

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

August 9, 2019

8:30 A.M.

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

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

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Parking Team has a new idea to better utilize spaces in the Parking Authority's parking lots that are mostly empty at night. The idea is to make the spaces available to downtown residents between the hours of 4:30pm and 8:30am when commuters are not using the spaces. It would be a Resident Overnight Parking Pass. Discussion was held with several questions posed including how to enforce, what the proper hours would be, could downtown workers also use it, etc. Eric plans to attend the next Parking Authority meeting to present the idea to them for consideration.
- Parking Team also discussed Nexus expanding their current 2 hours free on weekends to include weekdays evenings. No decision made yet, but it may start in October.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- The 2020 budget is being developed, the budget categories from the 2019 were reviewed and the group thought the audit categories should be used for the 2020 budget.
- The honorarium for the Metuchen High School Fellows has been eliminated and won't be part of the 2020 budget.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Isaac attended a Main Street NJ meeting where the Acting Governor announced the awarding of MSNJ grants, including a grant for the MDA.
- The Storefront and Public Spaces grant report was distributed and reviewed. Concern was expressed about the potential for grant requests/commitments exceeding the allocated budget. The need for greater oversight and being more transparent with businesses seeking grants was discussed. A time limit for businesses to complete their grant requirements and work is needed so projects can be closed out and money be made available to other businesses.
- The MSNJ grant must be spent by year end so Isaac needs to focus on making that happen.

Public Art Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- The Adirondack chair auction is on Sunday, Oct 6, at 4pm at Borough Hall.
- There will be another Public Art Public Meeting and seminar on Wed, Sep 25 at the Sportsplex.

Tech Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- No report.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- No report.

Parking Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Nexus Parking offered 20 free parking passes in the Pearl Street parking deck for the month of July for employees of downtown businesses.
- The offer was announced at the Grow with Google event on 6/27, but there have been no takers at this point.
- Councilmembers Linda Koskoski and Jason Delia are looking into several things including new meter rates, rates by time and location and possible elimination of the 10-minute free button due to continued abuse.

Communications Team Report

Jay Muldoon reported:

- The “Back to School and Family Activities” video will be going into production in August and be released after Labor Day. The next campaign will focus on Small Business Saturday and Holiday shopping.

Chamber Report

Leon Schwartz reported:

- August Cruise Night had to be re-scheduled due to weather.
- Chamber members and family event to Metuchen Pool is on August 13.
- Restaurant Week was held from July 15 – July 21 with 30 restaurants participating. Some restaurants extended their offers beyond the week.
- Country Fair is October 5. Early bird booth reservation ending soon. MDA Executive Board decided not to have a MDA booth at the Fair this year.

Arts Council Report

Mark Harris reported:

- The Cornerstone Jazz Concert on August 3 was sold out.

- There will be Jazz at The Greek on Main September 22.
- The Art Cycle event on the Plaza was hot, but well attended. The Arts Council appreciated the businesses who supported it including Dean's Café and Sherwin Williams.
- Metuchen Rocks on the Plaza continues on August 10 and the Dragonfly Theatre has performances at Metuchen High School on August 9 and August 10.

Old Business

None to report.

New Business

- Sue Fitzgerald raised the issue of needing parking spaces on Main Street for customers who need to run errands, make drop offs, etc. More spaces need to be "freed up" for retail customers downtown. She believes time is of the essence and that we need to try something new. Maybe different colored meter bags for the "drop off/ pickup" spaces. A suggestion was made for Sue to attend the Parking Team meeting so her idea could be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, September 13, 2019 at 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon