

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES
Membership Meeting
October 17, 2017
7:30 P.M.

In attendance: Grace Shackney, Joe Cascio, Deborah Zupan, Nancy Zerbe, Peg Inglese, Jan Margolis, Eric Berger, Leon Schwartz, Dottie Winhold. Not Present: Chris Flynn, Ruchir Mewawala, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Chris Crane, Mirjana Novkovic, Allison Inserro. Staff: Isaac Kremer, Executive Director. Guests: Edward Van Eckert (Famers Ins.), Greg Trowbridge (Carpet Maven), Michael Guido (Cartridge World), Judy Marsillo (Metuchen Taxi), Jim Vivello (Metuchen Taxi), Bob Matland (Black Belt Institute), Joe Bernheimer (Sagepoint Financial), Sherri Schwartz (Carpet Maven II).

MDA Board President Eric Berger opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Old Franklin Schoolhouse. He asked for introductions of all in attendance.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

Eric Berger reported the following:

- A downtown vacancy list is being compiled. Eric asked everyone to check the list and let him know if your property should be listed.
- A “Parking Team” has been created to address the parking needs of MDA members. Peter Kline will lead this team made up of MDA members, Nexus, and the Parking Authority. The first initiative is the creation of validation program for merchants to validate customer parking in the deck. Also a pilot program for discounted employee parking is underway with Novita employees. Employees will be charge half the rate.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Nominating Committee** – Joe Cascio stated the purpose of this Committee to oversee board elections and vet volunteers for various Committees or “teams.” Applications for volunteers and nominations were available. He reported that Leon Schwartz and Mirjana Novkovic have recently been elected to two Board vacancies. Leon is the owner of Carpet Maven and Mirjana is a resident who has been working with the Promotions Committee on the merchant videos.
- **Organization Committee** – Jan Margolis and Deb Zupan reported that the MDA office is set up at the Forum Theater. They are assisting Isaac Kremer with the arrangement of the office. They are seeking volunteers and working to set up good financial practices.
- **Economic Vitality Committee** – Eric Berger stated the purpose of this Committee is to help every business do better. They are involved with strategic planning, market analysis and helping to bring new businesses to town.
- **Design Committee** – Grace Shackney reported that this Committee engaged Metuchen’s Department of Public Works to steam clean the sidewalks and maintain a regular sweeping schedule. The Committee is also working on a theme for downtown holiday lighting. She showed a prototype of lampshade chandelier that may be used to light store windows and alleyways downtown.

- **Promotions Committee** - Chris Crane and Bobbie Theivakumaran reported the following:
 - They are working on a membership database with emails.
 - Mirjana Novkovic is working to finish video interviews of business owners that will be on our website. The videos also include event-marketing videos of Junebug, Country Fair and the ribbon cuttings celebrating the openings of new businesses.
 - 160 people participated in the pizza event with the Masons Lodge, which highlighted the District's pizza establishments and raised money for the Masons' scholarship fund.
 - A Downtown Metuchen ap has been created that can push out special events and sales. Members are asked to send information about their events to info@metuchendowntown.org.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Eric Berger introduced Executive Director Isaac Kremer who spoke about the importance of business leaders coming together and touched on the benefits for both business owners and property owners. He expressed confidence that the Merchants' Taskforce will be constantly listening to businesses and watching out for their needs. He is currently focusing on Small Business Saturday, the first Saturday after Thanksgiving. Plans for that day will be announced shortly.

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Jim Vivelo from Metuchen Taxi expressed his concern for better lighting and a general cleanup of Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Peg Inglese expressed her concern for more consideration of business owners needs when staging events downtown.
- Bob Matland said there needs to better communication about free parking in the deck for certain events downtown. A suggestion was made that businesses create a customer email list that can be employed to notify customers about free parking when it is offered.

All business being completed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by,

Grace Shackney