

**DAO Executive Committee Meeting – February 12, 2024, 9am
Santa Rosa Metro Chamber, 50 Old Courthouse Square, Santa Rosa, CA 95404
Zoom Meeting ID: 806 654 7370, Password: Downtown
Phone: 669-900-9128**

Executive Committee Present: Natalie Balfour, Pauline Block, Chris Denny, Hugh Futrell

Absent: Danielle Nelson

Staff Present: Cadance Hinkle Allinson

Chris Denny called in via Zoom from 306 Bouquet Circle, Windsor, CA 95492.

Natalie Balfour called in via Zoom from 8314 Trione Circle, Windsor, CA 95492.

MINUTES

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hugh Futrell called the meeting to order at 9:09 am.

2.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (limited to two minutes each)

There were no public comments at this time.

3.0 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OR ABSTENTIONS

There were no conflicts of interest or abstentions.

4.0 ACTION: CONSENT ITEM

4.1 Pauline Block made a motion to approve consent item, January 10, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Natalie Balfour and passed unanimously.

5.0 REPORT: TREASURER

Cadance shared that they're anticipating the arrival of the assessment check this week, which looks like it includes some delinquent funds from 2023.

6.0 REPORT: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cadance discussed the potential of shifting the normal meeting time back 30 minutes to 9:30am on the second Wednesday of the month. The committee agreed and Cadance said she would confirm with Danielle before updating the schedule.

Cadance provided the following updates:

City Council's priority setting meeting was last week and Cadance provided comment based on the DAO's policy related items. Danielle Nelson also spoke.

The business development piece and website should be wrapped up by March.

Bliss Boba and Mo'z have both opened on 4th Street.

The City of Santa Rosa Parks Maintenance hosted their Park-A-Month program in Downtown Santa Rosa and volunteers, including Caitlin Kurasek, planted some new plants along 4th, in addition to other projects on Courthouse Square.

There is movement with the trolley program, and she hopes to have a new budget in place soon.

She has not done any work on the grant opportunities that might exist or brought together a committee to review the Management Plan, though Natalie Balfour is the only one who has expressed interest. She suggested they might get together in a few months to review and present their findings.

She scheduled a community meeting on March 6 at 8:30am at The California. There will be coffee, doughnuts and discussion with members of the Downtown Community.

A conversation ensued about the effectiveness of the NexStreet team and Cadance shared there have been some issues with specific locations, but that she has not had any negative feedback recently. Hugh shared that there is a staff member who is not functioning at the productivity rate that is expected and does not seem to follow attire requirements. Cadance will speak with NexStreet management to discuss.

7.0 REPORT: BOARD CHAIR

Chair Hugh Futrell shared an update about the EIFD's Public Financing Authority. The draft plan is being prepared by staff, led by Gabe Osburn. Hugh does not think the tax increment from 888 4th Street will be captured by the EIFD and the percentage of tax increment remains unresolved.

Hugh shared the status of the conference center site and the potential for working with Sonoma County Tourism on an expanded project. Sonoma County tourism's top location is Simon. There might also be an opportunity to utilize a combination of the Cinema site, the Bank of America site and One Santa Rosa Avenue. The impact on Downtown would be significant, so supporting whatever project moves forward is critical.

Chris asked about the DAO's role and Cadance suggested that the DAO should be an active partner in meetings with City staff and council. Hugh reiterated that the DAO can provide expertise and help guide the project toward some kind of result.

8.0 DISCUSSION: TEMPORARY SEASONAL CLOSURES

Cadance shared that the City has received inquiries about closing 4th Street again and is open to a temporary summer closure of the 500 block only. Cadance has shared with city staff that there would need to be activation of the closure area and marketing for it to be successful. There is no interest in pursuing the idea if business owners within the proposed closure area won't support it. It's unclear at this point if all the business owners would support it, but ideally the board will weigh in on whether and how the idea should move forward.

A discussion ensued that reiterated the need for all the businesses to support the idea, as well as the need for active and engaging programming throughout the duration of the closure. If the City can ensure the closure is done well, by bringing in programming, infrastructure and gaining the support and engagement of businesses, the committee agreed it could be worth the effort to get the program up and running.

Chris suggested the business owners be engaged with questions about how they would use the closure, whether they would invest, the preferred dates and what would make it more attractive to their business.

Cadance will put the item on the next board agenda as an action item to determine if the DAO should work with the City to solicit the feedback of business owners on the topic.

9.0 DISCUSSION: DRAFT VACANCY ORDINANCE

Hugh shared that early on it was an objective of the DAO for the City to establish a vacancy ordinance and that City staff have been working on a potential program which has the first read at council tomorrow. The DAO provided feedback on a draft in July 2023, though the feedback was not incorporated into the final draft being presented. The DAO also suggested the organization take an active role in supporting the program Downtown.

Concerns were raised about the ordinance being ambiguous and overly complicated and whether it would actually be revenue neutral to the City, as they need to hire three FTE to commence the program.

Cadance will speak with council members to reiterate the DAO's support of the program's concept while raising concern about the approach being taken, which might cause additional issues and ultimately not address the real problem.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hugh Futrell adjourned the meeting at 10:22am.