

GPA General Membership Meeting

Thursday, September 21 2017

In Attendance: Dan and Pat Miller, Tom and Maureen Lee, Joanne Clement, Mark and Glenna Preradovic, Paul Durrenberger, Paul and Sue Kuester, Bill Briska,

Secretaries Report: Bill Briska moved to approve the minutes of the August meeting. It was seconded by Glenna Preradovic and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report: Pat Miller reported that with our CDs and checking account we have a total of \$110,789.13 in the bank. We are expecting a check for approximately \$7200 from Jewel for the Housewalk tickets they sold. Bill Briska moved to approve the treasurer's report. It was seconded by Glenna Preradovic and the motion passed unanimously.

Guest Speaker: Dan introduced Jennifer Fukala the new Executive Director of the Downtown Neighborhood Association. Dan reminded the group that Jennifer is well known to GPA as she has been on the house walk committee for several years doing public relations, and marketing. She also set up a survey for people to rate the house walk and has been a docent. She has been a neighborhood leader in the Near West neighborhood, being the president of the organization for five years. Jennifer explained to the group that DNA is in the middle of revamping, regrouping and rebooting as an organization. There has not been Executive Director since January. 80% of their funding (\$180,000/year budget) comes from the city with the remainder coming from grants and membership. Jennifer explained that there is a need for economic development in downtown and the responsibility has been given to DNA.

Jennifer has been a month on the job. She has been assessing how to move forward. They will have some of the same events and some new. There will be a pub crawl and winter wonderland. Businesses like the customer flow from events. Jennifer wants to promote a vibrant downtown. A membership structure is being revamped and will be relaunched this winter. It will be more inclusive model where core services will be available to everyone within the center city district. The group is looking into sponsorships, partnerships, and people that support the mission. Jennifer is looking for opportunities to partner with surrounding neighborhoods to foster relationships. She plans to meet with groups to brainstorm. She informed the group that they have three employees – a bookkeeper an events manager and part-time marketing for the harvest market.

Bill had an observation for Jennifer. He suggested she look at the vital active downtowns like Oak Park. Look at their surrounding demographics and the geography of the area surrounding downtown. They have a lot of people that have a 2 to 4 block easy walk to downtown. In Elgin our westside is just beyond the walking distance. North of the library is vacant. With 110,000 population the downtown is stretched. There are

voids in our downtown like the Butera parking lot and the Villa corridor. We need to be aware of our geography. Neighborhood kids can't walk to the new little ice cream store on State Street. Jennifer added that they will do a ribbon-cutting for the store and that if a business does it right they don't have to worry about customer flow. People will come there like they are to the ice cream store. We need to have more working dialogue with successful businesses.

Dan Miller suggested that they urge the city to bring back the façade improvement grant program.

Glenna mentioned that the benches on the bridges invite vagrants. Paul noted that he has seen the benches full with people eating their ice cream from the store. Jennifer added that the city does have a new nuisance abatement ordinance to deal with the homeless people downtown but it is a challenge implementing it. With Nick's liquors closed there's been a major shift of troubled people. There have been some changes along the river with guardrails and cleared out brush at the Metra parking lot. It detracts vagrants from hanging out there. Jennifer mentioned there is a meeting this month with city leadership regarding the homeless.

Pat Miller added that we used to have a city manager that had a rapport with Metra getting them to make many positive changes including the new National Street station.

We need to hold Metra accountable for keeping the Chicago Street station clean.

Pat added that she thinks that downtown should be included in the preservation ordinance. Design review needs to be required for changes made to downtown buildings. The new windows in Keeney's old store on Douglas and the taking the chimneys off the Knights of Columbus building on Villa are prime examples of why we need design review for downtown. It's a crime if someone invests in their building only to have the building next door trashed because of no design guidelines. Jennifer added that she is in favor of it in the she plans to campaign for it. She said that there are three groups in the residence business owners and renters. We need to find out how to meet all their needs.

In discussing the tower building Paul Durenberger mentioned that we must get the clock back. Glenna added that they have to take the paint off the clock. She thinks we need a white tablecloth restaurant the building. Jennifer mentioned that the plans call for residence on the first floor and an office for the building. There will be 45 – 1 and 2 bedroom apartments with a gym on the top floor. They have started replacing windows. Jennifer mentioned that they are looking into decorative board ups for vacant buildings downtown that don't detract from the streetscape. They have a program like that in Humboldt Park and in Milwaukee.

House walk committee

Pat Miller said that she has some fabulous news to share. The attendance was 2167 paid and complementary. Last year we had 1600. The gross income this year was \$39,069.95. It is hard to compare it with other years as we increased the ticket price. Sponsorship income was about the same as last year. We had expenditures of about \$10,500. Jewell will be sending a check for \$7215 for the tickets sold there. A lot of people like the changes we made to the presentation of the Wing mansion. After a call for any new business brought no response, Paul Kuester made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Paul Durrenberger. The motion passed unanimously. Respectfully submitted,
Dan Miller, acting secretary