

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE MINUTES

December 9, 2022

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

In attendance: Eric Berger, Diana Callinan, Bobbie Theivakumaran, Jenny Lai, Jason Delia, Moshe Atzbi, Joanne Cruz, Jace McColley, Dan Cea. Amar Singh. Not attending: Lynne Mueller, Gary Tilbor, Stuart Schooler. Staff- Dawn Mackey.

Eric Berger opened the meeting and noted that this was his last meeting as Board Chairperson. He also mentioned that Moshe Atzbi will also be leaving the Board due to term limits. He thanked the Board for their support and work over the past six years and shared some highlights of MDA accomplishments including all the MDA did to help businesses survive and succeed during the pandemic. Minutes from the November Board meeting were reviewed, and a motion was made to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Eric reported on the Nomination Committee's work to prepare and present a slate of board candidates to fill vacancies starting in January 2023. The Committee was made up of Eric, Bobbie Theivakumaran, and Jason Delia. Bobbie then presented the proposed slate:

Property owners: Sean Massey, Jace McColley

Business owners: Amar Singh, Joann Cruz, and Annie Quinonez.

Resident: Dan Cea

The approval and voting process was explained by Eric. Results of voting by members to be completed prior to annual meeting in January.

Motion was made to approve the proposed slate by Diana Callinan, seconded by Bobbie Theivakumaran. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report

No report

Executive Director's Report

Dawn Mackey reported that the annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for 1/16/2023 to be held at Suite Metuchen. She shared the ongoing work to complete the 2023 budget. Stuart Schooler has drafted a budget; Dawn is reviewing several vendor contracts to see if cost savings can be achieved. She is also working with the Borough CFO who has been very helpful

Dawn attended the Downtown NJ conference on 12/1 in New Brunswick. She continues to work on completing the Conversation Corner funded by AARP and recently visited the Senior Center to gain input from Senior Center members. Registration for the 2023 Main Street conference is open. Dawn shared that WPIX Channel 11 filmed a story this week

about Metuchen's nomination for the Great American Main Street award. She thanked Mayor Busch, Eric Berger, and Jason Delia for appearing on very short notice. Dawn thanked everyone for the warm welcome and help during the job transition. She looks forward to meeting individually with each Board member.

Treasurer's Report

No report

Borough Update

Jason Delia reported:

The amended ordinance to reflect the MDA bylaw changes is scheduled for approval at the 12/12 Council meeting. An application process is being developed for the cannabis licenses approved by the Council. Jason explained how the application and selection processes will work. The Borough Council reorganization meeting will be on 1/1/2023. Jason and Jay Muldoon then thanked Eric Berger and Moshe Atzbi for their service on the MDA Board.

Arts Council Report

No Report

Team Reports-

Organization Team

No Report.

Storefront Team

No report.

Promotion Team

Bobbie Theivakumaran reported:

1. Elf movie event successful, sold out
2. Multiple Santa events (pictures, breakfast, etc.) at several MDA businesses very popular
3. Downtown Caroling – 12/10
4. Winter Market and Gingerbread Contest - 12/3
5. New Year's Party on the Plaza 12/30
6. Promotion team selling copies of "Meet Me Downtown" posters as fundraiser

Communications Team

Dan Cea reported:

1. MDA SBS banner ad ran on front page of Star Ledger on 11/26. Great publicity. Our online SBS posts did very well in November, up 120%. Daily posts.
2. New strategy for Google Ads being planned to be target desired audiences, for example people shopping at Costco from out of the area (Staten Island) to get them to visit downtown Metuchen
3. Talking with rep from NJ.com about ads and a method to submit our events for some free publicity
4. Eventbrite is proving to be very useful and effective. Used for several holiday events.

Innovation Team

Jace McColley reported:

1. Committee and vendors had a call to identify ways for better outreach to businesses to make them aware of resources and innovation grants available.
2. Jace has been in contact with a couple businesses who may interested in opening in Metuchen.

Public Art Team

No report

Ribbon Cutting Team

Jenny Lai reported that a ribbon cutting was led for Lotus River Studio on 12/3. There are 4 ribbon cuttings to be scheduled after the holidays/early 2023.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

Bobbie shared information about a new program that Citi is involved with called "Acceleration Project" that provides assistance, resources, and mentoring to small businesses including women/minority owned businesses. She will provide information to Dawn for consideration.

With so many fitness/wellness/exercise businesses in the MDA, Dawn suggested that the MDA organize a wellness event in the Spring to highlight/promote these businesses.

Mo offered the back room at Haileys for future MDA Board meetings.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:27am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, January 13, 2023, at 8:30am at Hailey's on Main St.

Submitted by Jay Muldoon