



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks February 25, 2020

(Remarks delivered by Councilwoman Habgood and Councilwoman Mackey)

Good evening, everyone, and thanks to all who joined us tonight, in person or online. Mayor Brindle is unable to be here this evening, so I'm happy to pass along an update on her behalf.

RIALTO UPDATE

As Mayor Brindle mentioned at the last meeting, and as you may have read in recent press coverage, we continue to seek a funding partner to help realize a potential vision of the Rialto as a performing arts center, as the current marketplace does not appear to support the space re-opening strictly as a movie theater. As the Town is not looking to take on the full financial responsibility of running the theater, ongoing conversations continue about potential funding avenues that would make the most sense in terms of investment, viability and versatility.

COFFEE KIOSK UPDATE

In response to some inquiries about the timeline on the train station coffee kiosk work, I'd like to provide an update. The exterior kiosk renovation is nearly complete, with the roofing just installed and only the paint work remaining. The root of the project's delay is in the scope of the interior work that the site requires -- including a complete overhaul of the outdated electrical system that is out of code compliance, as well as the installation of water lines that were not previously in place. While this looks like a relatively small job, this interior work requires ongoing coordination between NJ Transit, NJ American Water, and PSE&G. Our contractor will begin the trenching work and line installation for both water and electricity to the kiosk, but we are dependent on PSE&G, NJ American Water, and NJ Transit to get the final connections in place. We are all looking forward to the work being completed so that we can then go out to RFP to secure an operator for the kiosk to bring coffee back to the train station!

NJ STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING

Mayor Brindle, along with Mayors Todisco and Giblin, recently met with Tom Bracken, President of the NJ State Chamber of Commerce, to learn about their proposed economic master plan and ask for their vocal support for small businesses, particularly those in walkable downtowns like ours. As the State reevaluates its economic development approach, it's critical that local mayors continue to work together and advocate for policies that are favorable to our businesses.

NJ TRANSIT

And with the ongoing fight for the one-seat ride never far from our minds, there will be a meeting of the 32 mayors of the RVL Mayors' Alliance this week. Speakers will include representatives from the Governor, Senator Booker, and Congressman Malinowski's Office. Also presenting will be officials from NJ Transit, including their customer care advocate. Priorities for the meeting are to receive an update on

the RVL peak one-seat ride feasibility study, request for potential of offering one-seat ride weekend service, and an update on NJ Transit's efforts to improve overall service and communication.

I'll now turn the remarks over to Councilwoman Mackey to provide an update on the DWC and Westfield 300.

DWC UPDATES

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Kathleen Miller Prunty as she completes her role as the DWC's Interim Executive Director. As you may have read, last night the DWC Board voted to approve the appointment of Bob Zuckerman to the position of Executive Director, effective March 23. Bob has extensive experience in downtown organizations, Special Improvement Districts and Main Street Programs. He most recently headed the South Orange Village Center Alliance and is currently President of Downtown New Jersey, a state-wide professional organization that advocates for downtowns. His vast experience, including business recruitment and serving on the Board of Governors for South Orange Performing Arts Center, innovative thinking, and knowledge of municipal government made him a natural choice, and I am thrilled to welcome him to Westfield.

In addition, the Council will vote tonight on the appointment of four additional members to the DWC Board, following a recent ordinance to approve its expansion by four members. They are Lillian Pien (Owner Director), owner of Akai and a new Downtown building owner; Roberta Loew (Operator Director), owner of Acting Out Studio on South Avenue; Michael LaPlace (Resident Director), who was actually the first Executive Director of the DWC; and Bob Conway (Resident Director), who owns Brownie Points in Summit and sits on Summit's equivalent downtown board. These new members bring extremely valuable and diverse experience to the Board, and as the Council liaison, I am grateful for their willingness to lend their time and expertise in our common interest to benefit the Downtown.

WESTFIELD 300

Finally, I'd like to provide a quick update about the Westfield 300 efforts as our dedicated volunteer base continues to mobilize and present some wonderful ideas about commemorating this milestone year. Just this past Sunday, we were thrilled to host the Colonial Dinner & Drinks event in partnership with the Westfield Historical Society. This sold out event at 16 Prospect Wine Bar & Bistro featured a historical discussion of Westfield's taverns and inns, as well as colonial dinner items. In addition, our very talented volunteer designer, Jenn Wilner, has produced some wonderful new Westfield 300 logos featuring retail, dining, and the Blue Devil mascot -- we can't wait to see them around Town on local merchandise and on Westfield's athletic uniforms. We also expect to have our online donation portal up on the Town website shortly, making it easier than ever to contribute to the Westfield 300 efforts this year.

We have much more in the works to share in the coming weeks and months -- and remember, it's never too late to volunteer and help us make Westfield 300 a success.