



**Downtown Development Authority of Blakely  
MINUTES**

**Monday, October 23, 2023**

**5:30 pm**

**Alexander Building**

**Chamber-Development Authority Board Room**

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Dave Atkins, Beau Clenney, Edwin James, Jennifer Mulkey, Franklin Ford and Brad Clenney.

**ABSENT MEMBERS:** Heather Allred (excused - culinary training)

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Vikki Ford, Jordan Mulkey and Susanne Reynolds.

Dave Atkins, Interim DDA Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

- **MINUTES:** Brad Clenney made a motion to approve minutes from the September 25, 2023 planning session and regularly scheduled meeting. Seconded by Franklin Ford. All voted in favor.
- **FINANCIAL REPORT:** As of October 23, the One South Bank checking account: \$8,425.50, and the First State Bank of Blakely (Facade Grant Program) checking account: \$7500.00. A motion to approve the financial report was made by Beau Clenney and seconded by Brad Clenney. All voted in favor.
- **OLD BUSINESS:** Reynolds discussed the bylaws and asked the board to review the following: Section 1.6 (telephonic participation limited to 2 times per year), Section 1.11 (Parliamentary Procedures) with the agenda item request form, and Section 2.9(e) - Executive Director: Spending Authority - authorized to make approved budget expenditures of up to \$500. A motion to approve the Bylaws as presented was made by Franklin Ford and seconded by Jennifer Mulkey. All voted in favor.
- **NEW BUSINESS:** Reynolds explained that some of the City of Blakely's Code of Ordinances do not allow for "metal/aluminum" awnings in the Central Business District, which affects Downtown Blakely boundary & Facade Grant program (Section 18.87).

The ordinance would need to be examined and amended by the City Council before facade grant program funds and Historic Preservation Commission Cert. of Appropriateness could be released for the application presented.

Before the 10 Court Square application could be discussed, Franklin Ford recused himself from voting on the “10 Court Square - Facade Grant Application” because the property houses his business, Backlight. He exited the room while the application was discussed.

A motion was made by Beau Clenney that the 10 Court Square Facade Grant Application be approved pending (1) City ordinance amendment, (2) Certificate of Appropriateness process approval by City and HPC; and (3) HPC approval of 10 Court Square Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion was seconded by Brad Clenney and all voted in favor. All discussions related to the application were concluded and Franklin Ford re-entered the meeting.

- **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Dave Atkins commented on “incubators” for Downtown Blakely business development. The DDA would prepare a business and then it be turned over/sold to someone wanting to manage it. He has experience with this from his time on the DDA board in Little Rock, AR. A movie theater was specifically mentioned. Reynolds explained this was a great idea; however, not with a movie theater. Currently, the Director is in conversations with the Early County Board of Commissioners and County Administration on preparing the Early County/Old Blakely Theatre (where commissioner meetings are held) to show movies again and allow the Blakely DDA to manage the movie showings to benefit Downtown Blakely. Reynolds is working with County administration on submitting a Norfolk Southern - Thriving Communities grant to get the theatre equipped for showing movies again. It was suggested the funds raised from the future movie showings be allocated towards a specific DT business development project. The Early County Theatre movie showings would be a partnership with the county and Blakely DDA. Atkins also mentioned the old opera house above Collier Insurance and wants to begin having conversations with the Colliers about revitalizing the space. Many who have seen the space commented on how unique the space is to Downtown Blakely. Reynolds mentioned this could be a Public-Private Partnership opportunity and that a documentary could stem from it and help build interest/donations.

A brief discussion of the City taking over ownership of the Court Square State Route was had for safety and to make the Downtown more “walkable.”

- **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Reynolds asked if any members had door prize items they could donate for the Merchant Meet-Up on Monday, Oct. 30. If so, they could contact her. Franklin Ford mentioned it would be great to have Downtown Blakely stickers/decals to give all those in attendance. All 30 complimentary shake/tea combos have been claimed, but guests are still welcome to attend. They may purchase teas/shakes from Balance Nutrition-Blakely. Heather Allred notified Reynolds that local artist Penny Howard is interested in helping the DDA with a Paint Party (fundraiser). More details are coming soon, but the tentative date would be Nov. 28, after 5 pm. Board members asked to make sure nothing else was scheduled on that date that would conflict and affect

attendance. Reynolds also let the board know she was meeting with an S&L Integrated A/V technician to get an estimate of what it would cost to prepare the Early County theatre for movie showings. Board members can register for DDA 101 Training by letting Reynolds know. The Director will register them and purchase the online training. A decision by DCA and GA Dept of Economic Development on Rural Zone Designation communities should be announced before the end of the month.

- **OTHER DISCUSSIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Franklin Ford updated the board on the DDA website and emails. He will purchase the emails and send login information. He will also make a landing page for the Downtown Blakely website, so meeting minutes and agendas, along with other news can be accessed by the public. Vikki Ford asked if the establishment of an Arts Council would help Downtown receive more arts grants. Reynolds commented that it was not necessary for a community to have an official arts council to receive arts grants via GA Council for the Arts or National Endowment of the Arts. Vikki Ford also commented that if the Opera House could be restored and revitalized and the Collier Family (owners of the property) agreed, it would be appropriate to name the opera house after the Collier family.

Interim Chair Dave Atkins called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Brad Clenney and seconded by Franklin Ford. All voted in favor.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Susanne Reynolds, Blakely DDA Executive Director.

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Dave Atkins  
Interim Chair

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Jennifer Mulkey  
Interim Vice-Chair