

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

October 14, 2022

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

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

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

Chairman's Report

Eric Berger reviewed the proposed bylaw changes from the Bylaw Committee which were distributed to Board members. He explained the three (3) proposed changes: Article V, Section 5 - Amendments to By-Laws by General Membership. Article VII - Board of Trustees, Section 2 - Number, Selection and Tenure of Trustees, and Article VII - Board of Trustees, Section 12 - Action by Trustees. The proposed changes were discussed at length with all questions answered. Motion to approve the proposed changes was made by Diana Callinan, seconded by Bobbie Thievakumaran. Motion approved unanimously.

Eric distributed the MDA contract for recommended new Executive Director, Dawn Mackey. Eric, Bobbie and Jay Muldoon reported on the selection process and the work of the Nominating Committee. Questions on the process and contract were answered. Motion made to approve recommendation of Nominating Committee and contract to hire Dawn Mackey. Motion approved, Dawn starts full time on October 24, 2022. A press release has been prepared to announce Dawn's hiring and will be released next week.

Eric reported on the process to remove inactive Board members as per the bylaws. Due to the dissolution of the Chamber of Commerce, Jacquie Zuvich has not been attending Board meetings and the Metuchen Parking Authority has not named a replacement for Aron Mandel who resigned; those Board seats have been vacant. As permitted by the bylaws, the Executive Committee removed Jackie Zuvich and Aron Mandel for non-attendance at Board meetings. To fill the vacant seats, the Nominating Committee solicited nominations and received seven nominations. Committee recommended one seat be filled by business owner, Amar Singh, and the other seat by resident, Daniel Cea. Motion was made to approve the recommendation, motion passed. Amar and Daniel will serve until 12/31/2022 and may seek full terms when Board election for the 2023 slate is held.

Secretary's Report

No report.

Executive Director's Report

No report.

Treasurer's Report

Stuart Schooler reported:

2023 budget being prepared, draft to be shared at the November meeting. Discussion held regarding EIDL loan which was used last year during the pandemic relief efforts and we should be looking for ways to replenish the amount used. The MDA will need to start making payments in 2023. We should look to identify the EIDL as the cash reserve in our budget. Discussion was held regarding what grant funding target would be reasonable with a new ED starting. Sponsorship and other fundraising initiatives were also discussed.

Borough Update

Jason Delia reported:

Following Eric Berger sharing a map indicating the proposed cannabis wholesale licensing areas and cannabis retailer licensing areas in the Borough, Jason described the process for the Borough ordinance adoption with the public hearing and second reading of the ordinance scheduled for 10/24/2022. Any approved applicant will need to appear before the Planning Board for site plan approval.

Jay Muldoon shared that Melissa Perilstein asked in input regarding the street fair put on by streetfairs.com in June each year. They would like to partner with the Metuchen Fire Department in 2023. Reaction was mixed - some MDA businesses benefit from the fair while others are hurt by having Main Street closed. Consensus was that the fair should be held on a Sunday when many businesses are closed.

Arts Council Report

Lynne Mueller reported:

1. **Central Jersey Jazz Festival – Metuchen – September 19, 2022** Success! Approximately 600 people in attendance. Latin Jazz theme. Performances by thirty students from Metuchen Dance Centre, Metuchen High School Jazz Ensemble and Bobby Sanabria & Ascension nonet with vocalist Jennifer Jade Ledesna.
2. **Cornerstone Jazz Series at the Library - Sunday, October 16 at 2 PM FREE!** Perth Amboy based, Latin Jazz Guitarist Alejandro Ataucusi and his Afro Peruvian Jazz Band “Forbidden Tropics” celebrate the release of their latest CD *Peruvian Rhapsody*.
3. **Art Cycle Outdoor Gallery (Greenway Entrance) Update November 5 at 1 PM Ribbon Cutting.** Artwork has been received from 11 artists and artists have been paid.
4. **Cornerstone Jazz Series at the Library Sunday, November 13 at 2 PM FREE** Multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson brings his Quartet. Mark your calendars.

5. Rotunda Gallery – A new curator is being sought to replace Joe Castronova whose tenure is over. Advise any suggestions.

Team Reports-

Organization Team

No Report.

Storefront Team

No report.

Promotion Team

No report.

Communications Team

Dan Cea reported:

Merchants of Metuchen video produced for Metuchen News

Haunted Downtown promotion going well - 137 responses on Event Brite and 169 on Facebook - all without boosting

Planning for marketing Small Business Saturday underway.

In September DA Google ads were shown 356 times with 59 people clicking through

Working with Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce on opportunities to advertise at NJ Transit stations at Metropark, Secaucus, Hamilton, and Princeton Junction. On digital screens from 10/15 - 12/32 and on printed posters and digital screens in 2nd Q 2023,

Innovation Team

No report

Public Art Team

Eric Berger reported:

Art team is working with Jay regarding the art element in the seating area near the Senior Center which is funded by AARP grant.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Jenny Lai reported:

Schedule of upcoming business ribbon cuttings shared, Board members are encouraged to attend the ribbon cuttings.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

Bobbie reported that the Sustain and Serve program is on track with 3000 meals provided in September and 6000 expected in October.

A film crew will be in town on 10/18 to film interviews and footage of the downtown for the Main Street America semi-finalist award.

A strategic plan update and work session with the Board will take place following the November board meeting. Suggestion was made to move the November board meeting to 11/18/2022.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:45am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, November, 18 2022, at 8:30am at Hailey's Parlor at 15 Station Place.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon