

Lark Street Business Improvement District

February 3, 2026

Board Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Leigh Jagareski, Chris Burke, Dan Odabashian, Dan Fitzgerald, Erica Scheer, Susan Pedo, Mark Brogna

Other Attendee(s): Jeff Gordon

- I. **Welcome and Introductions (Chris)** - Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- II. **Confirmation of Quorum** - Quorum was achieved.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** - The January minutes were approved.
Motion: Approve Minutes (Mark, Dan F., all in favor)
- IV. **Chairman's Report (Chris)** - Chris addressed recent board changes, including the departure of Rich Conti, one of the original founding members, and the appointment of Deirdre Brodie to fill his City Council seat. The board agreed to prepare a letter of recognition for Richard and to consider purchasing a gift to acknowledge his long-standing contributions to the organization.

Chris highlighted our response to a recent snow emergency, where the group successfully coordinated sidewalk and crosswalk clearing efforts with our contractor, Gerth Property Management, for 5 hours per week. He noted the challenges of maintaining cleared areas due to repeated plowing and the responsibility of property owners for sidewalk maintenance. Chris also mentioned his possible, not yet confirmed, involvement in a nightlife advisory committee being established by the Mayor. Once he's established if they have a spot for someone on the BID, we can discuss who will fill that role. The chair reminded the board we are still looking for committee members for Finance, Events, Membership, Public Safety and Communications committees.

- V. **Finance Committee Report (Dan O.)** - Dan discussed the financial status of the organization, noting we have squared up with the city on assessment funds from 2019 to 2025. He mentioned that the financials for 2023, 2024, and 2025 are clean and ready to go and will be reported on at the next board meeting. We can now submit everything we need to catch up on our tax returns and our 990 (due in May). Dan is in talks with an accountant to complete the filings. He's planning to submit the 2026 voucher in the next couple of weeks. We will get a partial assessment of an amount to be determined and will have to report on our expenditures prior to receiving the next distribution of funds. and the need to produce financial reports to receive the full assessment from the city. Dan will report each month to the board from now on using a Statement of Activities and Statement of Financial Position templates.

Additionally, Dan made progress on the ARPA grant, speaking with their head administrator, filling out their questionnaire, and will be submitting a report on potential uses for the remaining \$20,000 for street beautification. Next month the board will review our updated finances and decide on specific uses for the funds, with a mural and power washing the sidewalks as a possibility.

- VI. **Event Committee Report (Chris, Leigh)**
 - a. **Member Meeting** - We're planning a member meeting at Lark Hall on February 24th to give an update on the finances and activities of the organization.

- b. **Ribbon Cutting Event** - Leigh discussed plans for a ribbon-cutting event in April, which will include multiple businesses participating together, press coverage and refreshments. She confirmed that Out of Town Bistro and Tool and Jacob Alejandro's Wine Bar have agreed to participate.
 - c. **Art on Lark & First Fridays** - Chris met with Erin Harkes from Metroland to clarify the organization's financial resources and commitment capabilities, emphasizing the need for long-term financial stability while supporting events like Art on Lark in June/July. Chris will follow up with her about First Fridays.
 - d. **Champagne on Lark** - Champagne on the Park is being taken over by Lark Hall. They are hosting "Champagne on Lark" in May. It will follow a similar format as in previous years, as a fundraiser for our neighborhood nonprofits. The Lark Street BID will support the event in some form.
- VII. **Public Safety & Communications Committee Report (Leigh)** - Leigh reviewed progress on communications, including an upcoming meeting with our new marketing director at Wave Marketing, Sarah Bartanian, to establish content scheduling and automation processes. She also addressed the need to improve website engagement, with plans to post organizational documents and event calendars.
- VIII. **Membership Committee Report (Dan F.)** - The new membership committee, currently made up of Dan F., Chris and Leigh, is working on improving and expanding membership outreach. Their first step is to send a membership letter to both commercial and residential property owners within the next couple of weeks, ahead of a broader membership update. These groups are the starting point because there is already a reliable list of them through tax records. As part of this effort, Leigh created a form on the organization's website that will be shared as a link and QR code. This will allow recipients to submit accurate contact information, particularly in cases where properties are owned by LLCs or managed by someone other than the listed owner.

This outreach represents phase one of the membership plan. Phase two will focus on additional membership categories, specifically commercial tenants and residential tenants. The intention is to first ensure property owners, especially business owners, are properly registered and engaged, and then open membership more broadly. The expectation is that this phased approach will help build a more complete and reliable membership list.

- a. **New Board Member(s)** - Dan F. has been in contact with Lori Hylton, a resident on Chestnut and Lark with experience in the nonprofit sector and an interest in joining the board. Dan will bring her resume to the board for consideration of a Residential Owner's position, noting she will take Mark Brogna's seat as Residential Owner and Mark will assume a Commercial Owner's position. After that, we need one more commercial owner.
- IX. **New Business (Susan)**
 - a. **Albany Navigates** - Susan provided an update on the Albany Navigates program, which is currently about halfway through its grant period and has been renewed in this year's budget. Several hundred individuals have been engaged in the program and fewer than one hundred have been successfully housed. This program works to first gain trust of unhoused individuals so they can secure needed services and stay safe while longer-term housing solutions are pursued. Additional efforts are being introduced to support this work, including a new street psychiatry program funded in the county budget. This initiative allows mental health professionals to prescribe medications directly to individuals in

crisis while in the field. Six new staff members have been hired countywide and are coordinating with the Navigates team to build trust and help connect individuals to treatment and services, with the goal that stabilizing mental health will improve the likelihood of successful housing placements.

- b. Albany County Grants** - The group was informed that four Albany County improvement grants have recently opened and information about them will be shared with the BID for re-posting. A small business grant program is also being developed, likely focused on façade improvements, along with a \$1.6 million revolving loan fund intended to support affordable housing development. It was noted that many county grants are shifting to reimbursement-based funding, which may present challenges for some organizations.
- c. Downtown Investment Opportunities** - There was discussion about regional downtown investment opportunities and the importance of identifying a clear priority project for the neighborhood to advocate for. Potential ideas mentioned included improvements related to Trinity Church and corresponding parking lot, a redesign of the Madison Avenue intersection, or façade improvements. There was also brief discussion about the old YMCA building, which may have new interest from a potential party but would likely require significant planning and investment.

X. Old Business (Dan, Leigh)

- a. NYCON Services** - Dan spoke with Kate McNally at NYCON regarding creating an organizational chart, reviewing bylaws and helping with recruitment. She's going to review our organizational documents and come up with a plan and some options for us in the next week or two.
- b. Climate Ambassador Opportunity** - Leigh has been in touch with our City Community Specialist Lisa Rodriguez regarding the BID acting as a climate ambassador by hosting a meeting on behalf of Act Now Albany Climate Action Plan. It's possible we can partner with our neighborhood associations to open up more lines of communication between us and have as much local impact as possible.

XI. Public Comment - There were no public comments.

XII. Consideration of Executive Session - The board did not go into Executive Session.

XIII. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned.

Motion: Adjourn Meeting (Mark, Erica, all in favor)

Recorder,



Erica Scheer
Secretary of the Board