

## Minutes for the Saluda Downtown Foundation, Inc. 9/5/23

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors of the Saluda Downtown Foundation, Inc. (the "SDF") was held at 6:30 pm, Tuesday, September 5 at the Orchard Inn. In attendance were board Chairman, Marc Blazer, members, Debi Thomas, Susan Casey, Vice- Chair George Sweet, Lynn Cass, SDF executive director, Lynn Casey, Board members elect Jay Burris and Susan Cannon, City councilman, Paul Marion, Judy Thompson reporting on Sister City and Mark Powers reporting for Mountain Song.

Chair Marc Blazer called the meeting to order.

Executive director, Lynn Casey presented outgoing board members, Susan Casey and Debi Thomas with a cake in recognition of their service on the board and members took a moment to enjoy cake.

Continuing with the agenda, Lynn Cass moved the minutes of the June 6, 2023, meeting be approved as presented. George Sweet seconded the motion, and it was approved.

The next item on the agenda was the election of new board members and George Sweet moved Jay Burris and Susan Cannon be approved by acclamation and the board approved unanimously.

George Sweet then nominated Marc Blazer for another term as president. Lynn Cass seconded the nomination, and he was elected unanimously.

Marc Blazer nominated George Sweet as vice-president. Lynn Cass seconded the nomination, and he was elected unanimously.

Marc Blazer nominated Lynn Cass as treasurer, George Sweet seconded the nomination, and she was elected unanimously.

Lynn Cass nominated Glenn Franklin as secretary. Susan Cannon seconded the nomination, and she was elected unanimously.

Lynn Cass presented the treasurer's report. For the 8 months ended August 31, 2023, SDF total revenue for all program funds totaled \$58,155 and total expenses were \$43,375. The cash balance on August 31, 2023 was \$43,107, an increase of \$11,618 from the cash balance on December 31, 2022.

Lynn Casey reported that the insurance premiums paid by each of the program funds to be included under the umbrella of the SDF would be increasing by \$150 to \$300 for each program to cover the cost of an online accounting program for the organization. The online version will allow additional internal oversight. George moved that the board approve this increase. Jay Burris seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Paul Marion reported to the SDF board on the city's plan for McCreery Park. The City of Saluda received a grant for the park amphitheater. Steve Orr, city manager will be handling the process. The first phase will include an ADA walkway and the amphitheatre. The second phase will revamp the Boy Scout hut and surrounding area. Lynn Cass asked how the Scout Hut would be used and Paul reported the plans are to make it an education center with a fire pit and small amphitheater/seating area.

Judy Thompson emailed a copy of the Sister City report for the board. Sister City has a new board consisting of Debi Thomas, Susan Cannon, Teresa Drevar, Elizabeth Taylor, Ashley Sandhal, Stephanie Fletcher, Judy Thompson and Frances Fairey. Advisors are Lynn Cass(editor) Shirley Walsh (vision) and Judy Hunt (special projects).

The two Saluda teachers who traveled to Carunchio and Rome had a fabulous experience, gaining insight into how best to connect the students in Saluda to those in Carunchio as well as how Saluda Sister City can help provide resources to the Carunchio students to increase their proficiency in English which is a prerequisite for post High School studies in Italy.

Another Sister City trip is planned for June 2024 during the flower festival.

Claire Thompson reported on her trip to Carunchio in Saluda Lifestyles and plans to make presentations to several groups in Saluda this Fall and Winter.

Two young Italian visitors from Carunchio will be coming to Saluda next summer.

Judy also provided a list of scheduled events, plans, and needs for the coming year.

Mark Powers then reported on Mountain Songs. Mark recapped the last year since moving here to become the program director for Mountain Song and reported that the group is about to begin practice for the coming year's concerts. The first 2 will be November 9 and November 12.

Mountain Song has set a goal of 50 singers for this season. They currently have 35 members from Saluda, Traveler's Rest, Rutherfordton, Hendersonville and Edneyville. They are also developing a Friends of Mountain Song to help with expenses. Their annual budget is \$4500. They also applied to PCCF with assistance from Lynn Casey for a grant to assist with expenses and reported that they are extremely grateful to be under the umbrella of the SDF. The season's theme will be Homeward Bound. Practices are from 6:30-8:30 on Mondays at the Saluda Center.

SDF Executive Director Lynn Casey followed with reports on the Top of the Grade Concerts, The Arts Festival and the Visitor Center.

We had three Top of the Grade Concerts – June 16, July 21, and August 18. We had good turnouts at all three with just over 150 people for July and more than 200 for the June and August shows. The attendees are largely from the Saluda/Tryon community. We raised \$4,500 from Saluda businesses and residents and the total cost was \$4,276.80. We have applied for a PCCF grant for \$6,150 for three concerts for the 2024 Top of the Grade Concert Series.

The Arts Festival Core Committee will hold its first meeting at the end of September or early October. We have applied for a PCCF grant for \$5,000 to fund the children's activity tent.

The Visitor Center had 6,451 visitors from January through the end of August as compared to 6,664 for the same 8-month period in 2022. Casey also provided a cash forecast for the visitor center through 5/31/24 that shows excess cash based on current contributions from SDF, SBA and TDA. The SDF is responsible for the Visitor Center's operations through May 2024.

Following the department reports, Chair, Marc Blazer moved on with the agenda to old business and a discussion of the Visitor Center Lease renewal. Marc reported that although an offer had been made to buy the building in which the Visitor Center is located, the owners are no longer interested in selling it. The Saluda Tourism Development Authority negotiated a 2% increase in the lease for the next 5 years with an additional option to renew for another 5 years. He also reported a final notice of intent is due 1/1/2024.

He went on to explain that the TDA has offered to take over the lease and cover 2/3 of the lease cost as well as hire a manager although details have not been worked out. SDF director, Casey suggested that the financial committee composed of a member of each of the boards (SDF, TDA, SDF) meet and come up with a viable financial plan and all agreed.

In new business, Casey reported she would begin serving on the Conserving Carolina Saluda Grade Advisory Committee regarding the Rails to Trails effort.

City Commissioner, Paul Marion reported the City Council has begun to address the concerns over closed buildings and lack of retail on Main Street.

City Commissioner Paul Marion also reported that Friends of McCreery Park would like to come under the umbrella of the SDF. Initially, Friends of McCreery Park's role was to raise money and coordinate park activities, but it soon became clear that FOMP could not be a City of Saluda organization.

A new board was formed with new bylaws and members have been deliberating what kind of entity they should be and how and if they could come under the SDF umbrella as Sister City and Mountain Song currently do. There was much discussion concerning the ramifications of the FOMP either becoming an entity separate from the city or a department of SDF and how they should proceed. No decisions nor a course of action was decided.

George Sweet motioned to adjourn and Jay Burris seconded the motion which carried unanimously.