

**Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Friday, November 17, 2023, 8:30am**  
**Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street**

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

**Welcome:**

Chairperson Theivakumaran called the meeting to order at 8:39.

**Secretary's Report**

Mr. Delia asked for a motion to approve minutes from October. Ms. Theivakumaran moved, Mr. McColley seconded. Motion approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

No report

**Executive Director's Report**

ED Mackey provided an update on this year's shop small strategy. The focus this year will be on promoting stores that rely on "gift" items for a majority of their business. This strategy is based on industry recommendations. The messaging will be built around the concept of "gifting local". Restaurants and other businesses will be encouraged to lean in as well to capture the shoppers coming into town.

A discussion was had around a promotion that was initiated by the businesses and not the MDA. The Alliance cannot be involved with any promotions that may be exclusionary.

Mr. Muldoon had a question on how the gift guide would be distributed. It will be shared and boosted on social media, ED Mackey has already given several interviews to local press on the guide and holiday shopping season. The Alliance will ask local leaders to participate by sharing when they are shopping downtown and we ask Board members to do the same. We will also be looking to the businesses who are featured in the gift guide to do a lot of promotion as well.

**Borough Update**

Mr. Delia informed the board that the sidewalk work planned for New St was not able to be started on schedule. In order to not disrupt the holiday shopping season the work has been pushed off until early next year. The Winter Parade will be taking place Sunday the 26th. Mr. Delia informed the Board that Linda Koskoski will be taking the place of Mr. Muldoon as the Borough Administrator's designee. The cannabis retailer presented their plans to the Planning Board and received approval to move forward. Finally, Meximodo has been cooperating with having their employees park in the parking deck and encouraging their patrons to do the same with free parking validation.

**Arts Council Report**

Ms. Loftus Suchan said that the Arts Council is currently in planning for 2024. Ms Loftus Suchan believes that the MAC can provide a wider range of offerings and is looking to push for that in the new year.

### **Promotion Team**

Chairperson Theivakumaran reported on the various winter promotions that are about to begin. All upcoming promotions can be found on the Alliance's website. Also, postcards have been printed with those events and are being given out to businesses to share with their customers.

### **Communications Team**

Mr. Cea informed the Board that the MDA was featured in the most recent issues of the Discover Middlesex County travel guide. The "Come see what the fuss is about" ad continues to be used throughout the state. It was included in the travel guide and is also displayed at The Yard as well as at some NJ Transit stations.

Mr. Cea is working on various marketing posts to go along with all of the planned holiday promotions. Mr. Uhlig and Mr. Cea are putting together a short 30 second video ad at retail stores to promote small business Saturday which will go out shortly. Also, the MDA has once again secured an ad on the front page of Star-Ledger for Small Business Saturday thanks to Mr. Tilbor's contacts.

### **Public Art Team**

The team met the night prior to the Board meeting. Ms. Loftus Suchan has now joined the team and Mr. Berger and the rest of the team were happy to have her join. November 29th will be a dedication ceremony for the Roig Mural in the alley between Tribos Peri Peri and Menya Ramen House with a reception to follow at Papillion. The artist will be on hand and a plaque will be installed.

The art team is interested in reprinting the Steve Powers banners to be put back up on the light poles after the GAMSA win banners are removed next year. A discussion was had about the role of the Board as it relates to "permanent" decisions such as public art installations.

The Art Team is seeking a County grant for the Starbucks retaining wall. An artist has been identified and the County has provided feedback and asked for a few more requirements in order to have an opportunity at the grant. Another art installation is in the works for 16 Pearl St. The building is also planned to be refreshed by the owner. Looking to the early spring for these changes.

### **Ribbon Cutting Team**

ED Mackey thanked Ms. Lai for all of her and Ms. Callinan's work on the ribbon cuttings this year. There are no ribbon cuttings currently planned but we are looking forward to the opening of Yestercades early next year. Mr. Delia reminded the Board of a potential ribbon cutting for the new daycare facility on Mr. Schooler's property. Mr. Berger asked for a ribbon cutting for the Roig mural dedication. There was a suggestion to put together a video montage of all of this year's ribbon cuttings that was well received.

### **Old Business**

No old business to report.

### **New Business**

The Board discussed the yearly review provided by ED Mackey.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 am.

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

Submitted by Jason Delia