

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

July 9, 2021

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

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

Eric Berger opened the meeting. Minutes were reviewed and a motion was made to approve the June meeting minutes. Motion passed.

There were no additions to the agenda.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- A Resolution was needed regarding the COVID relief SBA loan the MDA received in 2020. At the time of application, the SBA did not request a Resolution from the Board as part of the process. A letter was recently received from the SBA now asking for a Resolution from the Board. There are NO changes to the loan amount or terms. A motion to approve the Resolution that was provided in the meeting packet was made by Aron Mandel, seconded by Lynne Mueller. Motion passed.
- Elizabethtown Gas Company work is upcoming on New and Main Streets Eric asked Jay Muldoon to provide information. Jay reported that the Gas Company needs to replace aging gas mains and service lines in the Borough and the BPU has approved their plans for replacement work involving numerous streets in Metuchen including Rt. 27, Main St, New St., and Lake Ave.
- Gas Company representatives will be attending the Borough Council meeting on July 12 to provide details on the project. Work on New St is the final phase and is scheduled for the week of September 20, 2021.
- The dining tents on New St will need to be taken down prior to September 20. At this point the Borough does not plan to have the tents put back up following the Gas Company work.
- The MDA will need to organize the removal and storage of the tents. A discussion took place regarding how and where the tents might be reused and whether the Borough had plans for outdoor dining next year on New St. No decision has been made at this time.
- The MDA Parking team has been disbanded since the MPA has established a Parking subcommittee to look at improvements at the New St lot and other lots which includes MDA Board members.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Q2 financial statement would be emailed to the Board members next week.
- The 2020 audit is underway.

Secretary's Report

Jay Muldoon reported:

- Jay's report was shared above as part of the Chairman's report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Numerous grants being pursued and included information in the meeting packet on the A Community Thrives grant application he had submitted.
- Also submitted an application to the T-Mobile Hometown Grant for \$50K.
- Also working on the Community Navigators grant for \$1M due July 23 and continues to monitor for a notice from Main Street NJ regarding their 2021 grant program.
- A description of the MDA teams was included in the board packet so that Board members have a better understanding of the teams and what they do.
- A Volunteer Orientation was scheduled for July 27 at 7PM.

Parking Authority Report

Aron Mandel reported:

- Parking Authority met with a presentation from IPS on a parking kiosk for the New Street lot which would replace the old meters in the lot. The MPA has received a proposal for 2 kiosks and will be voting on it at their next meeting.
- MDA will be ordering new meter bags to replace the current ones to better identify the 15-minute free parking for pick up and drop off.
- Parking Authority has formed a sub-committee that will be looking into improvements at the New St lot and other parking lots.

Chamber Report

Jacquie Zuvich reported:

- The Chamber magazine is being distributed and it looks great. Working with local restaurants on a recipe book.
- The Chamber will not be sponsoring a 2021 Restaurant Week due to the pandemic. There was not enough lead time to have the event this year.
- The Chamber is still discussing about whether to have the Country Fair this year. It is normally the first Saturday in October. The committee was holding a meeting on July 9 to discuss it and Jacquie said she would let them know that the tents will be down on New St prior to September 20 and that the Gas Company work would not impact their plans for holding the Fair. They hope to have a decision soon about the Fair.

Arts Council Report

Lynne Mueller reported:

- Piano Concerts - Saturday Evenings in July including:
 - 7/10: Bob Himmelberger; 7/17: James Austin
 - 7/21 Leonieke Scheuble; 7/31 Bob McHugh.

- Metuchen High School Student Art Exhibit at Rotunda Gallery – mid July MHS students who are planning to study art in college present their work. Opportunities for discussion with local artists.
- Jazz Virtual Education – Sanford Josephson presents Saxophonist Gerry Mulligan --July 18 at 3 PM - Partnership between Metuchen Arts Council and New Jersey Jazz Society. Continuing series once a month on Sunday afternoon into November 2021. Register at Metuchenartscouncil.com. FREE with donations suggested.
- Westerhoff School of Music and Art/ Metuchen Arts Council - Partnership Celebration at Library -- July 31 at 2 PM. Westerhoff presents Kawai Baby Grand Piano and a check to Metuchen Arts Council with performance by musician to be announced and Gary Westerhoff's debut as writer/photographer of children's videos featuring his photographs of animals.
- Classical Concert in planning stages
- Central Jersey Jazz Festival – Metuchen-- on Town Plaza –Saturday, September 11 at 6 PM Trumpeter Marcus Printup Band featuring Harpist Riza Printup. Also includes Family Jazz Education Presentation by Riza and Metuchen High School Jazz Ensemble (Big Band).

Organization Team Report

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Volunteer Orientation for new MDA volunteers was tentatively scheduled for July 27 at 7 PM. Isaac to finalize date and time. Team leaders will be needed to participate in the training for volunteers.

Public Art Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Piano project – three painted pianos were unveiled downtown on 6/25 at 7pm. One piano will be moved from Station Place to the Plaza. Performances on Saturday evenings will continue hopefully through August.
- Angie's Café mural project – working with a group of art students and professor from Rutgers this fall on the mural to be painted in 2022.
- Isaac has applied for a Middlesex County Arts Grant to fund the mural.

Promotion Team Report

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Juneteenth event held on June 19 at 7pm at various location downtown and included step dancers from Rahway.
- A Break-Dancing competition held on June 12 from 5-7pm on the Plaza.
- The return of Downtown Rumble wrestling event is scheduled for 9/18 on the Plaza.
- Raiders of the Lost Ark movie is scheduled for October 2 and plans are being made for Haunted Downtown around Halloween as long as the pandemic levels remain low.

Communications Team Report

Dan Cea reported:

- Ad Mesenger platform will continue to be utilized for promotions.
- Brandon is working on two video concepts – a drone video over downtown during a busy period and one to support the crowdfunding associated with our grants.
- We need to develop an inventory of stock photos of the downtown to be used in press releases and press articles.
- Team is looking into buying space in the Criterion-Sentinel which is more affordable and seems to be paying more attention to Metuchen lately. Their distribution is 38,000 households in the area. They recently ran a nice article about the MDA.

Innovation Team Report

No report.

Storefront Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Blade sign project is progressing, led by Bernie Hetzel. Site visits by the vendor were held at Nauti Cajun Crab, 7 New St; Metuchen Liquor & Wine, 431 Main St; Pastry Lu, 397 Main St; What's the Scoop, 457 Main St.
- New sign installed at Angie's Café. Working now on a sign for Tribos Peri Peri which plans to open in August.

Old Business

- None to report.

New Business

- None to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, August 13, 2021 at 8:30am in the Station Place lot.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon