



Public Affairs Committee
April 9, 2024, 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Hybrid, In person and via Zoom

MINUTES

In Attendance

Committee members: Stephen Brett, Beau Simon, Spencer Scheler, Wes Tyler, Russell Kiel Jr., Darcy Brown, Tammy Brock, Timothy Falvey, Erik Murray, Lauren Ellis, Brian Fenwick, and Pam Mendelsohn.

Staff: Marisa Rodriguez (CEO), Ken Rich (COO), Melanie Medina (Executive Assistant), Kristina Ghishan (Intern).

Guests: Joe Sangaridi (BART), Jackie Thornhill (Department of Emergency Management).

1. Call to order and Introductions.

Marisa Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Introductions were made.

2. Public Comment

Marisa called for public comment. Seeing none, Marisa moved to the next agenda item.

3. Announcements

a. Union Square Foundation Annual Luncheon- Save the Date May 3rd

Marisa informed the committee to save the date for May 3rd for the Union Square Foundation's Annual Luncheon and noted that it is sold out.

b. Union Square in Bloom

Marisa expressed gratitude to participating businesses for their involvement in the bloom initiative and highlighted that businesses outside the district are also taking part. She announced the VIP event scheduled for April 18th at the Rotunda for the bloom gown reveal, with the gown being debuted to the public at the Mother's Day event on May 12th. The Mother's Day event will feature a band, flowers, a fashion show, and high tea offerings at hotels.

c. Op-Ed

Marisa informed the committee about her op-ed about Union Square that was published in the San Francisco Business Times. It covered the importance of Union Square to the City as a whole, the importance of city partnerships, and a call to rediscover Union Square.

d. CDA Lobby Day

Marisa informed the committee that she attended CDA Lobby Day that took place in Sacramento, noting her role as a board member for CDA. Marisa outlined her four main requests for Union Square: support and accountability for clean and safe



initiatives, economic development funding and resources, housing conversions to enhance neighborhoods, and narrative support to allocate resources for destination marketing to promote positive tourism narratives.

- e. Powell Street Project Updates- Next Community Meeting 4/11 at Barnes Hotel
Ken shared details about the estimated cost of the first phase of the Powell Street Project, which is approximately \$3 million. He expressed optimism about securing additional funding for this phase. The next stakeholder meeting will be on April 11th at the Barnes Hotel. There will be three opportunities to hear from the design team about the possibilities for Powell.

- f. Action to approve Letter of Support for AB 2488 Downtown Revitalization and Economic Recovery Financing District
Ken shared the Letter of Support for AB2499 which expresses the Union Square Alliance's support for Assembly Bill 2488 (Ting) regarding Downtown Revitalization and Economic Recovery Financing Districts. The bill empowers local governments to establish districts aimed at converting empty office spaces into new housing to address challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on office culture and commuting patterns. The letter emphasizes the need for creative solutions to prevent economic decline in city centers. AB 2488 is seen as a solution that can generate economic activity, revitalize city centers, and address housing shortages.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the letter of support for AB 2488as motioned by Spencer Scheler and seconded by Tim Falvey.

- 4. **Action** to approve the March 12, 2024, minutes.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the minutes from March 12, 2024, as motioned by Stephen Brett and seconded by Spencer Sechler

- 5. **Jackie Thornhill; Department of Emergency Management, Street Crisis Response Team**

Marisa introduced Jackie Thornhill, a public information officer from the Department of Emergency Management, who spoke to the committee about the Street Crisis Response Team. Jackie informed the committee that the team manages the street response program, providing mental health care services and coordinating various street operations aimed at addressing homelessness and related concerns. She outlined the history of the team, which dates back to 2004 with the establishment of a street medicine response team, followed by the creation of the Healthy Streets Operation Center in 2018. Since 2020, the team has expanded to include additional street teams focusing on crisis response, overdose response, wellness, and coordinated care.

Jackie described the three services offered by the team: crisis response, rapid response, and planned outreach, with goals centered around building trust, coordinating care, and linking individuals to services. Strategies include structural coordination, data coordination, and accountability alignment. The creation of this team is aimed to reduce



non-emergency service calls to 911 by redirecting the call to the appropriate city department. She discussed the team's public education campaign aimed at raising awareness among merchants, nonprofits, and city leaders about the team's services and purpose.

Discussion took place regarding the clarification between 911 and 311 calls, emphasizing that 911 calls are for emergencies while 311 calls are for non-emergencies. She advised that if unsure, it's safest to make a 911 call. Jackie also directed the committee to visit sf.gov/okaytocall for more information on when to use 911 versus 311.

6. Joe Sangaridi: BART

Joe Sangaridi addressed the committee about BART safety and his candidacy for the BART Board in District 9. He emphasized BART's significance as the second-largest transit agency in the country and discussed safety concerns related to BART, including the impact of office policies on ridership. Joe noted that BART ridership has remained around 40% due to remote work policies and changing rider perceptions. He highlighted decreasing service quality on BART and warned about an upcoming fiscal cliff that could result in reduced operational hours, potentially limiting service to one train every 30 minutes and no trains after 7 pm.

Joe mentioned improvements in addressing harassment on BART due to increased policing. He highlighted the new majority on the BART Board as an opportunity to shift public opinion and improve services. When asked about employee impacts, Joe indicated that employment-related questions are still being determined.

Marisa Rodriguez inquired about BART's public relations efforts, to which Joe explained that BART has its own PR department but often faces negative press coverage. Marisa emphasized the importance of Powell Station.

Discussion took place regarding future PAC speakers including SF Travel and the CA Retailers Association.

7. Adjournment 10:37am

- **Next Meeting: May 14th, 2024, 9:00am**