



**MINUTES  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Tuesday – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – 12:00PM  
Downtown Development Authority  
350 SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Delray Beach, FL**

**1. Call to order/Roll Call – 12:05pm**

Members Present: Mavis Benson, Dr. John Conde, Vera Woodson, Mark Denkler, Christina Godbout.

Members Absent: Frank Frione and Rocco Mangel.

Staff: Laura Simon, Suzanne Boyd, Liliana Fino, Danielle Morien.

Guests: Julia Corliss, Kerry Filippone, Mike Tegler, Dianna Scotto, Kurt Falk, Alan Costilo, Brian Rosen, Max Zengage, Ellen Indursky, Angela Burns.

Zoom: Julen Blankenship, Gina Carter, Howard Alan, Sharon Morgan, Siobhan Boroian, Robert Cantwell, Nan Krushinski, Carol Jehle, Lynn Gelin, Missie Barletto, Jeff Oris, Stephanie Immelman, Dan de Oliveira, David Doran.

**2. Approval of Regular Agenda – Tuesday June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Motion** by Mark Denkler, seconded by Vera Woodson, to approve the regular agenda adding the topic “Summer parking rates” as item 3B. Motion carries (4-0). John Conde, Rocco Mangel and Frank Frione not present.

**3. NEW Business**

**A. Downtown Special Events DDA Board discussion**

Ms. Mavis Benson observes that one of the new directions from the City regarding the Special events policy is “6. S. Bridge closures are prohibited for non-City produced events.”. Therefore, the DDA Board is having this meeting today to provide directions to the City Commission, according to the DDA Board feedback and the surveys conducted recently by the DDA to local residents and businesses in the matter of Special Events.

**12:11pm – Mr. John Conde arrives at the meeting.**

Ms. Mavis Benson adds that some of these events have great longevity and many of the merchants are in support of these events to be taking place on the streets. These events, such as the Howard Allan festivals and the Delray Affair bring great exposure to businesses.

Mr. Howard Allan (Howard Alan Events, Inc, President - Chief Executive Officer) refers that a survey data done regarding the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts showed that there were 2 million dollars of non-art related purchases made during the daytime frame while the festival was taking place. Some of the event’s attendees mentioned to him that they were visiting Delray Beach on purpose for the event and were staying at one of the hotels in town. He mentions also, that, over the years, there have been no reports of major incidents happening during these events and adds that if the footprint of this event has to change (in 2023 was from SE 5th Avenue, going over the Intracoastal Waterway to A1A) he suggests for it to be placed on Atlantic Avenue from NW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave to west of Swinton Avenue. This event is

one of the largest of its kind in all the United States and it is ranked one of the top art fairs in the country. Also, if the footprint has to be changed the festival has to be restructured, since it would be on a different area and in a shorter footprint.

Mr. Alan Costilo (public comment, Big AL Steak's, Owner) observes that up until 1994, there were no festivals happening in downtown Delray Beach, and also there was barely any business happening in the area. Nowadays, downtown Delray Beach has a strong business core and that is also, a consequence of the events that are happening in the area which bring people to discover the area. The Delray Affair is a staple event that happens by the end of the season and the Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts, happening in January, marks the beginning of the season. The Downtown Delray Beach Art Festival on 4<sup>th</sup>, despite not being on Atlantic Avenue, but instead on NE 4th Ave it still brings business to the stores and restaurants on Atlantic Avenue. Not to have these events will have negative impact on Delray Beach economic vitality. All events bring customers to downtown Delray Beach which improves economic vitality. Art & Jazz on the Avenue, that takes place in different neighborhoods around downtown Delray Beach brings great exposure to the businesses located on the area these events take place.

Ms. Diana Scotto (public comment, Scoopy Doo's, Owner) observes that the weekend of January 14-15 of 2023 for the Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts brought an increase in sales of 45% for that weekend. Having the Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts had a huge positive impact on our sales. For Scoopy Doo's, even though the store was not a vendor at this event, it had a lot of walk-by traffic. There was also an increase from last year's sales numbers at 50% for that same weekend. Regarding the weekend of the Delray Affair event, last year the 500 block was not included in the Delray Affair and Scoopy Doo's sales were up 20%. This year the city included the 500 block for Delray Affair event and Scoopy Doo's sales this year, for the weekend of the Delray Affair, increased 100% related to 2022. It was the best weekend since the store opened. On the other end, for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, both years (2022 and 2023) Scoopy Doo's decreased the sales in about 40%. During the Tree Lighting event, having the 500-block included, brought Scoopy Doo's a 100% increase in sales, as compared to the year before when we saw a 40% decrease during the same event when the 500 block was not included.

Ms. Ellen Indursky (public comment, representing Spice store) also reports that every time an event takes place on Atlantic Avenue and includes the area where Spice store is located (521 E Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach, FL 33483) the store sees increase in business and if not leads visitors to discover the stores in that area.

Ms. Siobhan (public comment, Morley, Coco & Co and Periwinkle manager) reports that for the stores she manages, every time the street closes the stores see a decrease in sales at about 80%. The regular customers, that visit the stores on a weekly basis, do not come during the event days due to issues in traffic and parking.

Ms. Kerry Filippone (public comment, Achievement Centers for Children and Families, Community Impact Manager) reports that every time the non-profit participates in these events it brings great exposure and benefit to their entity, as they can recruit sponsors and volunteers, and also, there are one of the entities beneficiaries for some of these events. She also, adds that these events revitalize the area.

Mr. Max Zengage (public comment, Delray Beach Concours d'Elegance, founder) observes that these events bring a huge crowd into town and therefore they improve the economic vitality of the area. He suggests keeping in the future the bridge closed for these events as they are extremely important to drive economic vitality.

#### **Board Discussion:**

Mr. Mark Denkler suggests keeping the bridge closed for the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts, the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, and the Holiday Parade as they are great economic drivers. He mentions that for the businesses he represented (Vince Canning Shoes and Tootsies

Shoes) the weekend of the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival represented one of the biggest weekends in sales throughout the years, even though the stores were not in the event footprint. On the opposite for the St. Patrick's Day Parade his businesses drop 90% in sales and therefore the stores were closed during this event. He suggests having the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday, instead of Saturday.

**Ms. Christina Godbout** observes that it is important to perceive the feedback from the Delray Beach Police Department and from the Delray Beach Fire Department as well as from local residents regarding the impact of the bridge being closed for these events. She also adds that it is important to explore options of other event footprints if future changes to the footprint of these events have to be made.

**Mr. John Conde** observes that these events have great economic value and, also, they have historic value, as they have been happening for a long time. He adds that the events bring great exposure to the downtown businesses. He is of the opinion of keeping the bridge closed for these events.

**Ms. Vera Woodson** suggests if it will not be possible to keep the events footprint as they are to place the Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts in another footprint such as going from NW 5th Ave around the tennis center, and directing it to NW 1st Ave and utilizing the City Hall lot as well as the public parking lot across the Tennis Center and even having open the Community Center (at 50 NW 1st Ave. Delray Beach). This way the events would not have impact on the vehicular traffic on Atlantic Avenue. She highlights that it is important to create a footprint that allows for traffic flow. She mentions, also, that as she observes the visitors walking during the arts and crafts events and she looks at the purchased goods bags, she has been noticing that most of the bags are not from the retailers in the area but from the event's vendors. Nevertheless, she mentions that these events bring great exposure to the businesses in the area. She emphasizes that it is important to plan these events in a way that benefits and promotes the downtown area as a whole.

**Ms. Mavis Benson** reports that during face-to-face talks with multiple businesses in the area (Global Pursuit, Haystacks, Spice, MACArt, Andre Dupree, Charleston Shoe Company) they reported that they see benefit from all these events.

**Ms. Vera Woodson** observes that some of the events layout cause issues. Some of the retailers she got in contact with reported that they would prefer to the vendor's tents to be set up in the middle of the street versus by the sidewalks (which blocks the view to the local storefronts).

#### **Public Comment Observed:**

**Mr. Alan Costilo** observes that if the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts is moved from Atlantic Avenue to the Old School Square grounds that will not be beneficial for the businesses on Atlantic Avenue. He adds that if the events have to be moved out of Atlantic Avenue that will not bring as much attendance as when these events take place on Atlantic Avenue. Atlantic Avenue is a hub that attracts many visitors, and the public enjoys having the events on Atlantic Avenue. Mr. Alan Costilo also observes that there should be more events taking place in the off-season to bring people to the downtown area.

**Ms. Mavis Benson** asks if is the DDA Board consensus suggesting to the City Commission to keep Delray Affair and the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts events footprints as they were in 2019 (in 2019 the Delray Affair event closed Atlantic Avenue beginning in front of the Tennis Center at NW 2nd Avenue, east to the Intracoastal Waterway, the bridge was closed to vehicular traffic / the 2019 January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts closed East Atlantic Avenue from US 1 to A1A).

**Mr. John Conde** suggests keeping the events with bridge closures and suggests rethinking the configuration of the events, placing the booths and tents to the middle of the street versus by the sidewalks.

**Ms. Laura Simon** also suggests rethinking the configuration of the events to space out the vendors' tents/booths evenly throughout the multiple blocks, also making the configuration layout more pedestrian friendly. She adds that it is important to communicate with the local residents and have their

feedback on how to help them navigate downtown while the events are happening. She mentions how important these events are for the economic vitality of downtown Delray Beach.

**Ms. Mavis Benson** mentions that the merchants find great value in maintaining the footprints of the Delray Affair event and of the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts as of now.

**Mr. Mark Denkler** mentions that if the footprint of these events changes that will have impact in the event and consequently impact the businesses in the downtown area.

**Ms. Laura Simon** clarifies that as per the new guidelines regarding special events from the City Commission the Delray Affair event will have to end at NE 5<sup>th</sup> avenue, not including the 500 block.

**Ms. Vera Woodson** suggests shortening the footprint of the St. Patrick's Day Parade (allowing for the bridge to be open), but to maintain the bridge closure for the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts.

**Mr. Mark Denkler** suggests to the DDA Board based on the economic impact and marketing impact to recommend to the City Commission to keep the Delray Affair and the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts with the same footprint as they happened in 2022 (road closure for the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts: Atlantic Avenue is closed from E 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, going over the Intracoastal Waterway to A1A; road closure for the Delray Affair: Atlantic Avenue in Downtown Delray Beach from NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue east to E 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue)

**Motion** by Mark Denkler seconded John Conde, that based on the economic impact and marketing impact of the events, to recommend to the City Commission to keep the Delray Affair and the January Downtown Delray Beach Festival of the Arts with the same footprint as it was in 2022. Motion carries with 4 votes in favor, 1 against through roll call vote (Rocco Mangel and Frank Frione not present):

- Mavis Benson – Yes
- Mark Denkler – Yes
- Vera Woodson – No
- John Conde – Yes
- Christina Godbout - Yes

Ms. Stephanie Immelman (Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce, President and Chief Executive Officer) mentions that the Delray Affair event might include again the 500 on Atlantic Avenue, but that, ultimately, will be up to the City Commission to approve this change.

## **B. Summer parking rates**

Ms. Mavis Benson observes that many of the merchants have reported that their business is hurting more compared to the same period last year and therefore she suggests decreasing the parking rates to \$2/ hour until the end of September.

Ms. Vera Woodson says that she previously has suggested having different parking rates during high season versus low season, but the parking meters are not equipped to do that. Perhaps there is the need to produce more events during the low season to bring more people downtown.

Mr. Mark Denkler adds that apart from different parking rates for low versus high season, there should be also, different rates for daytime and nighttime.

Ms. Laura Simon suggests that the DDA can sponsor a time range for free parking, such as free parking on Tuesdays.

Ms. Angela Burns (public comment, City of Delray Beach, Commissioner) observes that it is very important to hear the different perspectives from the merchants as well as from the DDA Board.

Ms. Laura Simon suggests monitoring the parking rates data collaborating with the city Parking Management Advisory board.

Mr. John Conde enquires about economic updates on neighboring cities.

Ms. Siobhan Boroian (public comment, Morley, Coco & Co and Periwinkle manager) answers that she has some updates from merchants at the Boca Mall reporting that the business has slowed down more than the usual levels for low season. She adds that most of the customers mentioned that they are travelling during the month of June, returning in July. She also mentions that shipping has been one of the options to reach the seasonal customers.

Ms. Angela Burns (public comment, City of Delray Beach, Commissioner) adds that as the inflation rate has gone up to 4% that might have impacted the economy also.

Mr. Brian Rosen (public comment, Marcus & Millichap, First Vice President of Investments) notes that there have been decreases also on the on the real estate market.

Ms. Suzanne Boyd observes that manager from Death By Pizza has reported no relevant decrease in business but also he highlighted that it is important to keep promoting the business including through the app Google My Business that he has found extremely important to help market the business.

Ms. Vera Woodson mentions that the rise in interest rates and the more than usual rainy weather are slowing down economic vitality.

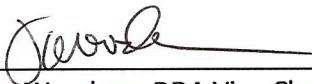
#### **4. Board Comments**

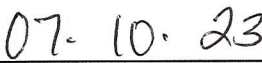
There were no Board comments.

#### **5. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:24pm through motion by Mark Denkler seconded by Vera Woodson. Motion carries (5-0). Rocco Mangel and Frank Frione not present.

Respectfully submitted,  
Liliana Fino

  
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Vera Woodson, DDA Vice-Chair

  
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DATE