

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

May 11, 2018

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Chris Flynn, Stuart Schooler, Jay Muldoon, Diana Callinan, Anthony Campisi, Robert Diken, Margaret Inglese, Michelle Schutz, Leon Schwartz, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Dottie Winhold. Not present: Allison Inserro, Gary Tilbor. Staff: Isaac Kremer. Guests: Linda Koskoski, Elaine Edgcomb.

Eric Berger opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the April Board meeting minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- MDA agreed to contract revisions from CVS for use of sidewalk for public market/space. Awaiting final signatures on agreement.
- Update on Public Art – summary of Steve Powers' presentation at the Membership meeting was given. The PA team met and has requested a final plan and quote from Steve. A public meeting in the summer is planned to share his plan. Expect the murals to be done in August or September.
- Eric updated the Board on his discussions with Brandon Uhlig, a videographer, regarding his interest in developing video content for the MDA. He currently runs the Edison Public Schools video channel. For \$10,000 annually he will produce 36 videos of MDA businesses and events at the direction of the MDA, as well as produce commercials which can run on Altice or other platforms. He would be a contractor to the MDA, not an employee. There was discussion among the Board. A motion was made to enter into a contract with Brendan for July, 2018 through June, 2019 for \$10,000. Isaac and a Communications sub-team will work with Brandon going forward.

Executive Director Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Isaac Kremer distributed a proposed MDA Social Media policy which was developed on policies used by other non-profit and for profit organizations. The objective being to be a "good citizens on-line." Board members reviewed and discussed the proposed. No edits were suggested. Motion made to approve the policy. Motion passed. Social media policy to be posted on MDA website and observed by all Board members.
- Elaine Edgcomb offered a suggestion that the MDA should be doing more to communicate to the public about what we are doing. For example, some people have been asking "where has the MDA gone" following the relocation of the office to Station Place. The MDA is doing so many good things and initiatives that are not being publicized widely. Many times our social media posts are in response to other people's posts. We should be more proactive about our projects

and successes. Isaac mentioned that Mike Regan was no longer doing the newsletter and we need someone to take on both the task of communicating with our members and the separate task of communicating with the general public.

- Eric asked Board members to think about identifying a volunteer who might be interested in helping with the member newsletter and general public communications.
- Isaac recently updated our reinvestment stats. Business starts continue to rise; vacancy rate is declining (from 20% to currently 6%).
- MDA has submitted a Livability grant to AARP with hopes of using grant for construction of a foot bridge over steam to connect the Greenway to trail at Myrtle Field. He had a positive discussion with Middlesex Water who has an easement in the area. Isaac also recently met with the Borough's grant writer about grant opportunities where the MDA and the Borough could partner.

Treasurer Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Stuart reported that the MDA is \$35,000 ahead of budget, primarily due to our surplus.
- We are awaiting the latest assessment check from the Borough.
- We're over running the "Rent Expense" category due to the recent relocation of the office.
- Other budget lines are in line with budget.

Communication Team

Chris Flynn reported:

- A banner promoting the Mother's Day Plaza event will be placed on ads running on Altice. He is working with Altice on data mining opportunities. Altice will run the new MDA advertisement once it is produced and delivered by Brandon Uhlig.

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Downtown Loves Moms event will be held on 5/12 on the Plaza.
- Other upcoming events include:
 - MHS Pre-Prom event will be held on the Plaza on 5/24
 - Kids Takeover Downtown on 6/20
 - Swing Dance on 7/13
 - Wrestling event on 9/15
- A calendar of events card has been produced in conjunction with the Chamber, Arts Council, and BIL. It will be updated and distributed quarterly. Cards were given to Board members to distribute.

Parking Team

Eric Berger reported:

- Nexus is offering the first 3 hours free in the parking deck from 5pm Friday through midnight Sunday from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend.

Innovation Team

Elaine Edgcomb reported:

- One-on-one consulting with member businesses is underway with Tech Team to help with marketing and social media
- A restaurant online ordering and delivery program are being evaluated to enable member restaurants to expand their delivery business
- Entrepreneurship students from MHS are helping businesses revamp and improve their websites
- Business recruitment – working on a one-page sales sheet with facts and data on why Metuchen is a great place to open a business
- MDA received a \$5K grant from SCORE to offer 3 workshops and a business plan competition. Goal is to help businesses expand and grow. Workshops will start June 27.

Getting It Done Team

Isaac Kremer reported:

- MDA hit our fundraising goal to of \$3,000 to be used for wall mural on Innovation Alley. This qualifies us for additional grants of \$25K, \$50K, or \$100K from Gannett Foundation for public art and public space activation activities.
- Golden Broom Award will be awarded to Sue Fitzgerald of the Scottish Dog.
- Two street pianos were donated. They will be placed in public places or hopefully in front of interested businesses.
- Diana expressed her appreciation for the removal of the sidewalk image that was painted in front of Cai's.

Old Business

Peg Inglese stated the need for parking areas for delivery trucks. Chris Flynn suggested that businesses schedule early morning deliveries when there are parking spots available on Main Street.

New Business

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40am.

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

Submitted by Jay Muldoon

