

## **METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES**

**December 10, 2021**

**8:30 A.M. – The Porch at Hailey's, 15 Station Place**

In attendance: Eric Berger, Lynne Mueller, Diana Callinan, Linda Koskoski, Moshe Atzbi, Gary Tilbor, and Bobbie Theivakumaran (arrived after meeting started). Guest: Dan Cea (arrived after meeting started). Not present: Jacquie Zuvich, Jace McColley, Jay Muldoon, Jenny Lai, and Stuart Schooler. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

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

There were no additions to the agenda.

### **Chairman's Report**

Eric Berger reported:

- Called Nancy Jessen, no plans for property. Not know why demolished. Was in bad condition.
- CVS lease ends in January will not exercise 5 year option. Looking for someone to manage. One of 900 units closing nationally as part of corporate closure.
- Reviewed changes to Affiliate member category. Move to approve by Bobbie, second by Lynne.
- Gift card platforms – Tremendous and Yiftee – want merchants to be able to redeem.
- Moshe would like to help with Gift Card (Clover, Toast, other POS). Isaac will send info. Report back next month with program.
- Annual Meeting on Jan 20 at 7:30pm. Suggested location for up to 60. In person fine. Isaac ask Lotsa Balls. Require mask.
- Nominating Team was Bobbie and Aron. Dec 20 need nomination forms go out for Mansi seat. Will go out with notice of Annual Meeting.
- Aron leaving Parking Authority but staying on through end of Jan.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Stuart Schooler was not present. Isaac Kremer reported:

- MDA 2022 budget to be reviewed by Borough. Not taking up until after New Year.

### **Secretary's Report**

No report.

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

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Metuchen Monthly keeps to be open.
- Bobbie to help with Main Street Minute report to Borough Council on Monday night.
- Small Business Saturday good sales. Those who made effort (spend money on marketing, arranged pop-ups, etc.) got best result.

- If want to continue to be big event, need to invest MDA and business dollars to grow.

### **Arts Council Report**

Lynne Mueller reported:

- December 4, 2021, art sale successful at Borough Hall successful with several artists' work.
- December 21, 2021, at 6 PM Holiday Concert, Metuchen High School Jazz Ensemble at Metuchen Plaza. Bring chairs and blankets.
- Windows of Understanding focus on economic justice, climate change, and policy. Berkshire Hathaway \$1,000 sponsor. Art display in their windows from January 17 to end of Feb. 2022.

### **Parking Authority Report**

No report.

### **Team Reports**

#### **Public Art Team Report**

Eric Berger reported:

- Meeting last night postponed to January.
- Students at Rutgers are working and have seen photos.

#### **Organization Team**

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Too many volunteers for events.
- Scheduling 3 month check in with Isaac to make sure on track.
- Base of volunteers diversifying with new families, high school students.

#### **Grant Team**

Gary Tilbor reported:

- A marketing campaign is ongoing – has been a success. Metuchen News and Hailey's upcoming.
- Around \$50K of grants for next year. Have grants, people apply, not sure if will follow through.
- Continue blade sign project.
- Start to target businesses that we would like to see make changes.

#### **Promotion Team**

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Busy winter season. Prize wheel drove spending.
- Winter Market last week really good that coincide with other markets through town.
- Downtown caroling tomorrow with Rise Up Chorus from 11-1. Not going into businesses. Start on plaza, will have song lyrics.
- Gingerbread contest tomorrow – break out into adults and kids. Buy tokens to vote that raise money for food pantry.
- Weekend before Christmas – good for pop-ups and events.
- New Years Eve on Plaza. Not doing ice skating. Will have photo booth and laser light show.

## **Communications Team**

Dan Cea reported:

- AdMessenger 1500 people saw ad and click through.
- NYE video. What set up promotions for New Years Party? No.
- Isaac advised not to redirect Brandon but to continue to manage him.
- Repackaged SBS video to focus on holiday shopping for end of year.
- January will start day in the life. Sit down with 3 businesses. Get behind the curtain and help relate with different businesses.
- MDA Google profile, percentages up double digits year-over-year. People are engaging and looking to come downtown.
- Advertised in Criterion for Small Business Saturday to bring people downtown.

## **Old Business**

None to report.

## **New Business**

- Winter Market does make sense to do twice. Weather is variable and is the problem. Anything more than 4MPH winds becomes a problem. Other things can do.
- Biggest spending time downtown on Saturday is 10am-2pm.
- Vendors from outside of Metuchen bring in base people.
- Find way to have storefronts look like holidays, grants, lights. Sax Fifth Avenue, Macy's. People out and shopping looks like holiday window.
- Before COVID had more retail promotions.
- Hours: work to have businesses stay open later during the holidays. After 5 is pretty dead.
- Need to have coordination with businesses. Need to have reason for customers to come downtown.
- Prioritize putting lights and doing storefronts if want to.
- Lynne said strings of lights on plaza lights it up. Suggest keep all time. Hit peaks of tents. Fine for holidays. Limits ability to do inflatables, movie night.
- Suggest talk with Borough that future lighting. Suggestions: 1) Storefront, 2) Plaza light configuration, and 3) to light trees.
- Isaac attending Small Business Development Center with Joanne Cruz. Will report back.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, January 14, 2022 at 8:30am in the Porch at Hailey's, 15 Station Place.

Submitted by Isaac Kremer