

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

September 11, 2020

8:30 A.M.

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

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

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Mirror requested press release on AARP grant. Eric advised Mirror that MDA didn't do the press release, AARP did. Isaac contacted AARP and requested that press release be forwarded to the Mirror, which was done by AARP.
- Mirror then requested from AARP a copy of MDA's successful grant application. It is AARP's national policy not to publish or release an applicant's application. Mirror then requested a copy of MDA's grant application from MDA.
- Non-profits' grant applications generally not released to the press or public as this is in the nature of trade secrets. There is a proprietary technique to successful grant application writing. Also, references are made to merchants or other members who have not authorized release of information to the general public. Release of applications to the press will endanger future funding.
- In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding with AARP specifically requires confidentiality and requires approval of AARP for any press releases. Approval not obtained for release of application. Eric will respond to Mirror.
- AARP has given MDA several substantial grants. It would be extremely damaging to both MDA and its members to lose out on future grants from AARP and other organizations due to the Mirror.
- Isaac spoke to state and national AARP representatives who were enthusiastic about MDA award and how MDA intended to use it for downtown initiatives.
- There are a couple of board seats open. The nominating committee, which consists of Jenny and Diana, are working on filling those vacancies.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Discussion of the substantial re-allocation of many budget line items to address COVID-19 challenges that were not present a year ago when the budget was put together. Eliminating funds and programming that are not conducive to social distancing (or are in violation of the

Governor's orders) and enhancing and making more inviting outdoor activities and street side pick-up and shopping.

- Budget for remainder of year to be provided before next meeting.
- Moshe and Bobbie will evaluate best use of EIDL loan proceeds.
- Main Street New Jersey is providing Main Street organizations grants of up to \$125,000. Resolution needed to apply for grant. Resolution passed unanimously.

Secretary's Report

Jay Muldoon is out recuperating from his knee replacement. No report.

Executive Director's Report

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

Storefront Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Working to install signs for A+J Jeweler, Papillon and Company.

Public Art Team Report

No report.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie reported:

- Jenny reported on the program to provide free headshot photos for jobseekers.
- Bobbie suggests that perhaps we expand the program to include headshots of small business owners for their websites or for social media.
- Halloween – Reconfiguring and reinventing programming.
- Working on lunch program for remote learning students whereby MDA restaurant members would deliver attractively priced lunch to each student's home.

Innovation Team Report

Isaac reported:

- Lots of success with Clover Food delivery platform for on-line sales.

Parking Team Report

No report.

Communications Team Report

Diana Callinan reported:

- Evaluating which vendors to continue with.

Chamber Report

No report.

Arts Council Report

Mark Harris reported:

- Windows of Understanding project along with several surrounding areas. This will have selected artists create new work based on social themes.
- Music on New Street will continue.
- The NJSO Bollywood Concert will happen in a virtual way later in the fall.
- Supporting the Galerie Westerhoff “Born in Quarantine” project.
- Jazz History presentation to MHS, again done virtually.
- Working with an outdoor dance performance by Mignolo, a local dance company.

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.

Closed meeting discussion regarding employee annual review.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, October 9, 2020 at 8:30am in the Station Place Parking Lot beneath the Hailey’s tent.

Submitted by Stuart Schooler