

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

March 13, 2020

8:30 A.M.

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Leon Schwartz, Mark Harris (on phone), Mo Atzbi, Gary Tilbor, Diana Callinan, Linda Koskoski, Sue Fitzgerald, Gary Wade and Jenny Lai. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

Eric Berger opened the meeting. Motion was made to approve the February, 2020 board meeting minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Still seeking a District Owner to fill vacant seat on Board.
- Metuchen resident came forward with proposal for a college student oriented co-working space for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Various options were suggested. Recommendation was made to redirect towards existing businesses like Cai's with basement or Hailey's back room.

Secretary's Report

- No report.

Treasurer's Report

- No report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Attended and participated in New Jersey Future Redevelopment Forum. Presented on panel dealing with Age-Friendly communities that included State Director of AARP.
- The MDA is planning to submit a \$15,000 grant request to AARP Livable Communities, due April 1, 2020. The target area for improvements is the pedestrian walkway at the end of Pearl St which leads to the train station parallel to the train tracks. The goal is to improve lighting, safety and attractiveness of this well used area.
- National Main Street Center report on implementation of transformation strategies was reviewed. Jenny Lai expressed interested in helping on refinement of Innovation strategy, and Sue offered to help.

Public Art Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- The Public Art Team is focused on a project involving the Town Plaza, and food themed sculpture. Seeking buy-in and support from Borough, Farmer's Market, and others.

Storefront Team Report

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Working with businesses on approvals for new grants.

Tech Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- No report.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Upcoming promotions include Downtown Goes Green (Apr 25), Downtown Loves Moms (May 9), and Kids Takeover (June 19). Taking wait and see approach about whether to continue.
- Many Board members expressed the need for a big relaunch event after COVID-19 crisis is over to welcome people back downtown.

Parking Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- No report. Awaiting study from Nexus. Likely to be postponed as a result of COVID-19 crisis because all parking data will be skewed lower from lower utilization.

Communications Team Report

Diana Callinan reported:

- Working with Brandon to get him focused on producing new videos, including one to welcome people downtown.
- Shifting strategy to focus on Facebook ads primarily.
- Also looking into opportunities to get free coverage for downtown businesses, particularly in digital media.

Chamber Report

Leon Schwartz reported:

- The Chamber will be producing a 2020 – 2021 full color Magazine and Membership Directory.

Arts Council Report

Mark Harris reported:

- Art classes at the Senior Center have started.

- The Tiny X project is being planned in conjunction with the Public Arts Team.

Nominating Team

- No report.

Old Business

None to report.

New Business

Historic District Committee requested letter of support for grant to assist with local historic district ordinance and establish of a historic preservation commission. After extensive discussion it was suggested for Eric and Isaac to speak with Nancy Zerbe directly to get more information, and share feedback from the Board.

Stuart Schooler asked that MDA consider helping businesses benefit from upcoming events held at the SportsPlex. Clarification was provided by the Borough that one of these events will not be held as it is not permitted. Discussions between Borough and SportsPlex will continue.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, April 10, 2020, 8:30am at Hailey's.

Submitted by Isaac Kremer