

Jewelry District Association
Board Meeting September 11, 2013
Brown Department of Continuing Education

Board Members Attending: Arthur Salisbury, Phoebe Blake, Tom Donovan, Ken Orenstein

Special Guest: Seth Yurdin, Providence City Councilman, District 1

Meeting called to order: 4:15 pm

JDA President Arthur Salisbury: Let's call the meeting to order and would attendees introduce themselves.

Lt. O'Connor of the Brown Police: During the summer the number of incidents in the Richmond/Friendship area declined significantly. The action has moved to College Hill. One reason for the decline downtown: high visibility of Providence and Brown police patrols. Both departments continue to work pro-actively together.

Salisbury: JDA is happy to see the patrols both around the bars and throughout the Jewelry District. Even so, on a recent Saturday night, 3 car windows were broken on Ship St.

Lt. O'Connor: We have seen what appear to be party buses. We are monitoring that situation.

Salisbury: JDA is pleased to welcome Councilman **Seth Yurdin**. Over the years, our council representatives have been invisible. We've had more meetings with Councilman Yurdin than all past representatives combined. He has been helping us and the Downtown Hospitality Committee develop effective bar regulations and look at other quality of life issues.

Councilman Yurdin: Yes, we have been working together a lot. Dramatic events downtown made us convene a group to look at such things as how we license bars and parking lots. The push for better regulations has resulted in real improvements. More changes are coming.

With regard to zoning, the City had a deadline to set DownCity goals. Now the 195 Commission has been given extraordinary powers as a stand-alone Board of Review for its land. It's not totally clear how the upcoming re-writing of the overall city zoning works with that. So the public needs to keep watch.

Then there's budgeting, the big challenge. We pay our taxes to the state and then beg to get it back. That's how it seems to work. **Salisbury:** What about real estate taxes? **Yurdin:** Obviously, the first step is checking to make sure the assessor got all the facts right. On the expense side, the Projo reported that for three years there have only been slight increases. That's good. **Olin Thompson:** So thing haven't changed much on the spending side. But assessments in buildings where units are identical in square feet are all over the place. **Yurdin:** There's another

issue. Too much of City government is paid for by real estate taxes and values do shift up and down. With an income tax, it's essentially predictable.

Ken Orenstein: Congratulations for a systematic effort on the bar regulations. But the state Department of Business Regulation has been making up its own rules. On another topic: the Complete Streets movement says that we only have guidelines not rules for accommodating pedestrians and bikes. **Yurdin:** A lot of concepts are built in; it's a beginning.

Salisbury: We've gotten rid of bad clubs and built much better relations with the License Bureau, but the DBR just tossed out the bottle law. We are meeting with Richard Licht to see how we can return control to the License Bureau and direct protests to the courts. **Yurdin:** That may be an issue of costs.

Yurdin: I'm involved with a number of health issues, including how to keep tobacco — some of it is candy-like — away from kids. **O'Connor:** what about hookahs. Are they legal?

Peter McClure: Jan Brodie of the 195 Commission has said that the Richmond & Friendship St. clubs are a visible road block to development. So are the aerial high tension wires across the river. That project has been stalled through a series of blunders for years. Can you push this important project over the hiccups? **Jan Brodie:** We'll do our best to collaborate on the clubs. But that presentation about burying the power lines was for information only. **Orenstein:** At Dynamo House, Brown plans residential units. They want to re-open some windows, but don't want students using high tension towers for laundry lines. **Yurdin:** Getting the players together is tough. We've written a lot of letters to the PUC. It's a chicken and egg situation.

Phoebe Blake: We need a transportation plan. I hear the zoning revise will look at parking. We have 35 acres of lots in the JD. **Brodie:** It's a demand and supply question. We'll be looking at key intersections... where people want to be in cars, on foot, on bikes, cars-on-demand. **Yurdin:** It's good to initiate discussion now, front-loading it with the planning people to avoid last minute decision making. We want more gems like Blackstone Blvd. Like the cityWALK idea. **Blake:** Now's a good time to mention Mayor Taveras's thorough and clearly stated support for cityWALK. Reads from letter (Attach Taveras letter).

Karen Sibley: What is that falling down, boarded up building down the street? **Orenstein:** A coastal steamer ticket office. National Grid has a transformer in there and is following the ordinance "Demolition through neglect."

Yurdin: Thanks for inviting me. It's been nice being here."

Blake: Re: 195, a license arrangement for parking at 95 Chestnut was mentioned at the last 195 meeting. **Brodie:** It's just temporary permission for them to use a driveway across 195 land.

Thompson: We need to recognize the importance of Point St. as a foot, bike, auto (including fire trucks and ambulances) East-West corridor, much of it going to the hospitals.

Brodie: We are working on a framework for a “developer package.” Showing what’s possible, what’s preferred so we’ll have criteria for weighing competing developer proposals. We’ve got three firms helping us. DK Communications on PR strategies... the Jewelry District’s Malcolm Greer Design on identity and how we frame our communications graphically. And Goody-Clancy regarding design and development strategies for the land. **Blake:** We saw the term *Knowledge District* in a presentation. **Brodie:** The 195 land is not a district. And everyone has a Knowledge District dream. We’re working on the communications issues. The Jewelry District is THE district.

Brodie: We’re looking at how other areas are going about this kind of development. **Lew Dana:** Can you repeat the time line you outlined at a recent 195 meeting. **Brodie:** Right now: Dyer street will become a mess. Longer term: Complete work on west side, Spring 2014; some preliminary work has begun on the east side, but digging starts in the Spring of 2014, and will finish in Spring 2015. The park: finished up in 2015 and the footbridge in 2016.

Orenstein: Some streets into the 195 land are wretched. Not a great welcome to developers.

Brodie: Bill Bombard should know what the schedule is. **Orenstein:** Viaduct reconstruction at Providence Place will impact traffic elsewhere. We’re a step removed, but traffic chooses its way.

Salisbury: On some other matters: The city is suing DBR on the bottle bill ruling. And DBR ruled on another matter — without notifying the city of the hearing. JDA Membership billing has brought in \$2900 so far. A number of members, including a few Board Members, haven’t renewed, but checks keep coming in. **Tom Donovan:** The bills are out there. **Salisbury:** And we have our first supporting advertiser on the website.

Sharon Steele: Any news about Lot 44? **Salisbury:** Need to call Bob Azar. The developers missed the meeting at the Downtown Design Review Board. But they got their approval on the parking variance. **Orenstein:** West Broadway B. A. came up with their own 2-pager on design criteria. Might be helpful to take a look at it and do something for the JD. **Steele:** is the Lot 44 architect cooperating? **Salisbury:** Yes, he came and talked to us at a meeting of the Planning & Zoning committee. **Unknown voice:** Does anyone see a link between the reduction in crime DownCity and Lt. Figueredo retiring from the force?

On that note, Meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lewis D. Dana