

Lark Street Business Improvement District
March 3, 2026
Board Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Erica Scheer, Chris Burke, Dan Odabashian, Leigh Jagareski, Dan Woycik, Mark Brogna, Deirdre Brodie

Other Attendee(s): Mike Yevoli, Justin Miller, Jenn Miller, Jeffrey Gordon

- I. **Welcome and Introductions (Chris)** - Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- II. **Confirmation of Quorum** - Quorum was achieved.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** - The February minutes were approved.
Motion: Approve Minutes (Dan O., Dan W., all in favor)
- IV. **Chairman's Report (Chris)** - Chris reported that the recent membership meeting was successful, with strong attendance and positive feedback, and emphasized continuing to build engagement over time. Operational updates included coordination with DGS and the Parking Authority, which will now handle placement of planters according to the BID's map, as well as progress on replacing street light bulbs. Efforts are ongoing to secure new garbage cans, and Chris plans to work with the codes department to better communicate rules around trash and street conditions, aiming to address ongoing issues caused by lack of clarity and enforcement.

He also noted that snow removal and general cleanup efforts are progressing reasonably well, with continued coordination with the vendor. In follow-up discussion, Dan added that it has been difficult to fully assess performance due to winter conditions, but expects a clearer evaluation once the snow melts and a larger cleanup occurs. He noted the vendor has been communicative and responsive, but emphasized the need to obtain invoices to avoid surprises and ensure alignment with expectations. The board also discussed scheduling a check-in with the vendor, acknowledging that the flexible contract allows the BID to adjust priorities (such as additional cleanup tasks like removing outdated signage) as needs evolve.

- V. **Finance Committee Report (Dan O.)** -The financial report introduced a new, more structured reporting format, including a balance sheet (statement of financial position) and an income statement with budget-to-actual comparisons. The reporting will continue to be refined over time, with plans to further itemize expenses—particularly for events and beautification—so the board can better track where funds are being spent. Current financials are straightforward, with standard operating expenses and some adjustments made to keep reporting clean (e.g., separating prior-year revenue and expenses like rent that were paid late).

On the balance sheet, assets include approximately \$35,000 in equipment, though much of it is older and largely depreciated. Grant funds are being tracked separately as deferred revenue to ensure they are not mixed with operating funds until used. Overall, the new reporting format was well received as a significant improvement and a useful tool for future financial decision-making.

Operationally, the BID is in a stronger financial management position, with an active bookkeeper providing timely reports at a low cost and a CPA engaged to complete three years of back tax filings for approximately \$6,000. The BID has also submitted a request for roughly \$101,000 in 2026 funding and expects a response soon. Additionally, about \$20,000 remains to be collected from an ARPA grant, which is expected to be secured once eligible past expenses are documented—effectively adding flexible revenue to the general operating budget.

- VI. Events Committee Report (Chris, Leigh)** - The Events Committee reported progress across three key initiatives: the ribbon cutting ceremony, Champagne on Lark, and Art on Lark. For the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, planning is actively underway, with outreach to participating businesses largely complete but still requiring final confirmations. Efforts have included both digital and in-person engagement, with printed invitations proposed to improve responsiveness. While logistics such as catering and invited officials are being coordinated, the group acknowledged that a formal “run of show” is still in development. A key discussion point centered on format—whether to have one central ribbon cutting or incorporate more personalized moments for each business—balancing the desire for individual recognition with the need for a concise, well-run event.

For Champagne on Lark, planning is progressing with Lark Hall taking the lead, while the BID supports through promotion, coordination, and use of its nonprofit status to facilitate donations. The event is already being incorporated into marketing efforts, including social media and the community calendar.

For Art on Lark, the BID has committed approximately \$10,000 (combining budgeted and grant funds) to support the event, with Metroland leading planning efforts. The team is currently working to finalize a June date—potentially June 6—pending coordination with city departments such as traffic engineering. Overall, all three events are moving forward, with continued coordination and refinement needed in the coming weeks.

- VII. Public Safety & Communications Committee Report (Leigh)** - The Communications report reflected a highly active month focused on building foundational systems, increasing visibility, and initiating consistent content production, while also highlighting capacity constraints and the need for clearer structure. Archival photos from the 1990s were digitized to support future “throwback” content, and the first round of social media content shoots was conducted on March 12, initially targeting a randomized list of businesses but ultimately shaped by accessibility and available contacts. Due to limited businesses being open during Wave Marketing’s scheduled shoot times, Leigh independently revisited locations during operating hours to personally capture additional photos and video content. These efforts also served as informal outreach, allowing for direct engagement with business owners and the start of a background information questionnaire to collect details such as business history, specialties, and key identifiers to support more meaningful and tailored content.

Outreach remains a time-intensive effort, with continued reliance on walking door-to-door, leaving notes, and attempting to verify contact information, though the

lack of business cards or clearly defined roles has made these interactions less effective and, at times, unclear to recipients. The importance of establishing designated roles (e.g., events, beautification, business development) and improving contact systems was emphasized as critical to maintaining momentum and ensuring consistent follow-up.

Social media posting began on March 20th and has produced strong early results. Top-performing content included a reintroduction carousel on Facebook and business-focused posts like the feature on Blue Tulip Bicycle on Instagram, demonstrating strong audience interest in local business highlights. Additional posts supported community partners and events, including First Friday promotions and Champagne on Lark. While the overall performance and visibility gains were viewed as very positive and indicative of growing community engagement, substantial time has been required to edit captions and refine tone to better reflect the authenticity and character of the Lark Street corridor. Leigh also noted that she has been handling all copywriting internally, which has been time-intensive, and is exploring the possibility of engaging a professional copywriter she knows from school to test on draft materials for quality, turnaround time, and cost.

A central challenge identified throughout the report is the absence of formal brand guidelines, resulting in inconsistencies in voice, design, and logo usage across content produced by external partners. This has limited the ability to enforce a cohesive identity and has contributed to inefficiencies in editing and content approval. To address this, Leigh proposed dedicating the next month to developing comprehensive brand standards and asked the board to be appointed to a Creative Director role within the organization to make it easier to introduce herself to members, guide messaging, design, and overall communications strategy. Additionally, a draft social media policy was developed by Jeff Gordon in collaboration with Leigh and Wave Marketing, outlining expectations for content, engagement, and response protocols.

Operational improvements to communications infrastructure were also reported, including updates to the website such as the addition of a “Contact Us” feature linked to a centralized email account, requiring consistent monitoring and response. Meeting minutes and a comprehensive events calendar were added, incorporating City of Albany events, BID meetings, and neighborhood association schedules, with ongoing outreach to gather complete event listings. The socials team also worked through a backlog of messages and is now beginning to receive new inquiries and event submissions from businesses. Additional updates included re-adding active businesses to the website and implementing tools such as a Linktree to better align social media traffic with website engagement.

VIII. New Business (Mike, Chris)

- a. Downtown Revitalization Initiative** - Mike Yevoli, Regional Director from Empire State Development joined the meeting regarding potential revitalization opportunities for Lark Street through engagement with the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and related state funding programs. Board members

introduced themselves and their roles, highlighting a mix of property ownership, nonprofit experience, and expertise in communications and event planning. This underscored the group's collective capacity to contribute to broader planning and redevelopment efforts.

Mike provided an overview of how these programs operate, what types of projects are competitive, and how communities can position themselves to successfully secure funding. His remarks emphasized the importance of having clearly defined, well-prepared projects and a unified community vision.

Discussion centered on how Lark Street could benefit from a more strategic and proactive approach to redevelopment. Ideas included leveraging underutilized properties, pursuing mixed-use development, and enhancing the public realm through improvements like streetscape beautification and lighting. There was a shared understanding that successful funding applications would require not only strong project concepts but also collaboration among property owners, the City, and state partners.

Overall, the conversation reflected a shift toward long-term planning and positioning the district for competitive funding opportunities. Key takeaways included the need to develop a pipeline of viable projects, potentially secure planning or grant-writing support, and move from reactive decision-making toward a more coordinated, forward-looking strategy for economic and physical revitalization.

The follow-up discussion focused on identifying a practical and realistic role for the BID in advancing revitalization efforts, given the fragmented nature of property ownership along Lark Street. Rather than pursuing large-scale redevelopment, members discussed the potential for coordinating block-by-block façade improvement projects, allowing multiple property owners to participate at once. This approach could reduce costs by securing group rates for shared needs such as lifts, utility coordination, and construction work, building on past examples where multiple buildings were improved simultaneously.

There was recognition that while this model could be effective, it would require significant coordination and clarity around who would administer such a program, whether the BID, the City, or another entity. Capacity constraints were noted, reinforcing the need for partnerships and a structured approach. There was general agreement that the BID could play a valuable role in organizing stakeholders and facilitating participation, even if it is not the direct administrator.

The group emphasized the importance of acting quickly to remain competitive for funding opportunities. They agreed to develop and circulate a clear project

list or statement of work within the next few weeks to keep momentum and demonstrate readiness. This will involve engaging key stakeholders and aligning neighborhood input to present a unified vision for the corridor.

Additionally, there was discussion of leveraging matching funds—potentially committing around \$100,000 - to strengthen applications and gain traction with state programs. Overall, the conversation reinforced a strategy centered on coordination, readiness, and targeted, scalable improvements that align with available funding opportunities.

- b. Promo Material Budget** - Leigh recommended allocating funds within the budget to cover the cost of purchases shown in the promotional material, which the board was receptive to.
 - c. Historic Albany Walking Tours** - Chris is reaching out to Pam Howard at Historic Albany Walking Tours to discuss how the BID can contribute to and support the event this year.
 - d. Women's History Month** - A request came through for the BID to do something on social media for Women's History Month. The Communications Committee is going to try to get something out in time.
- IX. Public Comment** - There were no public comments.
- X. Consideration of Executive Session** - The board did not go into Executive Session.
- XI. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned.
- Motion:** Adjourn Meeting (Mark, Erica, all in favor)

Recorder,



Erica Scheer
Secretary of the Board