

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

August 7, 2020

8:30 A.M. – held via teleconference

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Leon Schwartz, Gary Tilbor, Diana Callinan, Jenny Lai and Gary Wade. Not present: Bobbie Theivakumaran, Mark Harris, Moshe Atzbi, Linda Koskoski. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

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

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Update regarding the Metuchen Mirror's OPRA requests. MDA continues to maintain that it is not subject to OPRA while at the same time voluntarily providing the Mirror with the information that it is requesting. The MDA provided over 5,000 pages to the Mirror in response to their initial requests. The Mirror's attorney then forwarded an eight-page single-spaced list of additional information and records sought.
- One area of focus is the 2016 purchase of the downtown planters as well as seasonal plantings in those planters done in cooperation with the Metuchen Garden Club.
- Another area of focus for the Mirror is public art.
- Responding to these ongoing voluminous requests from the Mirror is effectively shutting down MDA for weeks at a time during the midst of a pandemic when MDA member businesses most need MDA's support.
- Several Board Trustees inquired what the Mirror was seeking to achieve, which nobody could answer. Therefore, the Board instructed the Executive Team to confer with MDA's attorney about how best to proceed with again seeking a meeting with the Mirror to find out what the Mirror is trying to achieve and to put the relationship on a more positive footing (prior requests to meet have been refused or ignored).
- The Nominating Committee needs to fill one property owner and one business owner position on the Board. Jenny Lai and Diana Callinan agreed to work on finding candidates for the business owner position.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- He and Isaac are working on the first half year actual report and are making COVID related budget adjustments for the remainder of the year. The report will be provided at the next Board meeting.
- The 2019 audit is just about completed and will be provided to the Borough once it is shared with the Board. Isaac will be resubmitting the EIDL request to the SBA which was discussed at the previous Board meeting.

Secretary's Report

No report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer provided a written report which was distributed to the Board.

Storefront Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Storefront grant applications have been received from Mangia Toscano, Metuchen Nail Salon, Classic Travel, and Papillion, the store coming into the former Brass Lantern space.
- To date 37 Business Reopening grant requests have been approved and paid. Three more are expected which will total the 40 grant limit of the program and funding of \$50,000.

Public Art Team Report

No report.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie reported:

- New "Curbside Pickup" signs are being installed downtown to support the takeout business of restaurants.

Parking Team Report

No report.

Communications Team Report

Diana Callinan reported:

- Video being done about the business re-opening grants and how those grants were helpful to businesses.

Chamber Report

No report.

Arts Council Report

No report.

Old Business

None

New Business

- Isaac informed the Board that due to the expected virtual class schedule for his children when Metuchen schools open, he will be working a flexible schedule, partly in the office and partly remotely.
- A member meeting will be scheduled in September or October. Both virtual and social distance in-person options are being considered.
- Discussion about negotiating a discounted rate with Uber Eats and other delivery companies for Metuchen restaurants. Other towns, including Westfield have negotiated deals.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, September 11, 2020 at 8:30am in the Station Place Parking Lot beneath the Hailey's tent.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon