

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ST. ALBANS CITY DOWNTOWN BOARD
& BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ST. ALBANS FOR THE FUTURE
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17TH, 2025

APPROVED

Members of the Board Present: IN PERSON: Maureen Brown, Chair; Emily Richards; Vice Chair; Jackie Hawkins, Treasurer; Debra Morton; Shannon Smith; K.F. Samandari; Jeremy Read; Donna Howard; Valdemar Garibay; Ashley Cleare VIA ZOOM: Lauren Bode

Members of the Board Absent: Sharon Holcomb

Members of City Staff Present: Arleigh Young, Coordinator of Planning & Development; Katie Haseltine, Minute Taker

Members of the Public Present: Bobby Powell, Jennifer Dinatale

1. Begin Recording and Call to Order - M. Brown calls meeting to order at 6:13 PM.
 - a. Attendance and introductions - introductions are made.
 - b. Public Comment on items not on the agenda - None
 - c. Additions or Deletions to Agenda - None
2. SAFF Financial Report
 - a. A. Young does not have a ton to report, but notes the following:
 - i. Downtown Dollars - some Christmas purchases, so that has gone up
 - ii. T-Shirt Fund - above the red, so that is good
 - iii. Vibrancy Fund - looks high, but Hallmark in the Park items will come out, and bring that down.
 - iv. Kingman Fest - they are starting to fundraise, so some increases there.
3. Discuss events/programs/committees
 - a. Events
 - i. Downtown Holiday Raffle
 1. E. Richards thinks its been going well. Some businesses have reached out for more tickets. There have been more online submissions this year than previous years. A couple businesses haven't had any full cards submitted (Holiday Inn and Boho Baby), so they haven't been able to draw a winner from the store and spotlight them.
 2. D. Howard asks if the Ace Hardware situation got sorted out. A. Young explains that there was some confusion with store staff on customers who wanted to participate in the raffle, and the possibility that cards were being thrown out. A. Young reached out to the store manager and he was going to reiterate with his staff what the raffle was and how it worked.
 3. E. Richards explains that next Saturday 12/27 is the last day of the raffle.
 4. S. Smith is curious what restaurants are participating. E. Richards shares that it is Mimmo's, The Drake, Tatro's, Black Radish/14th Star, Twigg's, Nelly's, and Kaiju Kitchen. S. Smith was curious how they would be recognized since they also don't get a ton of cards turned into them. E. Richards explains that they plan to do a draw on Christmas Day from the online submissions and they were planning to spotlight those businesses in that drawing post on social media.
 - ii. Festival of Trees
 1. A. Young thought it was terrific. J. Dinatale felt like there were more people than last year. A. Young agreed. J. Dinatale also thought that extending the bonfire, especially since it was so cold, kept people longer, and the food vendors helped as well.
 2. J. Dinatale adds a couple other highlights

- i. The cheerleaders were collecting names for cards to Santa and wondered if those have been sent out. A. Young is going to check with them but notes that they have historically been pretty on top of their projects so is sure the cards have been mailed in time to arrive for Christmas. Overall, they have been really helpful in volunteering their time.
 - ii. Joe Beaudry was Santa and was so amazing, even staying after all the kids dwindled out. He walked around to mingle with the crowd. J. Read believes he was recognized by the Rotary as an outstanding citizen, and he also umpires little league games.
 - iii. One of snow globes did blow out. A. Young confirms and that it didn't stop the kids from playing with it.
 - iv. Running of the Bells had pretty low attendance, but made sense being that it was 10 below. The time was pushed up last minute, so there were some people who missed it unexpectedly. S. Smith wonders why the school sports teams don't participate anymore. E. Richards notes that some of the winter sports teams are typically just finishing tryouts shortly before that event and could be part of the reason.
 - 3. A. Young shares an AI resource that gathered demographic data on event attendance. According to MobileData, approximately 3,600 people attended, along with a heat map illustrating where attendees came from. A. Young adds that it is a paid service and has heard it can be costly; however, it is an interesting new tool for tracking event engagement and evaluating whether events drive traffic to downtown businesses.
 - 4. A. Young adds that the Gala had similar attendance to last year, but the movie was more attended than previous years.
- iii. Last Night Fireworks Canceled
- 1. A. Young reports that responses on Front Porch Forum and Facebook were divided, with a combination of understanding for the cancellation, suggestions for alternative programming, and negative reactions.
 - 2. D. Howard suggests that if fireworks are to continue in the future, hosting them during a warmer time of year may be more successful, allowing people to make more of an evening out of the event.
 - 3. A. Young expresses interest in hearing from local restaurants to determine whether the cancellation impacts their business on New Year's Eve.
 - 4. A. Young also notes there were several constructive ideas in the Facebook comments, particularly suggestions for a more family-friendly event, and believes there is potential to explore those options further.
 - 5. A. Young did price out a laser light show, which was estimated at approximately \$10,000 (similar to the fireworks), and a drone show was even more costly. B. Powell suggests fire jugglers or a more carnival themed option. M. Brown recalls similar entertainment at the Eclipse event, which A. Young confirms included stilt walkers at a cost of approximately \$500 for the event.
 - 6. B. Powell had thought about fire jugglers and related performers as an idea. M. Brown recalls having that at the Eclipse event. A. Young confirms they had stilt walkers and they were only \$500 for the event.
 - 7. S. Smith highlights that organizing two large events within a short timeframe requires significant effort and should also be taken into consideration.
- iv. New Events to possibly support: Uniting For Community, 250 Semiquincentennial with SAM, Downtown West Fest
- 1. Uniting for Community - B. Powell shares it is an event he started last year with Jhon & Jody (organizers of the tattoo convention) that raises money for Spectrum Youth Services. This year it is just him and Jhon organizing it. A. Young shares that Community Arts partnered with them last year, which is why she wanted to bring the conversation back to the board, noting it is like a mini tattoo convention. B. Powell shares that they have 17 vendors signed up this year (more

- than last year) and 6-7 tattoo artists (had 5 last year). Additionally, they did a hard stop and transitioned to music last year. This year they are going to switch to doing 8 times lost and having music throughout the event, noting they are looking at more electronic/digital music.
2. 250 Semiquincentennial - A. Young shares that Trish Denton at SAM is putting together an event, and is looking to the Downtown Board for some programming support as well as potentially some monetary support. A. Young adds that Bay Day will still be happening so they won't do anything too large to interfere with that. S. Smith asks about monetary support for non-Downtown events and if it opens the door to that conversation again about how the board can support events equitably. J. Read asks if A. Young could invite Trish to a meeting to talk to the board more about their mission and what their plans are for this. A. Young will do that.
 3. Downtown West Fest - A. Young met with Erin at Food City, reflecting that there is a whole arm of Downtown that lives between Food City and Beverage Mart/Holy Angels that sees much less traction, largely due to limited walkability. He expressed interest in promoting this area by hosting an event in the Food City parking lot/lawn area, tentatively titled *Downtown West Fest*, as a way to draw people to that end of downtown. The event is being considered for late June. A. Young wanted to bring the idea to the Board for discussion and consideration.
- v. Business Socials 2026
1. A. Young is thinking ahead to next year, noting she'd like to shoot for quarterly events, meaning 4 throughout the year. This past year, they had 3 successful social events. Cody, owner of The Lofted Office, would be interested in hosting one. Thirsty Thrifters would also be interested, after settled into her new place on Kingman Street (used to be RPM Logos, then maybe a real estate office).
 2. J. Dinatale asks what happens at them. A. Young shares it is like a mixer, with heavy appetizers sponsored by the Downtown board and a cash bar, where they invite businesses to come together. She notes it is a way for everyone to get together, meet each other, and get to know what they are all about and build the Downtown culture.
- b. Programs
- c. Fundraising/Appeals
- i. Logo Shirt adjustment and release
 1. A. Young explains they took the date off the design and it has been released. They are available to purchase online.
 2. E. Richards wonders if as a way to boost advertising for it over the next week in conjunction with the Holiday Raffle, noting that maybe anyone who purchases a shirt gets an entry in the raffle. The board loves the idea and is in support. A. Young will look into the logistics.
 - ii. Taylor Park Coffee Table Book
 1. D. Howard shares that she has sold about 50 copies so far. A. Young adds that any other businesses who would like sell them can come to her and she can get them some copies.
- d. Marketing
- i. The Point FM offer
 1. A. Young connected with someone who works with Montpelier and they've provided a proposal to the board. S. Smith is curious about the events proposed, and if they'd be contributing funds towards it, noting they are not specifically Downtown Events (Vermont Maple Festival, Kingman Fest, Where's Waldo, Church Street Festival), revisiting the conversation of equitably supporting non-Downtown supported events.
 2. J. Dinatale asks if this would be similar to offers from other radios. E. Richards wondered the same, noting it would be nice to get some proposals from other radios to feel it out. A. Young agrees, and notes it was interesting to see an annual proposal that covers many events over the course of a year, when historically they've just piecemealed advertising as it comes up. Some board members feel that events like Vermont Maple Festival and Kingman Fest don't necessarily need help advertising.

3. A. Cleare joins meeting around 7:00 pm.

4. L. Bode would be really interested in an apples to apples comparison and adds that she isn't sure they should take out Maple Festival and Kingman Fest since they do draw a large crowd and already have a following. She adds that other communities have concert series and festivals, but St. Albans is the home of the Maple Fest, and feels they should want to capitalize on that and getting "St. Albans" said as much as possible to increase visitation. Lastly, L. Bode is curious how efficacy could be tracked with this type of advertising.
- ii. Business & Marketing Proposal; Madison Lamothe
 1. A. Young shares a proposal from Madison Lamothe, who is the Police Chief's daughter, and lives part-time in St. Albans and part-time in California. She highlights elements of the proposal, including influencer marketing, which, while somewhat nontraditional, is widely used and increasingly popular. The proposal also includes advertising expansion opportunities, specifically citing Amtrak and Greyhound advertising as ways to extend reach beyond existing markets, which the board has discussed many times in the past.
 2. S. Smith knows that Afterglow hired someone this year for this type of approach and it was very successful for them. She will inquire who that was and share with A. Young as another option.
- e. SACA Update
 - i. Big Chair Replacement - plans for the old chair?
 1. A. Young shares that at the last meeting, where they didn't have a quorum, S. Holcomb had suggested that the board pay John for his work. The board unanimously agrees but isn't sure how much. A. Young will ask him and see what he says.
 2. Plans for the Old Chair - D. Howard wonders if it was decided what to do with the old chair. A. Young shares that is still an ongoing conversation. E. Richards concern was if it was safe to auction off since it is deteriorating. A. Young does believe a disclaimer could be made about its structural integrity, and encourages the board to continue brainstorming ideas.
 3. Chair Affair / Downtown Broodhaha - S. Smith wonders if a similar event will happen. A. Young would like to and a barn quilt event is mentioned. S. Smith recalls they had previously discussed doing cornhole boards. A. Young builds on that idea, thinking there could be a tournament and have it tie into the Downtown West Fest. A. Young also thinks the tech center might be able to build the boards.
 4. Murals - M. Brown quickly highlights the murals that went up near Catalyst and Red House Sweets. A. Young confirms and adds that local artists Nicole Gadouas and Dee Christie did them. She adds that it kind of all happened a little under her radar, and had wished she was part of the conversation.
 - f. Social Media/Website
 - i. Website Redesign Update
 1. A. Young shares her and Chip Sawyer are meeting with London Middlebury on Friday to do a deep dive and pick it apart as best they can. After any edits are made from that meeting, the link will be shared with the board to look and click around to provide any last suggestions. A. Young hopes it will go live early in the new year. London Middlebury did apologize for the delay, noting some personal things came up, but A. Young was understanding and has been impressed with all of their work throughout this process.
 - g. Organization
 - i. Open Seats and positions for next year
 1. A. Young shares that Bobby, Jen and Cody have all applied to the board. There are 3 seats open and City Council will vote at their January meeting to decide on the new members. Ashley Cleare and Jackie Hawkins will be stepping down.
 - ii. Vibrancy Grant - Wayfinding, Fireworks, Murals, what's the priority
 1. A. Young shares they had slated \$11,000 for the purchase of an artificial tree and J. Dinatale was not in favor of going that route for Hallmark in the Park and the tree lighting, so that leaves

a good chunk of money to use towards something else. J. Dinatale explains that the City was fortunate this year to receive a donated tree from a resident on Berkley Terrace, which was conveniently located and required minimal transport to the park. She also notes that Breezy Acres shared on social media that they have a tree available they would be willing to part with, and plans to follow up with them in the new year. J. Dinatale had also thought about reaching out to other tree farms to identify and reserve select trees for future years, allowing them time to grow larger before using them.

2. A. Young wondered if the board might want to use some of the funding on Summer Concert Series to secure a couple bigger ticket bands or using some of it for the Downtown West Fest.
3. D. Howard wonders about a mural/painting to say "Welcome to St. Albans" in the alleyway from the parking garage to Main Street.
4. L. Bode shares an idea about creating an interactive walking path that encourages movement community members. A. Young thinks that could also connect with the Tiny Art idea they've mentioned in the past. D. Howard stems on this and notes they've also discussed a walking history tour. A. Cleare shares it could be even simpler and have a webpage to guide people around, noting that she has done one twice in New Orleans that was really well done.
5. J. Dinatale recalls a board being up near the Fountain in the park that explained the history of it.
6. A. Young asks the board to put some thought into this and bring ideas back for the January meeting. J. Dinatale asks for confirmation on the funding amount. A. Young shares it is \$7,000 - \$10,000.

iii. 2026 Meeting Schedule

1. M. Brown opens discussion on the meeting. A. Young thought it would be a good idea to review it ahead of time and think about combining the November and December meeting like they've done for the past two years. E. Richards shares that a Wednesday is her preference. E. Richards and D. Howard suggest 12/16 for the combined November and December meeting. All are in agreement of that.

h. Other - None.

4. Other Business

a. Approval of Minutes 9/23/2025 & 10/28/2025

- i. E. Richards motions to approve both 9/23/2025 and 10/28/2025 minutes as presented. D. Howard seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

b. Next meeting January 27, 2026 at 6 PM

- i. M. Brown confirms next meeting.

c. Other - None.

5. Adjourn. M. Brown adjourns meeting at 7:46 PM.