

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

October 12, 2018

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Chris Flynn, Stuart Schooler, Michelle Schutz, Leon Schwartz, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Linda Koskoski, Anthony Campisi. Not present: Bob Diken, Peg Inglese, Dottie Winhold, Gary Tilbor, Dianna Callinan. Staff: Isaac Kremer. Guest: Elaine Edgcomb

Eric Berger opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the September board meeting minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Update on several public art installations - Steve Powers project, Ed Wetzel, and robot mural:
 - Steve Powers has completed 2 murals. Next up are banners on the utility poles on New St.
 - Robot mural was completed in September on the Harpcade wall and received good press coverage
 - Ed Wetzel continues his Metuchen themed mural in Imagination Alley.
- Parking Team meeting – new meters have been installed on Main St. They offer a 10-minute grace period, but no first 10 minutes free. Many businesses not happy with loss of 10-minute button. Parking Authority will look into the situation. The time for feeding the meters remains 8am – 6pm. Meters on the Plaza are 2-hour meters, nit 24 hours. Concerns expressed about the tactics of the Parking Enforcement Officers. Jay Muldoon to discuss with Police Chief.

Executive Director Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- This week had an event every night. Saw Governor, Freeholders, and Mayor. Press conference at train station. Five MDA reps joined Mayor at State of the County.
- Helped Cachet, Kabab Factory with openings. Thank you to Borough.
- Media request for business starts in 2018, please check list. Excluded those that expanded or moved from one location to another in the District. Article around SBS.
- Suggest media buy with NJ Transit leading into holiday season. Need help with creative.
- Seeking to bring storefront consultant back Nov 15 and 16
- Two conference sessions accepted for National Main Street Conference next March 25-27. One on marketing workshops with SCORE, the other highlighting success of our strategic plan and retail promotions.
- Seeking GAMSA Award in 2019. Never win in first year. Have a good chance to win in 2020. Will need help from chairs and partners to achieve that goal.

Secretary's Report

Jay Muldoon gave an update on the proposed Metuchen Arts District and renovation of the Forum Theatre. Middlesex County Freeholders have awarded Metuchen \$3.5M grant for the project dependent on the Borough getting possession of the theatre.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Stuart provided a review of the revised 2019 proposed MDA budget which was distributed to the Board. He stated how important fundraising and grants will be to making the 2019 work, especially in the 4th quarter when expenses are high.
- Budget calls for \$25,000 in grants revenue. A grant has recently been submitted to Middlesex County.
- The Board was reminded of the importance of 100% participation in making a donation to the MDA each year. After discussion, a motion was made to approve the 2019 budget. Motion passed. The budget will be submitted to the Mayor and Council for approval.

Communications Team

Chris Flynn reported:

- We have a new sales rep from Altice. The new MDA commercial is running on Altice.

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Ghost Buster movie on the Plaza is Saturday night.
- Haunted Downtown is planned for Saturday 10/27.
- Small Business Saturday is Saturday after Thanksgiving. Retail promotions are being planned. There's a lot in interest in participating. After party will be held at 2 Chicks with Chocolate.

Innovation Team Report

Elaine Edgcomb reported:

- A Live Google webinar, "Get Your Business Online" is being planned to help businesses take advantage of the upcoming holiday shopping season. For those participating there will be follow-up a week later with clinic sessions to help businesses update their Google profiles.
- The "Downtown Fellows," a group of MHS students, will continue helping businesses improve their social media presence and digital marketing.

Getting it Done Team

Isaac Kremer reported:

- The Getting It Done Team is in need of a Chairperson.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Anthony Campisi indicated that that the street sign at the corner of New and Pearl is in disrepair and needs to be replace. He also said that the 3 street lights by the gas station across from Borough Hall are out.

Stuart was interested in finding a way to study the impact of the popular and well used Sportsplex on downtown businesses. Several ideas were discussed. Isaac is going to meet off line with Stuart about some of the things that might be able to be done.

Linda Koskoski asked about a branding strategy and was told that it's not currently being worked on. She also asked about an Empty Store Front Inventory which hasn't been updated since May 2018.Linda also asked about a marketing piece for attracting businesses and will meet with Elaine offline to find out where that stands

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45am.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon