

Downtown Business Alliance of Wilmington March 10, 2014 Meeting Minutes

**Mission: To unite, promote & support downtown Wilmington businesses, merchants & Commercial Property Owners**

Present: Jim Bitto – Network Realty, Mike & Joan Loch – Crescent Moon, Diane Upton & Doug Springer—Wilmington Water Tours, Bobby Hamelburg – Finkelstein's, Mary & Doug Erickson – C.W. Worth House, Lynn Adkins – Perkeo, Malissa Mashburn – Perkeo, Janet Pearson – Park Wilmington, Bill McClanahan – Enchanted Realm, Jessica Dixon – Park Wilmington, Merrimon Kennedy – New Elements, George Gardner – Grace UMC, Carl Marshburn – Cape Fear River Boats, Chris Andrews – Cool Wilmington, Valerie Bahena – Groove Jet Salon, Deb Conard—Port City Executive, Ray Worrell—Slice of Life, Randy Shackelford—DMAD Tours, Kristi Sullivan—BB&T, Peggy Mahan—Occassions, Lauren McKenzie—Adam Shay CPA, Aaron—Ziggy's, Ellie Craig—FSB, Ed Wolverton—WDI, Maggie Dowicyan—DBA Intern

Meeting called to order: 6:00 pm

The meeting was held at Perkeo Wine Bistro

Introduce the owners of Perkeo and the meeting attendees

Joan gave an update on the free trolley initiative between Bring it Downtown and Wave Transit. The purpose is to increase the trolleys usage, unify downtown, and encourage park & ride downtown. The trolleys will start to run on the last Sunday in March. They will be clean and feature new graphics of a map of downtown and lettering that are visually appealing and explicitly say "Free Trolley." Each trolley will have a bell to ring at each of their ten stops. Only one trolley will be in use at a time, but the goal is to use all three in the future. We are asking business owners to encourage their customers to use the free trolley service. New ¼ fold maps will be available for distribution with the trolley route on them as well. This initiative will make traveling and visiting downtown easier as well as boost revenue for the downtown parking decks. Contact Joan with any feedback and/or questions.

Valarie discussed her initiative with a full business directory for downtown that will include business owners'/managers' personal information. It is important to meet neighbors and come together for SEO, banking, advertising, etc. advice. There will be a quarterly "Meet Your Neighbor" event, the next one will be held in April. Only people who have signed up to be included on the directory will have access to the information, and a copy will be given a copy for emergencies. This is a great communication tool for businesses downtown.

Jim talked about the sidewalk beautification, including the wrought iron fence on the corner of Front & Market Streets that surrounds plants to prevent them from harm. The city plans to have more of these fences around trees and vegetation downtown to enhance the look of sidewalks. This initiative began a couple of years ago, but we need to get a quote from Hanover Iron Works. These fences will only be 2 or 3-foot sections to keep cost low. Cigarette receptacles are available on every trashcan for disposal, but can we get small receptacles close to vegetation to prevent litter?

Chris wants people to see the value of becoming a DBA member by seeing the changes that the organization can make, so DBA has to do more physical things for people to see, such as more beautification projects downtown. The 2<sup>nd</sup> & Market Street parking lot needs to be fixed up to be more attractive. DPAC has some money to devote to the project, but Chris and Ziggy's By The Sea owner, Aaron, are planning a fundraising concert for this project to begin ASAP. These events bring in business by attracting people to the downtown area, so business owners should take advantage.

Jim gave an update on the gang violence initiative. People outside Wilmington are becoming concerned with the gang reputation that has started to develop, and the city is doing whatever is necessary to get the issue under control. The final gang violence forum involved youth talking

about violence from their perspective. The city and Sterling Cheatham are working on a final report, coming out at the end of the month, with recommendations for the city to fix this issue.

Finally, DBA received an update on the MSD/BID to fix the Water Street parking deck. One recommendation was for 20,000 sq. ft. of retail space, up to 200 apartments and 600+ parking spaces.

WDI has been requested by city council to study a MSD with the goal of having a recommendation within a year from now.