



# City of Madison

City of Madison  
Madison, WI 53703  
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## Meeting Minutes - Approved DOWNTOWN COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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Tuesday, June 30, 2020

4:00 PM

Via Virtual Meeting

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### CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

Plotkin arrived at 4:09 pm.

**Present:** 8 - Michael E. Verveer; Patrick W. Heck; Kathy L. Marks; Gregory O. Frank; Adam J. Plotkin; Ted Crabb; Barbara Harrington-McKinney and Sandra J. Torkildson

**Excused:** 3 - Davy Mayer; Lori J. Henn and Max Prestigiacomo

### APPROVAL OF March 19, 2020 MINUTES

**A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by Frank, to Approve the March 19, 2020 Minutes. The motion passed by voice vote/other.**

[61242](#)

Public Comment

None

### DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

None

1. [61021](#) Downtown Recovery Discussion

*Tiffany Kenney, registered in support and available to answer questions*

Rebecca Cnare, Planning staff, and Meghan Blake-Horst, Economic Development staff, provided information on the Streatery program and Matt Mikolajewski, Economic Development Division Director, spoke about the Downtown Recovery Program.

Alder Verveer thanked staff for trying to assist businesses citywide, and especially downtown, through the pandemic and riot recovery. He said that he was sad to say that he was pessimistic that the Common Council will adopt this program and suggested they will need to figure out a compromise with potential modifications to the program in order to secure the votes needed for approval. Alder Heck agreed and said that some have concerns about finding the money in the budget and using it for downtown businesses when there are other needs related to systemic racism that would require funding, so people who oppose the program don't find it to be particularly fair. He referenced an anonymous letter sent by small businesses along State Street that are owned or operated primarily by immigrants or people of color and asked if there was a way to allot some of the money to businesses owned by people of color. He said that it might make the program more palatable for alders who currently oppose it. Mikolajewski said that he thinks it would be most impactful to make a greater deliberate effort to reach out to those building and business owners in the early

stages to make sure everyone is aware of the program and understands how to apply. Torkildson and Crabb suggested staff look into establishing criteria that would focus on small businesses.

Marks said that she's been a part of meetings with downtown business owners who need help, and asked how much input business owners had in the drafting of the recovery program. She said that it is a great idea but wondered if there was a way to bring in downtown business owners to help identify a program that would provide businesses some relief while also intentionally looking at how to encourage and promote more inclusion, diversity, and support for people of color. Mikolajewski said the program was set up quickly in an effort to assist with the initial response to damage that occurred in the past month, so there was not a lot of involvement from business and property owners. He said this is certainly not the end of the conversation about recovery; this program would address an immediate need but is the start of a much longer dialogue that will identify other programs and policies that may need to be changed or added over the next couple of years. Ald. Verveer said that he has kept staff informed of the dozens of conversations he has had with State Street merchants and property owners regarding their damages and financial needs. He referenced the letter from small business owners on State Street and said that he is open to any ideas for prioritizing people of color and encouraging more diversity on State Street. Torkildson said that she would encourage landlords to use empty spaces for pop-ups that would allow people to test out businesses for little to no rent, and she suggested they talk to black business owners in other parts of the city to see what they would want to see downtown. Plotkin asked if the program could include minority preference points or give minority applicants a first draw. Mikolajewski said that in past city programs, they haven't explicitly set aside funding, but they will double their efforts to approach business and property owners of color along State Street and make sure they are aware that support is available.

Crabb said that this is a critical issue for the committee and asked alders if there would be value in the committee going on record with their concerns and support of the program. Ald. Verveer said that he would welcome such a motion. Ald. Heck suggested a statement in support of the program that includes Marks' earlier comments related to supporting and cultivating small businesses owned by people of color in the downtown area. Marks said that she thinks the committee is in agreement not to support the program as is, but they are in support of a downtown recovery program that is intentional about business owners of color and diversity and also does everything it can to support downtown Madison and help get businesses reopened or encourage new businesses to fill in the vacant spaces. Torkildson asked about businesses' insurance deductibles and suggested that any program money left over could go toward encouraging minority-owned businesses to open downtown.

Frank said that he believes they need to pass this small program as part of a much larger project. He said that many downtown business owners don't have insurance or have very high deductibles. He said that the money in this program should go to small businesses that don't have resources, and they need to make sure that happens. He said that there are so many big issues to deal with, this program is a no-brainer for him and a way to start taking small steps to move forward and give downtown business and property owners some hope that they can reopen. He said that this has to pass, and the committee needs to do what is necessary to make that happen.

Regarding the Streatery program, Ald. Verveer asked why the weekend closure of State Street to buses doesn't include the top of State Street on the Capitol Square, stating that it would be meaningful to the restaurants on W Mifflin and N Carroll Streets. Cnare said they are aware of the request, and in wanting to get the Streatery on State Street ready for this weekend, the agencies involved could not come to an agreement on closing that

intersection. She said that her understanding was that Metro Transit couldn't close both the square and State Street and still make their routes work, but she would pass along the comments. Ald. Verveer asked whether those with merchant vending licenses could receive administrative approval to take advantage of the additional space created by the Streatery rather than receive Council approval. Blake-Horst said that right now, there is not another mechanism for approval. She pointed out that there are only seven licensed merchant vendors and they already have enough space to expand on the sidewalk. She said that she was working with Tiffany Kenney of BID to create an FAQ for State Street merchants with information on the program and how they can utilize it. She said that she heard concerns from retailers who were not sure if they could operate outside with regard to staffing and safety. Ald. Verveer said that he requested visible foot patrol by MPD for the Streatery this weekend because he was concerned that people would be too scared to attend. Kenney said she is hopeful that with more education, more businesses will take them up on the offer to participate. She agreed that retailers aren't feeling very confident to do so, but it would be supportive to show that we're making every effort to open up economic opportunities for them and it is BID's goal to work with the city to make sure everyone knows about those opportunities. She said that if Ald. Verveer can continue working with MPD to make downtown feel safer, they should see more participation. Ald. Verveer asked if allowing merchants to use umbrellas with commercial logos could be approved administratively while the Streatery program is running. Blake-Horst said that the Zoning Administrator would need to respond because that falls within the sign code.

Cnare thanked the Parking Utility for being an important partner in the Streatery program.

Mikolajewski provided information on the economy and culture recovery team related to the city's COVID-19 recovery plan, and Cnare opened discussion by the committee. Frank said that the downtown business community and property owners are upset and don't believe their voices have been heard. They believe that leadership has been lacking and instead of reaching out to them, they are being told what to do. He said that there needs to be collaboration in order to make this happen because State Street and downtown Madison are business-oriented, so the business voice needs to be included in the difficult conversations with our leaders so they can all stand together and create a plan forward. Crabb asked for suggestions on what the Downtown Coordinating Committee could do to help with that, and Frank said that he struggles with the role of DCC and doesn't think the committee's voice is as strong or powerful as it was meant to be. Marks said that she has also heard from business and property owners who feel they aren't being heard and asked where the disconnect was. She said that a public-private partnership needs to be in place and asked how the committee can help bring people together so they can begin to plan effectively. Ald. Heck said that it sounds like a lot of good efforts are happening from various organizations and city agencies, but there is no overarching coordination between those entities, which is a structural problem. He asked who should pull those groups together to move forward and asked if a new coalition should be formed for the purpose of downtown recovery. Marks said that businesses change and reinvent themselves to move forward and suggested they look at the composition of the DCC and ask if the right people are at the table in order to align themselves with the city's recovery plan.

Ald. Harrington-McKinney encouraged the committee to stand up and make a statement regarding what they want to see in the future of Madison. She said that they need to consider economic development, diversity, and racial equity as they reimagine what the downtown area will become and decide what they stand for. Torkildson said she thinks it is important to go beyond helping existing businesses and they should also try to get vacant storefronts filled with minority-owned businesses. She said that she understands it is difficult for small business owners and the restaurant industry to attend evening meetings and suggested they think of other ways to get feedback. Frank agreed that they need to be creative in their engagement. Crabb suggested the DCC review their stated purpose and reassess their

role and how they can be most effective. Torkildson suggested committee members prepare to have a discussion at the next meeting about the DCC's statement of purpose and things they want to focus on. Ald. Harrington-McKinney said that there should be outreach to business owners within their own space rather than expecting them to come to us and attend meetings in order to have authentic conversations about their challenges and what they hope to see in the future. Ald. Verveer said that he understands that it is a lot to ask that business owners attend city meetings, and he has had personal one-on-one conversations with many business owners as he reached out after the riots began. He said that he is only one voice, so it has been challenging to try to understand the needs of downtown businesses and then pass that along to the right people at City Hall. He would appreciate anything the DCC can do to help further the downtown recovery from the pandemic and rioting. He suggested they look at the list of requests in the earlier referenced letter from State Street business and property owners to discuss at a future meeting.

**A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by Marks, that the Downtown Coordinating Committee strongly supports the Downtown Recovery Program under the conditions that the City revise the program to work with business owners to better understand their needs in recovery, to cultivate new businesses downtown owned by people of color, and to focus on existing small businesses and existing businesses owned by people of color. The motion passed by voice vote/other.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by Marks, to Adjourn at 6:32 p.m. The motion passed by voice vote/other.**