

**Athens Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, August 13, 2025
2:00pm
ADDA Office, 250 W. Broad Street**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff Bishop, Kelly Girtz, Mike Hamby, Jason Leonard, and Andrew Ratcliffe

OTHERS PRESENT: Blake Aued, Linda Ford, Josh Koons, David Lynn, Greg Sowell, Rachel Swartz, and Allison Wright

1. **Approval of Minutes** – Mike Hamby motioned to approve the minutes from June 9, 2025, and June 17, 2025. Jeff Bishop seconded. Motion passed.
2. **Public Input** - None
3. **Directors' Report**

Planning and Outreach

A. Community Enhancement Program – David Lynn relayed a staff concern regarding CEP to the Board. The CEP process in the past was much simpler. The budget was \$60K and the ADDA would write a check for each event and then would get reimbursed at the end of the fiscal year by ACCGov Finance Department. Now that the CEP budget is \$250K it is a larger burden for ADDA to carry, so we will be asking for more regular reimbursements. Another level of concern is that there are several events in August and the Mayor and Commission do not authorize the funds until September. Directors checked with Andrew Saunders to confirm we could move forward with the August payouts and still get reimbursement. The ADDA would like to ask that the CEP fund allocation be approved during the ACCGov's budget deliberation. The ADDA will also be discussing this concern with Central Services at our upcoming meeting.

B. Holiday Lights – Josh Koons, with Koons Environmental Design, presented the board with a design plan for holiday lights in downtown Athens. Koons also discussed the pros and cons of renting the lights versus purchasing the light and using a professional lighting company to manage the costs and logistics. He explained to the board that in order for everything to be in place by the week of Thanksgiving, the ADDA would need to start the project in September. Mike Hamby suggested that we begin by renting the lights and focusing ADDA resources on College Ave and Clayton St. and give ACCGov's Central Services the ability to focus their lights in other areas of downtown, specifically Washington Street.

Mike Hamby also would like to find some sponsorship for future years to help with the cost and the ability to keep the lights going every year. Allison Wright asked how we would coordinate this project with Central Services, and Kelly Girtz said that he anticipates a planning meeting between the ADDA and Central Services, where the ADDA would adopt Clayton Street, and Central Services would shift their focus to Washington allocating ACCGov resources there. Jeff Bishop would like to see a long-term plan of removing the bushes and replanting with the lighting plan in mind. Board discussed making sure the lighting design covers a majority of the retail area and not leaving “dark” areas. Board discussed how the lighting Downtown should be a destination for December during a time when all the students are gone. Kelly Girtz made a motion to authorize the Directors to engage Josh Koons to develop a plan that satisfies the Board’s concept and the plan for year one to cover Clayton Street from Lumpkin to Thomas (Blocks B, C, E, and F on PowerPoint), and College Ave from Broad St. to Hancock Ave. (Blocks D, G, and J). Mike Hamby seconded. Motion passed.

- C. **College Square Redesign** – Jeff Bishop recused himself from the discussion of finances for the College Square project. In April 2025, ADDA staff solicited Downtown lending institutions for their interest in partnering with the ADDA for a construction loan of approximately \$7 million. The ADDA Board of Directors made it clear that they preferred partnering with a local bank with a strong track record in downtown Athens. Each response, however, was to be considered on its own merit for suitability regarding this project. Three banks responded: First American Bank and Trust (FABT), Synovus, and Truist Bank. The board was provided with a chart showing how each bank was scored. The proposals were all competitive. Considering the preference of a local Downtown lender, FABT stood out as the most competitive, and staff recommended the board accept the offer by FABT. Kelly Girtz motioned to accept the FABT proposal for the College Square project and authorize Directors and Chairman to execute all paperwork necessary to finalize the loan application. Mike Hamby seconded. Motion passed.

Business Services

- D. **Request for Additional Parking Holidays** – As per Section 3-3-25 and 3-3-30 of the Athens-Clarke County Municipal Code, parking fees are not enforced on Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day. Juneteenth and Indigenous People’s Day are not included in these parking holidays. Juneteenth and Indigenous People’s Day were added as ACCGov and ADDA holidays in 2022. Mike motioned to authorize the directors to request that the Mayor and Commission add Juneteenth and Indigenous

Peoples' Day to the list of holidays on which parking fees are not enforced. Kelly Girtz seconded. Motion passed.

- E. **Downtown Survey** – The ADDA board has asked the directors to explore how a survey of Downtown businesses could best be conducted to compile business owners' priorities and perceptions of downtown Athens. Linda Ford looked at Newnan, Ga, Canton, GA, Walla Walla, WA, Greensboro, NC, and Gainesville, FL. These communities have done surveys that took 5-7 minutes to complete and could be accessed several ways, including a QR code. The surveys had an average of 11 questions with a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Gainesville, FL, had the most comprehensive survey, where they engaged with a consulting group as part of a Business Improvement district. As part of public input for College Square, SPG Planners conducted a survey that focused on College Square but included a few broader questions about Downtown. Staff can build on these responses to further investigate successes and challenges Downtown.
4. **Executive Session** – Kelly Girtz motioned to enter into executive session with Staff and Commissioner Allison Wright included. Jeff Bishop seconded. Motion passed.
- Kelly Girtz motioned to adjourn executive session. Mike Hamby seconded. Motion passed.
5. **Suggest agenda topics for following month's meeting** - the board would like to see the Pay by App extended to the entire Downtown.
6. **Adjourn** – Kelly Girtz motioned to adjourn the meeting and Mike Hamby seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm.

Jason Leonard, Board Chair

Linda Ford, Director of Business Services

David Lynn, Director of Planning and Outreach