



Downtown Business | Downtown Life

December 3rd, 2009
General Meeting Minutes
(Unapproved draft)

Welcome and Introductions - Ken Grassi

Treasurer's Report- Marv Sandberg
Checking Account \$5287
\$1450 – Tollefest Ad

VP's Reports - There were no reports from the VP's for North Central. South – Tollefest is Friday, Saturday and Sunday!

BIA/TPD Safety Report:

Rob Jepson, TPD, reported in the month of November that there were: 20 Directed Policing Arrest, 98 Arrests in Sector 1 outside of Directed Policing Areas/Activities, 123 Abandoned Auto Impounds, 4 Abated Properties, 247 Parking Citations. Sgt Kitselman and his Day Shift Squad have taken Directed Policing to the next step. Sgt Kitselman has taken identified issues in the sector and challenged his squad to address them. Every two weeks his squad targets one of these issues. The first issue they started with was Parking Problems, and they wrote 247 Parking Citations. Their next issue was Abandoned Autos, and they impounded 115 Abandoned Autos. Their next target is Suspended Drivers. If you have a problem area or question – email Rob at rjepson@cityoftacoma.org. Request a complete safety report contact dmgsecretary@gmail.com.

Chelsea Levy, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber/BIA reported that the Security Meeting is held the first Thursday of the month at the Chamber Office at 2:00 PM. Chamber Economic Horizon Forecast – December 10 at the Convention Center – 7 AM. Love Tacoma – December 9 – Enoteca Wine, December 29 – Goldfish Tavern & Zoo Lights.

Advocacy:

Pacific Plaza Presentation: Dan Putnum

Developer Dan Putnum outlined the change that was prompted by the down economy and the credit crunch, as a way for vacant space to be filled with something, rather than remain empty. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," he said. "In this case, we don't have the bush. There is no plan B. There is no retail and there won't be retail for some time to come."

Pacific Plaza investors tried for three year during the construction and the last five months since the building opened to find a retail tenant. They have been unsuccessful.

Putnam outlined six reasons why the City should allow the change:

1. The AG really wants to come to Pacific Plaza and he claims there is no close second place in consideration.
2. The public benefits with better exposure for their consumer protection division and it adds people to the street.
3. The AG's limited exposure adds 50 feet of retail frontage when we consider the removal of the loading dock.
4. The AG's guarantees long term parking revenue that is at risk if they don't locate within the parking system.
5. The AG's lease would fill the rest of their building so they can aggressively sign a major retail anchor.
6. The AG's lease stabilizes their financial position and reduces the risk of financial non-performance.

Street Level Retail: Steph Farber, LeRoy Jewelers - Read Proposed City Council Letter

'In late November, a sub-committee of the Downtown Merchants Group (DMG) and the DMG's executive board prepared a response for council to the current proposal from the developers of Pacific Plaza for an alteration to their development agreement. At the December meeting of the DMG, Dan Putnam and his associates gave a full presentation to the group outlining the project and the proposed changes. Following that presentation, the membership voted to ratify the following amended letter.

On behalf of the Downtown Merchants Group (DMG), current President Ken Grassi, and past Presidents Patricia Lecy-Davis, Marty Campbell, Gayle Rieber and Phyllis Harrison, are writing to state the organization's opposition to any long-term use of prime retail space for non-retail uses. Each of the myriad consultant reports the City has commissioned over the years has pointed out that retail activity is the most important element in attracting housing, attracting commercial use, and making our city livable.

We are extremely concerned that alterations to an agreement are being requested on the basis of a potential grocery store rather than a firm contract for retail uses of the proposed spaces. We suggest that a grocery store located within the downtown will be a magnet for other retail activities. Why foreclose on the creation of a node of retail activity at the Pacific Avenue side of Pacific Place by turning

approximately one third of the promised retail space into offices instead? If offices attracted retail, we would have had an easier time attracting retail all along, and retail spaces around the Russell Company would have been full. Retail attracts retail, generating activity and traffic on the streets that office workers who arrive at 8 and depart at 5 leave empty much of the time.

The Downtown Merchants Group applauds the work and the vision behind the Pacific Plaza development. We understand the need to encourage development and to maintain an environment that is developer-friendly and provides market flexibility. At the same time, we recognize that the single most important element in energizing an urban center is retail, not offices. Retail activity generates feet on the street and lights in the storefronts. Retail activity attracts customers and clients from throughout a region. Retail activity improves the climate for commercial development as well.

We fear a precedent that will result in the increased commitment of prime retail space for non-retail uses in order to fill space. While we all want to see full storefronts rather than empty ones, we need to be working together on long-range vision of a healthy downtown. We fully appreciate the risks of development. We share those risks every day. We would, in fact, appreciate opportunities to work with developers to bring new retail downtown and to create win-win situations that are not happening now.

Major development projects like Pacific Plaza have the capacity to do great good and to do great damage to any community. The public investment in this project makes the question of public interest all the more pressing. Much in the way of public funding has gone into the Pacific Plaza project, from the Green Roof to the Turkish Baths in the basement. The space fronting Pacific Avenue has been contracted to the developers at a very, very low price, indicating the City's recognition that Retail use is hard to create. The City's partnership must guide the project toward the larger public good. Each entity in Tacoma, indeed each developer, landlord, and retailer in this region knows how difficult it is to do business in the present economy. But the economy will change. Long-term leases which convert potential retail space to offices will hinder, not aid in this City's renewal.

We implore Council to adhere to a strategy that will grow a healthy retail presence in our downtown core and hence encourage commercial success as well. We urge Council not to succumb to the pressures and temptations of every new project that requests a change in plans to ensure its own success. We remind the Council of several planning documents, Destination Downtown, adopted by the City in 2000, the Downtown Tacoma Retail Strategy, produced in 2001 in collaboration with The Farmers Market and the Downtown Merchants Group, and the 2003 Downtown Retail Strategy by Paula Reese and Maestri Designs, all outlining the need for sustained commitment to a focused and cohesive revitalization plan--a plan we should actually stick to. Such sustained commitment provides an infrastructure for dialogue—early dialogue between stakeholders before individuals have become invested and entrenched in plans that work well for some but not at all for others.

A shared vision and a consistent strategy can help us all to work together to build the healthy downtown we all want. We stand ready to be partners with the City, Pacific Plaza, and other developers to share the risk and the rewards of developing a long-term, sustainable plan for the revitalization of our downtown and the health of our greater community.'

Ballot Vote by Membership – Position Regarding Pacific Plaza

December 15 – Council Vote, December 8 – Study Session

Tollefest - A Winter Festival Update: Ken Grassi – Grassi's

Friday – Sunday, 11-6, Santa – 2PM Saturday, 5 PM Saturday – Tree Lighting, Several Vendors scheduled, Sing-A-Longs in the evenings, Buy your Christmas Tree from the Local Tree Lot. Come get your passport!

First Night Update, Steph Farber, LeRoy Jewelers Posters and flyers available! Come see the Fire Clock, Jewish & Black Gospel Choirs, Tacoma City Ballet, and much more! If you'd like to sell buttons in your retail location let Steph know.

Good of the Order

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10AM.

Thank you to the BCPA for the used of the Pantages, First Citizens Bank for coffee Judi Hyman, Two Koi, for treats and drawing

Join us at 8:00am January 7th at the Pantages!