

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES
November 28, 2017
7:30 P.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Joe Cascio, Allison Inserro, Margaret Inglese, Jan Margolis, Jay Muldoon, Leon Schwartz, Chris Crane, Grace Shackney, Not present: Deb Zupan, Chris Flynn, Ruchir Mewawala, Mirjana Novkovic. Staff: Isaac Kremer, Executive Director. Guests: Donna Harris, Jef Buehler.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 10, 2016:

Chris Crane moved to adopt the minutes from the November 10th Board meeting. Leon Schwartz seconded the motion. The motion carried and the minutes were approved.

CHAIR REPORT: MDA received its 501C3 approval. This also enables us to be exempt from sales tax.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

1. Need volunteer hours report for all Trustees, Chairs of Committees and Committee members for monthly reporting to Main Street NJ.
2. Reinvestment stats were distributed.
3. Small Business Saturday was a success. 100% of the businesses want to do it again.
4. Several new volunteers applied via the website. These applications were given to the Organization Committee for follow-up.
5. Passport Books: Totally distributed; 55 merchants involved; reaction has been positive.
6. Chris Crane felt we need a mechanism for follow up to measure impact.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Joe Cascio reported there is a new vacancy per the closing of Buddha's Loft. He discussed the challenges of getting store owners to commit to the Board. Proposed slate of new Trustees was presented and accepted.

ECONOMIC VITALITY: Jay Muldoon reported they have been working with consultant Kennedy Smith on the market analysis. Dottie Winhold felt we need a mechanism to learn about what store owners may be in trouble so we can help before they go out.

DESIGN: Grace Shackney discussed the new lighting for the Holidays. Eric Berger mentioned next year we need lighting as well on Pearl Street, Lake and Middlesex. Design team is working on guidelines for signage; a public art plan, sidewalks and disposal trash units. These need more frequent collection and Main Street residents need to stop using public trash bins.

PROMOTION: Chris Crane and Bobbie T. discussed developments on the MDA website and who might be able to help with the merchant videos. The BOD discussed the need for work plans with clear objectives and evaluation process.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY: This was tabled to the January Board meeting to allow time for Jef Buehler and Donna Harris. They will be attending the meeting to discuss the Strategic Planning exercise.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SWOT: Donna mentioned her surprise that Parking came up so high on the priority list. Board discussed plans with Nexus to provide 3 hours free parking to customers of Main Street merchants, as well as a parking scheme for employees.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: There was discussion about the need to train on Board roles & responsibilities, and gaining new volunteers with the right skill sets on the right committees. Member meetings will be quarterly, and it was suggested we invite committee volunteers as a way to educate and build relationships.

Isaac distributed a list of Special Events versus Retail events and asked for feedback a.s.a.p.

NEXT STEPS IN SWOT:

1. Donna/Jef will send a draft questionnaire to the BOD for input and feedback. Questionnaire will take 12 minutes to complete. They will coordinate with Kennedy Smith, who is leading the market analysis. Suggestion was made to use Chamber gift certificates as an incentive to complete the questionnaire. Perhaps a single \$500 certificate or two \$250 certificates, or something else. Goal is to get 400 responses. One way to expand the customer list is to get them from merchants, Woodmont, the Boro and others.
2. It will take 6 weeks from the close of the survey to complete the report. The report will incorporate Kennedy's findings as well.
3. Survey and market analysis will occur in January.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Submitted by:

Jan Margolis