

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

November 13, 2020

8:30 A.M. – Lotsa Balls tent, New Street

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Leon Schwartz, Mark Harris, Gary Tilbor, Diana Callinan, Jenny Lai, Moshe Atzbi, Linda Koskoski, Sheri Rose Rubin, Gary Wade, Jacquie Zuvich, Gary Wade. Guest: Colleen Hanson. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

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

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Welcomed new Chamber representative Jacquie Zuvich.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Budget analysis conducted in light of the significant Main St New Jersey grant and the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on cancelled programs and events.
- Stuart projects a surplus of approximately \$180,000 for 2020. Most of the surplus will be spent on business relief efforts in 2021. He will have a draft 2021 budget for the December meeting.

Secretary's Report

No report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- MDA was awarded a COVID relief grant of \$295,958 from the NJ DCA Main Street New Jersey program. The MSNJ grant is funded by CARES Act federal dollars.
- The grant must be used by year end 2020 and can be used retroactively for COVID response and recovery expenses to March 1, 2020. Those expenses include the purchase of tents, curbside pickup signage, electric heaters, sanitation of public spaces, e-commerce & website development, establishing on-line stores, etc.
- The MDA is accepting applications for funding from the MSNJ grant for eligible expenses.
- A discussion was held about other possible expenses eligible for funding including payroll expenses and cleaning costs. A suggestion was made to identify a cleaning vendor that MDA members could all utilize for cleaning and sanitation needs.

Public Art Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Linda La Stella has stepped down as Chair and from the Public Art Team.

- The remaining three members will be co-leading the team in 2021.

Nominating Team Report

Jenny Lai reported:

- Diana and Jenny reported on efforts to fill 1 open business owner and 1 open property owner Board positions. Several business owners were contact and expressed interest in serving. A motion was made to offer the position to Mansi Khandelwal from Kebab Factory and the motion passed.
- Gary Wade suggested a property owner who may be interested in serving and the Committee will contact them.
- Eric and Mo reported their efforts to identify candidates for the Board positions for 2021 – 2 business owner, 2 property owners and 1 resident representative. The terms are 4 years. They will contact the Board members whose terms are expiring to determine their interest is serving for another term.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie reported:

- Planning for Small Business Saturday (SBS) is underway. More business offers are needed. This year's campaign will feature photos of local business owners expressing thanks to their customers building a more personal appeal and connection. There will be a Downtown Wheel of Fortune on Main St where shoppers can show their receipts and spin the wheel for prizes.
- A holiday gift guide is being developed as well as a 12 Days of Downtown promotion to highlight a business each day.
- Need to push on-line specials and offers like Jenny's Photos with Santa promotion.

Parking Team Report

Gary Wade reported:

- Parking revenue continues to lag due to the pandemic and parking is available in all the Parking Authority lots.

Communications Team Report

No report.

Innovation Team Report

Isaac reported:

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

Storefront Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Storefront applications were received from Angie's Café and a possible new tenant at the old Danford's building at Main Street and Middlesex Ave.

- The MDA is working with Bernie Hetzel, Jay Muldoon and the Borough to develop a Blade Sign program to encourage the placement of blade signs in the District through a streamlined, standardized approval process.

Chamber Report

Jacqui reported:

- Chamber is meeting this week and introducing the new Executive Committee for 2021 consisting of Jacquie Zuvich, Colleen Hanson, Bob Maitland and Susan Wilcox. Dan Slobodien will be joining the Chamber Board.
- The membership meeting will feature a guest speaker from Hackensack Meridian Health. The Chamber recently made a donation to JFK Hospital of the proceeds from their on-line auction fundraiser.
- The Chamber is working with the Rec Commission on a residential holiday decorating contest and with the Borough on the “Metuchen Lights” initiative. It was also noted that MDA volunteer, Bernie Hetzel, is working on Metuchen Lights leading the team decorating the lamp posts throughout the downtown.

Arts Council Report

Mark Harris reported:

- The Mignolo Dance performances at the Pearl St parking deck are this weekend. Mark also reported that he will be stepping down at the Arts Council representative for 2021 and the Arts Council will name a new representative.
- Eric Berger thanked Mark for his services and contributions to the MDA.

Old Business

None

New Business

- Isaac participated in an Innovation Symposium at Princeton University and connected with several key contacts from Princeton and the NJEDA which might be interested in offering support of MDA’s innovation efforts.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, December 11, 2020 at 8:30am virtually via Gotomeeting.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon