

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

**Montclair Center BID - Full Board Meeting
December 8, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Montclair House Grill, 12 Church Street or Zoom**

Board members in attendance: Celestina Ando, Jose Barreiro, Jeff Beck, Lisa Johnson, Roger Mazzeo, Jill Montague, Jaji Packard, Hipolito Pollantis, Elizabeth Rich, Caterina Russo, Sue Schultz, Matt Silverman, Robert Squires, Nat Testa

Absent: David Cummings, Ashley Cyrus, Alescia Peyton, David Placek, Lori Price Abrams

Staff: Jackie Apicella, Jason Gleason, Pauline Heaney, AnnMarie Sekeres

Guests: Saif Edilby, Emer Featherstone, Luther Flurry, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Jr., Matt Horrigan, Lucas Kovalcik, Kiahna Malloy, Gladys Marrero, Jessica Sporn, Kristen Zachares

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Lisa Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the November minutes.

Sue Schultz seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reverend Allen Shelton spoke regarding his Workforce Readiness Program with Montclair High School youth. This provides students with weekly classes, training, organizational skills, and an entrepreneurial program. In preparation for 2022 classes, Reverend Shelton is reaching out to Montclair Center businesses to provide job opportunities, or donations to the program, as an investment in our future workforce. It was proposed that this would be a good bridge with our Business Support and Economic Development Committee.

Jessica Sporn, managing director of Vanguard Theater Company, introduced herself. She explained how Vanguard, which opened in June, specifically wanted to be located within the Fourth Ward. Their aim is changing the narrative through theater dedicated to DREAM: Diversity, Reciprocity, Education, Activism & Mentorship, with a goal to inspire the use of art to bring change in the world. They have collaborated with several Montclair Businesses, and she mentioned how helpful and supportive the BID has been to their organization in a variety of ways.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

a. New Board Member Election Results

Sue Schultz reported the results of the 2021 board ballot.

Property Owners (3-year term)

Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa
Matt Horigan
Rob Squires

Business Owners (3-year term)

Roger Mazzeo
Kristen Zachares

Resident (1-year term)

Jose Barrierero

At-Large (1-year term)

Emer Featherstone
Kiahna Malloy
Elizabeth Rich

Non-Profit (1-year term)

Jill Montague

Sue Schultz thanked all the nominees for their interest and encouraged those who did not win to consider joining a committee and stay involved.

- b. Storm Water Remediation Joint Resolution with MEC
Jason Gleason reported that traditional one-hundred-year storms are happening on a far more frequent basis. All the new construction is not helping when it comes to flooding issues within the district. There has been a lot of significant damage to businesses and buildings this year. He proposed a joint effort with Lyle Landon of the Montclair Environmental Commission (MEC), asking the board to put together a resolution encouraging the Township to undertake a study for storm water mitigation. The goal would be to present the board with a resolution in the New Year and get a seat at the table at upcoming meetings. The idea being to be shovel ready for when funding begins rolling out for the Build Back Better program.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Clean, Safe and Green Report
Clean: The ambassadors cleaned one-and-a-quarter tons of litter this month, mostly in leaves, although masks continue to be the most littered item.

Safe: The County construction project is ongoing. The initial schedule the company had provided is approximately three months behind, with work locations slated within this schedule all out of sequence. A mid-project recap with the construction company and Township may happen in January.

PSE&G has finally resolved some light outages. A survey conducted by the BID reported 47 streetlights out within the district, approaching the 30% threshold. After entering each outage in the company's portal system, and frequent

dialogue between Jason Gleason and PSE&G, we are happy to report about half this number are back on, with more being fixed daily.

Green: All 3,000 tulips have now been planted, with an additional 1,300 planted in the Church Street traffic circle. Jason Gleason heartily thanked May in Montclair for their donation of these bulbs.

b. New Business/Vacancy Report

Jason Gleason reported that 50 new businesses opened in the district in 2021. He read the list of business closures asking for them to be remembered. He then read the list of all the opened businesses, along with those slated to open in the first quarter of 2022. He stated that this is an incredible accomplishment given all that has happened this year.

c. 2022 Holiday/Activity Report

A giant 50 ft. banner encouraging everyone to Shop Local was installed across Bloomfield Avenue. The theme "Thank You for Loving Local" has been carried over into social media campaigns. Videos featuring our Beyond Main businesses aired on WABC-TV's *Localish*.

On Small Business Saturday the BID had a presence on Church Street accompanied by performances from Jazz House Kids and Vanguard Theater Company. Mrs. Claus and Santa spent time with shoppers and business owners, and despite a cold start retailers claimed the day was very successful.

There was a suggestion that perhaps next year the BID could include a character of color, such as an elf.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

2021 Year in Review

Lisa Johnson gave a year in review presentation. Highlights were comprised of:

- Strategic plan from P.U.M.A. included 1,000 stakeholder interviews and resulted in a great product, allowing the BID to be more mission focused. It should be required reading for all board members.
- Clean, Safe & Green: The ambassadors did an amazing job this year removing 10+ tons of litter and garbage overflow. Hand sweeping a staggering 676 miles of sidewalk and planting 50 hibiscus trees, 192 potato lime plants, and 3,000 tulip bulbs. They installed 111 hanging baskets, 400 banners, and 4,000 ft. of holiday garland.
- Marketing & Communications: The BID reached one-million-plus users on Instagram and Facebook, engagement more than doubling on both platforms. A new website was debuted in June. A monthly newsletter reached 12,000 subscribers.
- Business Support & Economic Development: The BID conducted 21 ribbon cuttings and 14 business and entrepreneurship classes. In partnership with Beyond Main, 30 businesses established an e-commerce presence, and 23 business profile commercials were produced.

The BID sent 378 email alerts to stakeholders regarding grants, marketing opportunities, road closures, disaster relief funding, etc.; helped secure \$700,000 in COVID recovery funds, in addition to distributing more than \$500,000 in direct grants to 140 small businesses.

Meanwhile, the BID also advocated for district businesses with the Township on topics such as parking, street closures, zoning changes and rent control. It also engaged Storefront Mastery to provide 1:1 marketing and merchandising strategies.

- Public Space and Activation: Fresh Air Montclair opened 12 new installations throughout downtown, and helped secure the renowned sculpture, Point of Action, installed at Crane Park.

Montclair Jazz Festival, an unprecedented success, garnered 20,000 attendees. Survey result data indicates visitors spent approximately \$500,000 downtown that day alone. This was the first time in 20 years that Bloomfield Avenue was closed due to an event. It is a game changer for this town and is sure to become an anchor event.

Lisa Johnson thanked the BID's partners, collaborators, staff, board, and committees for all their accomplishments in making this a stellar year.

VII. TREASURERS REPORT

a. 2022 Budget

Jason Gleason gave a brief overview of the budget to newcomers, touching on areas of the budget that saw changes over 2021. He stated that the budget reflects our focus of being less on internal events and now more in support of external events as per proposals laid out by the strategic plan.

The budget also reflects increased costs for technology upgrades and communication tools due to the pandemic, including licensing for Zoom and Basecamp. We are looking to add new GIS tools and consultation to get comprehensive statistics of district assets. This will empower the BID to make data-driven decisions, such as what best business models are needed in the district and what are the current trends.

The BID is also looking to initiate an operating reserve with approximately \$20,000. This is a best practice for BIDs, and by increasing yearly deposits we hope to have a robust plan in 5-8 years.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Nominations Committee

i. Officers Elections

Sue Schultz spoke on the election process for positions on the executive committee. Board members will receive an email to Survey Monkey asking for nominations to be submitted by December 17. Final voting will take place in person at the January board meeting.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None

X. OPEN DISCUSSION – New Ideas, Comments, Questions

Sue Schultz congratulated two business owners present who each won gold for the *Suburban Essex Best of Essex 2021* awards: Kristen Zachares for The Eclectic Chic Boutique and Celestina Ando for Celestina Ando Photography. She acknowledged many other businesses in the district who also garnered awards.

Jason Gleason spoke regarding the culmination of another crazy year. He thanked the staff, especially acknowledging Dylan Blackwell who will be celebrating his 20th anniversary with the BID next year. Jason thanked the board members for their participation and commitment, especially having to communicate through Zoom for more than half the year.

Jaji Packard thanked Jason Gleason for all his dedication to the organization, saying he has made a huge difference in the businesses and lives of so many people.

Nat Testa thanked Matt Silverman and Lisa Johnson, who are leaving due to term limits, for their work on the executive board, and Jaji Packard lauded Sue Schultz, also leaving due to term limits, for her 20 years of dedicated service to the BID. Sue Schultz was a founding member of the BID and helped the organization become incorporated. In her 20 years of service, she has never missed a board meeting.

Finally, Jose Barriero acknowledged council members Lori Price Abrams and David Cummings for their contributions and commitment to the board. He noted they have continually been a presence at meetings which shows how much they care for their respective wards and Montclair as a whole.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Jose Barriero moved to adjourn the meeting. Sue Schultz seconded.

Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

Jan. 12, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.