

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

December 8, 2017

8:30 A.M.

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

Eric Berger, MDA Board Chair, opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the November minutes. Motion passed. Eric provided an update on the lease arrangement with CVS which permits the MDA to conduct two "Market Days" per week on the sidewalk along New Street adjacent to the CVS building and across from the Plaza. CVS was delayed in reviewing the agreement Eric sent, but expects it will be signed shortly. Volunteers will be needed to work on the Market Days. Bobbie has a list of potential volunteers.

Executive Director Report – Isaac Kremer reported on numerous initiatives:

- Small Business Saturday (SBS) – see survey results below.
- MDA Financial book closing
- Reinvestment stats – 30 net business for 2017 vs. 11 net in 2016
- Recent performance review, includes project Planning for 2018

2018 Budget – Review of 2018 budget, board discussion, agreed to move \$5,000 from Reserve to Marketing line

- Motion made to approve the 2018 budget. Motion passed.

Public Art Policy – Grace Shackney reported on, and distributed copies of, the Public Art Policy and Plan. She also discussed ideas for the Art Walk and Community Murals which could connect different sections of the District. She talked about artist Steven Powers who has a "commerce & art" focus to his work. This was Grace's last Board meeting as Bob Diken will become Chair of the Metuchen Arts Council and will be replacing Grace on the MDA board.

Small Business Saturday – Elaine Edgcomb shared findings from the post-SBS survey. Eighteen businesses completed a survey.

- Majority reported increase in sales over 2016
- Most reported small (1-9%) increase, 3 reported a 25-49%, 2 reported more than 50% increase
- Majority of businesses would participate again in SBS
- Shoppers reported visiting 3 stores
- 2/3 of shoppers heard about SBS via social media

- Suggestions for next year: make it bigger, have stores open earlier, more info about pop up vendors, more offers from businesses, create multi-business offers/cross promotions, more promos to get people into more than 3 stores.

Tech Team – Elaine also reported on the Tech Team initiatives:

- Photos are being taken of businesses which can be added to Google maps, pages. Business Entrepreneur students from MHS have volunteered to help with this.
- Research being done on innovation grants. Contact made with Kennedy Smith for direction.
- Holiday pop ups scheduled – Love June, Genus Boni, and others.
- Working to find ways to help businesses learn to better utilize social media. Metuchen Library is offering a seminar in January for small businesses and the MDA will promote it to member

Communication Team – Chris Flynn reported on the MDA commercial running on cable and News 12. It will run through early January, 2018. It is running more frequently on News12. There have been 190,000 digital impressions with a 1% clickthrough rate which is 2 times the national average. The Board agreed to do a new commercial for 2018 rather than continuing to run the current ad.

Family Friendly Team – Bobbie Theivakumaran reported Family Friendly Team:

- Downtown Caroling scheduled for this Saturday.
- Plans for NYE Party on the Plaza being finalized. Sponsor donations going well. Working to get restaurants and businesses to promote NYE offers.

Old Business:

Chris Flynn encouraged other businesses to take advantage of the storefront consultants. He was very pleased with the results achieved by Hailey's Pub by implementing their lighting and other recommendations. Isaac reported that the reports from the store consultations they did in the fall should be available soon.

Several business owners complained about the "aggressive" parking meter enforcement. Some customers are afraid of getting a parking ticket and it is hurting business. It was suggested that the enforcement officer press the 10 minutes free button when he encounters an expired meter before issuing a ticket.

New Business:

Isaac announced the Annual Meeting will be on January 25, 2018, at 7:30pm at La Rosa Pizzeria.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, January 12, 2017 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon