

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 10, 2023, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

In attendance: Dan Cea, Joanne Cruz, Jason Delia, Jenny Lai, Sean Massey, Jay Muldoon, Angie Quinonez, Amar Singh, Meg Loftus Suchan, Bobbie Theivakumaran. **Not attending:** Diana Callinan, Gary Tilbor, Jace McColley, Stuart Schooler **Staff:** Dawn Mackey

Welcome: Secretary Jason Delia called the meeting to order at 8:37am.

Minutes from the February Board meeting were reviewed, and a motion was made to approve the minutes by Mr. Massey, seconded by Ms. Loftus Suchan. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report

No report

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Mackey provided an update on the AARP grant project, "Conversation Corner". The mosaic table was installed and she thanked everyone who attended the project's official opening. Extra thanks to Ms. Lai for photographing the event. About 30 - 35 people were in attendance including the mosaic artist and local YouTube celebrity Patrick Gerity who gives reviews of public benches on his YouTube channel. With the opening complete the final report was able to be submitted for the grant. Ms. Mackey plans on applying for another community challenge grant as well as the T-Mobile's Hometown grant program next.

Ms. Mackey is currently working through the audit. There are some receipts that are still needed and she may need to reach out to various Board members for assistance tracking them down.

An update was given about plans to travel to Boston for the Main Street Now conference. As so many team members will be away when the awards are announced, we discussed needing "ambassadors" here in Metuchen to help spread the excitement.

Given all of the attention our downtown is receiving this year, Ms. Mackey put together a one-page handout for the businesses, "All Eyes On Us". In this document are quick and easy tips for making their storefronts the best that they can be.

Ms. Mackey let the Board know that the weekend of April 22nd will be "Wellness Weekend". All fitness businesses will be involved offering trials, free classes on the plaza, etc. By labeling it "wellness" more than just traditional fitness businesses can be involved.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Theivakumaran discussed all of the preparation being done for the Great American Main Street award including assembling photos, quotes and putting together a press packet which was scheduled to go out over the weekend. She went into further detail on what we will need from our "ambassadors" in Metuchen on the day of the award announcement. She shared proof of window decals, postcards and stickers that were in the process of being made utilizing the "Simply the Best" graphic that was created.

Ms. Theivakumaran also shared an update on the plans for “Downtown Funhouse” to take place on June 10th from 5 - 8. This is the planned celebration for the GAMSA win and will include axe throwing, stilt walkers, gigantic “DOWNTOWN METUCHEN” letters for instagrammable moments and much more.

Treasurer’s Report

No report

Borough Update

As part of the GAMSA win our organization is expected to participate in a panel discussion at the conference. Mr. Delia will be our representative and he let the Board know that he is working on the presentation with help from Mr. Muldoon, Ms. Mackey and Ms. Theivakumaran.

He provided an update on the status of the request for cannabis applications. Mr. Delia expects to be receiving a number of applications over the coming weeks. Once the window is closed the cannabis subcommittee will begin reviewing.

Mr. Delia, Mr. Muldoon and Ms. Mackey continued their discussion with the Borough, Nexus Parking, and the Parking Authority on ways to improve the parking situation Downtown.

Arts Council Report

Ms. Loftus Suchan informed the Board about two upcoming events. The Windows of Understanding reception is to take place the Saturday following this meeting from 1 - 3p. The Library will be hosting another Cornerstone Jazz session.

Organization Team

No Report.

Storefront Team

No report.

Promotion Team

Ms. Theivakumaran reported that restaurant week was mostly successful. Black history month posters were well received and she thanked the businesses who hosted posters in their windows. Plans are in the works for a small “Downtown Goes Green” promotion for Earth Day on April 22nd. Should be a simple promotion to showcase businesses. The key message is how going green = shopping locally.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea has been using our social media channels to push out facts about the GAMSA nomination. Post regarding restaurant week had over 8k views. The Nj.com advertisement was not quite as successful as others we’ve done in the past and we may rethink using that in the future. Mr. Cea was able to get the “Town plaza” entry on Google maps. Now when we have events, we can direct people there and it will come up directly in maps and provide them directions.

Brandon Uhlig and Mr. Cea are working on putting together a celebration video for the award. This will be set to go out the day of the announcement. They need as many people to participate in the video as possible on March 18th from 10 - 12.

Innovation Team

No report.

Public Art Team

Mr. Berger informed the Board about the poster contest for the Forum Theater. A call for artists will be going out and three winners will be selected. The plan is to change the posters three times over the course of the summer.

This lead to a discussion on Ms. Mackey's desire to utilize art installations like this to help pull people further down south Main St.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Ms. Lai informed the Board of upcoming ribbon cuttings:

- Stretch Lab on March 11th at 2pm
- Pita Grill on March 15th at 12pm
- Beans & Bread on March 18th at 2pm

Three other ribbon cuttings are in the works:

- Classic tattoo
- Essie's Cuts
- Latin port
- Hummus Republic
- Rita's sometime in the spring

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

No new business.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:39am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, April 21, 2023, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia