



Public Affairs Committee

May 14, 2024, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Hybrid, In person and via Zoom

Minutes

In Attendance

Committee members: Stephen Brett, Spencer Scheler, Russell Kiel Jr., Darcy Brown, Tammy Brock, Timothy Falvey, Erik Murray, Lauren Ellis, Brian Fenwick, Casey Neuburger, Donald Thomas, Jessie Kozar, and Josh Callahan.

Guest: Rachel Michelin (CA Retailers Association)

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

1. Call to order and Introductions.

Marisa Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Introductions were made.

2. Public Comment

Marisa called for public comment. Discussion took place regarding luxury retailers and the announcement of Shreve & Co.

3. Announcements

a. Union Square Foundation Annual Luncheon- Recap

Marisa thanked all those who sponsored the Union Square Foundation Annual Luncheon, stating that the event was a success and was a sold out event. She thanked the presenting sponsor, United Airlines, who included two free airline tickets to be given away in a raffle.

b. Union Square in Bloom: Mother's Day Event, Closing Event: August 17

Marisa shared that the Mother's Day event went well. There was a live salsa band, candle giveaway, and a fashion show by Collen Quen revealing the Bloom gown.

c. Powell Street Project Updates

Ken announced that the next stakeholder meeting, which will be the third meeting, will possibly take place on June 10th at 1pm in the Marker Hotel. This meeting will showcase the final concept and the ways the project can be phased out based on funding. This time, there will only be 1 session instead of 3.

Ken also noted that the Mayor proposed a bond for the November ballot that would allocate funds for Powell Street. The bond must get Board approval first before being added to the November ballot. Darcy Brown asked if the bond is only for Powell Street. Ken responded stating that it is not solely for Powell. Ken added that the date is not



confirmed yet, however there will be a public open house held for the Powell Street project.

4. **Action** to approve the April 9, 2024, minutes.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the minutes from April 9, 2024, as motioned by Darcy Brown and seconded by Josh Callahan.

5. **Rachel Michelin; President & CEO of California Retailers Association**

Rachel Michelin provided an overview of the 12 bills that the association is advocating to advance to the Governor's desk by the end of June, focusing on retail theft and organized retail crime. These bills address various aspects, including penalties for repeat offenders and boosters, tighter regulations on aggregation, probable cause criteria, auditing for convenience stores, enhancements related to smash-and-grab incidents, rail theft, multi-jurisdictional crimes, and the implementation of the Fast Pass program for immediate case decisions by district attorneys.

Additionally, there are 5 bills on the Senate side covering topics such as car break-ins, strengthening organized retail crime statutes, addressing loopholes in online marketplaces, arson crimes, and increasing sentencing enhancements.

Marisa expressed gratitude to Rachel and proposed a motion to supporting the bill package through letters, emails, and phone calls as needed to the State on behalf of the Alliance for the bills proposed by the California Retailers Association, demonstrating the Alliance's commitment to addressing these critical issues affecting the retail community.

Action: The committee unanimously approved for the Alliance to submit letters of support for the CA Retailers Association Bill Package, as motioned by Erik Murray and seconded by Stephen Brett.

6. **Topics for "Bloom Loop" Series**

Marisa announced that the Alliance is collaborating with the Business Times on a four-part series addressing the current state of Union Square. The scheduled release dates are June 24, September 17, October 18, and December 6. The first piece will cover topics such as the district's recovery and its distinction as a 'reset' rather than a downturn. It will provide insights into pedestrian counts, store openings, and Alliance initiatives like Bloom, Winter Walk, and SF Live events. Additionally, the piece will delve into the Powell Street Improvement Project, efforts by Clean + Safe teams, job opportunities within Union Square, and the existing infrastructure supporting the district. The second piece of the four-part series focuses on the concept of creating a "24 Hour Neighborhood" in Union Square. It will explore potential zoning improvements, including building conversions and the need for feasibility studies. It will also discuss the thriving food and beverage scene, the impact of conventions on the area, highlight various events, and the existing transportation infrastructure aiming to provide insights into the dynamic and evolving nature of the district. The third installment will focus on Resetting



retail and the future of retail while the fourth installment will wrap up the year on the future of a hospitality zone and looking ahead into 2025.

Marisa added that the Alliance is also working on a series with the Nob Hill Gazette, with one article planned for the spring and another for the holiday season. Following this announcement, the discussion shifted to hotel pricing in Union Square during conferences.

The committee provided feedback on the series, suggesting a focus on current developments rather than long-term projects. They emphasized caution in promoting police presence and recommended including tourist testimonials to provide unbiased opinions.

7. **Adjournment at 10: 41am.**
 - **Next Meeting: June 11, 2024, 9:00 am**