

**Lark Street Business Improvement District**  
**April 7, 2026**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Board Members Present:** Erica Scheer, Chris Burke, Mark Brogna, Dan Woycik, Leigh Jagareski, Deirdre Brodie, Dan Fitzgerald, Susan Pedo

**Other Attendee(s):** Summer Wilber, Shelby Russo, Jeff Gordon, Justin Miller, Jenn Miller, Jesse Sommer, Joe Tersigni

- I. **Welcome and Introductions (Chris)** - Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- II. **Confirmation of Quorum** - Quorum was achieved.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** - The March minutes were amended to include Chris Burke as being present and were approved.  
**Motion:** Approve Minutes (Mark, Dan W., all in favor)
- IV. **Chairman's Report (Chris)** - Chris Burke provided an update on the Capital funding initiative for downtown Albany, noting that a meeting is being coordinated with BID stakeholders to determine how organizations can participate and access funding. He shared that a proposal has been submitted outlining approximately \$100,000 in BID-supported improvements, with a matching component, focused on exterior lighting, façade improvements, and overall streetscape enhancements. A key challenge identified is that, as a BID, the organization is not a property-owning entity, requiring a funding structure in which an intermediary—such as Capitalize Albany—would administer funds for private property improvements.

He also reported on a recent walkthrough conducted with the Mayor, Department of General Services (DGS), and city staff to assess conditions along Lark Street. The group reviewed issues including garbage, infrastructure deficiencies, and missing trees, resulting in a list of items for follow-up. Ongoing coordination with DGS includes efforts to improve placement of garbage cans, maintain and expand planters (22 planters are currently installed), and address deficiencies in the existing street lighting system, which is considered low quality and poorly maintained. Burke noted interest in upgrading to more durable, warm-toned overhead lighting to improve both safety and aesthetics.

Additional updates included outreach to the Albany Police Department and community-based response teams, including contact with a Community Advocacy Response Team (CART) representative, to better align on public safety and response strategies. Burke also shared plans to develop an informational packet for property owners outlining zoning, code enforcement, and compliance requirements following an upcoming meeting with City codes officials. Looking ahead, he expressed interest in incorporating educational workshops or presentations, similar to the City's "Know Your City" series, into BID membership meetings to improve awareness of available resources and requirements.

- V. **Mental Health, Addiction and Public Safety on Lark Street (Chris, Deirdre, Susan, Jesse)** - The Board and attendees engaged in a detailed discussion regarding ongoing concerns

related to individuals experiencing mental health challenges and addiction, and the resulting impact on perceptions of safety and accessibility along Lark Street. Chris Burke emphasized the need for clearer communication and practical tools for business owners, including training on how to respond when individuals in crisis enter establishments, as well as improved dissemination of information about available services and points of contact.

Deirdre and Susan, serving as government-appointed board members, provided an overview of existing initiatives addressing these issues, including the Navigates program—a city and county collaboration focused on homelessness and behavioral health—along with CART teams that deploy licensed clinical social workers to respond to non-violent calls, and a mobile “street psychiatry” program delivering on-site mental health care and medication. They noted that while these programs are active and evolving, coordination is complicated by legal and privacy constraints that limit data-sharing between agencies.

The discussion highlighted a shared interest in pursuing more targeted, practical solutions, such as developing clear guidance for business owners on who to contact in various situations and how to respond appropriately. There was also interest in hosting a local outreach style meeting on or near Lark Street to connect service providers, businesses, and community members, and to increase awareness of available resources.

Jesse Sommer, a resident and business owner, contributed the perspective that the issue is often mischaracterized as homelessness, noting that many individuals involved are in fact housed but are dealing with addiction and/or psychiatric conditions. He emphasized the existence of a regulatory gap that limits intervention options, as law enforcement lacks legal authority to detain individuals absent specific criteria, and service providers are constrained in their ability to compel treatment.

- VI. Finance Committee Report (Chris)** - Chris Burke presented the financial report in the absence of Treasurer Dan O., directing the Board to the statement of activities included in the meeting materials. He reported that the organization successfully collected the full year of assessment revenue and is in the process of completing required filings, including the IRS Form 990, with year-end financials in good order. Overall, the organization is performing well financially, with some areas under budget and others slightly over, which he noted is expected as the BID continues to refine its understanding of operating costs during its initial months.

Burke also noted an outstanding issue regarding equipment listed on the books, explaining that certain legacy assets remain recorded but have not been fully verified or properly depreciated in prior years. This is being reviewed, and adjustments may be made once documentation is clarified through past filings. He further highlighted the establishment of a capital reserve fund of previously unspent assessment dollars, which strengthens the organization’s financial position. A proposed budget update was introduced, including the addition of a \$25,000 part-time staff position to support

operations and community outreach; this is intended to begin discussion and will be revisited in a more comprehensive budget review later in the fiscal year.

The discussion surrounding the Financial Report focused primarily on the structure and future use of reserve funds and the need for greater clarity, accountability, and long-term planning. Chris Burke proposed formally restricting approximately \$137,500 in reserve funds—derived from prior years’ unspent assessments—for specific purposes supporting BID operations, including staffing, public art, events, beautification, and potential grant writing. He emphasized the importance of demonstrating responsible stewardship of funds to stakeholders, including members, the City, and potential funders, and suggested implementing a three-year plan to guide spending and replenishment of these funds.

Deirdre engaged in discussion around best practices for fund structuring, noting the importance of clearly defining the purpose and use of each allocation, particularly if funds are to be carried forward (“unassigned fund balance”) and later restricted. She recommended providing more detailed descriptions for each proposed line item prior to formal Board action.

There was general agreement to refine the proposal further before taking formal action, including developing clearer definitions and a structured plan for reserve use. The Board expressed support for the intent to restrict funds and ensure transparency, while deferring a vote to a future meeting to allow for additional detail and consideration.

**VII. Events Committee Report (Leigh)** - Leigh reported on recent and upcoming event-related activities, noting that a press conference was held on Lark Street with participation from the Mayor and Board representatives, helping to generate visibility for ongoing initiatives. She shared that Art on Lark is officially moving forward, with the website now live for vendor registration and logistics being managed by Erin Harkes. The BID will support the event with a \$10,000 contribution while taking a supporting—rather than lead—role due to current staffing limitations, with volunteers assisting in execution.

Leigh also provided an update on the upcoming ribbon cutting event which will recognize businesses that have opened since the BID’s transition. The event will feature several business speakers, with additional businesses acknowledged, and is intended as both a celebration and a way to strengthen engagement moving forward. She noted expectations for a strong turnout and positive community presence.

Additional discussion included promotion efforts for upcoming events, including “Champagne on Lark.” The BID is supporting the event by sharing social media posts and including promotion in its newsletters since the announcement, while the event itself is primarily led by Lark Hall. The BID is truly grateful for Lark Hall stepping up to host the event. Tickets are available online, and outreach includes email distribution and local promotion. Leigh also indicated plans to reconnect with Chris Pratt, organizer of Lark Out Loud, to discuss potential collaboration this year.

**VIII. Public Safety & Communications Committee Report (Leigh)** - Leigh reported on recent changes to the BID's communications strategy, noting that the organization has chosen not to renew its social media services contract with Wave Marketing following a four-month test period. The contract included a 30-day notice provision, which was exercised after determining that the partnership was not the right long-term fit, despite some initial progress in launching content and increasing visibility. The decision was made based on our evolving goals for the BID's communications approach.

Looking ahead, Leigh shared that the BID is exploring a new partnership with Metroland to better align with its needs, particularly emphasizing a shift toward more "hyper-local" content that reflects the character and businesses of Lark Street. This approach would leverage a broader creative team with local knowledge and on-the-ground experience. She noted that the goal is to produce more authentic, community-driven content that better supports BID businesses and initiatives. Leigh also confirmed that legal review of the transition has been completed and all actions were taken appropriately, with the BID in good standing as it moves forward with a revised communications strategy.

**IX. Membership Committee Report (Dan F.)** - Dan F. led discussion regarding planning for the upcoming membership meeting, with the Board considering timing, logistics, and overall structure. A tentative timeframe of late June was discussed, with June 23rd emerging as a potential date despite minor scheduling conflicts, acknowledging that some overlap with other events is unavoidable. The meeting is expected to include elections and therefore be larger in scope, with interest in incorporating an additional presentation or feature to increase engagement.

Chris emphasized the importance of ensuring the meeting is well-organized and structured, particularly given challenges experienced in the prior year. He stressed the need to complete all formal business, especially voting, clearly and efficiently before transitioning into any social components. There was general agreement on providing light refreshments and potentially hosting the meeting upstairs with bar access following the formal portion to encourage attendance and networking.

Deirdre highlighted the importance of proper preparation and compliance, including clearly identifying open board positions, confirming candidates in advance where possible, and ensuring all required information is communicated ahead of time in accordance with open meetings requirements. The Board discussed the need to reduce confusion around voting categories and improve overall clarity for members. It was agreed that additional organization and communication in advance of the meeting will be critical to ensuring a smooth and effective process.

**X. New Business** - Chris Burke shared that Dan Odabashian recently met with representatives from LaBella Associates, D.P.C. to explore the possibility of outsourcing grant writing services for the BID. This approach could provide a cost-effective way to pursue additional funding opportunities.

The Board discussed the possibility of having our property management company on site to assist with cleanliness during Art on Lark, in conjunction with DGS. Planning for the event is ongoing, with a broader logistics meeting anticipated. The conversation also emphasized the need for better communication with businesses and property owners about maintaining cleanliness, including a general reminder to keep storefront areas clean and manage trash appropriately.

- XI. Gerth Property Management** - Board members inquired about the current property management schedule and oversight. Chris explained that the BID currently contracts for five hours per week of litter cleanup, focused on smaller-scale trash, with additional pickups handled as needed. The schedule is generally set for the beginning and end of the weekend, with another visit during the week, though the Board is evaluating whether the hours and timing are sufficient and may revisit the contract if adjustments are needed.

Deirdre raised concerns about oversight and ensuring the contracted work is being completed consistently, noting the limitations of a volunteer-run organization without dedicated staff. Chris clarified that while no one is managing the work daily, he and Dan O. check in regularly with the vendor and monitor conditions on the street, with the understanding that more formal oversight may be needed as operations evolve.

- XII. Public Comment (Joe Tersigni)** - Joe Tersigni introduced himself as the prospective new owner of the Larkin Hi-Fi space, sharing that he has a handshake deal in place and is working through final legal steps. He plans to transform the space into “Aberration”, a cocktail-focused bar, emphasizing a high-quality cocktail program and incorporating local art, particularly photography, as part of the concept.

Joe noted that the interior will largely remain unchanged, with a brief closure expected for staffing and minor updates. While the exact timeline is still uncertain, he expressed a goal of reopening as soon as possible—ideally by Art on Lark. Shelby is the current lead staff person at Hi-Fi, and will be part of the transition team. He also emphasized his commitment to being a good neighbor, with little to no live or loud music, and contributing positively to the Lark Street community.

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

- XIV. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned.

**Motion:** Adjourn Meeting (Dan F., Mark, all in favor)

Recorder,



Erica Scheer  
Secretary of the Board