

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

April 12, 2019

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Michelle Schutz, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Diana Callinan, Mark Harris, Sue Fitzgerald. Not present: Leon Schwartz, Gary Tilbor, Chris Flynn, Linda Koskoski, and Jamie Gordon. Staff: Isaac Kremer. Guest: Sheri-Rose Rubin.

Eric Berger opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the 3/8/19 board meeting minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Eric thanked Board members who had contributed to the Community Thrives campaign. We did meet the initial goal and are eligible for grant funding.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- The auditor is working on the 2018 audit.
- He will have a 2019 YTD report at the May meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- The Community Thrives campaign was explained.
- Isaac reported that over \$3,5000 has been donated towards the MDA's "A Great Good Place in the Garden State" project. We are eligible for grant funding after the campaign concludes.
- We will be submitting a grant to AARP Livable Communities program due on 4/17/2019. The grant will focus on improving one block of Main St. from New St. to Middlesex Ave where improvements to storefronts, awnings, and accessibility.
- We will be exploring the idea of trialing valet parking as part of the grant request. Eric will talk to the Chamber about their interest in having the valet service offered during Restaurant Week.
- Update on Storefront grant program: See-More and Pyramid projects are being implemented and Isaac is talking with several other businesses who are interested in applying.

Metuchen Chamber Update

No report.

Communications Team

Jay Muldoon reported:

- MDA retail business commercial produced by Brandon Uhlig. It is running on the Comcast cable network and numerous social media platforms. Feedback has been very positive although somewhat less than the earlier restaurant commercial.
- The retail commercial has not been boosted on Facebook as the restaurant one had been.
- The Comcast buy ends mid-April and there was a discussion about whether to do another buy or not. No decision made.
- We have \$1,800 remaining on the Altice buy and it was decided to spend that money running the restaurant commercial prior to the Chamber's Restaurant Week.
- Stuart Schooler asked how to leverage the attendance at the Sportsplex to drive customers to downtown businesses and restaurants. Their marketing person, Omar Taha, will attend the next Communications Team meeting to pursue this idea.
- The Team will also determine the ad buy for the Metuchen Mirror in support of MDA events.

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Main Street Goes Green event on Saturday 4/13/2019.
- Downtown Loves Mom event on the Plaza on 5/4/2019.

Technology Team

Isaac Kremer reported:

- There will be a Google National Small Business Week Livestream on 5/8/2019 to help businesses grow by marketing themselves better with Google Ad Words.
- On 6/26/2019 Google will be sending a trainer to Metuchen to present Google My Business and educate businesses on using Google to grow their businesses. Isaac suggested that the Metuchen Accessibility Committee members might be interested in attending.

Public Art Team

Eric Berger reported:

- The Public Art Team is having their next public meeting on 4/24 at Phattra to discuss their summer project which will include building and decorating Adirondack chairs and a public space at Imagination Alley.
- The Team could use help assembling the Adirondack Chairs.

Parking Team

Eric Berger reported:

- There is interest in doing a trial of downtown valet parking during Restaurant Week. He'll be discussing it with Nexus and the Chamber.
- Jay Muldoon will discuss the idea with the Police Chief.
- The launch of the mobile payment app by the Parking Authority is still delayed.

- Eric is talking with Nexus about discounting parking be offered in the deck weekdays from 4-6pm and free after 6pm in order to get downtown business employees to not park at the street meters which continues to be a problem.

Storefront Team

No report.

Old Business

None to report.

New Business

- Eric also discussed the idea of a seasonal ice-skating rink at Trailhead Park which Stuart Schooler had suggested in earlier meetings. The idea was discussed and several issues were raised including that utilities would be needed, parking and possibly a traffic light on Middlesex Ave. Permission from the County would be needed since the park was established with County Open Space funds.
- Several members also liked the idea of splash park being built there for the summer season. A suggestion was made for the Metuchen Recreation Commission to consider the idea in order to move forward.
- The MDA will help to promote the downtown Treasure Hunt held in June sponsored by the Masons and local business owner Cristian Ossa.
- CDS has agreed to clean the Plaza tables and chairs as part of their cleaning program.
- A fundraising campaign to reach residents is being planned. Isaac is talking to a fundraising professional about the campaign.
- Sue Fitzgerald reported that her pet supply store, Scottish Dog, would not be affected if the Borough Council adopted the ordinance being proposed by the Humane Society of the US. Her store does not sell pets. It sells products for pets.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, May 10, 2019 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon