

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Downtown Committee
of
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation**

Via Video Conference Call & Live Stream Audio

**June 17, 2020
12:00 p.m.**

Committee Members Present:

Trina Burruss
James W. Comerford
Michael Finn
Darby Fishkin
Dottie Gallagher
Thomas R. Hersey, Jr.
Brendan R. Mehaffy (Committee Chair)
Kimberley Minkel
Darius G. Pridgen

Committee Members Absent:

[None]

Officers Present:

Peter M. Cammarata, President
Brandye Merriweather, Vice President
Mollie Profic, Treasurer
Kevin J. Zanner, Secretary
Atiqa Abidi, Assistant Treasurer

Guests Present: Rebecca Gandour, BUDC; Arthur Hall, BUDC; David A. Stebbins, Bisonwing Planning and Development, LLC; and Michael Schmand, Buffalo Place, Inc.

Roll Call; Meeting Procedures: The roll of Committee members was called at 12:03. A quorum of the Committee was present. Mr. Finn joined the meeting during the presentation of item 2.0.

The meeting was held via video/telephone conference in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 202.1, issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo on March 12, 2020. The meeting was also live-streamed to the general public and recorded. A transcript of the meeting will be made available at a later date.

- 1.0 Approval of Minutes of the May 20, 2020 Meeting** – The minutes of the May 20, 2020 meeting of the Downtown Committee were presented. Ms. Burruss made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hersey and unanimously carried (8-0-0).

- 2.0 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park – COB/BUDC Subgrant Agreement Amendment** – Ms. Merriweather presented her June 17, 2020 memorandum regarding a proposed amendment to the subgrant agreement between BUDC and the City of Buffalo. This amendment will provide for a subgrant from BUDC to the City in the amount of five million dollars for the construction of the pedestrian bridge. The amendment would also reduce the amount of the initial subgrant from

\$1,550,000 to \$800,000, with these funds reallocated among several project categories. In response to a question from Mr. Pridgen, Ms. Merriweather confirmed that the source of the grant funding is the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. Mr. Pridgen made a motion to recommend that the Board of Directors approve an amendment to the subgrant agreement to provide for a subgrant from BUDC to the City of Buffalo for the construction of the pedestrian bridge in the amount of \$5,000,000 and to change the allocation of initial subgrant funding from \$1,550,000 to \$800,000. The motion was seconded by Ms. Burruss and unanimously carried (9-0-0).

- 3.0 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park – GLC Funding Agreement** – Ms. Merriweather presented her June 17, 2020 memorandum regarding a proposed grant from the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) for the Centennial Park project. The initial grant is expected to be in the amount of \$1,000,000 and will be used to pay for design costs relating to shoreline restoration and improvements to the aquatic habitat at Centennial Park. There may be future grants available for park construction as well. This grant is sourced from federal funds and is subject to the formal approval of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In response to a question from Mr. Pridgen, Ms. Merriweather referenced the June 15th letter from GLC that was included in the meeting packet, noting that GLC’s issuance of this letter makes it very likely that formal approval will be obtained. Mr. Pridgen made a motion to recommend that the Board of Directors accept \$1,000,000 in grant funding from the GLC to pay for costs associated with the engineering and design of shoreline restoration improvements at Centennial Park and to authorize the President to execute a subrecipient agreement with GLC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hersey and unanimously carried (9-0-0).
- 4.0 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park – General Update** – Ms. Merriweather presented the Centennial Park project update. BUDC is working closely with its project team and its project partners to advance the project. Additional funding opportunities are being actively pursued. Maintenance and long-term sustainability continue to be important considerations as project design progresses. Mr. Stebbins commented on the status of a SEQRA and NEPA submission that will be presented to the Common Council. The project will reach 50% design completion within the next few weeks.
- 5.0 BBRP Loan Program – General Update and Discussion** – Ms. Merriweather reported that two developers have expressed interest in submitting proposals for BBRP loans. Submissions are due June 30th for this cycle of loan funding. The Alexandre Apartments loan was paid in full. Pursuit, BUDC’s underwriter, is reviewing a request from Sinatra & Company, the developer of the Phoenix Brewery Apartments project, for a long-term extension of its loan due to COVID-19 impacts. In response to a question from Ms. Gallagher, Ms. Merriweather stated that the developer previously received a one-year extension that was approved by the Board and a three-month extension that was approved by the Loan Committee. The developer is seeking an additional eight to twelve month extension as it seeks to close on permanent financing. This request would require Board approval.
- 6.0 COVID Impacts – OSP Small Business Reopening Efforts** –Mr. Mehaffy reported on a new program of Mayor Brown and the Office of Strategic Planning to assist with the re-opening of small businesses throughout the City of Buffalo. A new web page, “Reopen Buffalo” has been created as an online resource for businesses and the community. It will serve as a communication tool with small businesses. It is not intended to replicate sources of information available elsewhere. Mr. Mehaffy also reported on an initiative that will allow for streets and sidewalks to be utilized by businesses to make up for space that is lost within their businesses due to social distancing requirements.
- 7.0 COVID Impacts – NFTA Strategic Efforts Overview** – Ms. Minkel presented an update regarding the impact of COVID-19 on NFTA services and projects. COVID-19 has caused significant reductions in air passenger and bus/rail ridership counts. Closure of the U.S./Canada border has further impacted air travel, as many Canadians fly out of Buffalo. At one point, air passenger counts were down 95%. There has been an uptick in air travel recently, with numbers climbing to 1500 daily passengers. Mass transit ridership, which fell by 80% at one point, is now at 50% of pre-COVID-19 ridership numbers. Fee collection had been suspended but will resume later this month. The NFTA has continued to operate throughout the COVID-19 crisis. All capital projects have continued to

progress, including the airport terminal expansion project. The NFTA is following all regulatory guidelines, including social distancing for rail and bus services. Cleaning and sanitizing protocols have been implemented and with 1600 employees, the NFTA has had very few employees test positive for COVID-19.

- 8.0 Downtown Infrastructure – General Update** – Ms. Merriweather reported on continuing efforts to coordinate and limit the impact of infrastructure improvement work on businesses as they begin to re-open. The project remains on track, with the majority of construction to occur in the spring of 2021. Maintenance and long-term sustainability strategies continue to be emphasized.
- 9.0 Buffalo’s Race for Place – General Update** – Ms. Merriweather presented an update on the Race for Place initiative, noting that BUDC continues to coordinate with M&T and that M&T has resumed its construction work at One Seneca Tower. She also reported that the Ellicott Node project will be completed in the next few weeks. Mr. Mehaffy noted that a report from the Congress for New Urbanism conference held earlier this year is nearly finalized and will be issued soon.
- 10.0 Partner Updates** – Mr. Schmand presented a report on Buffalo Place matters. The Farmer’s Market will open on June 18th. The market will follow applicable social distancing requirements and Buffalo Place will be tracking pedestrian traffic. The concert series at Fountain Plaza has been cancelled this year due to COVID-19.
- 11.0 Adjournment** – There being no further business to come before the Downtown Committee, upon motion made by Mr. Hersey, seconded by Ms. Gallagher and unanimously carried, the June 17, 2020 meeting of the Downtown Committee was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin J. Zanner
Secretary