



Year End Report for 2016

Board of Directors

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(resigned in June, 2016)

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James Morgan, Sailor Jacks Restaurant

Jeanne Steinmann, Benicia Magazine

Mario Giuliani, Advisor, Economic Development Manager



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From the Chair: Year in Review:

Green Zone Enforcement: Discussion on what we need for First Street. Our future for the downtown is all about the economic vitality that we can create with turning our parking spaces into gold for our fellow merchants.

With collaboration of the Economic Development Department and the Benicia Police Department, warnings, then ticketing began in February. We are still working on this issue. It has been a start/ stop enforcement. This coming January, full steam ahead. This is what the Businesses on First Street need desperately. Our First Street is where we gather. It is the heart of Benicia. We are independent, we count on ourselves. We need to embrace the independent businesses on First Street and comply with green zones, and then the three hour zones. Green zones are a great way for shoppers to pick up, drop off items in a hurry. Without them, we are hurting everyone. Without them, shoppers go to a Mall, taking our dollars away from us, and from our tax base to the City which I would love to see rise!

The three hour zones are currently being used by some residents who park there for days. Also, businesses on First Street are also parking in these zones. Maybe a first step would be to warn with a soft compliance, to "help your fellow businesses make their goals". We need 30 minute signs close to the green zone itself. Without that, no one can really see the curb. That is an easy fix. So, with enforcement and signs, we will be on track for a better First Street for everyone.

New Water and Sewer Rates for Benicia: As the rates have changed the for restaurants and bars the most, we need to try and make sure we do everything possible for these businesses to make their increases easier. Parking spaces not being used properly really need to be addressed. As with sales, turning your merchandise or tables quickly is our mantra. As the City of Benicia is changing with new taxes, businesses need to re-coop these fees faster and quickly. We need to embrace the independent businesses we have here and find solutions for everyone. Let's try sooner than later.



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3rd Annual Benicia Film Festival: The Board approved to be a major sponsor for the 3rd Annual Benicia Film Festival. The Downtown Benicia Alliance funds were not used for this event. All monies came from our businesses advertising in the program. Our participation ensured that the Festival stayed on First Street for the three days. The first night, the Veterans Hall was the place for the Gala. For our sponsorship, we paid for the Saturday rental (\$1,300.) of the Majestic Theatre. We also secured advertising from our Downtown Benicia Alliance Businesses. It is already hosted on Sunday, by the Benicia Film Festival, and, with two full days on First Street, patrons will have a chance to stroll, shop and eat during breaks in the films. Lunchtime break is 1 ½ hours, which is a great amount of time for patrons to explore First Street, take a walk to the water, and fall in love with Benicia.

We also took over the designing, costs, and a portion of the printing of the program. Our web designer, Gordon Gray, was instrumental in this task. We implemented an advertising program of \$400, \$250, \$100, and \$50 sizes for our DBA businesses. 24 advertisers signed on for this first year of partnering with the Benicia Film Festival. For 2017, we will get an earlier start and hopefully many more advertisers will sign on. Getting the program out to everyone sooner is one idea we will talk about at our meetings. It is a great event, and brings patrons from all over the Bay Area to Benicia.

Twinkle Lights: This year we hardwired the GFI's in the area from F Street to the water. This is where we have most of the outages due to wind. Veteran's Hall Lights and the Gazebo lights were next on the list to work on. Finally, Labor Day was the turn on date. Just in time for the Benicia Film Festival! This next year we will go through the process of tree trimming on First Street. By dividing the street into 3rds, this project will go smoothly. More options and solutions will be explored for lighting First Street. Stay tuned!

HDL Contractor: Business License and BID Fee : The fees are now on the same application. For a bit more clarity, The BID portion needs to be larger, spelling out BID(Business Improvement District), and naming the Downtown Benicia Alliance as the recipient nonprofit group of the tax. This would insure that everyone sees the box, and it is defined for new businesses on First Street. This is still one of our problems that we need to further address.



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Benicia Art Walk, 2016. We were asked and agreed to again provide the ABC License for the Benicia Art Walks. This was the 6th year for the Art Walk. As a sponsor, our Downtown Benicia Alliance Logo was on all press releases, brochure, and lanyards that the pourers were to wear.

Stop Signs, Crosswalks, and Pedestrians: We asked to be on the August Agenda for the Traffic Safety Committee for these items. Benicia is no longer a “hidden gem”. This is a major concern for all of us who are on First Street and watch pedestrians cross intersections. It goes beyond just speeding. It includes crosswalk marking degradation; poor intersection lighting; great difficulty and dangerous conditions when attempting entry to Main Street from side streets at intersections that do not have 4 way stop signs; as well as the speed in which some drivers hit when going between the two stop signs presently on First Street.

With Measure C monies, the street will be repaved with crosswalk definition by end of April, 2017.

Hiring of an Accountant: In June, we hired Lynell Green, of ATS Tax Angels (a 30 year First Street Business) to be our Accountant. This will ensure all of our filings, timelines, and year end reports to the IRS are completed in a timely manner. A year end statement is attached with this report.

Civitas Advisors: In September, we contacted Civitas to start negotiations for our new BID for 2017. Civitas will create the database of district businesses, assist in consensus building, prepare and revise legal documents, and guide the City Council hearing process. Throughout the project Civitas will work closely with the City, business owners and City staff and officials. This will be a 10 year BID, and it will secure the Downtown Benicia Alliance in the manner in which it was started:



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We are a partnership of our Businesses that, together, we will promote the common interests of and improve advocacy for our Downtown.

Celebrating Local Merchants Every Day.

I believe that our BID that we created in 2012, has brought First Street businesses together. We have turned this long dark area into a wonderland of lights.

As I wrote in 2012 as Chair,

“It is my observation that this has increased foot traffic as it adds ambiance, safety, strolling, shopping and eating. In every season, there is an added benefit to these twinkle lights. In the winter, a wonderland has been created. The twinkle lights have created a beautiful shopping district for the holidays. In the Spring and Fall it enhances people shopping at the Farmers market. Our goal is to keep commerce flowing at all times. After work, we want people to come down shop and stay for dinner. Also, more “walkers” are coming down due to the safety of First Street. And they are turning into shoppers and diners as well. In the summer, outside café tables are popping up with diners enjoying First Streets beautiful ambiance. The twinkle lights are our patio lights”.

I would like to thank the City of Benicia, for our continued partnership, and Mario Giuliani, for his guidance in our Downtown Benicia Alliance. With all of us working together, communicating our strengths and difficulties, working towards solutions, and striving for a better First Street for everyone, our goals will be met for a thriving, lively, tourist driven First Street which everyone will enjoy for many years.

From all of us on First Street, Where the Community Gathers, We thank you,

Leah Shelhorn, Chair

December 30, 2016: