

Downtown Berkeley Ambassador Fired for Assaulting Homeless Man DBA Apologizes to the Berkeley Community

This morning the Downtown Berkeley Association was made aware of a video that is posted on YouTube showing a Downtown Berkeley Ambassador assaulting a citizen, who appears to be a member of the city's street population. The DBA was shocked by this totally unacceptable egregious behavior, that runs completely contrary to the extensive training, protocols, and mission of hospitality and outreach of our Ambassadors, Block-by-Block (our contractor / service partner), and the Downtown Berkeley Association.

Immediate steps were taken to terminate employment of the Ambassador for this violent assault, as well as the utter disregard of Ambassador protocol. The other Ambassador seen in the video has been suspended pending further investigation. We are cooperating with Berkeley Police regarding their investigation.

This incident occurred at approximately 7pm, Friday March 20th. DBA Ambassadors are instructed to call the Ambassador Operations Manager in the event any physical altercation occurs, which they did. They were instructed to submit a Block-by-Block incident report, which they did later that day. This report did not represent the extent and severity of the altercation, describing the event as an act of self-defense by the Ambassador. Block by Block and the DBA were not made aware of the true nature of the altercation until viewing the YouTube video this morning.

As CEO of the Downtown Berkeley Association, I want to personally, and on the behalf of the DBA board and staff, apologize to the victim of this beating, and the entire Berkeley community. This violent behavior runs entirely contrary to our organization's goals, as well as the standards and values of our entire community. The DBA will redouble its efforts with screening, training, and retraining to be sure no incident of this type occurs again in the future.

Also, please see statement below from Blair McBride, President, Block-by-Block, our contractor / service partner.

John Caner
CEO
Downtown Berkeley Association
510.549.2230 x12
jcaner@downtownberkeley.com

Susan Medak
Board President
Downtown Berkeley Association
510.647.2900
smedak@sbcglobal.net

Bill Schrader
Board President, Elect
Downtown Berkeley Association
bill@austin-group.com
925.683.8782

Lance Gorée
Operations Manager
Block-By-Block / Downtown Berkeley Association
510.547.2230 x13
lgoree@downtownberkeley.com

STATEMENT BY BLOCK-BY-BLOCK

This past week an incident occurred between two of our Block-By-Block Ambassadors and a known member of the Berkeley street population. The uncalled-for response by these Ambassadors has angered and appalled us deeply, and we apologize to this person, to the Berkeley community and to its leaders for the actions of these two individuals.

What happened is intolerable. The attacker has been terminated and his partner has been suspended pending an internal investigation. We are also cooperating with law enforcement officials as they continue their own investigation.

We have built our company on the caliber and professionalism of our Ambassadors. We carefully screen any Ambassador candidate to ensure that the best possible individuals-in terms of background, skills and character-are hired to serve our clients. We then train them extensively to respond and to react to a variety of situations and with a cross-section of the business district's population. Their fundamental charge is to engage all our residents with the highest level of respect and dignity.

Block-By-Block has been the service partner of the Downtown Berkeley Association since 2012. While we are disappointed in the actions of these two people, we and our Berkeley Ambassador team remain committed to serving the Downtown Berkeley Association-and everyone in this community-with the professionalism and respect they deserve.

Blair McBride
President, Block-By-Block
