

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 8, 2023, 8:30am
Borough Hall 500 Main Street

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

Welcome:

Ms. Theivakumaran called the meeting to order at 8:38.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Theivakumaran provided an update on matters concerning the EIDL loan. Looking to pay off the loan completely before the end of the year.

Secretary's Report

Mr. Delia thanked Mr. Tilbor for taking meeting minutes in August and asked for a motion to approve. Ms. Theivakumaran moved, Mr. Tilbor seconded. Motion approved.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Schooler went into more detail about repayment of the EIDL loan. The Board budgeted with the intention of full repayment at the beginning of the year. There are funds to achieve that, it's just a matter of figuring out what the group is comfortable with as far as the timing and funds on hand.

Executive Director's Report

ED Mackey updated the Board on the status of the Roig mural. It is mostly finished with some final touches and cleanup still left to do. There will be a dedication planned for when the plaque is installed.

ED Mackey has been seeking ways to provide assistance to larger groups of businesses rather than on an individual basis. To that end, she has set up two workshops. The first is concerning effectively using social media for promotion and another on holiday window design. Looking to see how these go and how well attended they are with the intention to do more workshops in the future.

Ms. Mackey informed the Board of a workshop she will be attending in October which will go towards her certification.

Borough Update

Mr. Delia provided an update on the pocket park with the help of Mr. Muldoon. Lights are installed. Manasquan bank press event planned for later this month. Mr. Delia, Ms. Mackey and Mr. Muldoon are working with a graphic designer on a parking map. Upcoming 15 minute parking spaces for the pilot have been chosen and will be rolled out soon with other parking changes. The Borough Council had first reading on an ordinance to add more entertainment businesses as permitted uses to the B-1 district including arcades, VR, escape rooms, brew pubs, distilleries, and other similar businesses. Second reading and public hearing on the changes are scheduled for 9/11.

Arts Council Report

Ms. Loftus Suchan updated the Board on the Jazz Fest which is planned for September 30th in the Halsey parking lot. A discussion was had about how we can ensure local businesses can be a larger part of these

events into the future. On October 29th Friends of the Metuchen Arts will be hosting a gala to raise money to help future art projects.

Organization Team

No report.

Storefront Team

No report.

Promotion Team

The sidewalk sale event will be taking place tomorrow rain or shine. The Townwide Tea Party inspired by American Girl Doll Kavi will be held later this month. On September 21st at 7 American Girl author Varsha Bajaj will participate in a panel discussion, "Why Representation Matters", moderated by Dr. Anna Branch. Event will take place at Suite Metuchen. For the Tea Party, "Mad Hatter" characters will be in town for photos and to set the mood. Businesses are being asked to lean into the "tea party" theme for promotions. American Girl has provided \$450 worth of swag.

The annual Downtown Rumble wrestling event is scheduled for October 7th, 4-6. There was discussion about vendors on the plaza for these events.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea provided his update via email. He is working on marketing campaigns for the upcoming fall events. Ms. Mackey showed the Board an example idea for business promotion of the Downtown Rumble where Mr. Cea will create Bitmoji-style characters of the business owners in a wrestling ring. The first downtown resident video was released on social media and was well received. Many businesses were mentioned during the residents' discussion in the video. A second video will be coming out soon..

Innovation Team

No report.

Public Art Team

Mr. Berger informed the Board that the next two posters will be switched out at the Forum soon. The idea here is to keep that installation fresh. One more set of two is ready as well. Artist Julia Win received a grant from Middlesex County to do art installation in Metuchen and is working with the art team. Her art is made of recycled materials and has a three dimensional aesthetic. There is ongoing discussion with her on what the most appropriate place for her work would be.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Ms. Lai said that the ribbon cutting for The Hair Loft was held on August 12th and went well. Next ribbon cutting will be for Lux Candle Lab on September 17th at noon.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

No new business.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:23am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, October 13, 2023, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia