

Downtown Business Alliance of Wilmington February 3, 2014 Meeting Minutes

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

Present: Jim Bitto – Network Realty, Mike Loch – Treasurer, Diane Upton—Wilmington Water Tours, Doug Springer—Wilmington Water Tours, Bobby Hamelburg – Finkelstein’s, Ashly Johnson – Lanier Parking Solutions, Doug Erickson – C.W. Worth House, Bill Graham – consultant, Lynn Adkins – Perkeo, Malissa Mashburn – Perkeo, Janet Pearson – Park Wilmington, Bill McClanahan – Enchanted Realm, John Crawford – Park Wilmington, Michael Goodwin – Lanier Parking, Jessica Dixon – Park Wilmington/Lanier, Kass Fincher – ILM Deals, Merrimon Kennedy – New Elements, George Gardner – Grace UMC, Carl Marshburn – Cape Fear River Boats, Chris Andrews – Cool Wilmington, Kelsey Gibbs – The Wonder Shop, Valerie Bahena – Groove Jet Salon, Maggie Dowicyan—DBA Intern

Meeting called to order: 6:00 pm
The meeting was held at Delphina Dos

Read minutes from 1/6/14 (ACTION: motion to approve minutes at next meeting)

Bring it downtown explanation, task force to market downtown

Funds from city, \$30,000

Any marketing promotions have to include that city parking decks offer one hour of free parking

Ed Wolverton put together a new memorandum of understanding

Membership update by Maggie

Introductions around the room

Introduction of new downtown businesses: Port City Cheese Steak Company, ILM Deals, Pineapple Studios, Bakery 105, Perkeo Wine Bistro, Courtyard Marriott, and The Courtyard Marriott.

First order of business:

Jim gave an update on the lighting and safety efforts made downtown, including a recap of what was discussed at last month’s meeting. All of the lights were retrofitted for LEDs in January and are connected to one electric meter to get data to know how much money is being saved. These lights give off whiter lights and give off the appearance of having a higher light value. Ed Wolverton says it seems brighter in the area, and they make huge difference in the park and on the street as well. The 300 block of N Front Street was also retrofitted. We need feedback because the city has the ability to make the same changes throughout all of downtown. Terry Espy commented that the average lifespan of the new lights are 20 years, so savings over time will be astronomical. The merchants association has asked the city to change certain blocks that seem more critical than others.

The public restrooms downtown need improvement, which was brought up at the last meeting. Carl Marshburn said that he has been talking to city about the restrooms issue for 25 years. The restrooms by the visitor booth or in the parking deck are not user friendly. We need to insist that the city remodel the bathrooms. The city keeps saying it’s too expensive, but we can’t afford not to fix them. As an organization we need to pick issues that matter to merchants of downtown Wilmington, this is one that matters

ACTION: Reach out to the city about the restrooms, at least to paint and fix fixtures.

The parking deck restrooms are taken care of, but they're not user friendly, although the attendants do their best to make them user friendly. There has been vandalism in the bathrooms. If we want to be a class A city, we need class A bathrooms; they need to reflect the city. This isn't an easy problem to solve, but there are homeless people sleeping in the restrooms and it can cause merchants to lose their sales.

ACTION: reach out to city council members and come up with specific recommendations to be done. Carl will be in charge of this project.

The city has plans to redo Riverfront Park, but the efforts are delayed because the Coast Guard hasn't done the assessment for structure. The remodel can't start until after Riverfest. Also, the lighting in Riverwalk area is very poor and needs improvement as well

ACTION: follow up with city on this?

Jim thanked Park Wilmington for attending the meeting. Park Wilmington got a 3-year contract for city parking, and John Crawford is available for questions. If there are any concerns, the office can be contacted directly, and they are happy to help. The parking decks will begin getting pressure washed starting tonight, and it is a two-week process that will happen overnight. Levels will need to be closed off, but a schedule of which will be closed will be posted once there is a definite schedule. An aspect of the new contract is the customer service, which includes a baseline survey for parking attendants, office, lights, etc. These will be looked at every 6 months, and employees can earn a bonus for good reviews. If someone is not receiving fair treatment from the parking attendants, tell the office right away and they will look into it. The idea of providing coupons on the back of a parking ticket can be looked into and mentioned to the city. Also, the idea of adding more security cameras can be brought up to the city because there are blind spots.

Doug and Bill Graham introduced the Renaissance Wilmington Group, and their proposal for the advanced iBeacon technology that can be used for tourists on the Riverwalk. There will be more details to come later on.

Finally, DBA will hold its meetings on the second Monday of each month from now on, beginning March 10th.