Lark Street Business Improvement District
May 5, 2026
Board Meeting Minutes

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

Other Attendee(s): Justin Miller, Jenn Miller, Erin Harkes, Nolan Leroux, Diana Macy, Brooke LaTarte

I. **Welcome and Introductions (Chris)** - Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting.
II. **Confirmation of Quorum** - Quorum was achieved.
III. **Approval of Minutes** - The April minutes were approved.
    Motion: Approve Minutes (Dan F., Leigh, all in favor)
IV. **Chairman's Report (Chris)** - Chris reported that the BID's planter installations are still forthcoming and that discussions are underway regarding a watering plan for the season. As part of that planning, the Central Avenue BID may serve as a backup support partner.

    Chris also met with Dave from Gerth Management to discuss the possibility of expanded summer cleaning services on Lark Street and additional support during major events. Those conversations will continue as the BID evaluates seasonal sanitation needs.

    Regarding public art initiatives, Chris shared that contact had been made with the owner of the Savoy building concerning a potential mural project. The owner directed the BID to work with Jason Pierce, and efforts are underway to obtain details on the Albany Parking Authority mural program process to help guide future discussions.

    Chris provided an update on ongoing conversations surrounding capital funding opportunities for the BID. Because the BID does not directly own property, there continue to be challenges identifying the best mechanism for accessing and utilizing capital improvement funding. Initial discussions with Capitalize Albany have begun, though no clear path has yet been established.

    Chris noted ongoing frustration with existing garbage cans, including leaking receptacles and difficulty obtaining responses from DGS regarding replacement options. Additional cans have been installed, but the BID continues advocating for improved models better suited for the corridor. Similar concerns were raised regarding deteriorating overhead lighting, with outreach ongoing to city representatives regarding replacement and upgrades.

    Chris further reported that a draft job description for a new part-time administrative support position had been included in the board packet for review and feedback. The position, which had been contemplated in the revised budget, would help manage recurring operational needs such as emails, scheduling, and communications support.

Lastly, Chris announced plans to begin developing a practical three-year organizational plan focused on long-term sustainability, capital funding strategies, revenue replacement, programming priorities, events, and broader BID initiatives.

V. **Community Advocacy Response Team C.A.R.T.** (Diana, Brooke) - Diana and Brooke, senior crisis caseworkers with the Albany Police Department's Community Advocacy Response Team (CART), explained that CART responds to quality-of-life calls involving mental health crises, homelessness, substance use, and poverty-related concerns that may not require a traditional police response. The program launched in late September 2025 and operates Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to midnight. CART can respond independently or alongside officers and is dispatched through 911.

They emphasized that much of their work involves proactive outreach, including walking neighborhoods and business corridors, building relationships with individuals, and connecting people to housing, mental health services, medication support, and other resources. CART also coordinates closely with local service providers and uses police data to identify hotspot locations with repeated quality-of-life complaints.

The presenters clarified that CART is different from Mobile Crisis teams, which focus on clinical mental health evaluations and determining whether someone meets criteria for hospitalization. CART instead focuses on de-escalation, stabilization, and connecting people to services so they can safely remain in the community when possible.

A large portion of the discussion focused on frustrations surrounding repeat individuals experiencing mental health crises who are transported to hospitals for evaluation but quickly released back into the community. Diana and Brooke explained that strict state mental health laws and hospitalization criteria often limit what hospitals and police can legally do, even when behavior appears threatening or alarming to businesses and residents.

They encouraged businesses to contact 911 or the non-emergency line and specifically request CART for situations involving behavioral health or quality-of-life concerns. The meeting concluded with discussion about improving communication, education, and trainings between CART, the BID, businesses, and residents so community members better understand when and how to use the program.

VI. **Finance Committee Report (Chris)** - Chris reported that the BID's finances remain stable, with the Profit & Loss Statement and Statement of Activities reflecting routine operations and no major financial concerns at this time. He also shared that the accountant is actively working on the organization's outstanding IRS Form 990 filings for 2023, 2024, and 2025, along with related tax documents. A key outstanding item, the 2022 tax return, has now been located and provided to the accountant to assist with completion of the filings.

Chris proposed to formally restrict prior years' assessment fees for specific future purposes, including operations, staffing support, public art, garbage cans, and other corridor improvements. He explained that the intent was to demonstrate responsible stewardship of prior years' assessment funds and to establish clearer long-term planning priorities while still allowing the Board flexibility to amend allocations in the future if needed.

Board members discussed the distinction between a traditional "capital reserve" and a general reserve fund, ultimately agreeing that the proposed restricted funds would function more as operational and strategic reserves rather than a true municipal-style capital reserve. Conversation also included the BID's future funding strategy, including leveraging reserve dollars as matching funds for grants, exploring mural and streetscape projects, and developing broader multi-year planning initiatives tied to corridor improvements and sustainability efforts.

Motion: Restrict assessment fees from prior years for operations for the BID – to be moved any time with board approval (Dan F., Leigh, all in favor)

VII. **Champagne on Lark (Jenn)** - Jenn provided an update regarding preparations for the upcoming Champagne on Lark event. The event run-of-show and schedule were distributed to give board members an overview of the evening's flow and timing, including coordination details for the band and speakers. It was reported that preparations are progressing smoothly and organizers expect the event to be a successful and enjoyable evening.

VIII. **Membership Committee Report (Dan F.)** - Dan F. provided an update on membership outreach and preparations for the BID's upcoming annual meeting. Initial mailings to taxpaying member entities were largely successful, with only approximately 25 notices returned as undeliverable out of roughly 230 mailings. The Board acknowledged that portions of the membership database remain outdated, and efforts are underway with the City of Albany to improve address and contact information accuracy.

Dan F. also discussed the need for commercial tenant members to reapply annually, as prior records were incomplete or unavailable. Outreach efforts will begin with current board members who qualify as tenants, followed by broader engagement with neighborhood businesses to ensure eligible tenants have the opportunity to become BID members in good standing prior to the annual meeting. Board members and volunteers may assist in contacting commercial tenants throughout the district.

Discussion then turned to planning for the annual meeting, tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 23. The Board reviewed procedures for sign-in, ballot distribution, member verification, required notices, website postings, and meeting logistics, with the goal of finalizing all materials by the June board meeting to allow sufficient notice to the membership.

Dan F. also reviewed our board composition and raised term staggering concerns. Because all current board members began their terms simultaneously last July, there is currently no staggered rotation of seats. To address this, the Board discussed moving Mark Brogna from a Residential Owner seat to a Commercial Owner seat, which would open a residential seat for prospective board member Lori Hylton. It was noted that Lori brings experience related to farmers markets and nonprofit work. Following discussion, the Board approved the motion to move Mark into the commercial owner category and proceed with the proposed restructuring to begin establishing staggered board terms.

Dan F. discussed the upcoming nomination process for the annual meeting and reminded members that all nominees must be posted publicly on the BID website in advance of the election. Board members were encouraged to bring forward any additional nominees by the next meeting, while also ensuring that potential candidates are contacted beforehand and willing to serve.

Clarification was provided regarding nomination eligibility requirements, noting that members must nominate candidates within their own membership class. For example, a Class A member must nominate another Class A candidate. It was also noted that individuals may self-nominate if they qualify within the applicable category.

Motion: Mark Brogna to assume Commercial Owner seat to open up Residential Owner seat for Lori Hylton. (Chris, Deirdre, all in favor)

IX. **Art on Lark (Erin)** - Erin Harkes provided an update on Art on Lark planning, including a proposed budget and ongoing conversations with the city regarding event logistics and opportunities to reduce municipal costs associated with traffic, sanitation, and staffing. Erin noted that city representatives, specifically Mayor Applyrs, have been cooperative and that additional discussions are planned to identify possible savings.

A major focus of the update was sponsorship outreach. Erin shared that sponsorship packets with tiered opportunities are available and encouraged board members to help identify and connect with potential sponsors through their personal and professional networks. The Board also discussed possible grant and ARPA funding opportunities that may help support the event and future BID programming.

Erin also reported that promotional efforts are ramping up, with the official lineup announcement and expanded marketing campaign launching the following day. Planned performers include Cantron, The Sound Minds and LuLu Gray. Entertainment will be positioned at opposite ends of Lark Street to encourage attendees to move throughout the corridor and increase foot traffic for businesses.

Posters are being printed and will be put out on the street prior to Tulip Festival for increased visibility.

X. **Communications (Leigh)** - Leigh reported the BID has officially transitioned away from its social media contract with Wave Marketing and is now moving forward with

Metroland handling social media management. Preparations are underway for expanded Art on Lark promotions, with outreach, scheduling, and content planning already in progress.

Leigh also noted the recent group ribbon-cutting event was successful, generating positive participation from business owners and receiving coverage from several local media outlets. The event was a positive opportunity for businesses to connect and promote activity along the corridor.

XI. **New Business (Chris, Deirdre)** - New business began with a discussion about the recent shattering of Daisies Pasteles (418 Madison Ave.) front window and the BIDs' role in showing support. Deirdre reported that Daisies is currently operating with a temporary plexiglass replacement while awaiting insurance processing, with repair estimates ranging from approximately $1,200 to $1,400. She noted that this marks the fourth storefront window incident along the corridor within roughly the last six months.

Chris and Deirdre discussed the possibility of creating a formal emergency assistance or revolving loan fund to help businesses respond to urgent situations such as vandalism repairs while awaiting insurance reimbursements. They outlined potential structures for such a program, including small short-term loans or emergency grants, but agreed that additional legal, financial, and procedural guidance would be needed before implementation. Concerns discussed included fairness, repayment expectations, insurance assignments, eligibility criteria, and the need for formal agreements and policies.

Additional discussion focused on public safety and neighborhood policing. Our treasured Beat Cop, Kevin, is retiring. Chris shared that conversations are ongoing with Albany Police leadership regarding his replacement and broader concerns about public safety staffing and scheduling. It was noted that existing policing structures and schedules may not align well with the needs of the Lark Street corridor, particularly during nightlife and evening hours.

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

Recorder,

Erica Scheer
Secretary of the Board