

# DOWNTOWN VENTURA PARTNERS



## Minutes of Board of Directors' Meeting August 26, 2009 Watermark Restaurant

**DVO Directors present:** Chairman Dave Armstrong, Vice Chair David Comden, Secretary Jerry Breiner, Treasurer Greg Smith and directors Jennifer Livia, Jim Rice, Jason Collis, Mark Hartley, Maria Fiore, Lucas Johnston, Jim Luttjohann, Zoe Taylor, Doug Wood, Clarey Rudd, Seana Marie and Ed Warren (absent: Christy Weir with excuse, Thom Wood)

**DVP Directors present:** Chairman Dave Armstrong, Vice Chair David Comden, Secretary Jerry Breiner, Treasurer Greg Smith and directors Mark Hartley, Cheryl Heitmann, Mike Merewether, Jeff Smith, Jeff Becker and Ed Warren (absent: Christy Weir with excuse)

**Other attendees:** Executive Director Rob Edwards, Marni Brook, Bernie Novatt, Serena Martinez, Sid White, David Wilson (VPD), Angie Hecht.

**The meeting was called to order at 8:37 a.m. by Vice Chair Comden.**

**Introductions** – Dave asked the members of the public to introduce themselves and their affiliations.

**Approval of previous board minutes** – A motion was made to approve the previous board minutes. Seconded and approved.

**Old Business | Executive Committee Report | David Comden** – David reported that we are waiting on final touches to Rob's contract in the next few days. The terms are in agreement, should be executed within the next week or so.

**Executive Director's Report | Rob Edwards** – Rob reported that he has moved in to our new office at 374 Poli Street, #203. We are still in need of a conference table and chairs for meetings, and he asked if anyone had contacts that might facilitate a donation of same. Updates were given to the following:

- **Outdoor Dining** - The outdoor dining ordinance final verbiage is now back from the City Attorney's office, and we should have the final signed copies by the City, ABC and VPD by weeks' end. DVO will be the entity to sign off on umbrellas, furniture and plant choices as the managing organization. Jim Rice thanked Rob for advocating and working so diligently on this, as it has and will continue to create a significantly positive impact on restaurants downtown who avail themselves of it. Question came up: will this increase the CUP fee? A: most probably yes, due to the enlarged footprint of the building. Rents may be charged at some point, but we don't know yet, as it hasn't played out. The application fee is \$300. Question: if there is no alcohol involved, will it still come to DVO? A: not sure. Jerry suggested that, once complete, the application and all pertinent information regarding the new ordinance be put up on our website, easy to find. Rob stated he would make that happen.
- **CDA conference** - Rob handed out the current brochure for the California Downtown Association conference, taking place late September. We discussed the need for a downtown map, which Jim Luttjohann said he is in final stages of preparing for this and other purposes.
- **Trestle** – Rob said CalTrans is working with us and the city to get approval from Union Pacific to paint the entire thing. Outreach is now going out to the State Senators. Discussion followed on the possibility of a photo-op AT the trestle to help stir up public interest and sentiment. Fact is, Union Pacific is being forced to negotiate with City Attorney Callone to renew their lease on the land at the Fairgrounds where they have a depot, the end of a 50-year lease. Barbara Evans asked if we could the names and addresses of those to contact in regards to getting this operation moving along, and Rob said it would be best to wait until we have all of our concepts together at one point – a media blitz would be more effective. Discussion.
- **Cultivate Ventura** – Rob mentioned that he had a phone call from a connection at Southern

California Gas (Sempra Energy), asking about help in a concept that would entail a grant of \$25,000 from them for green initiatives. The ER committee's Cultivate Ventura concept might well all within their confines, and Rob is pursuing this concept with the company. The grant will require tracking in Quickbooks.

- **Bank account and insurance** – Rob reported that with the help of Mike Merewether DVP has now an insurance policy set up and upgraded. We also have opened the DVP bank account at Montecito Bank and Trust, thanks to Marni Brook.
- **New signs in parking structure** – Discussion on new signage in structure, seemingly negative in its approach. Seana asked if it could be reworded and reprinted. David suggested flipping the sign and printing on the back to save money. Rob noted that the VIPs have printed out orange cards, warning people about locking their cars and their valuables due to some break ins. This negatively-charged attention getting device is not what the downtown needs at this critical juncture, and Jerry and Rob will bring it up at DAT next meeting.
- **Vagrancy issues in Plaza Park** – Long discussion on concepts, enforcement, funding. Jim Rice suggested it is time for DVO to take a position on the current state of affairs there. With daily problems, drug deals going down and general feeling of danger, it is not a park that families would want to visit. Jim L noted that the 1998 tourist survey had alcohol and drug problems were at the top of the things tourists noted were damaging to Ventura's image. Doug Wood stated that he lost approximately \$250,000 in military bookings due to the scene at Plaza Park when the research team was checking out the area. Zoe offered to go to speak with Rick Cole, either alone or with one or more of our board members. DVP is now armed as a 501C6 which can lobby, and perhaps that might be a new avenue to use we haven't yet. Jim Rice has spoken with three lieutenants about the situation, to no avail at this point. Suggestion was made to send a letter from DVP to demand enforcement of the law. Discussion. The proactive aspect of programming all three parks downtown will make a world of difference, but that requires funding.

**ACTION ITEM: Downtown Pedicab exclusive** – David noted the City Attorney office has been looking into giving an exclusive right to one party for a license to run pedicabs in the downtown. Discussion centered around why it would be good or bad for an exclusivity. Pros included quality control, enforcement of license, ease of contact, branding. Cons included free trade complaints, lack of quality control. Seana said that when she had her store in Santa Barbara, the pedicab business was just starting and, at first with few vendors, it worked great. Once the other vendors showed up, it was chaotic. Discussion. Doug stated he didn't like the idea of exclusives due to fair trade concepts, but he said there could be positives to it. Comment was made that a good example of an exclusive that works in town is EJ Harrison and Sons. The idea of a pilot program for a period not to exceed a certain number of years was discussed. Q: would this exclusivity be for the entire city or just the downtown? A: discussion. Jim Lutjohann and Rob said they would put together a letter to bring to the board for our next meeting, if the board approved the idea. There was a motion and second to create this letter, as long as the RFP process was not included as it would take too long to implement. Further discussion. Motion passed.

**DVO-DVP meeting format: David Comden** – David and the executive committee have discussed altering the way our meetings take place. Idea is to have two agendas but one meeting. The committee reports take too long in these meetings, and the idea is to have the reports emailed before the board meetings as an update, and if any board member has a question it can be raised at the meeting. The committee chairs would be required to send minutes to the Chair for distribution the weekend before the board meeting. Dave Armstrong will clarify this at the next meeting.

### **Committee Reports**

- **Economic Restructuring Committee | Rob Edwards for Dave Armstrong and Jim Rice** – Rob noted that committee has asked for a board vote on accepting grant monies from Sempra Energy for the Cultivate Ventura plan. Motion was made, seconded and approved. Zoe stated that the Economic Summit results required a "green working group" and this would fit nicely in to that plan. There are a couple of new retailers in town, and Buffalo Exchange and Urban Outfitters are open or due to open within the week. A big thank you to Jeff Becker and Mark Hartley for bringing them to town. Jerry gave an update on commercial activity at the WAV. Jim mentioned that there has been more activity on the noise ordinance and entertainment license issues at the Restaurant committee level. Jerry noted that at DAT VPD made mention of the fact that there have been a few complaints of late from hillside residents referencing noisy late night bars. Jim noted that Hush is now closed.
- **Design Committee | Rob Edwards for Lori Moll** – There was no meeting last week, the RFPs for the newsracks are going out.
- **Organization Committee | Lucas Johnston** – Lucas reported that the on the 20<sup>th</sup> the next merchant briefing will take place. The meeting is listed on the shopdowntownventura site but is not on the DVO site at this point. The Retail Smart Guys will once again be putting it on for us. Their

next seminar is tentatively scheduled for 9/17. Discussion followed on the candidate forum DVO will put on. Written responses to questionnaires will be required for participation, as they were last time. Jerry will work with Lucas and committee to come up with a target date (9/15) and target location.

- **Promotions Committee | David Comden** – Dave reported that there has been nothing new of merit, though the new managers of the new stores in town have expressed interest in hosting a Third Thursday event. Their “customer service friendly” mantra is something that all businesses should emulate, and hopefully they will share their business plans with other merchants.
- **DOT – DAT - SSTF | Jerry Breiner** – Jerry noted that the DAT covered a number of topics, as usual, at the last meeting including:
  - **Artwalk Funding** – Jerry asked Greg Smith if the monies collected by DVO had been turned in. Greg did not know of any checks, and Rob asked Jen if she had any DVO checks in her possession from the fundraiser. She said she did not but did say that all monies were given to the City. Discussion on followup thank yous.
  - **Cameras** – Due in the spring
  - **Homeless and transitional housing siting** – Jerry reported that he is working diligently with the Social Services Task Force Gateway Committee to help locate potential sites for this facility, and the committee has narrowed the search now to 12 properties, only two of which are in downtown. Neither, in Jerry’s opinion, will work for the purpose they are being sought for with various reasons.
  - **Substandard Housing at Ventura Inn, etc** – Jerry reported that trouble file opened by Code Enforcement at the Ventura Inn was closed, but the City inspector believes that another file may well be opened again due to the nature of the situation there. In discussion, Christy and Jerry will be putting together a meeting with Supervisor Bennett regarding the situation there and ask for County help in addressing the numerous issues of unsafe housing.

**New Business** – Seana noted her new grand reopening to take place 8/13. Same business, new name.

**Public Comments** – Mike noted that the Fair Parade trash bins were already full at 10:30, 30 minutes after the start of the parade, and he wondered if EJHarrison was aware of the situation. Clarey noted that he is serving on the Ventura County Library Task Force, and if anyone has comments regarding it to please notify him. Q: Is closing downtown Foster Library an option? A: County leases the building from the City, so yes. The idea is to NOT close it. Discussion.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m. | Respectfully submitted, Jerry Breiner – secretary, 2009-2010**