

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

September 8, 2017

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Allison Inserro, Jay Muldoon, Leon Schwartz, Grace Shackney, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Peg Inglese, Michelle Schutz, Gary Tilbor, Stuart Schooler on phone, Chris Flynn, Dianna Callinan. Not present: Anthony Campisi. Staff: Isaac Kremer. Guest: Jan Margolis.

Eric Berger, MDA Board Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed Allison Inserro, new Borough Council representative on the Board. He also stated that Jay Muldoon, Interim Borough Administrator, is now an *ex officio* member of the Board.

Approval of the July and August minutes was delayed until the October meeting to allow all Board members to review them. Eric gave an update from the Parking Committee. The three hours free parking in the deck ended 8/31/17 and the validation program is now in effect. The Greek On Main is participating, but more publicity is needed in order to enroll more merchants and restaurants.

He also gave an update on the new downtown planters. They will be placed by DPW in the coming week with planting of boxwoods scheduled for 9/16/2017. The fall flowers will be planted by the Garden Club and MDA volunteers on 9/30/2017.

Executive Director Report – Isaac Kramer highlighted the recent good press coverage of the MDA including the Metuchen Mirror and Home News Tribune articles. Plans are underway for an expansion of last year's successful Small Business Saturday on 11/25/2017. He also shared plans for the placemaking projects at the Lake Ave/La Rosa retail strip and the alleyway from Main St to the New St parking lots. These projects are made possible by grants secured from Edward Jones and IOBY (Lake Ave by La Rosa) and AARP New Jersey (alleyway and parklet).

Chris Flynn provided an update on the fall marketing campaign. A draft of the TV commercial will be shared with all Board members and feedback is due by 9/15. Chris also stated that the 3 month campaign will include an interactive element, geo fencing, digital banner and placement of the commercial on News12. He was scheduled to meet with Central Jersey In Motion later that day regarding their component of the campaign. Isaac thanked Chris and appealed for more members of the Communications team.

Bobbie Theivakumaran gave an update on the Family Friendly initiatives. A Town Plaza Team has formed and held an initial "planning" session. They are now researching best practices of other public spaces and will be working with the Borough (owner of the Plaza) to formulate policies and any ordinance changes needed. Work is underway to leverage the Whole Foods opening (10/11/17) with the "Hop, Skip, Jump" promotion to build connection with, and awareness of, Main St. businesses. The Board approved a \$3,530 work plan. A Haunted

Downtown event is planned and the Board approved the work plan. In conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, the Scarecrow on Main St project is coming back this year.

The Innovation Team is being led by Elaine Edgcomb who will provide an update at a future meeting.

Main Street Bridge Painting – Jay Muldoon stated that plans are being finalized with Ridge Painting. Painting should happen by end of the month. He will coordinate the schedule with DPW and Metuchen Police.

New CVS store – Eric Berger gave an update about proposal for CVS to provide public space near corner of New and Pearl streets to accommodate night market, kiosks, etc. to complement the Plaza across the street. Eric sent a license agreement to the CVS attorney handling their Planning Board application and is waiting for feedback.

Isaac shared the Signage, Storefront Façade Improvement Grant program with the Board. A handout was provided. The plan included a return visit from FrontdoorBack who provided technical assistance on storefronts to some MDA members last year. There was discussion among Board member about the timing, scope, cost and other aspects of the program.

Resolution of window consultants' engagement was put on hold. It was agreed that Isaac will set up a conference call between Chris Flynn, Gary and Leon and the consultants to redesign a proposal that defines how much we are willing to spend and what the consultants will do for that amount of money.

Isaac received approval from the board to implement the \$25,000 grant money that was already approved for the ten businesses that participated in the first storefront consultancy.

Holiday lights – Eric expressed the desire of the board to expand the holiday lighting to include all of the district. Isaac recommended that a Holiday Lights Team be created under the Getting it Done Team.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, October 13, 2017 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon