

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, May 9, 2025, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

Board in attendance: Dan Cea, Jason Delia, Ian Fawcett, Sean Massey, Jace C. McColley, Luisania Moronta, Sean Yan.

Not attending: Frank Assuncao, Joanne Cruz, Laura Feibert, Angie Quinonez, Amar Singh, Jennifer Zhu

Guests: Linda Koskoski, Eric Berger

Staff: Dawn Mackey

Welcome:

The meeting was called to order by Executive Director Dawn Mackey at 8:35 AM.

Chairperson's Report

Mr. Cea provided a recap of the recent social media class, which covered trends on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The instructor demonstrated strong results and will be hired as a paid influencer for a future promotional campaign.

Secretary's Report

Meeting minutes for April were circulated in advance. Motion to approve by Mr. Cea, seconded by Mr. McColley. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Mackey updated the Board on the following:

- **Business Mix & Outreach:** Reiterated how great the social media class was. Witnessed a number of “aha” moments from people in attendance.
- **Deli Delight Storefront:** Discussion with owner regarding downsizing his retail space and splitting it into two. Owner would potentially operate both deli and second storefront. Considering ideas such as small niche hardware store focused on essentials not carried by big-box chains. Board expressed support for the concept and would brainstorm other options.
- **New Business: Music Studio:** A rehearsal and music studio is opening behind Wade Appraisals. Current tenant is moving out. Studio will offer retail sales (strings, guitar picks, tuning tools, etc.) Location is complementary to the creative energy of the district. Discussion was had about ways to enhance this storefront visually.
- **Smoke Shop Space:** Two businesses are interested in the former smoke shop location and are vying for the space.
- **Incubator Space:** Ms. Mackey thanked Mr. McColley for his significant work on finalizing the lease and user agreement. Planning underway to line up initial businesses for the space.

Borough Update

Mr. Delia provided updates on the following:

- **Metuchen Arts District Redevelopment Plan:** The Borough Council referred the plan amendments to the Planning Board, which reviewed and approved it. The amended plan will go back to the Council for approval and will begin advancing through the next phases.
- **Master Plan Update:** The Borough is beginning the process of updating its Master Plan. Mr. Delia encouraged engagement from the Board and local businesses throughout the next year as public input will be essential.
- **Possible NJ Transit Strike:** In light of a potential NJT strike, there may be an increased number of residents working from home. This could present opportunities for local businesses to attract more foot traffic during weekdays. Emergency bus service is being explored as a contingency.

Promotion Team / Organization Team

Mr. Cea reported on behalf of Ms. Theivakumaran:

Planning underway for Pre-Prom events this month. End of month and June will host Pride, Juneteenth, and Metuchen's 125th Birthday. MDA is coordinating the birthday celebration, which will include a dance party featuring a DJ from Sports Illustrated Stadium.

Economic Vitality

Ms. Mackey reported on behalf of Mr. Muldoon that the committee continued planning for the incubator space. This committee will help source and evaluate tenant applications as well as other tasks as we get the space off of the ground.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea told the board:

- Held a marketing team meeting last month.
 - Reviewed the 2025 content calendar.
 - Discussed how to approach events more strategically and fill content gaps between them.
 - Brainstormed fresh approaches to digital advertising.
- Reels and Stories are currently being prioritized by social media algorithms over static images.
 - Testing has begun on these strategies using new "spotlight" series.
 - Early results show increased engagement and traffic.

Design Team

Ms. Mackey reported on behalf of Ms. Feibert:

- No updates yet on the Transformation Grant.
- Contractor scheduled to begin alleyway improvements during AcuPunk's vacation.

Ribbon Cutting Team

- Recent ribbon cuttings completed:
 - FOMA
 - Basecamp
 - KB Kitchens (second floor above Wells Fargo)

- Upcoming:
 - HoneyStash grand opening on May 17.
 - Olga has completed façade improvements including the eaves.
 - Space will feature a rotating monthly art gallery showcasing local artists.

Old Business

No old business to report.

New Business

No new business to report.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, June 13, 2025, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia