



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

Minutes

**May 22, 2025 – 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Beacon Grand – 450 Powell St.
Beacon Hall West**

Board Members in attendance (all in person): David Lewin (Grand Hyatt Union Square San Francisco), Don Thomas (Club Donatello), Evan J. Kaizer (Sieroty Company, Inc.), J. Timothy Falvey (Hanford-Freund), James Sangiacomo (Trinity Properties), Jordan Buckley (Paramount Hotels, Inc), Lauren Ellis (CK Contemporary), Mark Sullivan (Marketing Committee Chair), Opio Dupree (Macy's), Russell D. Keil, Jr. (The Keil Companies), Shirley Howard-Johnson (Entertainment & Arts Consultant), Stephen Brett (Brett & Co.), Manuela Anne King (RHAA), and Brian Fenwick (The Marker Hotel).

Staff and contractors: Marisa Rodriguez (CEO), Daniela Vasile (COO), Benjamin Horne (CFO), Ken Rich (Director of Economic Development & Policy), Sokhom Mao (Director of Services), Melanie Medina (Executive Assistant), Hollie Chiao (Marketing & Communications Associate), Marlenne Mendoza (Project Coordinator), E. Ryan Santamaria (Intern), Jaffar Mendieta (Block by Block), Miracle Matau (Block by Block), Don Lepana (Block by Block), and Jackson Alcantra (Legion).

Guests: Mark Hennon (BRV), Captain Stephen Jonas (SFPD), Jon Handlery (Handlery Hotel), Tammy Brock (167 Powell LP), Patricia Cardenas (2 Geary/9 Kearny), Jackie Hazelwood (OEWD), John Callan (San Mateo Land Exchange)

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 April 24, 2025, as motioned by Evan Kaizer and seconded by Tim Falvey.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the March 27, 2025, meeting minutes, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Board slate for the upcoming Board Election and Board Officers for 2025-2026FY, as motioned by Jim Sangiacomo and seconded by David Lewin.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Perotti and Carrade, CPAs engagement letter for audit and tax services for the 24-25FY, as motioned by J. Timothy Falvey and seconded by Jim Sangiacomo.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Unaudited Financial Reports of April 2025, as motioned by Donald Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved increasing the assessment rate by 3% for 25-26FY, as motioned by Stephen Brett and seconded by Russ Keil Jr.



- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved revising the deployment under HEART Safety grant to extend grant through December 2025, as motioned by Stephen Brett and seconded by Don Thomas.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Nintendo Bloom sponsorship of \$75,000, as motioned by Tim Falvey and seconded by Brian Fenwick.
- **Action:** The Board unanimously approved the Winter Walk sponsorship levels, as motioned by Brian Fenwick and seconded by Evan J. Kaizer.

1. Call to order, roll call, introductions, and welcome to the Beacon Grand

Marisa called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m., thanking the General Manager, Sebastian Pfeiffer, and the Beacon Grand for hosting. Marisa then took roll call.

2. Public comment

Hollie Chiao provided a brief update about Winter Walk as the marketing team is finalizing the Holiday deck and in the process of securing sponsorships.

3. CEO's report

- Staffing and hiring updates.

Marisa introduced the new Alliance staff: Sokhom Mao (Director of Services), Hollie Chiao (Marketing & Communications Associate), Marlene Mendoza (Project Coordinator), and E. Ryan Santamaria (Intern). Additionally, she recognized Ken Rich is working at his normal capacity now after his health recovery. She acknowledged the efforts and contributions the team has made thus far and expressed excitement with the organization being fully staffed.

- Chamber of Commerce City Trip - Japan

Marisa gave a recap of her recent trip to Japan with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. The goal of the trip was to prepare for the city of San Francisco to potentially be a host for World Expo in 2035 (formerly known as the World's Fair). She noted that her trip was fully sponsored, and the Alliance did not pay for this trip.. If successful in its bid the World Expo would bring millions of visitors and investment to San Francisco and the Bay Area. Marisa expressed her surprise while visiting the airport in Osaka and seeing a luxury designer bag out in the open without any security whatsoever. She acknowledged Japan's sense of culture and aims for the community of San Francisco to reach those expectations eventually.

- Union Square Foundation Annual Luncheon

Marisa thanked everyone who attended the annual luncheon and for the positive feedback. Ben shared that the Foundation outperformed their fundraising goals at \$145,000, with expenses at \$47,000. Marisa acknowledged the keynote speaker, Chris Thornberg (Beacon Economics), for his insightful presentation, as she expressed that the Alliance is gearing up towards a new round of strategic and economic development planning to help lay the groundwork for the Alliance's renewal in 2029.

- Strategic planning and economic development

Marisa announced that the strategic plan of 2022 continues to be followed and executed, and that the organization is looking to refresh, revise and update the plan for the upcoming years (leading up the organization's renewal in 2029). Ben stated that Chris and his team at Beacon Economics have been in discussions with the Alliance for goal setting and the specific role in this strategic plan.



- GO Bond allocation update.
Marisa reminded the Board that the Alliance was allocated \$22 million from the 2024 GO Bond for the Powell Redesign Project. There is still a funding gap to fully execute the project as designed. The Alliance has been working closely with the city and others to find and to allocate potential funds to complete the project.
- Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) and HEART Safety Grant
Marisa informed the Board that the Alliance is collaborating with the DDC to secure funds for Powell Street, as well as additional initiatives such as Winter Walk, Bloom and other programs. DDC's goal is to financially support the downtown efforts, allowing the organization to gradually reduce its reliance on City funding. Ongoing discussions are taking place to advocate for and secure these funds.
- SFPD Staffing
Marisa updated the Board that Chief Scott is stepping down from his role and AC David Lazar is retiring. As SFPD restructures and hires to fill these roles, Paul Yep will be the interim Chief of Police. The Alliance will continue to have a strong relationship with the police department despite these staffing and leadership changes.
- The Executive Committee met on April 24 and discussed and approved:
 - Minutes of February 27, 2025, meeting
 - Contract with Field Operations for Powell Street Improvement Project
 - AI Usage policy

CLOSED SESSION

 - Closed session minutes from February 27, 2025
 - Marisa development of an official Instagram handle
 - 401k additional payment for 2024
 - Employees' vacation payout and policy
 - Consulting client for CFO

Action to accept the CEO's report including ratifying the actions of the Executive committee from April 24, 2025.

Action: The Board unanimously approved to accept the CEO's report including ratifying the actions of the Executive committee from April 24, 2025, as motioned by Evan Kaizer and seconded by Tim Falvey.

4. **Action** to approve the March 27, 2025, meeting minutes.
The Board reviewed the previous meeting minutes which were sent out ahead of the meeting.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the March 27, 2025, meeting minutes, as motioned by Don Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.

5. **Board member and officer discussion and action to approve Board slate for the upcoming Board Election and Board Officers for 2025-2026FY.**



Ben shared that as part of the bylaws, property owners (Members) of Union Square Alliance vote to elect the board members. The Board was asked to approve the Board Slate that will be sent to all property owners for a vote. Ben also expressed that the officers must be elected annually and had stated that the current officers, Mark Purdy, Don Thomas, Stephen Brett, and Julie Taylor would like to continue in their role. Discussion took place regarding the bylaws and requirements to have a majority of property owner representatives on the Board and business representatives that are not property owners.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Board slate for the upcoming Board Election and Board Officers for 2025-2026FY, as motioned by Jim Sangiacomo and seconded by David Lewin.

6. Discussion regarding updating bylaws.

The Alliance is currently in discussions with an attorney about updating bylaws to ensure alignment and compliance with the Brown Act and California corporate law since the bylaws were last updated in 2021. Ben commented that he estimated they would bring a revised version for the Board to review in September and that the bylaws approval would need to be mailed to property owners for vote.

7. To Receive the BID's Advisory Committee reports and to take action to approve several Committee recommendations:

a. Streetscapes and Public Realm (Manuela King) (This item was moved from item d to item a due to a scheduling challenge).

- Update on the Powell Street Improvement Project

Ken provided an update of the Powell Street Improvement Project and the timeline. The project has been earmarked for \$22 million from the Prop B Bond. Additionally, there is \$4.3 million in other City funds available. In total, the available funds are \$26.3 million for the project. Ken mentioned that the projected cost is \$35-40 million. There has been discussion between the Alliance and the City about ownership of the proposed lighting system, along with street furniture and landscaping as well as ways to address the funding gap.

- Project Updates:

- Union Square stage improvements: General sound system project update and overview of draft operation and maintenance agreement

Ken described that the purpose of this stage project is to enhance concerts and performances at the plaza by adding a state-of-the-art sound system. Ben explained how the Alliance provides events and direct services in the plaza but is not contractually responsible for cleaning services. The Alliance's contract with the park ends June 30th. Discussion took place regarding potential ownership rights to the plaza improvements and equipment and related costs for maintenance and repairs.

- Maiden Lane

Ken briefly announced the Maiden Lane Improvement Project upcoming stakeholder meetings and invited the Board to participate. Marlenne explained the plans for Maiden Lane activations, with concepts of outdoor dining and music.

- Cable Car turnaround



Marlenne discussed that the Alliance is working to bring interactive public art installations and events at the CCTA. Examples include a larger-than-life slide guitar, a banana bench, and more whimsical interactive art.

- Public Art Opportunities

The Alliance is exploring additional public art opportunities in partnership with Building 180 and others.

- Bollards

Marisa acknowledges Manuela for her contributions in researching and developing a plan for the bollards and planters. She expressed the significance of implementing bollards, as they will be strategically placed outside of luxury stores to decrease theft and property damage in those areas.

b. Services and Public Safety (Don Thomas)

- March & April 2025 Operations Reports.

Prior to the monthly Operations Reports, Captain Stephen Jonas showcased SFPD's drone program, Drone as First Responder. He thanked the Alliance for their continuous support of technology for SFPD and acknowledged Marisa, Daniela, Ben, and Stephen Brett for their support in adding a drone as first responder in Union Square. He then shared footage of a recent theft incident at Burberry and showcased the capabilities of the drone which cut apprehension time in half and uses less resources compared to on foot beat patrols tracking down the suspects. This drone program gradually continues to become integrated within the SFPD, serving as a huge impact within the district, to enhance the security and safety of everyone.

Jaffar Mendieta then reviewed the statistics of cleaning and safety in the district for the months of March and April. He explained that the Block by Block team has been receiving lots of positive feedback from the community and reported that there has been an increase in foot traffic. Notably, the Block by Block team recently saved a person's life using Narcan. Don Thomas explained that Legion members have been facing verbal and physical altercations with transients and the organization should implement specific training for hostile circumstances. Jackson Alcantra gave a brief report on the Legion March and April reports.

- Discussion and possible **action** to revise deployment under HEART Safety grant to extend grant through December 2025.

Ben reminded the Board that the HEART safety grant was originally set to go through September but now the Alliance is exploring how to make the grant work through the holidays as the City has let them know that the grant will not be renewed. Ben shared a proposal that extends the grant through the holidays by reducing ambassador headcount between June and September so that coverage can be extended through December.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the revise deployment under HEART Safety grant to extend grant through December 2025, as motioned by Jim Sangiacomo and seconded by Don Thomas.



- Discussion re amended lease at Flood Building due to Block by Block Clean & Safe team relocation to first floor.
Ben informed the Board that the Alliance no longer holds the lease at the Flood Building for the Block by Block offices. Block by Block is now contracted directly with the Flood Building and have moved offices for the ambassadors to the ground retail space on Market Street. Member Services dispatch center remains on the 5th floor. There is no additional cost to the Alliance with this change.
- Project Updates
 - Security cameras
This topic was not discussed.
 - Bigbelly updates
Don noted that the Bigbellys were mostly repaired and that additional maintenance and repairs would be made to keep the fleet operational.
 - Derby Alley
Don mentioned that Derby Alley is being cleaned up and cared for and that the community had come together to make improvements with the help of Public Works.

c. Finance & Audit (Jim Sangiacomo)

- Review of engagement letter from Perotti and Carrade and **Action** to engage for audit and tax services for the 24-25FY.
Ben reminded the Board that the Alliance conducts an annual audit, according to California law and as required in the city contract. The Alliance would like to engage with Perotti and Carrade, CPAs, for the audit and tax preparation services for the 24-25FY. Perotti and Carrade were the auditors for the last couple of years, their fees were reasonable, and they were very professional.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Perotti and Carrade engagement for the financial audit and tax preparation services for the 24-25FY, as motioned by J. Timothy Falvey and seconded by Jim Sangiacomo.
- **Action** to accept the Unaudited Financial Reports of April 2025.
Ben provided a summary of the unaudited financial reports of April 2025. The Alliance has an operating surplus for the fiscal year of \$1.42mil as the organization received the second assessment payment of about \$3.3 million, at the end of April 2025. The organization has an overall positive budget variance as well but there are still reconciliations being made with the city for grants and for Block by Block invoicing issues. The assessment operational expenses are at 75% clean and safe, 12% marketing, 13% administration. Ben projected a surplus of approximately \$250,000 for the fiscal year if all goes according to the budget. Overall, the Alliance is in good financial shape.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Unaudited Financial Reports of April 2025, as motioned by Donald Thomas and seconded by Shirley Howard-Johnson.
- Review of draft budget, discussion, and **action** to approve assessment rate for 25-26FY.



Ben presented a draft budget summary for 25-26FY to the Board. He noted that this is a very conservative budget due to the uncertainty around additional funding sources like grants and support from the DDC, and assuming a flat assessment rate. An additional \$800K is needed the budget for projected City or other funding based on current and planned expenses. Ben opened the floor for discussion on whether to keep the assessment rate flat or consider an increase between 1–5%. Given rising costs of living and labor, the Finance Committee's feedback was a 3% increase (to keep up with the change in Bay Area Consumer Price Index – inflation) as a balanced approach, noting that this would generate just over \$200,000 in additional revenue helping to balance the Alliance budget. The Alliance will adjust as needed to stay within budget and will present a balanced budget in July.

Discussion took place regarding the potential impact of a 3% versus 5% increase, with Ben pointing out the possible burden a higher rate could place on smaller property owners. Marisa noted that we do not increase the rate, services will need to be reduced to ensure we stay within the budget. Some property owners shared their views and expressed opposition to raising the assessment rate for 25-26FY citing their personal economic challenges with their properties.

Action: The Board unanimously approved increasing the assessment rate by 3% for 25-26FY, as motioned by Stephen Brett and seconded by Russ Keil Jr.

Public comment was made by Tammy Brock, Patricia Cardenas, and Jon Callan opposing the assessment rate increase (citing their personal economic challenges with their properties and commenting that they believed they were not receiving value that others may have been receiving)

d. Public Affairs (Erik Murray)

- Economic Downtown Core updates

Ken updated the Board that the 4 downtown CBDs/BIDs collaborated on a plan with Kat Daniel and Ben Rosenfield to present to the mayor that focuses on the downtown recovery. One suggestion from the plan consisted of bringing more housing downtown. Another recommendation was to come up with more robust efforts in arts and culture program. A third suggestion was to come up with a way for the city to work more considerately to bring small businesses back downtown. It was unclear if this plan would advance further with the DDC ramping up and OEWD funding ramping down.

- Review and discussion of letter of support for increasing the number of liquor license in downtown San Francisco.

Marisa stated that there is a proposal being introduced at the state level by Senator Scott Wiener that would allow for \$20,000 liquor licenses in both the Union Square and Yerba Buena districts to help promote nightlife entertainment and businesses. A letter of support is currently being drafted and will be shared with the executive committee next month. Marisa, along with the rest of the board, supported this idea and provided positive insight.

e. Marketing & Communications (Mark Sullivan)

- Union Square in Bloom: Social Media & PR Updates



Mark Sullivan recapped the first half of the year, full of festive events with tremendous attendance. Specifically for Tulip Day, there were 35 different social media and advertising platforms that helped promote the event, resulting in compiling a reach of 28 million across these platforms. For attendance, 146,000 people were present for that single day alone in the district. All in all, the economic impact of Tulip Day was \$3.7 million. Additionally, the Annual Spring Luncheon event received \$145,000 in fundraising as well as showcased the third annual bloom gown. Furthermore, at the Mother's Day Fashion Show, there were 500 RSVPs, and 150 free products distributed for attendees, resulting in over 41,000 social media impressions and promoted on 9 media outlets.

Hollie announced the news of a collaboration with Nintendo, a Pikmin mini walk. The event will consist of an augmented reality game, which allows both locals and visitors to tour around the Union Square district in search of Pikmin figurines at local businesses. Hollie also provided an update on website design and planning, as she aims to make the Alliance's website more compelling and functional.

- Biederman Redevelopment Ventures

Mark Hennon expressed that after starting programs on the plaza, BRV has seen double the amount of foot traffic in the plaza since the program launched in February. He also stated that they are in the process of renewing their agreement with OEWD.

- Review and **action** to approve the Nintendo Bloom sponsorship (\$75,000)

Mark Sullivan presented the details of the Nintendo Bloom sponsorship of \$75,000. The sponsorship will include PR and marketing efforts around the Pikmin mini walks that encourage people to explore the district and discover new businesses.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Nintendo Bloom sponsorship of \$75,000, as motioned by Stephen Brett and seconded by Brian Fenwick.

- Review and **action** to approve Winter Walk sponsorship levels.

Mark Sullivan discussed that the Alliance is seeking funding to host Winter Walk this year.

Action: The Board unanimously approved the Winter Walk sponsorship levels, as motioned by Brian Fenwick and seconded by Evan J. Kaizer.

8. Announcements & New Business

- Executive Committee – June 26th, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
- Bloom and Bubbles Bar Crawl – Saturday, July 19th.
- Next Board Meeting – Thursday, July 24th, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. (Location TBD)

Adjourned: 11:21 a.m.