Amanda Wood, Arron Sutherland, Greg Stecker, Erica Williams, Brandy VandeWalle, Raja Krishnamurthy, Steven Ratcliff, Brett Hitchcock, John Chow, Todd Thompson, Nicole Watson-Lam

Absent: Ben Fawks, DeAnna Freeman-Foster

Guests: James Blackwell, Ald. Dylan Parker | **Staff:** Jack Cullen, Kyle Carter

Call Meeting to Order, Approval of July 18 Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m.

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

Infrastructure & Livability

Clean & Safe Operations

Jack announced the hiring of De'Andre Robinson as the new Operations Manager for the Downtown Alliance, beginning Sept. 5. As an employee of Christian Care for the past seven years, De'Andre has served as a Community Outreach Coordinator performing mobile street outreach and case management work in downtown Rock Island and across the Illinois Quad Cities. Through this work, he has made many impactful connections with downtown businesses, law enforcement and individuals experiencing housing and other quality-of-life challenges. De'Andre is a 2004 graduate of Moline High School and a National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA). He lives in Rock Island with his wife and their four children. During their free time, he and his wife create hospitality kits for rideshare and food-delivery service drivers and share the revenue with charitable causes in the community. Board members provided positive feedback on the hiring of De'Andre as some had worked with him in his previous role. Comments included he is thorough, quick to follow through on requests and he has qualifications that are difficult to train.

Jack and De'Andre will be working together to develop zones for downtown cleaning, maintenance and business/community engagements. Next steps include preparing to use a software application to track all work in the field and hiring Cleaning Ambassadors to assist with services. An enhanced Clean and Safe Services agreement between the Downtown Alliance and City of Rock Island is in draft form, and the goal is to present it to City Council for consideration Sept. 25. This agreement will outline the enhanced Clean and Safe services to be provided by the Downtown Alliance in partnership with the City.

Todd Thompson provided an update on the Centennial Bridge Building. The City is investing about \$68,000 in renovations and would consider leasing it to the Downtown Alliance for \$800 per month for three years, subject to an agreement approved by City Council.

Business & Economic Growth

Capital Improvement Grant Program

The Downtown Alliance has \$45,000 budgeted for a capital improvement program. Jack presented the concept of a Curb Appeal Property Enhancement (CAPE) Grant Program focusing on sidewalk and curb repairs. The matching grant would be promoted alongside the City's other financial resources, including the Property Enhancement Program (PEP) and Growing Rock Island Together (GRIT) program to incentivize participation.

The City could play a role by providing the engineering and construction for repairs. One Board member suggested prioritizing the most-traveled areas in the poorest condition. Another Board member suggested including other façade improvements, such as signage and awnings, in the program. An Infrastructure & Livability Committee comprised of Board members and other downtown stakeholders will be created to assist Jack and the City with the development of the program. Board members interested in participating are encouraged to contact Jack or Arron. Per bylaws, the Committee can have up to five members, two of whom are not Board members.

Advocacy & Promotions

Social Media & Website

The Downtown Alliance is currently administering the Downtown Rock Island website and social media accounts owned by the Development Association of Rock Island (DARI). In 2021, DARI and the Chamber partnered to allow the Chamber to use the website and social media. In July 2023, following the establishment of the Downtown Alliance, DARI made an offer to lease the digital assets to the Downtown Alliance for \$4,800 per year based on prior expenses incurred to develop platforms and audiences. Downtown Alliance/Chamber staff are not interested in leasing the assets. In the spirit of partnership, staff recommended sending a letter formally requesting DARI to consider transferring ownership of the digital assets to the Downtown Alliance at no cost in return for proper public recognition of the gift. The Board unanimously opposed paying for the assets and directed Jack and Arron to send the letter to DARI leadership.

Infrastructure & Livability

Rebuild Downtown Rock Island

The Downtown Alliance is advising the City on any and all capital improvements to the downtown, including the proposed \$7M+ in upgrades with local, State and federal funds. City Council on Aug. 14 directed the team to develop construction documents for the project, which has grown in scope and estimated costs. The project is expected to be released for bids mid-January, followed by Council consideration and approval of a construction contract mid-March with the goal of construction starting April 1. Arron proposed members of the Infrastructure & Livability Committee also work with Jack outside of full Board meetings to provide guidance on next steps for Rebuild Downtown.

Advocacy & Promotions

Alternating Currents | Downtown Alliance Launch Party

Alternating Currents 2023 in downtown Rock Island was a big hit! There were seven unique events at six venues across downtown. The kickoff to the festival at Schwiebert Riverfront Park featured an awesome set by Rock Island native Lissie and her band. Many said it was one of the best-attended events in the Park's history. It also served as the kickoff to the Rock Island Parks Department's Thursday Night Groove series. Other Alternating Currents activities included live music at Schwiebert during the QC Farmers' Market and Floatzilla; a film screening at Center for Living Arts; two professional wrestling events at Wake Brewing; a standup comedy show at The Circa 21 Speakeasy; and a rock show at RIBCO. Other businesses and venues expressed an interest in participating next year, and feedback from the Board was positive.

The Downtown Alliance Launch Party is scheduled for 4-6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 3, at Huckleberry's. De'Andre will start hand-delivering invitations to downtown stakeholders during his first week. The event will feature free food and beverages, a brief program celebrating the launch of the Downtown Alliance and time for networking and connection.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.



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downtown alliance

8.23.23 Board of Directors Meeting

Operations Manager Hired!

- Meet De'Andre Robinson
 - Christian Care, 2016 to present
 - Leads local mobile street outreach w/ Project NOW
 - National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA)
 - Passionate Rock Island resident
 - Early riser for outreach and case management work
 - Multiple years of experience circulating downtown
 - Proficient using technology to track metrics
 - Proven track record of boots-on-the-ground work
 - Connections to downtown businesses, partners
 - All-around positive person with strong follow-through



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Capital Improvement Grant Program

- \$45,000 budgeted
- PEP & GRIT
- Curb Appeal Property Enhancement (CAPE) Grant Program
- Matching \$X per square foot; \$X per linear foot
- Infrastructure & Livability Committee
- Next steps



Social Media & Website

- DARI owns Downtown Rock Island website and social media accounts
- Chamber declined DARI offer to purchase website and social media accounts for \$7,500 in 2021
- DARI and Chamber partnered in 2021 to use website and social media
- DARI made offer to lease digital assets to Downtown Alliance for \$4,800/year in July 2023
- Downtown Alliance/Chamber staff not interested in leasing digital assets
- Website needs refresh | Facebook (8,160) and IG (1,559) followers have grown 21% and 19%, respectively
- Recommendation & next steps

Rebuild Downtown Rock Island Project

- Downtown Alliance is advising the City on **any and all** capital improvements to the downtown, including the proposed \$7M+ in upgrades with local, State and federal funds
- City Council on Aug. 14 directed the team to develop construction documents
- Project to be released for bids mid January
- Council approval of construction contract mid March
- Construction starts April 1
- Infrastructure & Livability Committee



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Alternating Currents Recap



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Launch Party

- 4-6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 3, at Huckleberry's
- Invitations will be delivered to downtown stakeholders
- Free food and beverages
- Short news conference-style program
- Board and staff recognized
- Celebrate progress; set tone and expectations for future



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