

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

July 28, 2016

7:30 P.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Joe Cascio, Chris Crane, Margaret Inglese, Allison Inserro, Mirjana Novkovic, Grace Shackney, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Dorothy Winhold. Not present: Jan Margolis, Ruchir Mewawla, Jay Muldoon, Chris Flynn, Dep Zupan. Staff: Annabelle Clemont, Summer Intern. Guests: Jennifer Maier, Borough Administrator.

Board President Eric Berger opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room, Metuchen Borough Hall.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JULY 14, 2016:

Chris Crane moved that the minutes from July 14th be approved. The motion was seconded by Allison Inserro. The motion carried and the minutes were approved.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH REPORT:

Allison Inserro reported that two executive director applicants are scheduled for a second round of interviews and meetings with merchants. Board members will be invited to meet the candidates during these second interviews. Interviews with several other candidates will be scheduled through the month of August.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Nominating Committee** – Joe Cascio reported that he and Peg Inglese will talk to committee chairs and compile a list of present committee members and put it into Smartsheet for access. Committee descriptions along with the names of committee chairs will be put on the website.
- **Organization Committee** – Chris Crane reported that the office at the Forum has been painted and the office furniture is in. The bathroom needs painting and the water pressure needs to be improved. The heating vents in the floor need cleaning. We have a printer but we will need to purchase computers and phones.
- **Economic Revitalization Committee** -
 - Dottie Winhold reported that she and Jay Muldoon will meet with Bob McDade from Renaissance to talk about the tenant mix at the Whole Foods development.
 - Other members of the Economic Revitalization Committee include Steve Epstein, Eileen Millett and Sheril Hardaway (from Wells Fargo Bank).
 - Dottie reported about a recent dispute at the Farmers Market about adding a second bread vender. The Chamber board voted to allow a second vender over the objections of the Market manager and Hoboken Farms, the current bread vender.
- **Design Committee** - Grace Shackney reported on the following:
 - The Committee is working on some suggestions for improving the MDA logo about word placement and typeface style and size.
 - The banners on the Woodmont fences had to be taken down because they caused the fences to blow into the street during a storm.
 - Eric Berger prepared an application for zoning approval to put an MDA logo mural on the side of the old Danford's building on the corner of Main Street and

Middlesex Avenue. Two artists on the Design Committee, Roman Stefaniw and Bob Diken, had volunteered to execute the mural. However, the building owner is withholding permission until he gets the OK from his new tenant.

- Grace, Eric and Annabelle interviewed two outside vendors about District sidewalk cleaning and maintenance. They are CDS Public Space Management and Dare Living. A proposal from Dare Living was very expensive. We are still waiting to hear from CDS. Once we have both estimates, Grace and Jay will review options, including partnering with Metuchen Department of Public Works.
- The Committee is reaching out to lighting designers and exploring options to improve District holiday lighting.
- The Committee embraced the idea of creating a chalkboard mural for community participation. The MDA could create events for people to comment on it. It could also be activated for events that are already in place, such as the Country Fair. Building location and owner permission is being sought.
- Annabelle gave a presentation on design standards that included ordinances for unifying facade materials and color choices for signs and awnings, as well as lighting, tree planting, sidewalk furniture and the use of art. It was noted that Annabelle internship will end at the end of July. The Trustees thanked her for her service to the MDA over the course of the summer and wished her continued success with her studies.
- **Promotions Committee** – Bobbie Theivakumaran reported the following:
 - The Pokémon promotion is doing very well. There were no reports at this time about whether it increased business for those who participated.
 - A “fitness month” event is being planned with a kick off at the Farmers Market that will feature one of the District’s fitness businesses each week.
 - Mirjana is working on “Meet the Merchants” videos that will be three-minute spots.
 - Other items being explored are: a virtual concierge service with the hotel at Metro Park; and a brochure with parking map for downtown apartment dwellers.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- 501c(3) Filing – Eric reported that Aaron Katz will not be able to do our filings. Chris Crane will make some calls to try to find another firm to handle it.
- The 2017 Budget – Discussion was put off until the next meeting.
- Peg Inglese was named as an MDA liaison to the Junebug Committee.
- A Parking Committee was formed to focus on parking issues with representation from the Parking Authority, Nexus and the MDA. Barry Montalto, Ted (The Greek on Main) and Peter Klein will be on the Committee with Jay Muldoon.
- The next MDA membership meeting will be September 27th at 7:00 p.m.
- All requests for MDA speakers and MDA comment should be cleared through Eric so that talking points are accurate and up to date.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

The next MDA Board of Trustees meeting is Thursday, August 25, 2016, 7:30 p.m. at Borough Hall.

Submitted by:

Grace Shackney