

## **METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES**

**May 26, 2016**

**8:00 P.M.**

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

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 2, 2016

Eric Berger asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Board of Trustees meeting. Nelson Li pointed out that his name was omitted from the list of attendees and was misspelled in another spot. A motion was made to approve the minutes with that correction. The motion was seconded and approved by all present.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

Eric Berger reported that about 20 applications for the Executive Director position have been received to date. Jan Margolis reported that she met an excellent candidate at the Main Street Now conference this month. Jan met the new Executive Director of the Montclair organization, Israel Cronk. He offered to help us with the interview process. The Search Committee will keep the Board posted.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board was in receipt of Nelson Li's letter of resignation which he submitted because he is about to begin a new job that requires a long commute. Eric announced that Nelson has agreed to stay on the Board until we have efficient means to replace him.

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported that she is compiling an email list of District businesses to be used in the Board nomination process. There was discussion about buying an appropriate database through the Metuchen Public Library to manage the list. Bobbie will ask our summer intern Annabelle Clément for help compiling the email list.

### ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Eric reported that several members of this Committee plus other Trustees looked at several possible office spaces in the District. The two under consideration are the old Lollipop Land store which rents for \$1800 a month; and the front office in the Forum Theater building for \$750 a month. The Committee is inclined to go with the Forum Theater space because of its price, location and the fact that it is a month by month lease. It will need to be painted and outfitted with a new air-conditioning unit.

Chris Crane made a motion that the Metuchen Downtown Alliance lease the office space in the Forum Theater. Deb Zupan seconded the motion. All present approved.

It was noted that we will need to establish a mailing address. There was a discussion about leasing a post office box at the cost of \$250 a year.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Jay Muldoon reported that he and Dottie Winhold are in the process of forming this committee. They are talking to Steve Epstein, Glen Gawronski (from an investment management firm in town), Lorraine Mulligan (Metuchen Savings Bank), Elaine Edgcomb (retired micro finance and grant making expert).

Eric's office looked into a MEWA, a multi-employer welfare organization, which could potentially provide better health insurance to all interested MDA member organizations at a lower cost than they are currently paying. Eric provided the contact information for two (2) existing MEWAs to Jay who will look into this further.

#### MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

Mirjana Novkovic passed out an outline for a MDA web video series that would include:

- "MDA Close-up" – A monthly video newsletter.
- "Meet the Merchants" – A 30-60 second to 5-minute spotlight about individual merchants.
- "MDA Supports Youth Community Journalists – A community feature based on the Mirjana and Gus's work with the Metuchen High School Bulldog Productions (MBP). Some projects include:
  - A Campbell School roving reporter speaking to store owners and customers at Lollipop Land.
  - Enlist high school journalists to conduct interviews with business owners and MDA volunteers as part of the newsletter series.
- "MDA Community Spotlight" – Filming big events like June bug, the Country Fair, Memorial Day Parade, etc.
- Creating a "Downtown Highlights" video made up of above video snippets.
- "Construction Highlights" – Updates on the downtown development projects like the parking deck and Whole Foods.

Grace Shackney passed out a list of Metuchen events from now until the end of the year that the MDA should acknowledge and help publicize.

#### DESIGN COMMITTEE REPORT

Grace Shackney reported that members of the Design Committee to date are: Jay Muldoon, Robert Diken (landscape designer), Linda LaStella (ceramic muralist), Judy Weinberg (Photographer) and Kim Adlerman (illustrator/graphic designer). Grace is looking for an

architect to join the committee. Pat Lobdell was suggested. Chris Crane, who is an architect, also is interested in joining the committee.

Grace met with Fred Hall at DPW to get his take on how to keep sidewalks clean. He would put 3 people on that job twice a week using blowers to push trash into the street that would then be picked up by street sweeper. The cost would be \$250 a week (\$13,000 a year) and would cover Main Street, Pearl Street and Middlesex Avenue up to Lake Avenue. Fred has a request in for \$200,000 street sweeper. He also recommended a sidewalk vacuum called the Billy Goat that cost \$2,247.49.

Fred suggested coordinating with the Parking Authority about what areas they will be responsible for cleaning.

Things to consider for action:

- New Planters
  - Possibly have the Garden Club do a survey to determine number and placement of planters
  - Determine cost of plantings
  - Research attractive planters
- Holiday Decorations
  - Research and determine the cost of lighting all the trees on Main Street during the December holidays.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- Chris Crane will talk to the Chamber about their email list.
- We need to retain an accountant to do a tax filing for non-profit status. Eric Berger will look into two suggested firms. Grace Shackney will give him contact information for Aaron Katz, a Metuchen firm.
- Eric reported that the MDA bank accounts have been opened and we are waiting the deposit from the Parking Authority.
- A copy of the Mission Statement was given out and approved.
- **The next Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 p.m. at Borough Hall.**
- We will hold a public meeting on Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Forum Theater at 7 p.m. It is intended to be the first membership meeting. There was a discussion about whether it should be open to the public.

All business being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Submitted by: Grace Shackney