



**DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY**
of Augusta

**Downtown Development Authority of Augusta
Board Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2022**

The Downtown Development Authority held its monthly board meeting on August 11, 2022, at 10 am at Auben Realty, located at 909 Walker Street.

DDA board members and staff in attendance were Jack Evans, Phuong Nguyen, Ashanti Lilley Pounds, Pastor Anthony Booker, Executive Director Margaret Woodard, Project Coordinator Katherine Bonner and Jeb Murray, Legal Counsel.

Guests and presenters included Richmond County Sheriff's Office Chief Patrick Clayton, Augusta Chronicle reporter Joe Hotchkiss, and Augusta Business Daily staff writer Josh Heath.

Chairman Jack Evans called the meeting to order at 10:03 am and thanked board member Phuong Nguyen for hosting at his recently-renovated office.

Executive Director Margaret Woodard introduced the consent agenda, which included the June 2022 minutes and June and July 2022 financial reports. There were no questions or comments. Rev. Booker made a motion to approve the consent agenda, with a second by Mrs. Lilley Pounds, and the motion passed unanimously.

In the Director's Report, Ms. Woodard updated the board on the following:

Economic Development:

26 8th Street has sold, and payment has been received by the DDA.

1812 Slaton Street/25-acre mixed-use project. Project completed. CO issued May 27. 25 apartments have been leased; 9 pre-leased.

Millhouse Station is 90% leased.

Assisted The Brunch House of Augusta with new location.

Met with bank investor from South Carolina on July 15.

Met with market-rate housing developer August 8.

New businesses are on-pace with last year's growth, and expansions have doubled from last year.

Attachment presented with list of openings, expansions, announcements, housing, and hospitality.

Ribbon Cuttings:

HUB on 6/24.

ATC Development on 7/14.

Mellow Mushroom on 8/2.

Design:

Riverwalk Arches

Contract has been executed with RD Brown in the amount of \$314,000.
Change order in the amount of \$20,234.74 (increased costs of light fixtures).
Submittals and fabrication underway; November unveiling.

DCA Grant allocations were solely provided to rural downtowns. Exploring alternative funding options for Jones Street and Jones Street Alley improvements.

DDA/City MOU for Downtown Maintenance-America Relief Funds

MOUs with City and ACE have been executed.
First disbursement received from city and first payment has been made to ACE.
ACE is providing monthly reports on operations and deliverables.
Additional \$500,000 allocated to ACE by commission for 2023 and 2024.
MOU addendum submitted to City on 8/3/22.
Meeting on 8/11 to begin discussions on possible structures for the blight removal program.

5th Street Bridge Wi-Fi

Submitted project parameters to Dr. Malik and he has given us notice to proceed.
Finalizing details with AU Building for rooftop equipment.

Façade Grants:

Received a check from Georgia Power for \$50,000. \$25,000 will be for facades and \$25,000 for blight removal. Thanks to Mr. King and Georgia Power for their partnership!
On agenda for approval today:
510 Greene Street

Promotion:

Website: Phuong is updating Office Inventory Report/updated demographic reports have been added.
Katherine has updated Data & Demographics, Downtown Highlights, and Projects pages.
Collaborative ad in August edition of Georgia Trend Magazine.
2nd edition of Bi-monthly report completed 6/29 and distributed to city leaders on 7/6 (Attached).
Assisted with Camp Soul City on 7/16.
Sponsoring Small Business Saturday on 11/26 (logo on tote bags).
Planning committee for NCDCA Conference September 13-16.

Instagram:

825 followers (23.7% increase); 20 posts; 224 stories; 1514 accounts reached; 233 accounts engaged.

Facebook:

509 page likes (15% increase); 676 followers (14.8% increase); 4084 people reached; 505 post engagements.

Website:

851 sessions; 1808 pageviews; 88% of website visitors are new; 20% of visitors follow the link from Instagram, and 40% of visitors follow the link from Facebook.

SOOFA Kiosks:

Encroachment permits have been approved.

Kiosks will ship September 7. October unveiling.

Ad sales in progress.

“Something Cool is Coming Here” vinyl in progress and will be installed this month.

SOOFA has sent new batteries and USB ports to the City to update existing benches on the Riverwalk.

Organization:

Chamber Luncheon with Commissioner Bobby Williams on 7/13.

Trip to Madison with Phuong to look at workforce housing on 7/29.

ACE Board Meeting on 8/3.

Other:

Submitting budget request to City 8/12.

Upcoming presentation to Commission and press release with DDA updates.

Business and Property Owner Directory has been completed by intern Tniya Collins.

Next meeting is Thursday, 9/8, at Buona Caffè on Reynolds Street. Dr. Whirl from Augusta Tech will be providing updates on their downtown automotive program and other projects.

Mr. Evans asked for a motion to accept the Director’s Report as information. Mr. Nguyen made the motion, Rev. Booker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Under new business, Richmond County Sheriff’s Office Chief Patrick Clayton thanked the DDA for revitalizing downtown and encouraged continued forward momentum. In regards to downtown safety, he emphasized the importance of statistics. Since 2012, violent crime is down by $\frac{1}{3}$, and property crime is down by $\frac{1}{2}$. While Augusta had 32 homicides in 2021, Macon had 55, and Columbus had 72. The City is becoming safer over time, especially in comparison to similar cities across the state.

Chief Clayton spoke about a recent meeting with downtown business owners, which resulted in a presentation to the Commission that allowed RSCO to focus on hotspots policing with the introduction of new cameras both downtown and across the City. 18 of 32 criminals who stole cars in the last year have been arrested as a result of the new cameras. The FBI Safe Streets Taskforce partnership has also been a significant deterrent for late-night crime, and RSCO is actively moving deputies around for heavy patrol times and increasing technology where beneficial.

Chief Clayton closed by reminding the DDA that RSCO needs funding and manpower to be competitive with local departments like Columbia and Burke Counties and the City of North Augusta. DAs, justices, and legislatures need to prioritize punishments for chronic predatory offenders, and the City needs more space for habitual offenders to keep them off the streets.

Under new business, Ms. Woodard presented a façade grant request for 510 Greene Street, submitted by Michael Beckham. The request was for \$5,000, and all invoices and paperwork were in order. Mrs. Lilley Pounds made the motion to approve, with a second by Mr. Nguyen, and the motion passed unanimously.

In closing, Chairman Evans stated that this was an exciting time for Augusta, with great things happening behind the scenes. He encouraged board members to continue to work with partner agencies and put pressure on local authorities to support necessary initiatives for safety and growth.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05am, with a motion by Mrs. Lilley Pounds, a second from Mr. Nguyen, and unanimous approval.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen King
Secretary-Treasurer