

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES
March 11, 2022
8:30 A.M. – The Hangout and Parlor at Hailey's, 15 Station Place

In attendance: Diana Callinan, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Stuart Schooler (on phone), Jace McColley, Jay Muldoon, Jenny Lai, Lynne Mueller, Jason Delia, Moshe Atzbi, Gary Tilbor. Not present: Jacquie Zuvich, Eric Berger. Guest: Dan Cea. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

Bobbie Theivakumaran the meeting. Minutes were reviewed and a motion was made to approve the February meeting minutes. Motion passed.

There were no additions to the agenda.

Chairman's Report

Since Eric was available only by phone, Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- EIDL loan modification was discussed. Increased to \$200,000 total which will lead to a slightly higher monthly payment. No prepay penalty.
- Isaac Kremer appointed to Historic Preservation Committee by Borough.
- Ribbon Cutting for Bowery Art Collective, 327 Main St, March 23, 1pm. Members are encouraged to participate.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

- Budget being introduced by Borough Council on March 14, hearing in April
- Requested SID Assessment for Q1, check should be ready soon

Secretary's Report

No report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer provided a written report to the Board in the meeting packet.

Borough Council Report

Jason Delia reported:

- AARP Livable Communities team continues to meet and refine concept for grant due in March.
- New Street lot paving to begin in April depending on weather and contractor schedule. Businesses and residents need alternate places to park.
- Manasquan Bank demolition to begin early June.
- Banners over Main Street policy will be for non-profit org use and downtown events only.

Arts Council Report

Lynne Mueller reported:

- "Windows of Understanding" (WOU) Art Project:
 - March 10th – 39 people attended the Metuchen Arts Council and Human Relations Commission virtual "Community Conversation" about social responsibility issues represented in artwork showcased in the windows of Berkshire Hathaway. Artists and representatives of the following organizations spoke: League of Women Voters, Citizens

Campaign, Food Pantry at Presbyterian Church and Rutgers Office of Engagement/Urban Ag Lab.

- April 23 – Metuchen is one of 4 towns invited to show their Window of Understanding artwork at Newark Museum for Earth Day Celebration.
- May 21 --Fundraiser Concert outdoors to benefit Food Pantry building expansion at First Presbyterian Church.
- For more info visit www.windowsofunderstanding.org.
- Rotunda Gallery in Borough Hall
 - Exhibit Closing: “Reassembly” with Artist Joe Castronova
 - Exhibit Opening—March 22: “Are we FIDDLING while the world burns? Activism, the environment and the artist’s responsibility” through June 17, 2022 Five Artists --see facebook.com/rotundagallerymetuchen
- International Jazz Day April 30, 2022 Free Concert at 2 PM featuring Mike Lee Quartet at Metuchen Library, a collaboration between Metuchen Arts Council and Metuchen Library. For more info visit: www.jazzday.com.

Parking Authority Report

No report.

Team Reports

Organization Team

No report.

Grant Team

Gary Tilbor reported:

- Met March 7, 2022
- Marketing campaign of before and after on MDA funded projects
- Matching grants for 2022 - \$53,250 or requests and \$61,250 of funding available.
 - Newmarket blade sign, getting permits
 - New Pearl Cleaners / Dante Zeller Tuxedo, new painting, sign, and lights.
 - Angie’s Café, outdoor dining in parking lot off Amboy Ave, funded by ACT/Gannett.
 - The Greek on Main, new dining enclosure under awning.
 - Brewed Awakening, awning and new furniture, funded by ACT/Gannett.
 - Orchid Kosher, have permits.
 - Working with other prospects.

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Upcoming promotions:
 - Spring Bazaar, May 21
 - Pre-Prom, May 26
 - Breakdancing Competition, Sat, June 4
 - Juneteenth, Sat, June 18 or 19
 - Kids Take Over, last day of school in June
 - July Restaurant Week, dates TBD

- Debrief on Restaurant Week reported over \$250,000 in sales including several first-time customers. Marketing campaign generated impressive numbers on multiple platforms.
- Non-restaurant businesses had offerings during Restaurant Week including Newmarket and King Strength.

Communications Team

Dan Cea reported:

- The Restaurant Week Communication push was very successful.
 - AdMessenger - 66k impressions, 2,260 people clicking through them, which is a 3.41% click-through rate (highest yet)
 - We did a heavy social media push. Our Facebooks reach was up 466% and Instagram was up 556%
 - Businesses shared our posts or created posts of their own.
 - Restaurant Week video by Brandon boosted for the whole week. We had 25 shares and reached 8000+ people.
 - Print ads, Criterion Sentinel reached 20,813 people.
 - MDA website received 1,000s of hits a day whereas before it received 100s
- March Video - We are going to shoot two Meet the Merchant Videos in March. We are still talking to some businesses to find the right one.

Innovation Team

Jace McColley reported:

- Team met on Monday, Feb 28.
- MDA Member Meeting 2022, April 19, 7:30pm – planning tech presentation and challenge grants for businesses.
- Yiftee to launch May 1, working to get businesses to sign up to accept the eGift card before then.
- Trying to encourage businesses who might want to relocate to Metuchen.
- Still looking for buyer of New Street dining structures.

Public Art Team Report

Isaac Kremer reported:

- Met on January 13, 2022. Planning projects for 2022.
- Angie's Café project – mural to be installed this Spring.
- Looking for major project. Team expressed interest in tile mosaics at their last meeting.

Old Business

None to report.

New Business

None to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 am. Motion by Lynne, second Jenny.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, April 8, 2022, at 8: 30 am at The Hangout and Parlor at Hailey's on Station Place.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon