

## **METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES**

**January 8, 2021**

**8:30 A.M. – held via teleconference**

In attendance: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Gary Tilbor, Diana Callinan, Jace McColley, Jenny Lai, Lynne Mueller, Moshe Atzbi, Jacquie Zuvich, Linda Koskoski, and Gary Wade. Not present: Mansi Khandelwal Staff: Isaac Kremer.

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

### **Chairman's Report**

Eric Berger reported:

- Welcomed new Board members Jace McColley and Lynne Mueller.
- The need take nominations for the Executive Board positions to be approved at the annual member meeting in January. Jay Muldoon then reported that the current Executive Board members (Eric Berger, Bobbie, Theivakumaran, Stuart Schooler and Jay Muldoon) are willing to serve another term. He opened the floor for other nominations. Hearing none, a motion was made to nominate the current Executive Board for another term by Gary Wade, seconded by Diana Callinan. Motion passed.
- Update on additional requests for records by the Metuchen Mirror. For the benefit of new Board members, Eric gave some history and background on the MDA planter purchase and public art projects that the Mirror has been requesting information on. Discussion was held about the Mirror's repeated requests and the amount of time being spent to respond to the requests which puts a strain on the MDA's limited resources.
- Renewal of the videographer contract with Brandon Uhlig. Comments were shared regarding the high quality of Brandon's work, but some felt the MDA's work was a lower priority than his work for the Borough and Board of Education. Suggestions were made on how to better schedule time and projects and possibly creating a better arrangement with Brandon. This will be discussed further, and a decision made at the next Board meeting.
- Next round of PPP funding is available. The loan can be forgivable if spent on certain expenses, including payroll. The MDA has been assisting businesses to learn about and make applications for the Middlesex County grants which has generated good results for many businesses. The MDA will continue to provide assistance to member businesses.
- Finally, he, Bobbie and Mo continue to work of identifying how to spend the \$150K EIDL loan the MDA received. They will report to the Board at the next meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Reviewed the proposed 2021 MDA budget which was provided to Board members. The budget line items are similar to the 2020 budget with a reduction in administrative expenses and

programs expenses increasing by \$30,000. A priority remains direct assistance to business impacted by the ongoing pandemic. After some discussion, a motion to approve the budget was made by Bobbie Theivakumaran, seconded by Gary Tilbor. Motion approved.

### **Secretary's Report**

Jay Muldoon reported:

- Onboarding sessions for Jace McColley and Jacquie Zuvich are scheduled for January 13, 2021. Onboarding session for Lynn Mueller was held in December.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Isaac Kremer reported:

- MDA had successfully dispersed the \$655,628 Main St New Jersey COVID-19 Recovery Grant before deadline on January 21, 2021. 47 businesses were helped, and grants ranged from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Isaac indicated that MSNJ may have another round of grants in 2021 to assist businesses recovery from the pandemic.
- Various contractors that the MDA will be working with in 2021 including 20 Lemons (marketing), Storefront Mastery (storefront design), Lauren Beischer (photography/online retail) and JC Gomez-Peralta (business support/grant applications).
- Pursuing a grant to help businesses from Ameriprise Financial.
- Grant applications had been received from businesses where Board members have an ownership position so in accordance with the MDA's Conflict of Interest Policy those Board members left the call while the Board considered their grant request. After discussion and review by the Board the grants were approved. The Board members rejoined the call.

### **Public Art Team Report**

Eric Berger reported:

- The team met and discussed the idea of doing a public art project with collaboration with the Metuchen Arts Council (MAC).
- They also are interested in seeing public art as part of the proposed pocket park/beer garden on Main St that Mayor Busch had announced at the Council reorganization speech.
- A \$1,500 Middlesex County grant will be used to finish the mural in Imagination Alley.
- Another planned project is the painting of the 3 Main Street pianos by artists – selection process to be determined.

### **Promotion Team Report**

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- The "Celebrate New Year's Eve at home" promotion was a success for the businesses who participated.
- A Valentine's Day promotion is being planned for the weekend prior to Valentine's Day.
- As COVID hopefully gets under control later in 2021, the MDA hopes to resume outdoor events on the Plaza and Downtown.

**Parking Team Report**

No report.

**Communications Team Report**

No report.

**Innovation Team Report**

No report.

**Storefront Team Report**

No report.

**Chamber Report**

No report.

**Arts Council Report**

Lynne Mueller reported:

- The MAC's participation in "Windows of Understanding," a social justice focused public art project.
- Metuchen is joining New Brunswick and Highland Park on this project which will feature art by various artists displayed virtually and at the Metuchen Library and in storefronts in New Brunswick and Highland Park. The program will launch on January 18, 2021, which is Martin Luther King, Jr., Day.
- Lynne also mentioned the desire of the MAC to work with the MDA Public Art Team.
- A Louis Armstrong Jazz Video for Metuchen High (MHS) Jazz Assembly was produced by Peter and Will Anderson Sextet, UT Cinema and Metuchen Media. Sextet hopes to perform live at MHS once COVID 19 restrictions end.
- Currently there are works by four artists on display for purchase at Boyt Drugs through January.

**Old Business**

- Gary Tilbor complimented Isaac on the outstanding job he did to pursue and receive funding through MSNJ and other grants. The funding enabled many businesses to be helped and is greatly appreciated.
- Reminder that the virtual MDA Annual Meeting will be on January 21, 2021, at 7:30pm

**New Business**

- Non-Discrimination Policy was presented for Board review and approval. A motion was made and passed to approve the policy.

- Diana talked about the Communication Team creating a calendar for MDA businesses to share events and information via an MDA Facebook page.
- Diana wants to improve communications among MDA members so that more businesses know what is going on. Many people don't read emails so other methods are needed to reach them.
- After some discussion it was agreed that Diana would schedule a Communication Team meeting to work on this.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, February 12, 2021 at 8:30am virtually via Gotomeeting.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon