

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 12, 2025, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

Board in attendance: Frank Assuncao, Joanne Cruz, Jason Delia, Ian Fawcett, Laura Feibert, Sean Massey, Jace C. McColley.

Not attending: Dan Cea, Luisania Moronta, Angie Quinonez, Amar Singh, Sean Yan, Jennifer Zhu

Guests: Linda Koskoski, Jay Muldoon, Eric Berger

Staff: Dawn Mackey, Linda Levine

Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Executive Director Ms. Mackey.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Cruz reported that preparations are underway for the annual assessment, which helps guide the organization's planning and funding priorities for the coming year.

Secretary's Report

The meeting minutes for August were circulated prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Cruz and seconded by Mr. Fawcett. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Mackey provided updates on several key initiatives:

- **Transformation Grant** – Work is beginning at 14 New Street, marking progress on one of the projects supported through the grant.
- **Audit** – The annual audit is well underway, with all required documentation submitted to the auditor.
- **New Businesses**
 - Dukes has passed its health inspection and is in the process of receiving its Certificate of Occupancy.
 - Acting Out has received its CO and is now preparing to open.
 - The Salad House is progressing well toward completion.
- **Networking Event** – Scheduled for Monday, September 15 at 6:30 p.m. at Lore Ceramics, with catering by Fresh Twist. Board members are encouraged to spread the word and invite local business owners.
- **472 Main** – The space is looking great, and a new retailer has signed a lease. The announcement will be made soon. Mr. Assuncao thanked Ms. Mackey for her assistance in coordinating and finding the right tenant.
- **Economic Development Coordination** – Ms. Mackey and the Board thanked Ms. Koskoski for her continued collaboration between the Borough and local businesses.
- **DCA Visit** – Representatives from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) are scheduled to visit Metuchen in January.

Borough Update

Mr. Delia / Ms. Koskoski

- **Master Plan** – The Borough continues work on the comprehensive Master Plan update.
- **Zoning Officer Update** – Former zoning officer has resigned. Borough is actively recruiting a replacement.

- **Main Street Safety Project** – Expected to begin in Spring 2026.
- **Downtown Improvements** – New garbage cans have been installed, improving the appearance and cleanliness of the district.

Promotion Team / Organization Team

Ms. Theivakumaran reported:

- **Wrestling Event** – The 4th annual Downtown Wrestling Night will take place in the Town Plaza on September 13 from 5–7 p.m.
- **Metuchen Pops** – The event returns for its 2nd year on September 27, expected to draw twice as many attendees as last year. The concert series continues to bring energy and significant foot traffic downtown.

Economic Vitality

Mr. Muldoon referenced the attached August committee minutes and provided the following updates:

- **Spark Downtown**
 - That's Adornable (custom embroidery) continues through the end of September and has seen great success. The owner loves the space and community interaction.
 - City Workshop (menswear from Maplewood) is confirmed for October, aiming to build brand awareness in Metuchen.
 - Five potential vendors are being considered for the November–December holiday season, including concepts in collectibles, pet goods, and wood art. That's Adornable has also expressed interest in returning.
 - Vendors are already confirmed for January and February, featuring an artist-led business focused on art therapy and DIY workshops.
 - The Spark storefront continues to serve as a strong platform for local entrepreneurship and business incubation.

Communications Team

The marketing team has adjusted its meeting time to the last Wednesday of each month at 2:00 p.m.

- **August Highlights:**
 - Promoted the Sidewalk Sale through pre-event and live social media reels.
 - Featured local businesses recognized on regional “Top 10” lists, including R&R, Pastry Lu, Be My Guest, and Fresco.
 - Created digital graphics for Metuchen Pops promotion.
- **September Focus:**
 - Comprehensive marketing rollout for Metuchen Pops across Instagram, Facebook, Google Events, press releases, community news pages, Reddit, banners, A-frames, and the Chamber of Commerce. Board members were encouraged to ask local businesses to share posts.
 - Wrestling Promotions are live on social channels.
 - Preparing a curated Influencer Event for September 25 to showcase downtown Metuchen.
- **Holiday Planning:**
 - Early preparations underway for the holiday season, including ad buys in local newspapers, postcard mailers, and an integrated online marketing strategy.

Design Team

Ms. Feibert reported:

- **387 Main Street** – Artist Marco Santini met with the building owner and received approval to move forward with a new mural, beginning Monday. The project is expected to make a significant visual improvement to the building.
- **“See More” Mural** – Repairs will be completed by next Thursday.
- **Holiday Planning** – Decorations will include benches and a large photo opportunity display to encourage social media engagement downtown.

Ribbon Cutting Team

- **FK Living:** Ribbon cutting scheduled for September 19 at 4:00 p.m.

Old Business

- **Theater Project** – Mr. Assuncao inquired about updates on the Forum Theater. The Borough hopes to receive news later in the fall.

New Business

- **Holiday Parking** – Mr. Cruz raised the topic. Mr. Delia requested an official email from ED Mackey to formalize the request.
- **2026 Budget Process** – The annual budget cycle is beginning. Committees are asked to submit their proposed budgets for the upcoming year.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:24am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, October 10, 2025, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia