



**UNION SQUARE ALLIANCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING**

Minutes

**January 23, 2025 – 9:00-11:30 a.m.
Parc55 San Francisco – A Hilton Hotel – 55 Cyril Magnin
3rd Floor, Market Street Room**

Board Members in attendance (all in person): Clif Clark, David Lewin, Don Thomas, Evan J. Kaizer, J. Timothy Falvey, James Sangiacomo, Jordan Buckley, Julie Taylor, Kevin Flanagan, Lauren Ellis, Lin Huber, Mark Sullivan, Maxine Papadakis, Peter Hart, Russell D. Keil, Jr., Shirley Howard-Johnson, Stephen Brett, and Wes Tyler.

Staff and contractors: Marisa Rodriguez (CEO), Benjamin Horne (CFO), Daniela Vasile (COO), Zarrina Yousufzai (Finance & HR Associate), Eva Schouten (Public Realm & Events Manager), Jessica Chilingirian (Marketing and Communications Associate), Liza Bernard (Events Coordinator), Melanie Medina (Executive Assistant), AnaKatrina Cortado (Intern), Beau Simon (Legal Counsel), Chip (Block by Block), Don Lepana (Block by Block), Adrian Garcia (Block by Block), and Joe Shelley (Legion).

Guests: Supervisor Danny Sauter (D3), Tita Bell (Chief of Staff), Mark Hennon (BRV), Scott Rowitz (Yerba Buena CBD), Tammy Brock (Property Owner), Darcy Brown, and Jackie Hazelwood (OEWD).

Summary of Actions Taken by the Board of Directors

- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved to accept the CEO's report including ratifying the actions of the Executive committee from December 19, 2024, as motioned by Julie Taylor and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the November 26, 2024, meeting minutes, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Clif Clark.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the mid-year report, as motioned by Mark Sullivan and seconded by Evan Kaizer.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Union Square Foundation management agreement for Jan-June 2025, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Mark Sullivan.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved to move forward with the Field Operations contract for the full development design phase, as motioned by David Lewin and seconded by Jordan Buckley.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the permit agreement with Rec & Park, as motioned by Peter Hart and seconded by Julie Taylor.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the tulip purchase, as motioned by Clif Clark and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the new contract with Kevin Bartram for sponsorship sales, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Russell Keil, Jr.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Unaudited Financial Reports of December 2024, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Evan J. Kaizer.



- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the budget modification for Jan-June 2025, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved to delay 10B return until March 2025, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Mark Sullivan.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved SFPD camera access for JP Morgan, as motioned by Wes Tyler and seconded by Mark Sullivan.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the security camera policy revision, access by SFPD, and indemnity agreement with SFPD, as motioned by Wes Tyler and seconded by Lauren Ellis.

1. Call to order, roll call, introductions, and welcome to Parc55 Hotel.

Marisa called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and thanked Peter Hart and Parc 55 for hosting the Board meeting. Then, she took roll call.

2. Public comment

Marisa called for public comment. Russ reported that Walgreens (135 Powell Street), a longstanding flagship location, is closing. He noted that the closure could support his efforts to lease 151 Powell Street. Discussion followed on the broader implications, including the perception of vacancies and challenges in maintaining active storefronts in the area.

3. Introduction from Supervisor Danny Sauter – Welcome!

Supervisor Danny Sauter introduced himself and provided an update on his team’s legislative priorities, focusing on streamlining small business regulations and improving street conditions through an initiative with Mayor Lurie that also expands shelter beds. Discussion included revitalizing Union Square, with a focus on investments like the Powell Street Improvement Project, and efforts to address vacant storefronts through flexible tenant arrangements. Supervisor Sauter expressed support for Prop B funding for the Powell Street project and other priorities, such as the Embarcadero and Chinatown Public Health Center, while Board members asked questions and shared suggestions on housing, small business support, and public perception.

4. CEO’s report

- Holiday Overview

Marisa thanked the Board for supporting holiday activations, highlighting Winter Walk’s success and plans to work with the city to secure funding for an extension through New Year’s Eve. She also previewed upcoming events, including Lunar New Year celebrations, an NBA All-Star Weekend half-court activation in Union Square Plaza, and the R-Evolution installation unveiling on February 6th.

- JP Morgan Conference

Marisa noted that the JP Morgan Conference was excellent for hotel occupancy, and to activate Union Square Plaza and was well attended and is expected to return to the Westin St. Francis for the next few years.

- Union Square Alliance Board of Directors 2025 meeting schedule

Marisa and Ben presented the 2025 Alliance Board of Director’s meeting schedule, confirming that meetings will continue to be held on the fourth Thursday of every odd month, except for November, which will be held on the third Thursday due to Thanksgiving.



- Staffing updates
Marisa announced Daniela Vasile's promotion to COO, citing her experience with BIDs and Block by Block. She thanked Jessica, the Marketing Associate, for her work and announced her resignation to pursue urban planning. Marisa also shared that Jason Cherniss, Director of Services, will not return due to health reasons but will volunteer at events like Tulip Day. The Alliance will begin hiring a new Director of Services. Lastly, Marisa noted that Ken Rich, Director of Policy and Economic Development, could not attend due to health challenges, and the team remains hopeful for a speedy recovery.
- City leadership
Marisa expressed confidence in Mayor Lurie's leadership and the strong collaboration with his office. She discussed the Hospitality Zone, spanning from the Convention Center to Union Square, with plans for a police substation starting as a task force. Marisa and Scott Rowitz will work on identifying a location. To enhance security in the meantime, the Alliance has deployed Safety Ambassadors in black-and-blue uniforms, funded by a one-year grant (RFP 230), until the substation is further developed.
- Executive Committee met on December 19 and approved:
 - Use of \$230,000 of line of credit (if needed)
 - Ratify approval of SFPD access to security cameras for November 29 (Black Friday)
 - Contract with Metro Electric for electrician services for Winter Walk

CLOSED SESSION

 - Closed session minutes from October 24, 2024.
 - New position (COO)
 - Staff consulting clients.
 - Year-end bonuses, staffing and compensation revisions.

Action to accept the CEO's report including ratifying the actions of the Executive committee from December 19, 2024.

Action: The Board unanimously approved to accept the CEO's report including ratifying the actions of the Executive committee from December 19, 2024, as motioned by Julie Taylor and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.

5. **Action** to approve the November 26, 2024, meeting minutes.

The Board reviewed the previous meeting minutes which were sent out ahead of the meeting.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the November 26, 2024, meeting minutes, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Clif Clark.

6. **Review and action** to approve mid-year report.

Ben presented a draft of the Mid-Year Report which details the Alliance's impact on the community. While the financials and metrics are in good shape, the Alliance will spend a couple more weeks reviewing other aspects of the report. Ben asked the Board to review the report for typos or suggested changes. The Alliance aims to finalize and send the report to the city by February 14th.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the mid-year report, as motioned by Mark Sullivan and seconded by Evan Kaizer.



7. Review and **action** to approve Union Square Foundation management agreement for Jan-June 2025. Ben reviewed the Union Square Foundation management agreement for January-June 2025. The management fee decreased due to RFP 230 (which will be contracted directed to the Alliance), which allowed the Alliance to capture about \$100K in wages during the grant period, easing the financial burden amid uncertainties around other grants. Ben also mentioned that a time study was used to track how much staff time is allocated to RFP 230 and other grants and this study will be completed every 6 months.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Union Square Foundation management agreement for Jan-June 2025, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Mark Sullivan.

8. To Receive the BID's Advisory Committee reports and to take action to approve several Committee recommendations:
- a. Streetscapes and Public Realm (Manuela King)
 - Update on the Powell Street Improvement Project
 - Discussion and **action** to move forward with Field Operations contract for the full development design phase.

Eva provided an update on the delayed Powell Street Improvement Project, noting that with Prop B's approval, the Alliance plans to proceed with the next phase of design development. She presented a contract with Field Operations and requested approval to move forward, mentioning that additional funding from previous grants could help cover costs. This phase includes an underground survey of Powell Street between Market and Ellis to assess surface work. The Alliance will also coordinate with MTA on their Powell Street Safety project scheduled for March. Discussion followed on the project timeline, construction, and potential funding sources.

Action: The Board unanimously approved to move forward with the Field Operations contract for the full development design phase, as motioned by David Lewin and seconded by Jordan Buckley.
 - Project Updates:
 - Stage Improvements

Eva updated that the Union Square Stage project is progressing, with architect Yann Taylor from Field Operations working on 75% of the construction drawings. The Alliance will return to the planning department at Rec & Park and other city departments to secure necessary approvals. David Zieses from We are the Kind is also obtaining quotes for sound equipment. Eva hopes to receive all relevant information by the end of the month, and the project will continue with city partners to finalize permits and approvals.
 - R-Evolution and **action** to approve permit agreement with Rec & Park.

Eva announced that the Alliance has received a draft permit from Rec & Park for R-Evolution which was presented to the Board and had been reviewed by legal. The statues load-in will begin next week and will remain in Union Square for three months, with the possibility of month-to-month extensions depending on the plaza's activation needs.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the permit agreement with Rec & Park, as motioned by Peter Hart and seconded by Julie Taylor.



- Winter Walk & Holiday Decor 2024.
Liza reiterated Winter Walk's success despite weather challenges, with activations like two stages, food trucks, bars, a holiday market, and photo-ops. The Alliance plans to work with the city to secure funding for a longer activation next year, inviting the Board to share suggestions for Winter Walk 2025. Mark suggested a longer activation period and earlier preparations, while Lauren recommended a larger space for the holiday market. Eva noted holiday decor at Maiden Lane and Holiday Plaza will be removed in early February for Bloom.
- Union Square in Bloom 2025 and discussion and **action** to approve tulip purchase.
Eva announced that Union Square in Bloom will return, with the campaign kicking off on March 22nd with Tulip Day. Despite a worldwide tulip shortage, the Alliance secured 80,000 tulips, made possible through the support of Dutch partners Royal Anthos. Don suggested exploring options for post-event cleanup and managing the anticipated high attendance, particularly for volunteer coordination.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the tulip purchase, as motioned by Clif Clark and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.

b. Marketing & Communications (Mark Sullivan)

- 2024 Recap.
Mark thanked Jessica for her contributions, and Jessica expressed gratitude for her time at the Alliance. He then summarized the Marketing Committee's 2024 social media achievements, including 14M impressions, 158K engagements, a 17K audience growth, and 1.5M video views. In addition to social media efforts, Jessica highlighted the newsletters as the Alliance's key communication tool. Mark also shared the website's strong performance, with 97K active users, a 57% increase in organic searches, and 20K views, particularly for Winter Walk. He encouraged Board members to submit content for promotion and noted the 45 active members in the marketing committee's Slack channel.
- Winter Wander-land & Winter Walk
Mark reported approximately 1.3M visitors to Union Square from November 29 to December 29. The Alliance will compare these numbers with actual foot traffic from the Winter Walk, and the economic impact report will be presented at the next board meeting. He also highlighted social media content from influencers promoting Union Square and Winter Walk, created through an agency collaboration. The Alliance plans to replicate this approach for Tulip Day and Winter Walk 2025.
- Biederman Redevelopment Ventures.
Mark Hennon from Biederman Redevelopment Ventures (BRV) introduced the company, highlighting its success in programming at Bryant Park and Salesforce Park. BRV plans to enhance the park with additional furniture aligned with the Alliance's branding and various activations, including a games cart, ping pong table, and a kid zone. From Tuesdays to Sundays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., free, family-friendly activities will be offered, including cardio dancing and concerts. Children are a key focus for the park's activations, as they represent safety and help attract families to the downtown area. Other programming will feature live music and multicultural events, with the full schedule launching on January 30th.



- Social media and PR updates.
Mark highlighted upcoming events in Union Square, including Valentine's Day, the Lunar New Year Parade, NBA All-Star Weekend, and the launch of the district's "Union Square in Bloom" campaign with Tulip Day. He encouraged the Board to share this information to help promote the district. Finally, he asked the Board to save the date for the Annual Luncheon will be held in May.
- Discussion and action to approve a new contract with Kevin Bartram for sponsorship sales.
Mark reminded the Board that they had previously approved a contract with Kevin Bartram from Bartram Partnerships to assist in developing corporate sponsorships for events such as Winter Walk. The Alliance team held an internal meeting to assess Kevin's progress and to consider engaging big sponsors for year-round programs, rather than just for individual events. As a result, the Alliance is exploring changes to its partnership with Kevin including a larger monthly retainer and less commission. Ben added that contract negotiations with Kevin are still ongoing, with the Alliance reviewing his contract holistically. Discussion occurred regarding the financial feasibility of his potential future contract.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the new contract terms with Kevin Bartram for sponsorship sales, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Russell Keil, Jr.

c. Finance & Audit (Jim Sangiacomo)

- 990, banking, and insurance updates.
Ben confirmed that the 990 had been completed and filed in November, with some adjustments made to the information. He also mentioned that the Alliance received its first assessment payment of approximately \$3.9M shortly after December 25, which was used to pay off the line of credit, resulting in a total interest expense of about \$1,500. Regarding insurance, the Alliance's broker indicated that the current insurance carrier is unwilling to cover the \$10M general liability umbrella, making renewal difficult. The broker mentioned challenges in finding another carrier, suggesting the need for a new broker. If renewed, insurance coverage would be reduced to \$5M at a higher cost.
- Action to accept the Unaudited Financial Reports of December 2024.
Ben reported that the Alliance received its first assessment payment of \$3.9M in December, leading to an operating surplus of \$533K and a positive budget variance of \$230K. The positive variance of \$242K in assessments/core operations was due to Marketing and Administrative expenses being under budget. However, Other Revenues had a negative variance of \$412K due to delays in the Powell Street Improvement and Union Square stage projects. Core operations expenses were close to the management plan, with Clean & Safe at 76%, Marketing at 12%, and Admin at 12%. The Alliance expects a \$260K surplus by year-end. As of December, net assets totaled \$2.88M, with a cash balance of \$3.37M.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Unaudited Financial Reports of December 2024, as motioned by James Sangiacomo and seconded by Evan J. Kaizer.

- Review and action of budget modification for Jan-June 2025.
Ben explained that the Alliance modifies its budget each year due to changes in the city and grants, such as RFP 230 (\$1.9M), which was initially not budgeted. While the final document is still awaited, the Alliance received the RFP 226 amendment, which is a positive development as it will help cover holiday expenses. He summarized the budget modification, noting that there is typically a larger surplus in the first half of the year due to the timing of assessment payments. However, a



\$300K deficit is projected for the next six months, with an overall surplus expected by year-end. The biggest change in the budget is the additional \$2M in grant revenue, which was not originally included. Despite this, the Alliance expects a surplus of around \$200-250K by the end of the year.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the budget modification for Jan-June 2025, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.

d. Public Affairs (Erik Murray).

- PAC Chair discussion.

Marisa directed the Board's attention to the PAC 2024 overview, which outlines the Alliance's policy-driven goals for the year. She highlighted that the PAC for 2024 is focusing on areas such as safety, creating a welcoming environment, building a strong economy, addressing vacancies, valet parking issues, and the creation of a substation. PAC has heard from several insightful speakers and encouraged those interested to join the committee or have someone represent them.

- PAC Goals for 2025.

Marisa outlined the PAC's 2025 goals, focusing on building relationships with new city staff and Prop B funding for the Powell Street Redesign Project. Plans include inviting a Chief of Staff from Mayor Lurie's office or Ned Segal to discuss economic development and housing, continuing conversations on the Hospitality Zone, police engagement, and working with brokers. The committee also plans to explore state support for Union Square, advocate for the Downtown Plan, and look into food and beverage flexibility at Union Square Plaza. Efforts also include promoting Union Square through sponsored content and exploring partnerships with the Cultural District for arts and cultural initiatives.

e. Services & Public Safety (Don Thomas).

- November and December 2024 Operations Reports.

Don Thomas recognized Block by Block and Legion for their commitment to keeping Union Square clean and safe, while Ben praised Daniela for her smooth transition into the COO role and her collaboration with Block by Block during their operations management transition. Don (Block by Block) introduced Adrian Garcia, the West Coast project manager, overseeing the Clean & Safe program as Block by Block onboards their new Operations Manager.

Don provided an overview of the November Operations Report, noting it was a critical time for holiday preparations. Ambassadors collected 843 bags of litter (about 21,000 pounds) and launched a mobile strike team to focus on high-traffic hotspots. November also saw a significant increase in sweep requests. Graffiti abatement efforts removed 530 tags, continuing the decline in vandalism, and 276 hazardous waste incidents were addressed. Block by Block surpassed staffing expectations by 4.6%. December included an annual Appreciation event hosted by the Alliance, where ambassadors received their bonuses, and Monroe Quarles was recognized as Ambassador of the Year.

Joe presented Legion's report, noting similar growth with a doubled staff and an increase in dispatched calls to support Block by Block. While there were some shifts in categories, incidents like narcotic use and aggressive panhandling decreased slightly in November and December. The team is currently undergoing training with a new Operations Manager. Lauren mentioned that Union Square felt very clean and safe during the JP Morgan Conference, but that perception faded



afterward, which Marisa attributed to the presence of police officers, a costly solution to maintain daily.

- Discussion and possible **action** to delay 10B return until March 2025.
Don announced a delay in 10B services until March 2025. Ben revisited the RFP 230 grant, which provides \$1.9M for safety ambassador deployment, allowing the Alliance to add 20+ Safety Ambassadors. This frees up assessment funds and allows the Alliance to increase (doubling) the security presence in the district, with four guards and 20 Ambassadors focusing on evening and overnight shifts. The Alliance is also collaborating with the Yerba Buena BID, covering Market to Sixth Street. Ben noted that Lt. Hall mentioned 10B officers are now joining his team, limiting the availability of 10b officers.

Action: The Board unanimously approved to delay 10B return until March 2025, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Mark Sullivan.

- **Action** to approve SFPD camera access for JP Morgan.
Ben clarified that the Executive Committee had previously authorized SFPD access to security cameras for JP Morgan., and this action serves as a formal ratification of that decision.

Action: The Board unanimously approved SFPD camera access for JP Morgan, as motioned by Wes Tyler and seconded by Mark Sullivan.

- Discussion and **action** to approve security camera policy revision, access by SFPD and indemnity agreement with the SFPD.
Don stated that the Alliance is revising the security camera policy to expedite access, eliminating the current 24-hour approval process. SFPD will be given online access to the cameras and will notify the Alliance of the footage they need, which will be reviewed and provided but the SFPD will have continuous access and can research and request video more precisely. Ben reminded the Board of past concerns about liability if SFPD used the cameras and made a wrongful arrest, as the Alliance's insurance would not cover SFPD's actions. The Alliance worked with SFPD on an initial agreement that was revised after legal concerns, and a revised indemnity agreement that was suitable and agreed to by legal counsel was received.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the security camera policy revision, access by SFPD, and indemnity agreement with SFPD, as motioned by Wes Tyler and seconded by Lauren Ellis.

- Contract updates and updates on RFP230 grant and related services.
The item was discussed in a previous agenda item.

- Project Updates.
 - Bigbelly updates and sponsorships.
Ben announced the return of the Bigbelly sponsorship program and thanked Hilton for their commitment to seven Bigbelly units, along with other sponsors. He mentioned that invoices for the 2025 sponsors will be sent out soon, with a cost of approximately \$1,500 per unit per year.
 - District360 projects



Ben announced that the Alliance is moving Legion to District 360, which Block by Block is currently using for all statistics and data. Also, geo-tracking will be implemented to track both Ambassadors and Legion guards in the district, with the goal of collecting and utilizing that data.

○ Derby Alley

Ben shared that the Services Committee discussed Derby Alley with Dominique Charles from DPW. While not technically part of the district, the alley has been compromised for months, particularly since the pandemic, with the unhoused community using it for shelter. Accessing Derby Alley through a door in a nearby parking garage, they have been involved in activities like drug sales and storing items. The Alliance has been collaborating with city partners to address the issue and is seeking long-term solutions.

9. Announcements & New Business

- R-Evolution Unveiling Party – February 6th, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. at Union Square Park
- NBA All-Star – February 13th – 16th, 2025
- Chinese New Year Parade – Saturday, February 15th, 2025
- Executive Committee – February 27th, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
- Tulip Day – Save the Date – March 22nd, 2025.
- Next Board Meeting – Thursday, March 27th, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., Location TBD
- Union Square Foundation Annual Lunch – Save the Date – May 2nd, 2025.