

**NIAGARA FALLS URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY**  
**Minutes of Meeting May 22nd, 2019**  
**City Council Chambers – 745 Main Street**  
**Niagara Falls, New York**

**Present:** Mayor Paul Dyster  
Council Member Andrew Touma.  
Council Member Christopher Voccio  
Council Member Ezra Scott - Phone In  
Mr. Michael Hooper  
Mr. Christopher Robbins

**Excused:** Council Member Ken Tompkins  
Council Member William Kennedy  
Ms. Doreen O'Connor  
Mr. Doug Mooradian

**Staff** Mr. Allen Booker  
**Present:** Mr. Doug Janese  
Ms. Michelle Shaughnessy  
Maria Brown  
Thomas DeSantis, AICP

Mayor Paul Dyster called the meeting to order at 5:23 P.M. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes of URA Meeting dated March 27th, 2019:**

No changes to be made.

Motion to approve with this change was made by Council Member Touma, seconded by Council Member Voccio.

**POLLED VOTE:**

In Favor:	6
Opposed:	0
<b>Approved</b>	Unanimously

**Presentation of the 2018 Audited Financials by Maria Brown**

Maria Brown reviewed the (2018) Audit with the Board. She stated she doesn't expect salary to decrease in the near future as the rent obtained from 3625 Highland Avenue (Project) covers those salaries along with a few miscellaneous items —like postage. Mr. Janese agreed that even though 50 percent of the rent is being held towards the future purchase of the building, the rent is sufficient to cover the Agency's salaries. Mrs. Brown stated she would be giving Mr. DeSantis monthly updates on future projects going forward.

## **1.) Executive Director- Nominations/Discussion/Approval**

Mayor Dyster recommended to the Board: to appoint Mr. DeSantis to fill the vacant position of Executive Director of Urban Renewal Agency. Further, that the appointment would be at a prorated salary of \$10,000 per/annum for the remainder of 2019 only. Both the position and the salary amount will be determined again by the Board through 2020 budget proposals.

Council Member Voccio asked if this would be a stipend or salary increase. Mayor Dyster stated would be a salary increase (for Mr. DeSantis) not a stipend.

Council Member Touma asked what is the justification of salary increase from \$7,500 to \$10,000 for this position. Mayor Dyster stated that Mr. DeSantis has been serving as ‘Acting Director’ of the Planning Environmental and Economic Development Department for a while now without pay. Mayor Dyster said because Mr. DeSantis has taken on both additional administrative duties and now additional Agency duties, he should be compensated for it. Mr. DeSantis could of filed a grievance when his stipend was revoked and he did not. To compensate him, he feels the increase would help correct the situation. Also, this would be prorated anyways, so the salary increase would be minimal.

Mr. Hooper asked if the increase would end in 2020, and Mayor Dyster stated that would be up to new administration and the URA Board.

Council Member Touma stated he feels comfortable with Mr. DeSantis taking on the role, but does not think that with the state of the City’s finances that the salary should increase. Council Member Voccio and Council Member Scott agreed as well.

Mayor Dyster asked Mr. DeSantis if he was willing to take on the role for \$7,500 instead of the \$10,000 as suggested. With the understanding that Councilmembers (on the Board) would only compensate Mr. DeSantis for the additional Agency work assignment, Mr. DeSantis agreed to accept that arrangement at this time.

Motion to Amend the proposed salary amount from \$10,000 to \$7,5000 (pro-rated) was made by Council Member Touma and seconded by Council Member Voccio.

### **POLLED VOTE:**

In Favor:	4-	Council Member Touma, Council Member Scott, Council Member Voccio, Mr. Hooper
Opposed:	2	Mayor Dyster, Mr. Robbins

### **Motion to Amend Approved**

Motion to approve Appointment as Amended was made by Council Member Touma, seconded by Council Member Voccio.

### **POLLED VOTE:**

In Favor:	6
Opposed:	0
<b>Approved</b>	Unanimously

**2.) Approval of Funds for Professional Appraisals Related to the South End (Downtown) Gateway Project**

URA was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from Empire State Development Corp. (ESD) to complete projects in the South End (Downtown) Gateway Project area. As part of this initiative, URA requires professional appraisal services to assist URA in determining the values of properties located in the Initiative area. As URA seeks projects to infill this area, having knowledge of the values of certain properties will be paramount to successfully creating development-ready sites.

If this measure is approved, URA will select a qualified appraiser and then discretely identify parcels where appraisals will be made. In the interest of protecting URA from predatory acquisition tactics, URA would prefer to keep the parcel or parcels of interest from public disclosure until such time that they are acquisition-ready, at which point this Board's approval will be necessary and all details of the potential acquisition(s) will be disclosed. The cost for the appraisal services will be fully reimbursed to URA from the ESD Grant funds, meaning these services will require URA to expend some of its funds prior to reimbursement.

There was no discussion on this Item.

Motion to Approve was made by Council Member Voccio and seconded by Mr. Robbins

**POLLED VOTE:**

In Favor:	6
Opposed:	0
<b>Approved</b>	Unanimously

**3.) Authorization for Executive Director to Expend Funds for Incidental Expenses Related to South End (Downtown) Gateway Project**

URA was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from Empire State Development Corp. (ESD) to complete projects in the South End (Downtown) Gateway Project area. As part of this initiative, URA will be required to make some incidental expenditures related to the execution of this grant and the related project.

URA's budget does not include expenditures for incidental related to the South End (Downtown) Gateway Project because those expenditures are fully reimbursable from the grant. As such, every expenditure made related to the project could require a vote from the Board, which would hamper the ability of URA to complete projects in a timely manner, and could lead to missed opportunities.

Instead, we are proposing that the Board grant the Executive Director the authorization to expend URA funds (which would be reimbursed fully) for incidental expenses without requiring each minor expenditure come before the Board. Then, at each meeting of the Board, URA will provide a summary of the aforementioned expenditures so the Board can review same and ensure

the grant funds are being used to promote the goals of the project. We are suggesting that the maximum amount the Executive Director be allowed to expend without Board approval be Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) per expenditure, and that any expenditure exceeding that amount would be brought to the Board for approval.

Mr. DeSantis stated that the designated area for the South End is from John B. Daly Boulevard to 3rd Street. He feels this is the proper timing for the redevelopment of this area to get more fully underway. Local developers and those from out of the area will be invited for interviews in the upcoming months as a start to this project.

Mr. Janese added that time is of the essence with this project, so allowing Mr. DeSantis to expend “incidental” funds rather than having to wait to next URA meeting is necessary and needed, especially given the difficulty in getting a board quorum at meetings.

Motion to Approve was made by Council Member Voccio and seconded by Council Member Touma.

**POLLED VOTE:**

In Favor:	6
Opposed:	0
<b>Approved</b>	Unanimously

**Old Business** – None

**New Business**- None

**Adjournment**-

There being no further business, a motion for adjournment was made by Mr. Hooper, second made by Council Member Touma. Unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 5:53 P.M.