

Minutes for the Saluda Downtown Foundation, Inc. 3.7.23

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors of the Saluda Downtown Foundation, Inc. (the "SDF") was held at 6:30 pm, Tuesday, March 7 at the Saluda Visitor Center. In attendance were board members Debi Thomas, Susan Casey, Vice- Chair George Sweet, Glenn Franklin, SDF executive director, Lynn Casey, city manager, Steve Orr, city councilman Mark Oxtoby and Mark Power, director of Mountain Song.

Vice- Chair George Sweet called the meeting to order.

Glenn Franklin moved the minutes of the December 6, 2022, meeting be approved as presented. Debi Thomas seconded, and the motion was approved.

Lynn Casey gave the treasurers report. The Saluda Downtown Foundation reported \$20,091 in revenue for the two months ended Feb 28, 2023 including \$12,134 from Arts Festival exhibit fees and \$1700 from sponsorships, \$3,210 from donations for Mountain Song, \$1,150 from donations to Sister City, \$1,250 from Top of the Grade Concert sponsorships and \$2,346.25 in contributions for the Visitor Center from SBA and TDA. Expenses for the two months totaled \$6,510 comprised of Visitor Center operating expenses of \$2,050, Mountain Song operating expenses of \$2,319, Arts Festival operating expenses of \$1,686, Sister City expenses of \$420.18 and general fund expense to process of 1099's of \$35.77. The net profit in total for all funds for the two months was \$13,580.

The Feb 28 cash balance was \$44,225 compared to \$31,489 at Dec 31, 2022. The increase was primarily driven by Artist exhibit fees. The increase in accounts receivables to \$1,250 is for concert sponsorships.

Mark Oxtoby moved the treasurer's report be approved and Glenn Franklin made the second. The motion passed.

Next, Mark Powers, director of Mountain Song updated the Board on the choir's latest events and explained how he came to be director. Powers, who moved to Saluda from Columbia, SC was asked to apply for the position after leading the group through a vision process last spring. Once he accepted the position, rehearsals began in September with 30 members. There are now 40 members in Mountain Song from all over the area. The choir will present a concert April 27 at 7 PM at Saluda Elementary, followed by a second concert at Trinity Presbyterian in Hendersonville on April 30 at 5 PM. They have also been asked to sing at the unveiling of Saluda's Blue Zone project in June. Lynn Slaughter is Mountain Song's board chair.

Judy Thompson followed up with a Sister City report.

*On June 9, 21 Saludians and friends will travel to Carunchio. They will take additional children's' books to add to the English reading library we established there for children.

*Another Sister City trip in June of 2024 was fully booked but now has one room available due to a cancellation. They are working to fill that spot for the maximum total of 21 people.

*Massimo Criscio and Dino Paganelli were here for 11 days in February, hosted at Judy Thompson's house. They visited locations in Asheville, Hendersonville, Greenville and Tryon speaking to groups of retired people about their facility and program in Carunchio. There was also a lovely reception at the new Looking Glass Realty hosted by Sister City.

*More people want to go to Carunchio than can be accommodated by the one trip a year.

Palazzo has only 12 rooms and that limits guests to a maximum of 24. In anticipation of Massimo's visit, and with the help of Shirley Walsh of Hendersonville, Judy met Greg Sutter of Globe Treks Tours in Hendersonville. He has agreed to start promoting and offering trips to Carunchio which will cost a bit more than the trips Sister city put on (since they get no proceeds at all from the trip but merely do it as a way to facilitate Saluda residents and friends going to our

Sister City). Greg has agreed to donate \$100 for every person who takes one of his Carunchio trips into a fund specially set aside to purchase equipment for the classrooms at Carunchio elementary. When Massimo was here, he indicated that the Carunchio elementary school is in need of an electronic blackboard. That will be the first goal and then any other funds can be used for other equipment such as computers which the Carunchio school might need. That enables SS to keep the funds raised here in Saluda to primarily benefit the Saluda school and our citizenry.

*Two Saluda teachers, Stephanie Fletcher and Brandi Drake, are due to depart on April 15 for nine days in Italy. Massimo is hosting them without charge at the Palazzo for several of those days. They will get to experience the people, cuisine, elementary school, children and curriculum of Carunchio.

*Thompson reported that the city manager had determined once they took down the flags off the street light poles at Christmas, he did not feel they were in good enough condition to replace, Judy will order new ones. They also have the artwork done for the Sister City sign to go at the town boundary and will be presenting this to the City Commission for approval, perhaps at the April meeting or at least by May. Funds for the sign have come from memberships. Please notice the new sign celebrating our Sister City connection that is on the tennis court fence.

*Clair Thompson is prepared for her 4-week trip to Carunchio in July. Massimo Criscio has asked us to host a young woman, Maddalena, from Abruzzo who has just graduated in architecture school and wants to spend time here to work on her English. She is 22 and would like to come in mid-July for 4 weeks. Saluda Sister City will get more details and work out the hosting arrangement. Hopefully, they can get her a bit of exposure to some local architects or architectural firms.

*The Venetian Gala netted nearly \$11,000 for the teacher exchanges. Some expenses are still out so they will have a final total in the next report. Massimo reports that the Carunchio Elementary School is in very poor straights with the student population down to about 18 students. They are putting all the second through fifth grade students together in one classroom and have one teacher trying to deal with four different grade levels. The principal manages 7 schools throughout the mountainous area. Massimo is meeting with the principal this week and is hoping that next year will be better for the school. He is working on additional English classes for the students.

*The Saluda Elementary has a pottery kiln that is not working and they have reached out to the new art teacher to try to get that fixed. She has asked if Sister City would be interested in teaching a pottery unit to the children in art class and they are looking at how that might work.

*A teacher at the Saluda school has offered to help us with their Saluda video to send to Carunchio to the mayor and the students.

Lynn Casey reported on the 2023 Arts Festival. We will hold one of our largest Arts Festivals on May 20 from 10 am to 4 pm with 96 artists accepted in the show. Our budget is for \$15,000 in revenue - \$10,000 from exhibit fees and \$5,000 from sponsors.

Our expenses are budgeted at \$16,000. The largest expense will be our performers – musicians \$1,100 and children artists \$4,000. Our advertising is budgeted at \$4,000. The \$2,000 fee to Cathy Jackson is the

next largest item. We're using last year's profit to cover the \$2,000 but we want to include the \$2,000 expense so we have the funds for next year.

Logistically speaking we have some changes. We will encourage folks to turn off Seminary for event parking behind the school, Saluda Library and First Baptist Church. Artists will park at the Fire Dept. This hopefully will alleviate congestion caused by folks trying to make a left hand turn onto Greenville St. We are adding more parking lot volunteers and golf cart driving volunteers. Please volunteer if you have not done so already. Music will be at Saluda Moon Glass Courtyard and Don Mintz. Children face painters and ballon artist will be at Ella Grace Mintz stage.

L. Casey then followed up with a progress report on Top of the Grade Concerts which will be held June 16, July 21 and August 18. She is currently seeking sponsorships for the concerts which will cost about \$4500 because we missed the PCCF grant deadline which was mid-December. She is hoping to bring back the cake walks this year since they were so popular. Casey also apologized for her oversight when she was scheduling the concerts. She was trying to avoid the dates of the Summer Tracks Concerts held at Roger's Park and inadvertently scheduled TOTG concerts for the same night as the Friday Night Train Tales on the third Friday of the month.

Casey moved on to the Visitor Center report.

We finished 2022 with 9,896 visitors compared to 10,600 in 2021. Since opening the Visitor Center in May 2020, we have seen more than 27,000 visitors. We are currently closed Tuesday and Wednesday and opened 11 am to 3 pm Thursday through Monday. Casey asked the board their thoughts about when we should expand to 7 days a week and expand our hours. Following a discussion on this subject, the board agreed that if there were enough volunteers, the Visitor Center should be open 7 days a week by April 1 (in time for spring break and Easter visitors).

In new business, Exec. Director, Casey stated, that given the mission of the SDF, all board members should be aware of the updated McCreery Park master plan which will be discussed at the March 14 City Council meeting. City manager, Steve Orr reported the city would host an open house with the architect from 4 PM to 6 PM prior to the general meeting. George Sweet complemented the city manager and Council on their forward thinking plan and Glenn Franklin agreed that it was indeed a great plan and of paramount importance to the city as the Rails to Trails Initiative moves forward.

Finally, Casey noted that the City of Saluda is still trying to reconcile the heavy cost of continuing Coon Dog Day and noted that, again, given the mission of the SDF, perhaps the board should be weighing in on these discussions. Debi Thomas asked the city manager what the largest expenses are to which he replied security and music. Several board members expressed concerns that Coon Dog Day may not be the best event for the city to continue to sponsor considering the cost to the city (\$16, 000 in 2022) and that perhaps the money would be better spent on sidewalk repair or street lights.

With no further new business, Mark Oxtoby moved to adjourn. Debi Thomas made a second and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Casey