

DOWNTOWN OAK PARK BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
October 8, 2024 VIA ZOOM

Present: Susie Goldshmidt, Mike Fox, Paul Beckwith, Tina Salerno, Michelle Vanderlaan, Jenny Shepard, Jonathan Kaufman, Ray Ward, Jonathan Burch (VOP), Cam Davis (VOP)

Staff: Shanon Williams, Jayne Furlong, Amelia Dellos

The Downtown Oak Park Board of Directors' meeting was called to order by Board President, Susie Goldschmidt, at 8:35am via Zoom.

Introductions

Joanathan Burch - Asst. Village Manager - Lead Neighborhood Services Department

Motion to Approve August 2024 Minutes:

Approved: Mike F

Seconded: Tina S

All in favor

- Motion Carried –

Finance Report – Shannon Williams

1. Oaktoberfest:

- a. \$28,000 over budget on Oaktoberfest, but working on ways to cover the overage
 - i. Pulling back on holiday decor - usually \$65,000 - pulling back \$25,000
 - 1. Keeping tree lighting and some decor pieces, but not lighting poles or filling pots
 - a. Received approval to light the smaller trees on Lake St. for the first time since their planting
- b. Pulling back on holiday event spending and looking at ways to cut event costs next year
 - i. Winterfest - switching to local tent company or empty storefront, assessing other small cuts that can be made
 - ii. Oaktoberfest 2025 - considering downsizing to one day or other ways to cut costs
 - 1. Susie - Vendors want a two-day event. A one-day event is riskier weather-wise and too much work for one day.

2. Board Feedback

- a. Michelle - Do we know why the overage occurred for Oaktoberfest?
 - i. Shanon - there are a few reasons this occurred
 - 1. Increased costs for some elements
 - 2. Used new companies for a few elements that were more expensive (sound, security)

3. Less beer and wine was sold than previous years
 - a. Paul - Surprised to hear the sales were lower this year. When volunteering, the crowd seemed steady.
 - i. Jayne - Weather likely had an impact. It was very warm Saturday during the day and the crowd did not pick up until after 5pm. So sales were likely slower for about 5 hours of the event than previous years.
4. Increased village fees that were unexpected, specifically related to police costs.
 - a. Paul - Happy to have extra police but it seemed like we had more than normal. Can we have a discussion with the Village about how many police we have? It seems unfair to get numbers afterward.
 - i. Shannon - We are having ongoing conversations with Cam Davis and Emily Egan about the process and the baseline services we'd like in partnership with them
 - b. Jenny - Previously, has it been the same amount of police year to year and prices have been the same?
 - i. Shannon - Yes, this was unexpected and more than double what we have previously paid.
- b. Susie - People look forward to this event after TNO. While considering next year, it would be a shame to alter the event significantly or cancel it when it is such a great event.

Motion to Approve September 2024 Financial Statements:

Approved: Mike F

Seconded: Tina S

All in favor

-Motion carried –

Village Updates - Cam David, Jonathan Burch

1. **Pick Oak Park** - sign up for the newsletter to receive updates on economic vitality in the Village. Will provide link to Shanon to send out.
 - a. This month's newsletter highlights the new bookstore in Hemingway District and the new Breakfast House restaurant in the old Cozy Corner space
 - b. Gyumon Japanese BBQ - They got the HVAC system in and are moving forward
 - c. Porter commercial lease finalized in Pleasant District
 - d. New business - Burger 76 on South Blvd, owned by the same people as Taco 76 on Madison

2. **Economic Vitality Focus Groups** - Focus groups will be for the ongoing study on economic vitality being conducted by the Village
 - a. Shannon will send out information once received from the Village
3. **Porta-Potties on North Blvd.** - The Village has been in conversation with property owners about cleanliness in DTOP due to unhoused population. Everyone wants to provide support to the unhoused community while also mitigating issues created by the situation. Porta-potties have been tried before unsuccessfully but the Village thought it was a good time to try again with some changes.
 - a. These units will be cleaned more frequently
 - b. Police increased patrols around Metra station and are working to strengthen the relationship with the unhoused community to promote rules about appropriate use of the units
 - i. Board feedback:
 1. Shanon - Mike Kelly checks the units frequently during his hours
 2. Jenny - Did the Village also removed benches along South Blvd? Are there plans to remove more?
 - a. Jonathan - Yes, feedback from property owners resulted in removal of benches south of the station. No plans to remove others.
 3. Mike F - Happy to see this addition and hopeful it will work. It is a tough situation.
 4. Tina - Businesses have not seen a difference yet in the back alley, which is still being used as a bathroom by unhoused individuals.
 5. Mike F - Will the units be locked overnight when it gets cold?
 - a. Jonathan - The Village is trying this out for the month of October then will assess continuing and what that looks like.
 - i. Paul - Do you need community members in the Village to actively support this initiative? This is an ongoing issue so only doing this for a month doesn't seem like it will make an impact.
4. **"Arts and Crafts License"** - This liquor license was recently added and allows "maker businesses" (where things are made on site) to get liquor licenses for events, classes, etc, so they can sell alcohol. There are 2 businesses interested already.
 - a. In general, the Village is working to make the liquor code more economic vitality focused
 - i. Also recently updated BYO so businesses can charge a corkage fee and 2 businesses have already utilized this (1 in Pleasant and 1 on Madison)
 - ii. Board Feedback:
 1. Michelle - Does this apply to retailers?
 - a. Cam - Only retailers that make items onsite. Other retailers can serve (not sell) alcohol at private events not open to

the public. No municipality has a liquor license that allows regular retail to sell alcoholic drinks on site to the public.

5. Board Feedback:

- a. Paul - How many new businesses so far for 2024?
 - i. Cam - 84 new licenses so far this year. The highest percentage is in DTOP, but they are spread throughout the community.
 - ii. Anyone can find a list of new businesses on the Pick Oak Park website
- b. Susie - Want to give a public shoutout to Mike Kelly. He makes a huge difference in DTOP. Whatever we can do for him to acknowledge his work publically, let us know.
 - i. Jonathan - Happy to pass this positive feedback along to the chief of police.

Marketing - Amelia Dellos

1. **National Hispanic Heritage Month** - DTOPBA is doing several things for this month:
 - a. Profiles on socials and website honoring Hispanic business leaders in DTOP
 - b. Partnering with Vigo for a Mexican Art Pop-Up event on Saturday, Oct 12
 - i. Event features artists and handmade crafts on site, live music, and dessert samples
 - c. Featuring a round up of Hispanic Heritage Month community events in the area on the website
2. **Sponsorship 2025** - Currently working to restructure this program to increase sponsorship dollars in 2025.
 - a. Advent come in late this year as a sponsor and had great experience, surpassed numbers for what they expected.
 - i. RUSH feedback coming this week
 - b. Shanon - Currently looking at tools we can use to show the return on investment to sponsors, comparing our packages with other organization's packages to compare price points, and considering creating two packages (one for membership, one for non-DTOP/corporate businesses)
 - c. Board Feedback:
 - i. Susie - Are we not a non-for-profit? The goal isn't to make money.
 1. Shanon - Correct, all sponsorship money will go right back to expenses supporting events, marketing, and district maintenance.
 - ii. Michelle - Theme Nights at TNO could be an opportunity for sponsorship, such as the Kids Night being sponsored by Sugarcup Trading
 1. Jayne - Currently creating a list of event assets that could be sponsored, including Theme Nights
 - iii. Tina - Thank you for making it easy to share events. The press kits with information, QR codes, and socials make it easy to share and talk about the events

3. **Gift Certificate Redesign** - Updated the package and developed a marketing plan to launch during this holiday season. Focusing on education merchants and employees to make accepting the gift cards as easy as possible for businesses.
 - a. Board Feedback:
 - i. Mike F - Is the program automated?
 1. Shannon - No. The program is still a physical certificate.
 - a. The Village and Chamber are looking at doing a Village-wide gift card program which could impact the the future of DTOP's program if they move forward. DTOPBA is in communication with the Village and Chamber and will keep an eye on their progression.
 - ii. Susie - Does the Chamber no longer have a gift card?
 1. Shannon - We are the only program right now.

Events and Communications - Jayne Furlong

1. **TNO** - Ended the season basically on pace with previous years. The Bring Your Own Chair campaign was successful and the Sustainability initiative was also successful, diverting over 60 totes of recycling and compost from landfills.
2. **Oaktoberfest** - Data from the event can be found in the Events and Communications report for this period.
3. **Halloween** - Creating an adult-focused event in collaboration with Beer Shop and Lake Theater featuring a happy hour followed by a free screening of A Nightmare on Elm Street
 - a. Other districts have kid-focused events and with our young-adult population it made sense to try something more adult-focused
4. **Oak Park Homelessness Coalition** - DTOPBA is working with the Village and the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition on a panhandling campaign that will roll out this month. The campaign focuses on educating the community on the issue of panhandling and ways to mitigate the issue while supporting the organizations providing services to this population.
 - a. DTOPBA will be represented by Jayne at a community forum focusing on constructive approaches to addressing hunger and homelessness that creates the need for panhandling. DTOPBA will be participating along with John Harris from A5 and Chief Johnson of the Oak Park Police Department.
 - b. The forum will take place November 18th, 6pm-8pm at the OPPL Main Branch Veteran's Room.

Old Business - Shanon Williams

1. **Triton Marketing Seminar Series** - first session went well, with 15 people attending of the 13 who rsvp'd. Attendees filled out assessments and reportedly got a lot out of the seminar.
 - a. Next session is at Lake Theater, on Website Best Practices.
 - b. After speaking with the Village these seminars will be opened up to non-DTOP businesses for a small fee. They remain free for DTOP owners and employees.
 - c. DTOPBA will repeat this series in Spring 2025
 - d. DTOPBA will also do a series on interpersonal communication, with topics like how to train staff, customer service, and management skills
 - e. Board Feedback:
 - i. Ray - Is there anything that could be shared for those who can't do Mondays? Also, The Nineteenth Century Charitable Association could donate space for a lecture if not on a Monday next time.
 1. Amelia - We will ask for the deck for the series from Triton and will be doing these lectures in the afternoon next round. We will follow up on using space.
2. **Village Budget Meeting** - Shannon and Susie met with VOP staff to review DTOPBA's budget and it was determined they don't have to present to the Village Board. VOP staff were impressed by what DTOPBA does as an organization. The presentation focused on sustainability, DEI, community partnerships, and business support. VOP staff expressed the Village wants to support DTOPBA in its efforts.
 - a. Shanon - Filled out a racial equity assessment for DTOPBA but have not heard what that information will be used for

New Business - Shanon Williams

1. **New Intern** - Meghan Cummings, a Concordia student, is working with DTOPBA 2 days a week this semester helping with social media and marketing.
2. **DTOP Vacancy Rate** - Shanon will meet with VOP staff once a month to keep tabs on vacant spaces and interested businesses
3. **Book Table Closing** - posted on social media they will likely close around Thanksgiving
 - a. Mike F - going through inventory then closing, no set date but by the end of the year
4. **Board Topics:**
 - a. Paul - Will there be a holiday get-together for Board or merchants?
 - i. Susie - If so, could we do January or February to prevent overwhelm from the holiday season? It is the busiest time for many of our members.

- ii. Shanon - Will look at this and will check in with the Board next month to follow up

Consent Reports

a) Executive Director – Shanon Williams

1. Met with new sustainability manager - looking forward to partnering with her
2. Link in the report to the new drone footage on the website homepage

b) Marketing – Amelia Dellos

c) Events/Communication- Jayne Furlong

Motion to adjourn: Downtown Oak Park Board of Directors' Meeting at 9:48 am by Susie Goldschmidt, Board President.

Approved: Mike F

Seconded: Ray Ward

All in favor

-Motion Carried –