

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

March 9, 2018

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger (by phone), Chris Flynn, Stuart Schooler, Jay Muldoon, Diana Callinan, Robert Diken, Michelle Schutz, Leon Schwartz, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Gary Tilbor, Dottie Winhold. Not present: Anthony Campisi, Margaret Inglese. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

Chris Flynn, MDA Board Vice Chair, opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the February minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Planters – there had been a rash of negative postings on various social media forums concerning the planters purchased by the MDA last year. MDA Executive Team had decided not to engage in public debate on social media which does not lend to nuanced or complex discussions. Offered to meet in-person but offer of face-to-face meeting declined. As far as the damaged/cracked planters, replacements at no costs to the MDA are being shipped.
- Agreement with CVS for use of sidewalk for public market/space still awaiting signature by building owner.
- Update on public artist, Steve Powers, was provided. Good meeting with MDA volunteers held in early February. Steve has agreed to a \$30,000 budget for murals and banners in downtown. He will attend the 4/24 Member meeting. Approval was given by Board to proceed with contracting with Steve.
- Memorial Day parade plans are underway, under direction of Jan Margolis and Chamber. The MDA will be supporting an effort to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts and the American Legion via a placement program with local restaurants who will offer discounts and specials for veterans.

Executive Director Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Worked the past 40 days straight. Happy to report numerous new business openings including Frutta Bowls and Chipotle.
- All MDA related social posts are read and considered even though public responses are not always given. Many times good, productive “off-line” communications take place.
- Planning and discussions on the 2019 MDA budget need to start in June with budget to be finalized in August.

Treasurer Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Stuart reviewed the latest Financial Statement and indicating rent expense would be increasing due to pending move to new location.
- He also reviewed the various expense classification used in the budget, but pointed out that some expense categories are found in many of the program expenses.
- The relocation of the MDA office to 10 Station Place was discussed. Although the rent is higher than the current rent for the current space, the new office is located closer to downtown businesses, it is larger, and has a conference room. In addition, current landlord is seeking to raise rent on current space to be higher than the new rent. A motion was made to authorize signing of lease and spending up to \$2000 to fix up the new space. Motion passed.

Communication Team

Chris Flynn reported:

- Altice was creating a one page summary of their marketing plan for 2018 which includes cable TV, News12, web and digital marketing.
- Chris reminded everyone of the need for a months or longer campaign to see desired results. Altice's plan will also include measurement and tracking tools.
- Stuart Schooler mentioned that the Sportsplex website is updated and back on-line. It reaches a wide area beyond Metuchen so may be a good vehicle for reaching potential customers.

Family Friendly Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Plaza team is looking to buy equipment for events – movie projection equipment, photo booth. The vendor the Arts Council uses (Mitch?) has reasonable price.
- Downtown Loves Moms event will be held the Saturday 5/12 before Mother's Day on the Plaza.
- Other upcoming events include:
 - Prom Fashion Show at MHS being promoted by MDA
 - MHS Pre-Prom event will be held on the Plaza
 - June – 2nd annual Kids Takeover Downtown
 - Swing Dance on 7/13
 - Other events being planned include Movie Nights, Professional Wrestling, "Supper Club," and World Cup Finals viewing party

Innovation/Tech Team

Isaac Kremer reported:

- A Recruitment Team has been formed and has identified 28 targeted businesses to pursue.
- Team is working with marketing consultant Alex Roberts who is helping Mangia Toscana as a pilot case.
- Our LoopNet account is active with over 30,000 views of our available listings.

Getting it Done Team

Allison Inserro reported:

- Volunteer Management – volunteer meeting to be scheduled. Sign-up sheet for 3/24 planting day is available.
- Cleaning vendor starting on 3/17 and is expected to clean the downtown district twice a month.
- Golden Broom Award program to start in April. Volunteers for the review committee are needed, as well as volunteers to promote the program to business owners.

Old Business

None.

New Business

There will be a meeting on 3/24 at Woodmont Metro to discuss the upcoming paving project on New and Pearl Streets which will start in April. Area businesses are encouraged to attend to learn about the project, timeline and traffic detours being planned. Isaac will be working with Woodmont and the Borough on a communications plan for the project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, April 13, 2018 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon