

## **METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES**

**May 2, 2016**

**8:00 A.M.**

In attendance: Eric Berger, Joe Cascio, Chris Flynn, Margaret Inglese, Jan Margolis, Ruchir Mewawla, Jay Muldoon, Grace Shackney, Dottie Winhold, Deb Zupan. Not present: Chris Crane, Nelson Li, Barry Montalto, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Allison Inserro.

Board President Eric Berger opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room, Metuchen Borough Hall.

### SLATE OF OFFICERS

The following slate of officers for the MDA was presented:

- Chairman – Eric Berger
- Vice Chairman – Chris Flynn
- Treasurer – Ruchir Mewawla
- Secretary – Barry Montalto

The opportunity was offered to make additions to the slate. With no additions proposed, the slate, as presented, was unanimously approved by those present. These officers will serve as a transitional Executive Board until the first membership meeting in January when a new slate of officers will be elected by the district members.

### COMMITTEES

Chairman Eric Berger recommend proposed the formation of the following committees:

- Executive Director Search Committee chaired by Jan Margolis and Allison Inserro
- Nominating Committee headed by Joe Cascio and Peg Inglese
- Board Organization Committee headed by Deb Zuban and Nelson Lee
- Finance Committee chaired by Ruchir Mewawla
- Design Committee chaired by Grace Shackney
- Economic Vitality chaired by Jay Muldoon and Dottie Winhold
- Marketing chaired by Chris Crane and Bobbie Theivakumaran

The Committee heads will reach out to District members and residents to serve with them on these committees.

### OFFICE SPACE

The Board Organization Committee chairs will conduct a search for office space for the MDA, preferably located on ground level on Main Street. It was suggested that the Committee approach Peter Lowey, owner of the Forum Theater, to see if he would rent ground floor office space the MDA. A meeting was set with Peter via a text for May 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the Forum.

The Organization Committee will also compile a list of available office spaces in the District for consideration.

#### THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee will create a slate of officers for election at the January membership meeting. They will work with Jan Margoles who is creating a Board Manual.

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT

It was agreed that each committee would reach out to the entire Metuchen Community as well as to the District members, to solicit volunteers for each committee.

#### THE MDA'S FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 6 MONTHS

In a discussion about what we can accomplish in the next six months, the following points were agreed upon:

- Make a list of all the events that are already scheduled between now and January and partner with the sponsoring groups to develop a public relations strategy and recruit volunteers.
- Make improved holiday decorations a priority for this year's holiday happenings downtown.
- Work on slogan that defines who we are (not where we are). The Marketing and Design Committees can work together on this. It was suggested that we reach out to Mirjana Novkovic and Peter Lowey to help with this.
- Create a vacancy list to send to brokers. Start talking to brokers about what our mission is.
- Counter the perception that it is hard to do business in Metuchen.
  - Work with the Borough Zoning Officer regarding design and implementation.
  - Eric Berger to be the point person (until Executive Director is hired) for new businesses coming to town by walking them over to Borough Hall and walking them through the process of opening a business.
- Create a mission statement: Grace Shackney will circulate a draft and collate suggestions in one draft to be reviewed at our next meeting.
- Create an initial business plan by September
- With regard to the complaints about parking, create awareness of the parking deck's capacity and access. Publicize the current signage and wayfinding study that will help direct shoppers to parking.

#### BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2016

It was agreed that Board meetings should move to the evenings at 7:30 p.m. The following meeting dates were proposed and tentatively accepted:

- May 26 (TBA)
- June 9 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)

- June 23 (Public meeting)(TBA)
- July 14 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)
- July 28 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)
- September 8 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)
- October 13 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)
- November 10 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)
- December 8 (Borough Hall Conference Rm)

Meetings should be publicized with notices in the Criterion, on the Borough Website and on our Website. There was discussion about having the Borough send notification of these meetings to the publications they use for Borough meetings. We should check to see what the policies are for other districts with regard to inviting the public to district meetings.

There was a discussion about holding our first “public” meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Forum and recruit volunteers for the committees. It was suggested that volunteers be vetted for their qualifications to serve on appropriate committees. It was suggested that we use the form that the Borough uses as an application for volunteers to serve on Borough boards and commissions. It is located on the Borough website. We can customize it for our purposes.

#### FINANCES

Jay Muldoon will oversee the movement of the Parking Authority funds through the Borough to the MDA. Eric Berger and Ruchir Mewawla will open an account at the Metuchen Savings Bank.

#### SUMMER INTERN OPPORTUNITY

Jan Margolis knows of a Brown University undergraduate studying urban design, who is a Metuchen resident, and is available for an unpaid, summer internship in the field. It was suggested that the intern could split her time working on design elements for the MDA and for the Borough Zoning Officer. (The idea was presented to the Borough Zoning Officer as he stopped in after our meeting, and he embraced the idea.) Jan will obtain the student’s resume for consideration.

The meeting was concluded at 10:10 a.m.

Compiled and Submitted by:  
Grace Shackney in the absence of the Board Secretary