

## **Minutes from 4/11/2011 Lark St. BID Meeting**

Attendance: Matthew Badalucco, Jeff Gritsavage, RA DePrima, Mark Brogna, Collin Rost, Chris Schloss, Richard Conti, Elissa Halloran, Stephen O'Neill, Jerry Aumand, Luis Perez

Staff: Mary Spinelli, Sara-Becca Smith

The Meeting was called to order at 6:15

### Executive Committee Report:

Matthew Badalucco had nothing to report for the Executive Committee Report but did ask that another board meeting be scheduled for May, before Art on Lark. Due to Champagne on the Park being the first Thursday of May the meeting will need to be held later in the month.

### Executive Director Report:

Mary Spinelli reported that Scotts Miracle-Gro has selected Dana Park for a nationwide park revitalization program. They have already begun work in the park and have cut down 2 diseased trees. They will be planting 4 new trees, putting in flower beds, and possibly replacing the park benches. They are going to put together a Champagne on the Park Silent Auction package and will have a presence at the event.

The first Lark U forum was held February 22 at Trinity Church. The forum topic was an overview of business topics with panelists from the Community Loan Fund and the Legal Project. There were about 12 attendees some of which were current business owners. The forum was well received and offered attendees the opportunity to ask questions and network with each other and the panelists. The next forum is being planned and will focus on marketing, which is something that merchants and attendees indicated as a need. The first free legal clinic in March was attended by 2 people. The next legal clinic is scheduled for June 23. These programs have been offered with the help of Khamel Abdulai of the Legal Project and with the donation of the Trinity Church chapel.

The Champagne on the Park Honorary Committee brought in \$8,325 which is over the amount budgeted. Tickets sales are open and are slowly coming in. This year will have live models showcasing silent auction items, a passed signature drink, and six restaurants 2 of which are new (McGuires and the Wine Bar & Bistro). Duvel will be present at the event with beer and corresponding specialty glasses.

Spinelli has been working with Albany arts organizations in planning Art on Lark. Partners include Samson Contompasis of the Marketplace Gallery, Chip Fasciana, and the Youth FX program from Grand Street Community Arts. These partners are working with the BID to create a large scale mural on Hudson Ave, pop galleries with lectures, and youth film screenings. There will be two stages at Art on Lark; one featuring WEXT

and the other featuring performance art and more avant garde musical acts. Art on Lark does not yet have a cash sponsor at this time.

#### Business Retention & Recruitment:

Chris Schloss reported that the committee is going to focus on three core items: a District brochure with a map and business listings, a Lark Street VIP card, and a business retention and recruitment packet. Funding for the printing of the brochure is being sought from Key Bank through the Community Reinvestment Act. The VIP card will be a card that District residents can use at participating Lark Street businesses to receive special perks. It will not be a discount card and each business will determine the perk that they choose to offer. The cards and the chosen perk will be valid for one year. The committee has been discussing offering the card for purchase to people living outside the District. The business recruitment and retention packet was reviewed at the committee meeting in its rough draft form with Joe Rubino, the intern who has been working on it. Also mentioned at the meeting was starting an "Ambassador Program" where established Lark Street merchants could mentor, give advice and feedback to new businesses on the street.

Richard Conti reported that the fees for the sidewalk café ordinance were reduced so that the application fee will be \$50 and then each applicant will pay a fee based on square footage. The permit will be for a full 12 months from May 1 to April 30. Cafés that wrap around a building using two sides will require two separate applications. Permanent fixtures will not be allowed but so long as no damage is done to the sidewalk more permanent looking barricades are permitted.

#### Special Events Committee:

The committee had nothing to report but RA DePrima requested \$2,000 for a six time concert series in Dana Park. There were 2 pilot concerts in 2010. DePrima stated that businesses were not being asked for funding because of the additional taxes that they pay. The concerts would be for the benefit of residents and merchants. The two concerts in 2010 were free and were not advertised beyond posting information on the neighborhood listserves. The money requested would help to pay for a banner to be hung in the park with a listing of concert dates and to pay each band a small sum. The concerts could be tied into 1<sup>st</sup> Friday events and would capitalize on the revitalization work that has been taking place in Dana Park. Because of the location this concert series would have more connection to the street and one of the bars could be used as a rain location. Badalucco stated he would be willing to give \$500 from the BID but because the BID is in a position where it is necessary to raise money for any extra programs or activities undertaken that it would not be feasible to give \$2,000. Additional concerns to be addressed are liability issues and insurance coverage for the concerts, amplification of the music, already overtaxed staffing resources, traffic and noise concerns.

### Finance Committee:

Chris Schloss reported on the Community Development Block Grant Funds. A 20 percent reduction was made to our funds and across the board. The BID did not participate in the appeals process to address the funding cut. It was stated that it is possible that the amount cut from the funding could be different depending on the amount given by the federal government. Richard Conti stated that at a previous City Council meeting that a few members of the council spoke about reducing the BID's awarded amount and that after this meeting it was asked that board members and other BID supporters attend the next meeting but that it was not necessary to address the council. Schloss stated that he, along with Spinelli and Sara-Becca Smith, attended the following meeting as did Jeff Gritsavage. At the meeting, Gritsavage addressed the committee and stated that it would be okay to reduce the BID's funding so long as there was some time to adjust the BID's budget. Schloss also discussed a bank withdrawal on the KeyBank account statement that could not be reconciled and that no one with access to the account had any knowledge of and actions taken by Gritsavage relating to this transaction. Due to these actions, Schloss requested Gritsavage's resignation. Gritsavage declined.

### Quality of Life/Public Safety:

Richard Conti stated that there had been a meet and greet at the BID office in March to welcome the new Neighborhood Engagement Unit officers to the neighborhood and allow community members to meet the officers. The event was well attended with a few of the local news stations in attendance as well.

A neighborhood meeting is in planning to identify community members that are interested in joining a neighborhood watch program. Matthew Montesano will be presenting the "Introduction to Neighborhood Watch." Neighborhood Watch trainings will follow.

Conti reported that the next Public Safety meeting will be on April 29, 2011 and that the committee might return to meeting once a month. Montesano will continue to attend Lark Street BID board meetings but the Neighborhood Engagement Officers will attend the neighborhood association meetings.

A lighting survey of the south side of Madison Avenue from Lark to Willett was completed by Conti, Spinelli, and Montesano. The current "acorn" lights are not effective. Cleaning the lights was suggested as a solution since replacing the lights is expensive.

Neighborhood Night Out will be the first Tuesday in August this year. The APD has a blanket permit for the night so an event is going to be planned for Dana Park.

The meeting between the BID, Hackett Middle School, APD, parole, and other community stakeholders was reviewed. School officials informed attendees that there are

a number of programs in place for the kids to help alleviate issues and that Hackett students are not the only students in the area that are causing issues. No resolutions were agreed upon but it was acknowledged that APD needs to have a stronger presence and work with the school to better the situation.

Environmental Committee:

RA DePrima reported that DGS removed the Big Belly that was located outside of Amazing Wok because of jamming issues. Other Big Bellies have been jammed as well with pizza boxes and other items of garbage. It was asked if there are any ideas for resolving these problems. DePrima spoke to John DeJohn about asking his staff to keep their areas neater when putting out their boxes and waste. Spinelli and Badalucco reported that the Central BID clean team has begun the 3<sup>rd</sup> street cleaning day which is scheduled on Sundays. DePrima stated that three bike racks had been found. Park South requested 16 back racks through the BID and through the same CDTA program as was used for the bike racks on Lark Street. The request was approved for the racks.