



## ROME DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

March 9, 2023  
Carnegie  
607 Broad Street

### MEETING MINUTES

Lytle called the meeting to order at 8:32am and welcomed members, city staff and guests. Members present: Kelli Duncan, Tayesha Lytle, Rhonda Wallace, DJ Rickman, Randy Quick and Elaine Abercrombie. City staff present: Aundi Lesley, Megan Otwell, Jennifer Bailey, Doug Walker, Thomas Goggans and Kelley Parker. Guests present: David Crowder and Kevin Dillmon.

### ACTION

**Approve February 2023 Minutes** – Vote moved to April 2023 meeting due to lack of quorum.

**Approve BID Financials** – Vote moved to April 2023 meeting due to lack of quorum.

**2023 Impact Grants** – Otwell presented the 2023 Impact Grant recipients voted on by the Promotions & Outreach Committee. The committee reviewed 12 applications with a total of \$6,000 to be awarded. The committee voted to award a \$1,000 grant to Rome Shakespeare Festival, Rome Symphony Orchestra, Rome Little Theatre, Rome International Film Festival, and the DeSoto Theatre. The committee also voted to award a \$500 grant to Going Caching and Schnauzer Fest. Lytle asked what organizations/events did not get picked. Otwell shared that Sylvan Learning Center, Swerve, Hospitality House, Rome Pride and RAD Eco Arts Fest did not receive impact grant funds this year. Staff will send an email to board members for final vote and approval.

### DISCUSSION

**Small Bar Ordinance** – Lesley updated board members on the current small bar ordinance that is being voted on by the City commission. It has already gone through the first reading and second reading will be on Monday, March 13. The ordinance is for businesses of 1800 sq. ft. or less and would require them to stop pouring by 11pm. No 50/50 food sales ratio will be required, the base liquor license fee would be \$2,000, and these businesses would not be allowed to have entertainment unless prior authorization is received from the ACC. Lesley shared that feedback from restaurant owners seems to be both positive and negative. Rickman's shared his concerns are that it would not be easily regulated, and that a new bar opened under the proposed ordinance would not have the same costs or profit margins that a business under the 50/50 ratio would have. He feels it is a step backwards and is not business friendly to current businesses. Liquor is the highest profit margin at 60-70% whereas a food profit margin is 10-15% at best. Dillmon proposed the idea of regulating the number of licenses being issued. Each restaurant owner also brought up the current liquor licensing fees and asked that the commission re-evaluate the fee schedule. Quick clarified that there are also two variances being voted on and they are not the same as the ordinance. The two variances are for Nathan Roberts – requesting 50% of his sales be from steel sales, and Combat Market – requesting 50% of his sales be from retail/merchandise. Lesley reiterated that Old Havana Cigar received the variance 10 years ago and they have been an asset to downtown.

**Parking Study** – Bailey presented the board with an update on the current parking study. In the first week of the study, 259 tickets were 'issued' for the 3 hour on-street limit. 41 permit holders were ticketed. Bailey shared feedback from downtown businesses, which seemed to be even across the field. 3 businesses stated they were impacted negatively, 3 businesses were neutral, and 4 businesses stated they were impacted positively. Duncan shared that when she helped go door-to-door to inform businesses of the study, she received overwhelmingly positive feedback and that most businesses she visited are happy that action is being taken.

**Deschamps Plaque at Town Green** – Lesley shared a rendering of the plaque, which will be installed by the Street Department. Approval has been received from both the City manager and County manager.

**Committee Update** – N/A

**Staff Reports** –

- Otwell briefly reviewed the DDA's 2022 Annual Report, concentrating on the social media aspect. Downtown's Facebook page has a following of 34,100 and grew by 8%. Per ZenCity, it is the top performing Facebook page in the City. Downtown's TikTok doubled it's following and Instagram increased by 12%. The Downtown website's top day in 2022 was October 8, the day of Fiddlin' Fest.
- Otwell shared that the First Friday lineup is almost complete, sponsorships are still available, and Loft Tours will be on April 22 this year.

**Other/Adjourn** – Lytle called to adjourn at 9:28am.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer Bailey-Bowers