

SCOTIA DISTRICT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

SCOTIA BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

OCTOBER 9, 2013 MEETING MINUTES

A monthly meeting of the Scotia Business Improvement District was held on October 9, 2013 at the Turf Tavern, Mohawk Avenue, Scotia, NY

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cathy Gatta at 8:05 a.m.

Present: Tom Gallant, Nell Burrows, Cathy Gatta, Ken Swain, Charlie Palmer, Sandy Lattanzio, Richard Adams, Gary Kelly, Alan Payette, Ed Rosenberg, Gail Hopper, Lou Buhrmaster, Tina Koehler

1. **Approval of Minutes:** MOVED by Gary and seconded by Ken to approve the minutes of the September 2013 meeting; unanimously approved.
2. **Special Guest:** Cathy introduced Ray Gillen, Chairman of Metroplex, and noted that the county tax increase was 7 percent. Ray said the Payments In Lieu of Taxes on properties that were either government owned or vacant lots now generates about \$9 million from previously untaxed sites.

Updates: The Western Gateway Bridge—Ray noted that this is a state bridge and the reconstruction was designed and built by the state with no input from the county or local entities; he added that the hike and bike trail was not in the original plans, but the final bridge will have a trail. Work on lower State Street will be beneficial to the Scotia area and the student housing complex at SCCC is full. Ray added that every building on lower State is either under contract or under construction.

Community College growth has been very helpful; there are more than 1,000 new people working at the downtown GE campus and the white-collar cutbacks announced recently are a result of redundancy. He said over \$350 million has been invested in Schenectady county by GE.

Glenville Business and Technical Park is also very active; Old Dominion is building a distribution and trucking company in the former SuperSteel building. He said DHA and Adirondack Beverage are also doing well. Ray added that it would be helpful to distribute information about the Scotia BID to the companies in this area.

The McDonald's cleanup went well—this was a case where the Village, Town and the City of Schenectady told McDonald's that this was an unacceptable situation and worked to get the site taken care of. He said 1,100 tons of dirty soil as well as a vehicle lift were removed from the site and sale of the lot is underway to the Mazzone Group.

Ray also noted the Scotia Manor project and the façade of Rolling Greens bowling alley as all positive developments in the area. He added that the county did the demolition of the old antique store and actually ate the cost of this.

Ray said Metroplex would like to do more façade projects in the Village—CVS would be a good candidate; he added the redoing the sidewalks in front of the old McDonald's property and along that section of the Avenue to make a more continuous visual connection of those properties is another goal. He said Metroplex is willing to partner in projects that will make a difference in the Village and fund half the cost. Micro projects are acceptable, but the work needs to have an impact and improvement within the Village. He added that the Village is a very important commercial corridor in Schenectady County.

Cathy asked how a business would get started on a project—Ray said they could call him at 377-1109, ext 1, or google Metroplex. Gail asked if Metroplex helps with design. Ray said they refer businesses who could help with the specific work. Tom asked about the auction sale on the old antique store. Ray said the county is doing this through Collar City Auctions.

Ray said the Village gets about \$300,000 from Metroplex; Tom mentioned that the business district doesn't really see this money since it is placed in the general fund of most municipalities. Ray said the Village does offer a revolving loan fund and that PILOT money goes directly to the taxing entity.

Regarding the hike/bike lane on the new bridge, Ray said this is supposed to have some separation from vehicle traffic. He added that as lower State Street becomes more developed he would hope to see more traffic come into the Village.

Ed asked about increases in Metroplex money and if the increases could be used within the business district; he also asked about attracting successful businesses into the area. Ray said the key is to point to revenue producing projects and making the area more attractive—Ray said Metroplex is also available to help get prospective tenants into the district including subsidizing a tenant at \$1 or \$2 per square foot. Ray noted that the event strategy also helps bring people and businesses into the district and felt that Collins Park should be exploited more to bring attention to the Village.

Gail mentioned Welcome packets or gift bags to be given to new business employees. Ray felt this was a good idea.

3. **Treasurer's Report:** Ken reported there was no spending in September and we are ahead of budget at about \$6,200 for the year; he added we have received the tax assessment from the Village. MOVED by Al and seconded by Gary to accept the Treasurer's report; unanimously approved.
4. **Chairman's Report:** Cathy reported that she and Charlie met with the Village attorney to go over the contract and the district plan. The BID is a separate entity and cannot be covered under the Village insurance for liability or Director/Owner insurance. She added that the focus in 1997 was on sidewalks and landscaping but felt that the plan now should include promoting the Village.

Executive Director's Report: Nell said she had completed a directory page for the BID brochure and has a picture of the clock for the cover page; she hopes to get this finalized soon. She said the BID has not been informed about activities going on in the park, but noted there will be a "zombie walk" to raise money for the Rotary Club. There was discussion about having no Village representative at BID meetings. Cathy said the Mayor will forward minutes from the Park Board meetings to her so the BID is aware of these events.

Lou said we have to resolve the flower pots and benches work. He said he has the equipment and would like to work something out with the Village. He felt that leaving these out is not a good option and they can be moved in about six hours; he is willing to show someone how to do this. Gary felt we should not have the benches out at all since they tend to just attract loiterers. Others thought they could be placed in logistically positive spots.

Gary said the website either needs to be taken down or someone needs to work on it continuously. Ed felt we need a dedicated person to update the site; Gary added that promotion of the BID should start with the website. Cathy mentioned a Scotia person who might be available to do this. Tom felt the pictures should be redone and all businesses should be included.

Gary said he had called the Art Chairperson at the High School regarding painting the flower pots but has not received a response—he will try again.

Tom asked if the land behind Dorazio's could be used to store the flower pots.

Gail reminded the group about "small business Saturday" which occurs on the Saturday following Thanksgiving, which was started by AMEX to promote the small business. Application deadline is Oct 15; and upper Union St BID and the Chamber are interested in partnering on this. She said the Chamber can apply and work with everyone—she added you must have ten businesses who want to participate. There are promotional materials and ideas for electronic promotions as well. The Gazette has offered to do a small business page. Restaurants and

CVS are not eligible. Let Gail know if you are interested in taking part in this event or the Gazette ad—she added there is no cost to participate unless you want to be part of the Gazette ad.

Nell asked if there were materials and information for the Bid newsletter. Tom mentioned that the BID could buy an ad in the Proctor's playbill—Nell will follow up on this. There was also discussion about joint promotions among the Mohawk Avenue businesses involving the Scotia Cinema—more discussion to follow.

MOVED by Ed and seconded by Ken to adjourn the meeting; the meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Tina Koehler
BID Secretary