

**Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Friday, July 12, 2024, 8:30am**  
**Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street**

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

**Welcome:**

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Delia at 8:36am.

**Chairperson's Report**

Ms. Theivakumaran

Document put together to help business owners deal with solicitations from various groups. Gives guidance on how to offer other types of support beyond financial.

**Secretary's Report**

Meeting minutes of June were shared. Motion to approve by Ms. Theivakumaran, second by Ms. Loftus Suchan.

**Treasurer's Report**

No report

**Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Mackey questioned the Board about whether she needed to continue to send the monthly newsletter to the Board along with the meeting agenda and minutes. Board agreed that wasn't necessary as everyone already received the newsletter.

Ms. Mackey informed the Board that the Economic Vitality Committee continues working to evaluate the Storefront Grants applicants. Two were approved and there is a meeting immediately following the Board meeting to discuss the remainder.

There will be an audit conducted the the National Main Street program this October. This will require Board participation. The newly formed Design Committee is taking shape with Laura Filbert agreeing to serve as Chair. Actively looking to recruit someone with interior design experience and a landscape architect. ED Mackey has several exciting potential tenants she is working with and actively looking to find a space for them to rent. There was some discussion around potential limitations per zoning ordinances.

The downtown planters have been refreshed and look great. Mr. Muldoon commented that the planters are starting to show wear and tear and there should be some planning to find funding for new planters in the near future. ED Mackey commented that this would be a project for the Design Committee. Another near term project for them would be to look into shading options for the Plaza. The first of two Summer Sounds concerts was held but it was very hot and people remained in the shade until the sun moved behind the buildings. If there were a way to provide shade on the Plaza it would activate the space more during summer months. All in all the concert was a success.

**Borough Update**

Mr. Delia spoke about the groundbreaking at The Kempson on Durham Ave. This is out of district but very walkable to the downtown and there will be 272 apartments built on the site. This will add to downtown foot traffic. Also as part of this project is the opening of an entrance to the nature preserve. This has potential to bring in hikers and others to town from the area and is another source of potential customers.

Ms. Koskoski gave an update on Thomas Mundy Peterson Park informing the Board that the Borough has received several bids for design services.

### **Arts Council Report**

Ms. Loftus Suchan had nothing new to report but Porchfest will be on September 21st. There will be 8 locations, 2 acts per location, and the locations are split into two hubs; north and south of town. Jazzfest will be September 28th on the Plaza.

### **Promotion Team**

Chairperson Theivakumaran was happy with the Pride event and thanked the Board for their support. This was the biggest Pride since we began running this program. This weekend is our Juneteenth celebration. Theme for that is both 60 years of funk music and 60 years of the Civil Rights Act. There will be a funk band, DJ, step dancers, drumline, etc.

Kids Takeover will be happening. Ms. Theivakumaran thanked Mr. Massey and Mr. Delia for the idea of Slow Streets and for working with the Borough to implement. The structure of the event will be a little different with the activities housed mostly in the Plaza and not encouraging circulation for safety reasons.

This July is the summer Olympics. The Promotions Team is working on fun ideas to incorporate that and promote Metuchen businesses. Looking for our businesses to lean in to that theme as well. This is a good opportunity to showcase our many international businesses.

Chairperson Theivakumaran reported that there will be a small July promotion for the "Metuchen Olympics". This will be similar to Valentine's Day and Festivus where businesses are encouraged to lean into the promotion and be involved. Some ideas include hanging a flag representing your heritage during the olympic weeks. The MDA will be looking to incorporate fitness businesses in fun games. We haven't seen any other communities planning anything similar.

The next concert on the Plaza will be the Sugar hill Gang on July 31st. In September a Metuchen Pop art promotional event will be held sponsored by Atlantic Health. Look for small popup art shows. Planning still in the works. This will be on September 28th prior to the Jazzfest.

### **Economic Vitality / Organization Team**

Mr. Muldoon reiterated the update from earlier regarding Storefront Grants. The committee will also be discussing changes to the Borough's sign ordinance and any NJEDA follow-ups.

### **Communications Team**

Mr. Cea reported that this month was fairly typical with promoting the events and general MDA businesses. AAA magazine reached out looking for photos for a future article highlighting Metuchen.

### **Public Art Team**

Mr. Berger informed the Board that the mural by Starbucks is currently going up. The team is working on a lantern project to be installed at Peterson Park for lunar new year.

**Ribbon Cutting Team**

Ms. Lai said that the last ribbon cutting for Rising Heart Studio went well. They are working to reach out to the new owners of Antonio's to see if they are interested in a grand re-opening. Next up would be Ram and Rooster. Ms. Mackey and Mr. Cea have already been in touch with them as we are looking to work with them in the future. They may be interested in one as early as end of July.

ED Mackey let everyone know of a new kitchen and bath designer that has moved above the Wells Fargo building and Acupunk will be moving to the old Alfina space and will want a cutting.

**Old Business**

No old business to report.

**New Business**

No new business

Meeting was adjourned at 9:18 am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, August 9, 2024, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia