



Thayer Street District Management Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, December 13, 2022
118 Waterman Street, 2nd floor, Providence, RI

MEETING MINUTES

The Thayer Street District Management Authority (TSDMA) board meeting was called to order at 9:05 A.M.

1. Roll Call

Directors: Joe Mardo, Chair; John Luipold; Lauren Berk; Katie Silberman; Liza Farr; and Donna Personeus, Executive Director.

Asbent: Paul Griesinger; Richard Dulgarian

Guests: Megan Megan Lewis, Brown University; Audrey McClellan, Social Media Consultant; Julia Evelyn, RIPTA Transportation Planner (via zoom), Sarah Ingle, RIPTA Director of Long Range Planning, John Plouffe, Project Manager of Combined Interior/Exterior Construction Process.

2. RIPTA Tunnel Redevelopment Status Update from Julia Evelyn, RIPTA Transportation Planner, Sarah Ingle, RIPTA Director of Long Range Planning, John Plouffe, Project Manager of Combined Interior/Exterior Construction Process.

Ms. Evelyn presented an updated plan for the RIPTA East Side Tunnel Redevelopment to the TSDMA Board of Directors. Key project goals were listed as safety, ADA accessibility, and comfort for riders. She explained that the following community engagement had taken place: stakeholder meetings, public meetings, community group meetings, email, online survey, and bus operations. Ms. Evelyn explained that the option 2 plan had the least amount of support and was dropped, option 1 had 33% support and option 3 had 47%, the largest amount of support. It has been decided that option 3 would be the preferred design, with option 1 has the back up. Mr. Luipold reminded the RIPTA representatives that changes need to be made to the north side of the tunnel plans; the walkway from Angell onto the Brown University should not be shown. That area is currently implying a public way, which it is not. Ms. Evelyn informed the members that the next steps of the project would include: stakeholder meetings in January for the West Side of the tunnel, finalizing details, moving the plan to a full design by fall, construction planned for the summer of 2024 (the exterior and interior at the same time). The goal is to complete the work in 2024. Ms. Berk voiced concerns about the loss of (4+) four plus parking spaces and asked how they would be replaced. Ms. Evelyn replied she was unsure how they would be replaced at this time. Mr. Luipold asked how the public funding would work, questioning now the public would be certain that the exterior upgrades would actually be constructed as detailed by the plans. Ms. Ingle replied that she was a grant writer and it was her job to secure the funds to complete the final project design that would be presented. Mr. Mardo voiced his concern on the tight turning radius on to Waterman, and questioned an expansion of the sidewalk in that location that could make that turn even more difficult. Ms. Personeus asked Julie to make a note that the planter

containers on either side of the tunnel entrance were purchased and owned by the TSDMA. She requested a plan be put into place as to how they would be used and moved safely. Several members had concerns regarding how RIPTA planned to maintain the area once the project was complete. The TSDMA has been maintaining the space for several years without receiving compensation. Board members mentioned that the letter sent to TSDMA outlining the services that had been provided and asking for compensation to continue providing services that had gone unanswered. Ms. Ingle confirmed that the letter had been received. Ms. Silberman stated that lighting and safety in the area were a large concern and that she thought Brown might be RIPTA's largest customer. Mr. Mardo noted that several businesses use the area on the side of the tunnel for trash containers, stating that the issue would need to be addressed. Ms. Evelyn was asked how this RIPTA bus stop was ranked in ridership volume. She stated that the stop serviced on average 300 riders a day and was one of RIPTA's top 10 stops. Ms. Personeus mentioned the snow removal services that the TSDMA had also been providing RIPTA in that area. Ms. Ingle, when questioned about adding art to the project, answered that she was planning on integrating working with Arts in the City to provide interior tunnel art. Mr. Luipold asked Ms. Ingle get back to the Board regarding a plan for maintaining the area once completed that could include the TSDMA receiving compensation and continuing the services provided. Members asked the RIPTA representative to continue to communicate updates to the TSDMA as stakeholders.

3. Discussion and Vote to Approve the Minutes from the Board Meeting on November 1, 2022.

Minutes from the November 1, 2022 Board meeting presented by Ms. Personeus were approved after a motion by Mr. Luipold, which was seconded by Ms. Farr. The vote was unanimous.

4. Discussion and Vote to Approve the Financial Report as provided on December 13, 2022.

Financial Reports were presented December 13, 2022 by Ms. Personeus. Mr. Luipold asked Ms. Personeus to check into several line item figures provided by the bookkeeper. After discussion, a vote to approve the reports was tabled to receive an update from the bookkeeper.

5. Social Media Report Presentation by Consultant Audrey McClelland

Ms. McClelland presented her social media monthly report for November 2022. Highlights of the report included an update on social engagement, influencer-related activity in November, and influencers scheduled for December. She mentioned that it was a good month overall. She had posted (39) thirty-nine posts/stories on Instagram (IG), and IG engagement and followers were up. She reported Facebook interaction was lower than October due to Taste of Thayer being in October. Both Small Business Saturday and our Santa kick-off event helped maintain a good engagement level. Ms. McClelland stated that she continues to use twitter as a traditional news distribution tool.

6. Executive Director Report

Ms. Personeus provided her Executive Director report on December 8, 2022, to Board members. There was no further discussion.

7. Thayer Street Marketing Committee Update

Ms. Berk provided updates from the marketing committee meeting. She presented members with the 2023 TSDMA Calendar of Events. The date of March 4th, with rain date March 5th, was approved for the Ice Sculpture Stroll. A summary of the Holiday events was provided.

8. Working Group Thayer Holiday Lights Update

Ms. Personeus provided members with updates on the holiday lights and decorations that were installed for the 2022 season.

9. Redevelopment Update on 279 Thayer (Two Cousin LLC) and 235 Meeting (Boutros Salo & Boghos)

Ms. Personeus provided the Board with an update provided by Rouben Balagian, project manager on the redevelopments of 279 Thayer (Two Cousin LLC) or 235 Meeting (Boutros Salo & Boghos). He stated that at the 279 Thayer Street project they had completed demolition of all buildings on site and removal of foundations where safe. Their engineering team is days away from completing engineering plans for shoring up the site and adjacent buildings. Once completed and approved, they will begin shoring the site. On the 235 Meeting Street project, they have completed securing the site with permanent shoring and are getting ready to start connecting utilities and erecting the building structure.

10. Thayer Street District Curbside Study Update

Ms. Farr thanked the Board members for the letter of support and its quick turnaround to help to secure a USDOT SMART Grant that would help fund her curbside study and include Thayer Street. She confirmed that she had submitted the grant application. Ms. Farr was asked to check on the use of cones to block off large sections of Thayer Street for construction vehicles. Ms. Personeus mentioned that she had received several complaints from businesses on the serious reduction of available customer parking spaces and that “No Parking” permit signs were not posted. Ms. Farr responded she would check on the situation and report back.

11. Thayer Business Update

There were no updates at this time.

12. Other Business

Mr. Luipold mentioned that Blue State Coffee had closed and there was a lot of interest in the location. He also mentioned that Yaz Chicken had leased the former Tropical Smoothie Cafe location.

Board members were asked to consider possible candidates, who are property owners, to fill the remaining Board position.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 A.M.