

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, June 9, 2023, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

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

Welcome:

Executive Director Dawn Mackey called the meeting to order at 8:34.

Vice Chair Gary Tilbor declared a quorum was present. Minutes from the May board meeting were reviewed, and a motion was made to approve the minutes by Mr. Massey, seconded by Mr. McColley. Motion passed.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Theivakumaran thanked everyone for all of their help in planning the upcoming June events. She then updated the Board on the Sustain and Serve grant which has now delivered 40 - 50k meals with \$398k of the grant money spent. Many families receiving the meals have reached out to thank the individual restaurant owners. Also, some restaurants have now forged relationships with these food banks and have continued to work with them even without the grant funding. Mr. Muldoon inquired about how we can get this success story out into the world.

Secretary's Report

No report

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Schooler asked for clarification from ED Mackey around several outstanding payments and was interested in the potential for an economic analysis in the wake of the GAMSA win.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Mackey updated the Board on a new grant opportunity that needed to be completed within only a few weeks. This grant is for placemaking and she will be submitting it for the alley between Menya and Tribos.

ED Mackey discussed her ideas for the design committee and how they can help improve the area between Station PI and the Forum Theater. Some ideas discussed were tree plantings and improved landscaping. The Borough will be able to help with some of this as well.

The economic vitality committee had their initial meeting to discuss goals. Mr. Massey will be joining that team. One of the goals would be to compile and maintain a list of rents and listings that can be easily accessed when needed. They would also compile other important information for businesses such as information on zoning, sign ordinances, etc.

Borough Update

Mr. Delia gave a short update on the cannabis application status. The Borough continues to have discussions with the Parking Authority and the deck on improving parking management downtown with some imminent changes to come.

Mr. Schooler had a question about Trailhead park which Mr. Delia informed the Board that the property is owned by the County but there may be plans for improvements to that park soon. Mr. Tilbor asked about the pocket park. It requires a subdivision which is set to go before the Planning Board, however, Mr. Muldoon does not think the property will be deeded for at least another month.

Arts Council Report

Ms. Loftus Suchan informed the Board that the Arts Council continues to work on programming. She also mentioned the upcoming concert series which is being put on by the MDA, Borough and Arts Council. ED Mackey gave the board more details about the concert series.

Promotion Team

Chairperson Theivakumaran reported that June will be the busiest month of the year for promotions. The Pride event took place the weekend prior and was well attended. Easily surpassing the prior year's attendance. Upcoming is the Downtown Funhouse from 5 - 8 which is in celebration of the GAMSA win. Mr. Muldoon asked for more information about where each attraction will be staged. Also coming up is Juneteenth and the Kids Takeover event on the last day of school.

Organization Team

No Report.

Storefront Team

No report.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea updated the Board about all of the social media that will be going out surrounding the June events. The New Jersey Transit ads have been installed and they came out great. They went up at stations such as Secaucus, Metropark, Princeton, etc.

A number of new videos are now available or coming soon. A video has been created that will come out later in the month with residents having a discussion about the Downtown at Angie's. The pre-prom event video is out now. There will be a video done for the Funhouse event as well as the Kids Takeover but Brandon Ughlig is unavailable for the Juneteenth events. A video was also released to welcome Atlantic Health to town.

A promotion is being run with SeeMore Appliance for a chance to win a BBQ grill. Grill to be positioned at the Jewel Shop location and window clings will be put up around town for information on entering the contest.

Mr. Cea encouraged all businesses to share the posts made by the MDA.

Innovation Team

No report.

Public Art Team

Mr. Berger told the Board that on June 17th the first two of 8 posters will be unveiled for the poster boxes on the Forum Theater at 3pm. He asked for Mr. Cea's help to promote via the website and social media. Refreshments to be provided by Beans & Bread and a local musician will be on hand to perform.

For the wall mural on the upcoming Starbucks building, an artist has been identified and approved by the building owner Mr. Schooler. The team will now be looking further into cost and possible grant money available.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Upcoming ribbons cuttings as follows:

- Rose and Root June 9 at 5:30p
- Manasquan Bank June 10th at 10:00a
- Dicosmos June 16th at 11a.

Mr. Schooelr mentioned that the new daycare center Everbrook should be contacting us for ribbon cutting in August. Also the Hair loft will be having a ribbon cutting for their anniversary on Aug 12th.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

Ms. Callinan started a discussion around encouraging businesses to stay open late. Perhaps it can be coordinated on a specific day of the week.

Mr. Muldoon inquired about a summer restaurant week. There was discussion on whether it is worth the effort given last year's underwhelming response. Ms. Mackey had ideas on how to make it more successful and suggested brainstorming offline.

Ms. Mackey discussed ideas about the concert series and how businesses can take advantage of them this summer. She also gave an update on changes happening at Conversation Corner.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:33am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, July 14, 2023, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia