



GASLAMP QUARTER ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MINUTES

Wednesday, February 26th, 2025, | 3:30 PM
Marriott Gaslamp

Present Board Members	Absent Board Members	GQA Staff
Aron Langellier Lucy Burni Cindy Blair Josefine Jandinger Laurie Peters Jeffrey Burg Stephen Sherman Joe Santos Chris Lott Rick Borba Kim Shattuck	Carlos Becerra Sean Renard Howard Greenberg Vania Raitano	Michael Trimble Alma Ascencio

1. **Call to Order** – Directors Present

- Aron Langellier
- Lucy Burni
- Josefine Jandinger
- Joe Santos
- Jeffrey Burg (Arrived subsequent to the meeting's commencement.)

2. **Minutes approved in this meeting: Executive Board- Aron, Lucy, Cindy, Laurie... motion carries**

Michael Trimble: Opened the meeting, thanked Aaron for chairing, and requested guests introduce themselves to the board.

Aaron: Officially called the meeting to order.

Michael Trimble: Outlined housekeeping items, clarified seating arrangements, and encouraged guests to introduce themselves.



City Resident (Public Comment): Introduced himself as a Cortez Hill resident, real estate broker, and tech company owner. He mentioned attending per Aaron's invitation. Expressed frustration with downtown's management and shared support for improving the area and backing local businesses.

Michael Trimble: Thanked the city resident for their input.

Carlos Padial III: Introduced himself as a local business owner involved with a nonprofit and stated he was present to speak on behalf of the Gaslamp Quarter community.

Michael Trimble: Confirmed receipt of Carlos' email and letter and asked him to proceed with public comment.

Carlos Padial III: Described issues faced by Gaslamp Quarter businesses, including transients, mental illness, and illegal activities. He proposed creating a neighborhood watch program to address these issues and improve safety. He emphasized the importance of local involvement in maintaining a clean and safe environment.

Michael Trimble: Acknowledged Carlos' input and mentioned distributing his letter to the board. Suggested discussing the plan with law enforcement offline for further steps.

Carlos Padial III: Thanked Michael for the support.

Maria (Gaslamp Hostel): Introduced herself and briefly explained that the Gaslamp Hostel offers budget accommodation for travelers. She was present along with John Vino.

Rhiannon (Gaslamp Foundation): Introduced herself and addressed the Gaslamp Quarter's historical Foundation.

Public Comment (Nathan Congo): Introduced himself as a member of Exclusive Collections and a resident of the area.

Michael Trimble: Welcomed Nathan to the meeting.

Public Comment (Joyce Severn): Introduced herself as a 31-year downtown resident, actively involved in the community, and committed to helping when possible.

Clayton Fowler (San Diego Downtown Partnership): Introduced himself as part of the San Diego Downtown Partnership.

SDPD (Ryan - Captain, Central Division): Introduced himself as the captain of the Central Division and provided updates on efforts in Gaslamp. He acknowledged ongoing challenges with homelessness and criminal activity but noted progress with enforcement teams. He expressed support for a



neighborhood watch and highlighted the importance of community involvement in addressing safety issues.

Michael Trimble: Thanked SDPD for their input and support.

Speaker: SDPD

Summary:

The SDPD representative addressed various challenges faced by law enforcement in the Gaslamp Quarter. These included recruitment difficulties, with a noted shortfall in staffing and challenges posed by policy changes such as Proposition 47. The representative emphasized that the department is working to increase arrests, though the effectiveness is hindered by insufficient support from the City Attorney and District Attorney's office. The discussion also covered the impacts of street closures (bollards) on law enforcement, particularly in terms of increasing violence when streets are closed off but also recognizing the positive aspects of using barricades for events.

Additionally, the representative mentioned a critical staffing shortage, with only about 95-100 officers available on the streets daily, a stark contrast to the required number. The department is also grappling with the challenges of recruiting new officers, especially with the significant number of officers retiring soon. The conversation continued with details on the complexities of enforcing certain public safety violations, such as vendor activities and public intoxication.

Key Points:

- Recruitment challenges and a significant gap in officer staffing
- Rising violence due to street closures (bollards)
- The department's efforts to manage crime despite staffing shortages
- Impact of policy changes (e.g., Proposition 47) on law enforcement effectiveness
- Discussion on handling vendor-related violations

SDPD Update:

- **Melanie** (Detective from SDPD) briefly spoke about crime concerns in the area.
- **Michael Trimble:** Addressed the concerns but suggested speaking further offline.
- **VICE Report: Melanie**
 - Shared updates on a successful trial conviction for an illegal nightclub operation, with a sentence of 90 days plus one year in jail.



- Encouraged business owners to review their permits and licenses regularly to avoid violations.
 - Announced preparations for **St. Patrick's Day** events with law enforcement assistance, including trapdoor operations.
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San Diego Downtown Partnership Update by Clayton:

- **Quarter 1 Light Audit:** 17% of public lights are out in downtown; Gaslamp Quarter has approximately 15% non-functioning lights. Encouraged reporting lights to help improve downtown infrastructure.
 - **Service Ticket Requests:** Over 4,100 requests received in January (3,200 via Clean & Safe app). Over 93% were resolved.
 - **Unsheltered Count:** 843 unsheltered individuals, a 17% decrease from last year. The outreach team connected 463 individuals through the Family Reunification program.
 - **Ongoing Issues with 4th Avenue:** Continued concerns with 4th Ave. between Broadway and F St. being flagged with the mayor's office for further action.
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Public Comment on Clean & Safe Initiatives:

- **Cindy** inquired about the status of the city's operating center and the number of beds available for the homeless population. Clayton responded, explaining that the partnership works closely with SDPD and other service providers, placing individuals in safe spaces.
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Public Awareness of Clean & Safe App:

- **Carlos Padial III** emphasized the importance of spreading awareness of the Clean & Safe app to encourage more people to use it. Clayton offered to provide pamphlets for further distribution and outreach.
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Gaslamp Foundation Update by Rhiannon:

- **Shamrock Event (March 15th):**
 - Event will run from 2:00 to 10:00 PM, slightly earlier than past years.
 - Shamrock is a major event for the foundation, though increasingly expensive to host. Support from the community and local businesses is needed to keep the event viable.



- Michael Trimble discussed collaborating with the marketing team to send out a newsletter and letter to businesses to stress the importance of the event for the Gaslamp community.

Public Comment Regarding Event Funding:

- **Funding for Event Barriers:** Concerns were raised about the removal of barriers, with a question on whether it was due to a lack of funding. Michael Trimble confirmed it is a funding issue related to installation.

Additional Notes:

- **Shamrock Event Impact:** Michael Trimble reiterated that the Shamrock event brings significant value to Gaslamp, and supporting the event helps preserve the historical heart of the neighborhood.

Key Points Discussed:

- **Consent Agenda:**
 - The minutes from the Gaslamp Quarter Association Board meeting held on January 29th were reviewed and approved. Cindy abstained from the vote, and the motion carried.
- **Compliance Training:**
 - Michael Trimble reminded members about the city of San Diego's compliance training, which was due by the first week of March. Six members had not yet completed the training.
 - Discussions included individuals confirming their submission statuses.

Gaslamp Quarter Association Meeting Summary – Minimum Wage Increase

Key Points:

- **Michael Trimble** addressed the city's proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$25 per hour for hotel, event center, and janitorial services. The proposal is scheduled to be discussed tomorrow at 9:00 AM, with **Ela Rivera** introducing it to the committee. There are growing concerns about the potential trickle-down effects this wage increase could have on the restaurant and hospitality



sectors, with the Gaslamp Quarter likely to be significantly impacted. The change, though aimed at addressing the rising cost of living, could lead to detrimental effects on operations, especially for businesses already struggling with the current economic climate.

- **Public Comment** shared additional concerns, referencing cities like San Francisco and Santa Monica that previously raised minimum wage but faced unintended consequences. In particular, these cities saw financial strain, which could serve as a cautionary tale for San Diego. **Joe Santos** emphasized that businesses, especially those outside the traditional hotel sector, would be hard-hit, and the increase could force businesses to cut back on staff or even close.
- **Michael Trimble** expressed it was a short notice about the proposal, explaining that board members, including businesses in the Gaslamp Quarter, only learned about it last Thursday night. He encouraged members to attend the Council meeting tomorrow morning to voice their opposition and to submit written comments if unable to attend.
- **Maria from Gaslamp Hostel** shared her experience as a hostel owner, particularly within the budget accommodation market, where profit margins are thin. She emphasized the need for people to take action by writing letters to elected officials, as she believes that the decision-makers may not understand the true impact this could have on smaller establishments. She expressed concern that this initial wage increase could set a precedent for further increases in the future, as has occurred in other cities.

- **Public Comment** further explained that while the task force behind the proposal believes the wage increase is a solution to the rising cost of living, there are many alternative ways to address this issue without burdening businesses with higher wages. Suggestions included addressing healthcare, childcare, and rent control as potential areas for reform. It was noted that the task force consists of three council members who may not have a clear understanding of the broader implications for the local economy.
- In response, **Michael Trimble** mentioned that the Gaslamp Quarter Association is already working to oppose the wage increase and will continue advocating for a more balanced solution. He invited businesses and community members to join efforts in calling for more thoughtful approaches to cost-of-living adjustments, noting that the situation is still developing and there may be opportunities to influence the outcome.
- The meeting concluded with a strong call to action for businesses and community members to advocate for themselves and ensure their concerns are heard. It was stressed that without collective effort, the city council may proceed without fully understanding the ramifications of the wage increase on smaller businesses, leading to greater long-term challenges for the local economy.

Public Comment: Concerns Raised by Laurel McFarlane

- **Concern:** Laurel McFarlane expressed concerns about the lack of time for the community to respond to newly proposed fees. She highlighted several issues, such as the \$202 shutdown fee



for event organizers, new charges for parking spots used for events, and the requirement for union labor at public buildings and city-run events. McFarlane emphasized that these changes are being rushed through with minimal notice, making it difficult for community members to provide input.

- **Community Impact:** McFarlane noted that these changes, if enacted, would negatively affect not only hotels and restaurants but also events and other local businesses that contribute to San Diego's attractiveness. She pointed out that this creates unnecessary burdens on businesses, especially when there's no time for community engagement.
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Stephen's Commentary:

- **Event Center Reference:** Stephen raised concerns over the lack of clear definitions in correspondence about the "Event Center" reference, as it might have broader implications.
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Public Comments and Discussion:

- **Michael Trimble's Updates:** Michael Trimble acknowledged that the association is working on addressing the concerns raised by the public. He mentioned that his office had sent letters to the appropriate parties and is continuing to push for more involvement from the community.
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Jeff's Comments on Business Operations:

- **Concern about Future Impacts:** Jeff expressed concern that these new policies could have severe consequences on the hotel and event industries, making it harder for them to maintain operations and provide good wages and benefits to employees.

Further Concerns from the Public:

- **Questions about Union Requirements:** Public comments raised concerns about the new union requirements for city-operated events and public spaces, with questions about how it would affect smaller businesses and vendors.
- The conversation shifted to discussing the impact of wage increases on businesses, particularly in the hotel and hospitality sectors. Several participants, including the Gaslamp hostel, expressed concerns about how higher wages would affect their operations.



- **Next Steps:** Michael Trimble urged the community to keep pushing and remain vocal about the impact these changes will have. He reassured attendees that the process is not over, and that continued advocacy is crucial.
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Social Media Update: Alma Ascencio

- Alma provided an update on the social media performance for February, noting a 31% increase in engagement and a 27% growth in engagement rates. Overall, the audience grew by 1.8%, with the net total audience increasing by 316. Video content remains the primary source of content, accounting for 31% of the posts, compared to previous months.
- Alma highlighted the focus on promoting events and businesses in Gaslamp, including a Valentine's Day campaign and ongoing giveaways. She noted a strong SEO performance, with key terms like "nightlife" and "Gaslamp" showing an upward trend. The SEO ranking improved by 60%, with more keywords appearing on the first page of search results.
- Alma discussed upcoming efforts to target hotel keywords to continue improving SEO rankings. For March, Alma is focusing on promoting Shamrock and Gaslamp businesses for the St. Patrick's Day events. The website is continuously updated to ensure accuracy and relevancy.

Marketing Update: Laurel McFarlane

- Laurel introduced new marketing campaigns, including the development of three potential taglines. The board expressed strong support for the tagline: "Gaslamp Quarter: A Little Extra, Just Like You."
- A new initiative will reward participation in the craft cocktail program with magnets and stickers. Laurel also discussed hiring a membership liaison to engage with businesses and promote local events like the pickleball tournament.
- Regarding pickleball, Laurel shared progress with plans to host Gaslamp Urban Pickleball Nights every Thursday in August and September. The event will include a fee for entry, which covers two drinks at local bars and restaurants. Sponsorship opportunities, particularly in the liquor and beer categories, are being pursued.
- Laurel also discussed partnerships with the Tourism Authority to market the pickleball events to conventions and destinations, as well as the possibility of featuring professional pickleball players.
- Plans for additional events such as Labor Day parties, Nightmare on 5th Ave (with a costume contest), and Chihuahua races for the Gaslamp Cinco De Mayo Event were also mentioned, with the goal of increasing engagement and promoting Gaslamp as a prime destination for events.

Adjournment:

- Michael Trimble thanked everyone for attending.
- Aaron called for the meeting to be adjourned.



- Michael Trimble closed the meeting with a thank you, and stated, "See you next month."

MEETING ADJOURNMENT –meeting ended: 1 hour 44 minutes