

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 9, 2024, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

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

Welcome:

Secretary Delia called the meeting to order at 8:39.

Secretary's Report

Secretary circulated the minutes of the January meeting via email and asked for a motion to approve. Moved by Ms. Loftus Suchan, seconded by Mr. Massey. Unanimously approved.
Meg, Sean

Treasurer's Report

Executive Director Mackey reminded the Board that we are in need of a new volunteer to fill the Treasurer role.

Executive Director's Report

ED Mackey reviewed the annual meeting that took place on Monday earlier in the week. There were about thirty people in attendance which is typical. The meeting had good information and was well received. Mr. Massey, who was in attendance, agreed.

ED Mackey informed the Board of a need to add another Board member as signatory for checks. Mr. Massey made a motion to add Dan Cea to the account. Seconded by Mr. Delia. Motion was unanimously approved.

Borough Update

Mr. Delia informed the Board that the parking stickers that he circulated at the last meeting had been added to most of the parking meters throughout town. He also discussed his work with the Borough Clerk and the Health Inspector to put together an FAQ around food licensing that can be distributed to businesses in the District. The document is nearly finalized. This news was welcomed and led to a discussion on other ways to remove barriers to businesses moving into the District.

Arts Council Report

Ms. Loftus Suchan informed the board of an upcoming gala that the Arts Council will be putting on at the Metuchen Golf and Country Club on March 2nd.

Promotion Team

Chiar Theivakumaran was not in attendance but Executive Director Mackey reported on the events that are to be held this coming weekend around Valentines Day. There will be a photo opportunity in Peterson Park with a large "LOVE" sign displayed at the park. There will also be a kissing booth, and "Parking Cupids" will be roaming downtown paying for people to park at the meters.

Restaurant week is around two weeks away and ED Mackey informed the Board on the difficulties the team has had so far with getting some restaurants to participate. The intention was to have specials in the theme of \$24 in '24. There has been some pushback on being able to offer that price. It has changed to there being three types of price points, \$15, \$25 and \$35. Ms. Quinonez gave some background from the perspective of a

restaurant owner on why they may be having difficulty putting together specials. Suggested that in the future specials not be tied to a certain dollar amount

The Lunar New Year celebration will be on the 24th. Similar to years in the past with lion dancers, drummers, etc. Always a well received event.

A new promotion this year will be on March 9th entitled "Game on Metuchen". You will see the slogan "Come out and play" used in promotions. Asking businesses to lean into gaming and consider staying open later that day. Lots of opportunities to incorporate games into many types of businesses.

New sculptures will be coming soon. The MDA will put together a "scavenger hunt" for people to play and discover the various sculptures. The idea here is to encourage circulation throughout the District.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea reported that there has been a lot of effort put into planning for 2024 since the last meeting. There is nothing concrete to share at the moment but should have more details at the next meeting.

Public Art Team

Mr. Berger told the Board that the Public Art team has been brainstorming ideas for different projects to work on during 2024. Also, the MDA was awarded the Middlesex County art grant. It was unfortunately not for the full amount we were requesting, but the property owner will help make up the difference. The team has been working with the artist on designs. ED Mackey showed some renderings.

Work is nearly complete on the Pearl St project. ED Mackey informed the Board that along with this art installation, the building itself at 16 Pearl will be painted in the spring. The team is discussing with the artist a possible collaboration to host a fun event for kids in conjunction with the installation.

A discussion was had about wanting to fill the rest of the wall on Angie's Cafe and looking for possible grant opportunities to make that happen.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Ms. Callinan told the board that the next ribbon cutting will be for Be My Guess on the 16th at 4. Owner John Manzo is planning a big event with food and fun.

Public Comment

Stuart Schooler, owner of the site where Starbucks will be located provided an update on their progress.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

Main St NJ Grant opportunity was discussed. Motion was made to pursue a grant this cycle by Mr. Cea. Seconded by Mr. Delia. Unanimous approval

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Loftus Suchan, seconded by Mr. Massey. Meeting adjourned at 9:08am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, March 8, 2024, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia