

Memorandum Mayor's Office

To: Rock Island City Council
From: Mayor Mike Thoms
Subject: Rock Island Downtown Alliance Board Appointments
Date: March 17, 2023



Rock Island Downtown Alliance Board - On February 13, 2023, the Rock Island City Council approved an agreement for the Quad Cities Chamber to manage the City's downtown special service area (SSA) and provide place management services through the creation of the Rock Island Downtown Alliance (Downtown Alliance or RIDA). Pursuant to the Downtown Alliance Governance and Board Bylaws, the organization shall have a Board of Directors composed of 13 voting members:

- a. Ex-Officio member. The City Manager shall be ex-officio, voting member of the Board
- b. Elected members. The twelve (12) non-permanent voting Board members shall include the following:
 - i. Two (2) downtown residents.
 - ii. Three (3) downtown business owners (may also be property owners).
 - iii. Six (6) downtown property owners.
 - iv. One (1) downtown non-profit owner, director, or leader.

The twelve (12) non-permanent voting Board members shall be divided into three appointment groups of four (4) persons each. The initial appointment groups shall have terms of one, two, and three years respectively when the Board is first established. Upon expiration of their respective initial terms, all members may be re-appointed for three (3) year terms. Members may serve two (2) consecutive terms (including the initial Board appointment term) before being required to take at least one (1) year off of the Board. They may thereafter serve again.

The Mayor shall appoint the initial Board members. Thereafter, the Board, following the nomination process set forth in the Downtown Alliance Bylaws, shall appoint members in June of each year or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible.

Appointment of a three-year term, expiring 2026:

Appointment of DeAnna Freeman-Foster – Ms. Freeman-Foster is the owner of Big T Wear Big & Tall Clothing and a hospitality area sales manager with Kinseth Hospitality. She has 25 years of sales and marketing experience working with corporations and small businesses. Ms. Freeman-Foster would like to be a part of the revitalization of the downtown area of Rock Island and has experience with retail and special events. She would like to focus on improving public perception, building vacancy, and conditions of the Rock Island downtown area by adding new dining options, hand crafted gifts, and unique retail shops.

Appointment of Raja Krishnamurthy – Mr. Krishnamurthy represents a downtown business and property owner as Information Technology Executive at Royal Neighbors of America. Mr. Krishnamurthy brings a unique perspective as an immigrant and 10

years of experience with strategic thinking, project planning and execution, application of technology for value creation, budget management, risk management and governance. He would like to focus on improving public perception and business mix and adapting to the post-COVID environment.

Appointment of Steven Ratcliff – Mr. Ratcliff is a downtown property owner and business owner of Bent River Brewing Company, a brewery, restaurant and special events venue. He has been a member of the Rock Island community for 41 years and has years of experience in acquiring resources, developing relationships, problem solving, and leadership. Mr. Ratcliff would like to be a part of restoring the downtown to its previous level of success by addressing the absence of commerce and business mix in the downtown.

Appointment of Greg Stecker – Mr. Stecker is a downtown property and business owner of Stecker Graphics, a printing, signage, design and marketing business. He has been a part of the Rock Island community for more than 20 years. He has previously worked at downtown bars and festivals and has experience helping other businesses through branding and marketing. Mr. Stecker would like to use his experience and relationships with businesses owners to grow the downtown and revitalize the downtown community by addressing building and storefront vacancies and vagrancy.

Appointment of a two-year term, expiring 2025:

Appointment of Brett Hitchcock – Mr. Hitchcock is a downtown property owner and business owner of The Circa 21 and The Speakeasy in the arts and entertainment and restaurant/bar industries. He has been involved with the downtown for nearly 30 years. Mr. Hitchcock would like to focus on addressing public perception, sense of safety, business attraction and retention and building/storefront vacancies to create a thriving downtown to ensure they can pass along their businesses to the next generation.

Appointment of Arron Sutherland – Mr. Sutherland represents a downtown business and property owner as President/Chief Executive Officer of Illinois Casualty Company. He has been a member of the Rock Island community for 17 years. He understands the history of the goals and objectives as he has been working on the development of the board for many months and the approval of the Special Service Area. Mr. Sutherland would like to bring sensibility to the board including adherence to a budget, development of key performance indicators, general management, and leadership skills. Mr. Sutherland would like to improve a sense of safety, cleanliness, and create a business friendly-environment in the downtown.

Appointment of Brandy VandeWalle – Ms. VandeWalle is a downtown resident, property owner, and business owner of Skeleton Key Antiques for 10 years. She has been a member of the Rock Island community for 27 years. She has skills and experience with retail and planning special events. Ms. VandeWalle has firsthand experience of challenges facing the downtown area including absentee property owners, vagrancy, and unwanted behaviors. She would like to utilize her skills and experience to assist in improving the downtown area.

Appointment of Nicole Watson-Lam – Ms. Watson-Lam is a property and business owner of Ms. BriMani's Hair and Beauty Supply and The Urban Reserve Luxury Rooftop Events which specialize in retail sales and special events. Ms. Watson-Lam has been a

member of the Rock Island community for more than 40 years. As the Vice President of the Downtown Rock Island Steering Committee, she has advocated for the establishment of the Special Service Area and understands how it is intended to implement services to maximize potential success in the downtown. Ms. Watson-Lam would like to address concerns such as the business mix, building vacancy, condition, and public spaces.

Appointment of a one-year term, expiring 2024:

Appointment of John Chow – Mr. Chow is a downtown business and property owner as the Executive Director of Rock Island Housing Authority and CEO of Community Home Partners. He has several years of experience with housing development, construction and facilities management. Mr. Chow would like to improve building and storefront occupancy, foot traffic, and marketing and promotion.

Appointment of Benjamin Fawks – Mr. Fawks is a downtown resident and the owner of Rozz-Tox, a downtown business in the arts and entertainment and restaurant/bar industries. He has been a member of the Rock Island community for 12 years. Mr. Fawks brings unique experiences with travel, interest in urban environments and communities focusing on functional aesthetics, art, design, and utilitarianism. He would like to focus on public amenities and spaces.

Appointment of Erica Williams – Ms. Williams is a downtown resident and property owner at DuMarche Condos and a municipal services employee. She has been a member of the Rock Island community, recently returning for 1.5 years. Ms. Williams has been a manager in local municipalities for over 20 years and brings knowledge of government processes, budgets, citizen communications, enforcement, planning, and unpopular mandates. She actively engages with the downtown community daily and would like to continue working to improve the cleanliness and building appearances in the downtown.

Appointment of Amanda Wood – Ms. Wood is a Development Manager for Russell, a commercial real estate development and construction company, and representative of Rock Island Investors, owners of the Federal Building. Her experience in developments provides value when evaluating needs for growth, understanding realistic construction costs and timelines, and defining facilities management costs. These all play a significant part in creating improvement programs for downtown businesses and property owners. Her experience in accounting can provide value related to forecasting and budgeting to meet both short and long-term goals. Ms. Wood would like to improve the community's sense of safety downtown as well as improve business attraction and retention.

Submitted by: Mike Thoms, Mayor

Approved by: Mike Thoms, Mayor