

Metuchen Downtown Alliance Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 13, 2024, 8:30am
Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street

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

Welcome:

Meeting was called to order by Ms. Theivakumaran at 8:34am.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Theivakumaran provided an update on the news from Papillion that had been shared by the owner the previous day regarding the closing of her store. The MDA and ED Mackey have been working for several months with the landlord on a transition plan. Having an empty storefront in that location for a long period of time would be detrimental to the district. There is already a business that has been identified and they will likely be moving in shortly. This potential new tenant is an existing business owner in another established community.

Discussion was had on how the MDA is here to help connect landlords and businesses to quickly fill spaces and Ms. Theivakumaran reminded everyone to bring ED Mackey into discussions early with businesses looking to move into town.

Secretary's Report

Meeting minutes of August were shared. Motion to approve by Ms. Theivakumaran, second by Mr. Cea. Motion approved.

Mr. Delia initiated a short discussion on steps to update MDA by-laws for the next annual meeting. It was agreed to begin work on those changes mid October.

Treasurer's Report

No report

Executive Director's Report

ED Mackey was absent but submitted the following written report:

1. Update of the Design Committee which met again and sourced additional contractors. Laura and I met with one of those and Dawn Mackey met with another. One gave a verbal quote but did not follow up in writing. Another gave a significantly better quote than our original contractor who did Roig alley and we will try to get on his calendar to do Imagination Alley before winter.
2. Met again with OLP to re-discuss the Plaza lighting and have a solid plan B. Waiting on estimates to light only perimeter trees with electric from poles and asked they include cost to maintain and remove/reinstall for 5 years.
3. Preparing for actual financial Audit with Supplee Clooney
4. Preparing for Main Street Audit on October 18th (pleases keep date open)

Borough Update

Mr. Delia informed the Board that the updated Borough ordinance regarding signs was approved after second reading at the last Council Meeting.

Ms. Koskoski mentioned that a landscape architect was selected for the Peterson Park project and that the Park was also selected to be a part of the Black History Trail.

Arts Council Report

Ms. Loftus Suchan reported that Porchfest will be coming up later this month and to check the Arts Council website for more information and a map. Next weekend will be Jazzfest on the Plaza which coincides with the Metuchen Pops event. Other upcoming events include International Dance day on October 6 and a painting event at Tommy's Pond on October 13th.

Promotion Team

Chairperson Theivakumaran reported that this Saturday will be the annual Downtown Rumble on the Plaza from 5 - 7. It is a free event and one of the most popular. Metuchen Pops will take place on the 28th from 11 - 4. Atlantic Health is the lead sponsor. There will be lots of art throughout town, breakdancers from 1 - 2, graffiti artists including the owner of Classic Tattoo doing live demonstrations. The idea is that this is smaller scale and free-flowing rather than on a tight rigorous schedule.

Economic Vitality / Organization Team

Jay Muldoon

No report

Communications Team

Mr. Cea reported that he has been getting ready for Downtown Rumble by pushing out images and videos. That even does so well on its own that there isn't too much to worry about there as far as communication. He has been spending much more time promoting Metuchen Pops. Mr. Cea has done a lot of work to get that event in various publications including the Star Ledger. The Middlesex Chamber is helping to promote the event as well. The team is considering promoting the event on Eventbrite to push it to the top of searches to see what the return on that investment may be. We have not done that before. Finally, Mr. Cea provided the Board with the map that has been made up for that event showing all the various participants

Public Art Team

Mr. Berger reported that the mural is complete on the wall near Starbucks and they are working to set up a date for an unveiling. Next project for the public art team will be the lantern project for early next year.

Ribbon Cutting Team

Ms. Lai nor Ms. Callinan were present but submitted this written report:

1. Upcoming ribbon cuttings:
 - a. Mindful Connections - This Saturday @ 11:30 am
 - b. Pastry Lu - Friday, September 20th at 2pm (time to be confirmed)
2. Businesses that still need cuttings:
 - a. Kitchens, Bath and Beyond
 - b. Ram & Rooster
3. Opening Soon:
 - a. Khorasan Kabab
 - b. Starbucks

It was noted by the Board that Starbucks is now open and Mr. Delia asked about the new owner of the barber shop on New St.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:16am.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, October 11, 2024, at 8:30am at the Metuchen Senior Center 15 Center Street.

Submitted by Jason Delia