

-METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

July 9, 2022

8:30 A.M. – The Hangout and Parlor at Hailey's, 15 Station Place

In attendance: Eric Berger, Diana Callinan, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Joanne Cruz, Jay Muldoon, Stuart Schooler, Jenny Lai, Jason Delia, Moshe Atzbi, Lynne Mueller, Gary Tilbor. Guest: Sejal Patel. Not present: Jace McColley. Staff: Isaac Kremer.

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

Addition to the Agenda

- Lynne Mueller inquired about what could be done to improve the maintenance of Imagination Alley. A lively discussion ensued.
- Eric Berger stated that he would request assistance from DPW and requested that Isaac inquire as to the cost to have Dare clean Imagination Alley.
- Lynne Mueller agreed to seek out volunteers to undertake this effort include high school students and the Boy Scouts. To be further discussed at August meeting.

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Dedication of the mural by Raul Ayala at Angie's Cafe was a success. It was well attended and the mural is beautiful.
- MDA has surpassed \$1M in grant funding since being established including the most recent \$380,000 Sustain and Serve grant. Eric recognized Isaac for his efforts in securing this impressive amount of grant funding for the MDA and our member businesses.
- Discussion was held regarding the Sustain and Serve grant which provides funding for meals prepared by local restaurants which go to feeding the hungry in our area and assist restaurants recovering from pandemic related losses. 17 restaurants have signed up to participate. Restaurants are responsible for delivery of the meals to shelters, food banks and other organizations. The MDA will need to hire someone to administer the program which can be paid for with grant money.

Treasurer's Report

No report.

Secretary's Report

No report.

Executive Director's Report

Isaac Kremer submitted written report.

Borough Update

Jason Delia reported:

- Help is needed to spread the word about the survey currently available on the Borough website to obtain information regarding interest among Borough businesses and residents about an alternate internet service provider to Optimum. Planet Network may be interested in being a service provider in Metuchen but is trying to gauge the level of interest via the survey. Jason asked everyone to please complete the survey and tell others about it.
- The link is here: <https://survey.fasternj.org/1209>

Arts Council Report

Lynne Mueller reported:

- FOMA (Friends of Metuchen Arts): Jazz Night in the Parlor at Hailey's with Harry Allen Trio on July 20 in collaboration with Moshe from Hailey's. Flyers were distributed at the meeting.
- MAC Chamber Music Concert, July 28 outdoors at the Library.
- MAC Hearts Festival – Windows of Understanding – New Brunswick, August 13, 2022.
- MAC Metuchen Rocks Concert on the Plaza – Lonesome Pines, September 3, 2022.
- FOMA and MAC Central Jersey Jazz Festival featuring Latin Jazz on the Plaza– Metuchen, September 10, 2022.
- Stuart Schooler mentioned that the proposed Starbucks on Middlesex Ave is open to working with the Public Art Team regarding a mural on the building.

Team Reports

Grant Team

Gary Tilbor reported:

- Storefront team met on July 22, 2022.
- Storefront Matching Grant and Blade Sign Pilot Project online applications are closed because funds have been fully claimed.
- Rejection letters sent for projects that did not meet project criteria and are ineligible for grant.
- Next round of blade signs to include The Greek, Newmarket, and Runner's High.
- Open storefront projects include:
 - Rita's Italian Ice, 640 Middlesex Avenue
 - Needle and Thread Cleaners, 5 Station Place
 - DiCosmo's Italian Ice, 20 New Street
 - A&J Jewelers, 412 Main Street
 - Akihi, 403 Main Street
 - Hailey's Harp & Pub, 400 Main Street
 - Metuchen Travel, 426-428 Main Street
 - Metuchen Dance Centre, 395 Main Street

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

- Debrief Juneteenth event held on Sat, June 19, 2022. Very successful
- Debrief Kids Takeover, June 21, 2022. Big success. well attended.
- Debrief Pride event, June 25, 2022. Great support from MPD and Borough officials. The speakers from the Metuchen High School and Edgar Middle School student groups felt supported and expressed their appreciation. Many people loved the Pride Karaoke event and asked for it to be held again. The MDA has received some emails from the community members criticizing the MDA for supporting a LGBTQ themed event.
- Upcoming promotions:
 - Summer Restaurant Week, July 18-24, 2022. More restaurant offers needed.
 - Downtown Rumble Pro Wrestling, September 17, 2022 on the Town Plaza.
 - Small Business Saturday planning underway for November 26, 2022.

Communications Team

No report.

Innovation Team

No report.

Public Art Team Report

Eric Berger reported:

- Team has not met since last Board meeting
- Angie's Cafe mural project is completed.

Old Business

- No old business to report.

New Business

- Discussion was held on what to do with the currently open Chamber of Commerce and Parking Authority board positions .The Chamber is no longer functioning and will officially disband by year's end. The Parking Authority has not filled their representative on the Board since Aron Mandel resigned from the Parking Authority earlier this year. Eric will work with Stuart and Jace to review the bylaws and suggest revisions.
- Jenny from Picture Perfect announced that her business will be celebrating their 5-year anniversary in August and she is planning an event to celebrate the anniversary in August. She asked if there were any MDA events being planned in August and Bobbie said none, except possibly a pop up movie night.
- Diana announced she's opening Clicks & Brick and Parties on Pearl later this summer in the former bank building on Pearl St. Bobbie said Che Pizza will be opening soon on the Plaza where Olive Press was.
- Jay mentioned that the demolition of the former Metuchen Savings Bank and construction of new branch for Manasqaun Bank at Main and New Streets will start in July.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, August 12, 2022, at 8: 30am at Hailey's Parlor at 15 Station Place.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon.