

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, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD, 2025

APPROVED

Members of the Board Present: IN PERSON: Maureen Brown, Chair; Emily Richards; Vice Chair; Shannon Smith; Debra Morton; K.F. Samandari; Jeremy Read; Donna Howard; Valdemar Garibay

Members of the Board Absent: Lauren Bode; Jackie Hawkins; Secretary/Treasurer; Sharon Holcomb; Ashley Cleare

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

Members of the Public Present: Jenn Dinatale

1. Begin Recording and Call to Order - M. Brown calls meeting to order at 6:05 PM.
 - a. Attendance and introductions
 - i. A. Young introduces J. Dinatale. She has helped with Hallmark in the Park in the past and has some interest in joining the committee. The rest of the board members introduce themselves.
 - b. Public Comment on items not on the agenda - None.
 - c. Additions or Deletions to Agenda - D. Howard brought updated pricing information for the photo book.
2. SAFF Financial Report
 - a. A. Young does not have a ton to report, but notes the following:
 - i. Festival of Trees - small gains, not as ideal as they'd like
 - ii. Unencumbered - holding strong, will talk about some thoughts on spending money there
 - iii. Summer Concert Series - J. Read asks what the turnout for those events are. A. Young explains that it has been very successful. There has been an addition of food trucks, plus 14th Star pours their beers and often Green Mountain Kettle Corn is there selling popcorn.
3. Discuss events/programs/committees
 - a. Events
 - i. Downtown Art & Sidewalk Sales - October 2-4, 2025
 1. A. Young has about 5 vendors signed up. D. Howard will have some authors present. A. Young has been talking with the merchants downtown to spread the word and try and get a good showing of merchants. A. Young adds that there will be a car show happening on October 4th and Church Street will be closed off. She is hopeful that will pair nicely together.
 - ii. Spooky Saturday - 10/25/2025
 1. A. Young has flyers for people to take and spread the word. D. Howard proposes for future years to consider doing a banner to promote it. Some committee members feel that the event is well attended without it and given it being a one-day event, the banner isn't really needed.
 - iii. Northwest Nightmares 10/27 - Downtown Dollars
 1. A. Young explains that the group reached out to ask about a sponsorship or donation for some prizes to give away at the film festival. She asked them to provide more detail on that and they suggested donating a \$50 downtown dollars card.
 2. S. Smith recalls having this discussion in the past about opening that door of approving donations and then having to choose who you donate to. D. Howard wonders if there is a way to open that door and offer half off downtown dollars, so the board is kicking in in some way.

- On another note, D. Howard does say she (The Eloquent Page) would be happy to sponsor a prize for Northwest Nightmares.
3. V. Garibay had reached out for the Calcutta event (St. Albans Museum) and wasn't sure what the protocol was and didn't know this had been a larger conversation so is glad it came up.
 4. D. Howard wonders if it might be a good idea to put a note of some sort on the website to explain the Downtown Board's "policy" on donations.
- b. Programs
 - c. Fundraising/Appeals
 - i. VT Clothing options
 1. A. Young is waiting on pricing for that and will report back to the board when she has that.
 - d. Marketing
 - i. Meta Verified
 1. A. Young spoke with other Downtown staff in Vermont about this and Rutland does the "Business Plus Plan" for \$36/month. The main takeaway of that plan is that you get access to customer service to have immediate support related to your site when you need it. They have noticed that it gets them seen a bit more.
 2. D. Howard asks what London Middlebury (website designers) think about that. A. Young will make a note to ask them about it.
 - ii. Front Porch Forum Plans
 1. A. Young just joined FPF as "Downtown St. Albans" and shares some plan options. They are currently registered under the free plan, but wanted to bring the plan options to the board to see if they'd like to pay a small amount to have more ability to post.
 2. D. Howard motions to approve the Standard Nonprofit Plan for \$108/year (\$1/month savings when locking in for the year). E. Richards seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
 - iii. Great Eastern Radio - Holiday Ad Special
 1. A. Young shares that Great Eastern Radio came to her about running a holiday promotion. This would require 9 business to sign up at \$249/each. Then, the Downtown Board would commit to \$1,300 to lock in that lower price for the merchants.
 2. E. Richards feels that if they can get 9 businesses signed on, then it would behoove the Downtown Board to cover the \$1,300.
 3. D. Howard motions to conditionally approve spending \$1,300 on the holiday radio promotion if they are able to get 9 business committed. S. Smith seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
 - e. SACA Update
 - i. Big Chair Replacement - cost and who
 1. S. Holcomb got A. Young in touch with Bruce, who was the original Big Chair creator. He said that he could make some minor adjustments, such as less incline to the seat, more space in the slats for painting, and a step to the front. The cost would be \$600 and that would include delivery and a whitewash base color to it.
 2. E. Richards motions to approve spending \$600 on the new chair. D. Howard seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
 - ii. Tiny Art Downtown
 1. A. Young would like to table this until the next meeting.
 - f. Social Media/Website
 - i. Website Redesign Update
 1. A. Young shares that the sub-committee will be meeting on Wednesday October 1st and then from there a beta-site will be shared for board members to peruse and provide feedback on.
 - g. Organization
 - i. Downtown Coalition Update and hiring with Preservation Trust - formal vote
 1. A. Young explains that the designated Downtowns meet monthly and this coalition has been created to help the Downtowns have a voice at the Statehouse. The last two years, they have

brought someone on for 3 months, who was a previous Downtown Director, and acted as their go-between at the legislature in how to best have a voice at the table. This year, it was proposed to have her work year-round, rather than during the legislative session, so that work can always be actively pursuing current events and concerns.

2. A. Young explains that it is a \$1,000 yearly commitment, and each downtown has to agree to a 3-year commitment contract. M. Brown asks if this is a time-sensitive approval. A. Young had emailed the committee to get “yay” or “nay” responses regarding this and most people said yes, but she does need to get formal approval and vote from the board.
3. D. Howard formally motions to approve spending \$1,000/year for 3 years for the Downtown Director position in conjunction with the coalition. S. Smith seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

ii. Downtown Retreat takeaways

1. A. Young shares some thoughts from the Downtown Retreat:
 1. Yearly Sponsorships - they put on many events a year and it is often tapping the same tree (businesses) asking for support. Newport has started offering yearly sponsorships and that sponsorship donation is spread out among various events. A. Young shares a recent example with Stewart’s Shops thinking they had already donated to an event and in turn, asked that A. Young send a list of all events so that they can choose which ones they’d like to support. S. Smith shares some concern that it might feel different to merchants to commit to a larger amount at once versus the small asks throughout the year. E. Richards would be curious to know how Newport went about promoting this and how that was received among their merchants. A. Young will reach out.
 2. Transformational Strategies - A. Young explains that topic was about finding what we do well and building on them. Moving into the next year, A. Young would like to really focus on finding what St. Albans “hook” is and what brings people here. S. Smith recalls that there has been discussion on doing work out of state and wonders if that has moved forward at all. A. Young has been trying to find out more information and contacts, but hasn’t had much traction. She adds that she could reach out to the VT Chamber of Commerce and Tourism to see if they have any advice on how to move that forward. A. Young appreciates S. Smith’s perspective but would also like to maintain some focus on the local population with the increased concerns of safety in Burlington (Chittenden County) and more draw to St. Albans and the Franklin county area. M. Brown wonders about advertising on local channels like WCAX, noting that VNA is all over that and wonders what they pay. D. Morton wonders about advertising at the movie theater in Essex. A. Young will look into both of those potential advertising platforms. D. Howard notes that advertising in January/February can be less costly than advertising during the holiday months.

iii. Changing membership - Open Seats & New Treasurer/Secretary needed.

1. A. Young reminds that Nicole had stepped down and D. Morton stepped into a full seat. A. Young believes that J. Hawkins, A. Cleare, and S. Holcomb may also be stepping down, which would leave 4 open seats, and an opening for a Treasurer/Secretary.
2. C. Sawyer was curious if the board has any questions that they would like to ask a prospective board member. He mentioned to A. Young that he wanted to be sure that council members are asking questions that the Downtown Board might want to know when prospective members are being interviewed. A. Young asks the board to put some thought into that.

h. Other

- i. Coffee Table Book for Taylor Park - A. Young shares it has been finalized and D. Howard shares some paper weight options and pricing of \$679.54 for 250 copies. E. Richards thought is that if we are doing it, we should do it right. K.F. Samandari has a magazine with him and the weight of that cover seems to be more in line with this type of book. A. Young would like a heavier weight as well

and suggests allowing up to \$5/book cost. E. Richards motions to approve spending up to \$5/book. J. Read seconds. D. Howard notes a quantity of 250 books. Motion passes with all in favor.

4. Other Business

a. Approval of Minutes 7/22/2025 & 8/26/2025

i. D. Howard motions to approve 7/22/2025 and 8/26/2025 minutes. J. Read seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

b. Next meeting October 28, 2025 at 6 PM

i. M. Brown confirms the next meeting for October 28, 2025.

c. November and December meetings - 11/25 and 12/23 - adjust date or cancel

i. D. Howard proposes doing an early December meeting as a combined meeting. A. Young did look at that and the options are 12/10, 12/12, or 12/17. M. Brown notes that 12/12 is the Tractor Parade. A. Young will send an email with 12/10 and 12/17 as date options and go from there.

d. Other - None.

i. S. Smith asks if there is an update on the Cigarette butt cans. A. Young reached out to Doug, but hasn't heard back yet.

5. Adjourn. M. Brown adjourns meeting at 7:17 PM.