

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, June 13, 2025, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

Board in attendance: Frank Assuncao, Dan Cea, Joanne Cruz, Jason Delia, Laura Feibert, Sean Massey, Jace C. McColley, Sean Yan, Jennifer Zhu.

Not attending: Ian Fawcett, Luisania Moronta, Angie Quinonez, Amar Singh

Guests: Eric Berger, Jay Muldoon

Staff: Dawn Mackey, Linda Levine

Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Cruz at 8:32am.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Cruz reported the following:

- Wrapping up a busy stretch of events downtown.
- Plans to reintroduce post-event surveys. While past response rates were low, the hope is to improve results this time by sending surveys immediately following events.
 - A new version of the survey is being developed.
 - Ms. Feibert suggested utilizing text messaging as a distribution method to improve engagement.

Secretary's Report

Meeting minutes for May were circulated prior to the meeting. Motion to approve by Mr. Massey, seconded by Mr. McColley. Motion approved.

Executive Director's Report

ED Mackey updated the Board on the following:

- Metuchen's 125th Birthday Celebration:
 - The Borough asked MDA to help produce the event. A traditional birthday party theme was chosen.
 - Thanks to Mr. Delia for providing the DJ, who received very positive feedback.
 - The Arts Team contributed a giant birthday card for the event.
 - Marco Santini will be painting a mural on the side of Bonnie's.
- Audits:
 - Both an insurance and a financial audit are currently in progress, following months of document collection.
- Summer Concert Series:
 - Announcement coming soon for two concerts: July 14 and August 12.
- "Seemore" Mural Damage:
 - A vehicle crashed into the Seemore mural. The original artist has offered to repair or create a "mural within a mural."
 - The proposed cost for repairs and new artwork is \$6,875.
 - Motion by Mr. Cea to fund the work from reserves; seconded by Mr. Massey. Motion approved.
- Care and Maintenance:
 - Ongoing issue with garbage can overflow, often due to residents and businesses using public receptacles.

- New garbage cans are being ordered.
- Plans to bring in supplemental maintenance help at \$23/hour for 10–12 hours per week. Candidate referred from Plainfield.
- Exploring a seasonal garbage can cleaning service with one cleaning at the start of the season and another targeted cleaning mid-summer (e.g., by What's the Scoop and The Plaza).

Borough Update

Mr. Delia reported on:

- Quarters/Taxi
 - Meters are now accepting quarters again
 - 5 parking spaces previously occupied exclusively by the Taxi stand business will become meters spaces
- CAFE Tax Program Submission
 - Grant being finalized for the CAFE tax incentive program which, if awarded, will be used for the bulk of the Forum Theater.

Promotion Team / Organization Team

Ms. Theivakumaran reported Dan reported for her

Ms. Theivakumaran, with Mr. Cea reporting:

- June was a very active month with successful events.
- Planning and coordination ran smoothly across teams.

Economic Vitality

Mr. Muldoon reported:

- The team will meet following the board meeting.
- Storefront Grant: Application from Lore Ceramics to be reviewed.
- Spark Incubator Space:
 - Ongoing communication with Portside Creative owner.
 - Business is performing better than expected; the owner is interested in pursuing a permanent location.
 - Meetings scheduled with prospective future tenants on Monday and Tuesday.

Communications Team

Mr. Cea provided updates:

- Print Advertising:
 - Half-page ads placed in Discover Middlesex Magazine and 08840.
 - Ads highlight the district's murals and include a mural map.
- Postcard Campaign:
 - Postcards with mural maps to be distributed to local businesses.
- Social Media Performance:
 - Three trending videos this month, with over 7,000+ views each.
 - For the first time, more than 50% of viewers were non-followers.
 - Reels featuring local businesses have significantly boosted engagement.
 - MDA Instagram has surpassed 6,000 followers.

- Influencers have begun reaching out to collaborate after seeing increased visibility.

Design Team

Ms. Feibert reported:

- Alley Improvements:
 - Final alleyway completed at the end of May near AcuPunk and Pastry Lu.
 - This was the third and final alleyway funded through the Transformation Grant program.
 -

Ribbon Cutting Team

- Lore Ceramics ribbon cutting to be held today at 5:00pm.

New Business

Early discussion began around ideas for the 2026 Summer Music Series.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:27 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, July 11, 2025, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia