Lark Street Business Improvement District
September 1, 2026
Board Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Erica Scheer, Chris Burke, Susan Pedo, Mark Brogna, Dan Woycik, Dan Fitzgerald

Other Attendee(s): Hannah McNamee, Emily Mortensen, C.J. Hughes, Nick Warchol, Dan Gadbois, Willow Contompasis, Rich Conti, Jesse Sommer

I. **Welcome and Introductions (Chris)** - Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. **Confirmation of Quorum** - Quorum was achieved.

III. **Approval of Minutes** - The August minutes were approved.
Motion: Approve Minutes (Mark, Dan W., all in favor)

IV. **Chairman's Report (Chris)** - Chris reported that the BID received 14 applications for the part-time BID Manager position. Applications will now close, and the volunteer review committee will begin evaluating the resumes. The BID also provided the city with its accounting related to outstanding event expenses and is awaiting confirmation. Several expenses were negotiated down, and payments are being made based on the agreed-upon amounts. A revised draft of the strategic plan was distributed to the board for review and comment, with the goal of finalizing it by year-end to accompany the next budget. The September 23rd membership meeting will focus on public safety and available community services, with participation from the City, Albany Navigates, the Albany Police Department, and other partners. The Chair will meet with Board Member Lori Hylton regarding her scheduling conflicts and ability to remain on the board; if she cannot continue, the vacancy will need to be filled. The city also provided pricing to replace the Lark Street string lights with softer white lighting, which they will install for us. The Treasurer, Dan O., will determine whether the cost fits within the BID's capital plan, and a long-term maintenance plan will also be needed. Chris is pursuing ribbon cuttings for local businesses and will explore coordinating one with an upcoming mayoral visit and presentation of the Nightlife Advisory Council report.

V. **Finance Committee Report (Chris)** - Dan was unable to attend, so no formal finance report was presented. However, Chris reported we did not incur any significant additional expenses, and there were no major financial changes.

VI. **Events Committee Report (Chris)** - As Leigh was not able to attend, Chris gave a short update that the board will begin focusing on our upcoming Halloween and Santa Speedo events at our next board meeting.

VII. **Communications Report (Chris)** - A meeting with Erin is scheduled for this upcoming Thursday to address the BID's ongoing email and social media issues and discuss hiring someone to manage and resolve them. The goal is to establish consistent communications support and improve operations before the next board meeting.

VIII. **New Business** - Susan discussed a proposal before the County Legislature to eliminate the county sales tax on clothing. Although the proposal may sound beneficial, she expressed concern about its practicality given the anticipated financial effects of federal H.R. 1 and the resulting pressure on programs such as food assistance. She noted that

the county's sales-tax revenue is shared with municipalities and estimated that the City of Albany could lose approximately $500,000 this year and in years to come. She encouraged anyone interested to comment when the proposal comes up for a vote.

Susan also thanked those who attended the recent Albany Navigates SYNC meeting in Washington Park. Information was distributed about how residents can request assistance, and similar presentations may be offered to neighborhood associations. She noted that police participation was helpful in explaining how the agencies coordinate their services.

IX. Old Business - No old business was discussed.

X. Public Comment

a. **Jesse Sommer** - Jesse identified petty crime, aggressive panhandling, and disruptive behavior as key concerns on Lark Street, although he generally does not feel physically unsafe. He highlighted gaps in enforcement and prosecution and requested someone qualified to discuss legal or legislative solutions at the upcoming membership meeting.

b. **Hannah McNamee** - Hannah described experiencing unprovoked aggression on Lark Street and emphasized that seemingly harmless individuals can still pose safety concerns. She also raised accessibility and appearance concerns about the string-light fixtures, suggesting their removal and alternatives such as wrapping trees with lights.

c. **C.J. Hughes** - C.J. proposed a volunteer street ambassador program to provide a visible community presence, particularly between 5:00 and 9:00 a.m. Board members supported further discussion, noting challenges with volunteer consistency and the need to coordinate with neighborhood associations. A paid model involving trained ambassadors could also be explored if funding becomes available.

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

XII. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned.

Motion: Adjourn Meeting (Dan W., Susan, all in favor)

Recorder,



Erica Scheer
Secretary of the Board