

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

February 9, 2018

8:30 A.M.

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

Eric Berger, MDA Board Chair, opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the January minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- A recent meeting with Sharon Atkins was held to prepare for visit of mural artist, Steve Powers. He met regarding potential sites in the District where murals could be hung or painted. The focus is along New Street from the Plaza to Lake Ave to better link Main Street with the Whole Foods development. Numerous sites were identified including hanging banners from the utility poles along New Street. Steve's studio time is in the \$400 - \$500/day. Other expenses include production or printing of his designs. Timing would be Spring (in time for MetFest) or late Fall.
- Eric also reported that the purchase of new, smart parking meters for the downtown was approved at the last Borough Council meeting. Late Spring installation is expected. 218 meters are included in Phase 1. No changes in rates or time limits are planned.
- Eric reminded the Board of their obligation to make a financial donation to the MDA each year. It is important for the MDA to show 100% participation in financially supporting the MDA.

Executive Director Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Ongoing window/storefront improvements occurring. Highlighted the update at Frescos' Deli on Main Street. Isaac spent time helping the owner prepare the windows. Fresco's was a recipient of a grant from MDA to help with the improvements.
- Project plans are being developed with Chairs and project leaders for 2018.
- The national Main Street conference will be held in March in Kansas City. Since Isaac has attended 10 national conferences he doesn't plan to attend this unless Board members or MDA volunteers also attend. He encouraged Board members to consider attending and contact him for more information.

Communication Team

Chris Flynn reported:

- Met with Altice to review the 2017 advertising campaign. The “pluses & minuses” of the campaign were discussed to determine the overall effectiveness. The ad only ran for 2 months which is a short period. Altice has analytics which they will be sharing with Chris.
- For 2018 the goal is to create a campaign that goes beyond awareness of the downtown and helps drive customers to downtown businesses.
- Chris talked about a new feature of the mobile app that tracks or follows the user to actual store destinations after viewing a banner pushed to their phone.
- Eric Berger suggested that the campaign also push the parking validation program by including a “we validate parking” message. Currently there are 12 businesses in the validation program.

Family Friendly Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Last week’s “Ice Cream for Breakfast” event at the Scoop was a big success. Event will be repeated due to big turnout. Event benefited from the Scoop collaborating with other Main Street businesses, including Cai’s Café, Buttery Bake Shop, and others.
- Find Your Love Downtown event is this weekend.
- Upcoming events include:
 - Prom Fashion Show at MHS being promoted by MDA
 - MHS Pre-Prom event will be held on the Plaza
 - May – Downtown Loves Mom, taking place on the Plaza 5/12 from 12noon – 5pm
 - June – 2nd annual Kids Takeover Downtown
 - Other events being planned include Movie Nights, Professional Wrestling, “Supper Club,” and World Cup Finals viewing party
- Plaza Committee has determined the equipment needed to support Plaza events including tents, audio, movie screen, etc.

Innovation Team

Elaine Edgcomb reported:

- Innovation Grant program to be launched. Description and application form included in the Board meeting packet. The purpose is to help businesses overcome the risks of trying new or innovative ideas for their business – introduce new products, develop experiential services, pop up stores, ecommerce, etc. MDA will match expenditure by businesses up to \$5,000 via a reimbursable matching grant. MDA will also include a summary of the recent Market Analysis with the grant application. The program was approved by the Board.
- Marketing teacher and students from Metuchen High School have taken photos of 28 businesses to use on their websites, Google maps, and social media sites. Photos need to be tagged with #shopmetuchen.
- Dottie Winhold has joined the Business Recruitment Team. They will be visiting other downtowns to identify businesses that might want to open a location in Metuchen.
- The MDA was not awarded a SCORE grant. Plan to submit again in the future. It is a very competitive process.

Treasurer Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Stuart stated he will do bimonthly variance (budget vs. actual) reports.

Getting it Done Team

Isaac shared the report in Allison's absence:

- Cleaning contract was reviewed. Finalized at 26 visits (weeks) for a fee of \$20,000. Board will have opportunity to increase # of visits later this year if they choose to. Motion to authorize Isaac to sign contract with Commercial District Services. Motion passed.
- Golden Broom Award program to start this month to recognize business owner or building owner who best maintains and cleans his property.

Old Business

None to report.

New Business

Peg Inglese mentioned that she will be signing a lease for her vacant store front this week. New tenant will be opening a pet supply business called "The Scottish Dog." The owner, Susan Fitzgerald, had operated a similar business in Connecticut.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, March 9, 2017 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon