

# **MONTCLAIR CENTER BID**

## **GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015**

**Montclair Center BID - Full Board Meeting**  
**February 16, 2022 – 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.**  
**Virtual Via Zoom Link**

Board members in attendance: Celestina Ando, Jose Barreiro, Jeff Beck, David Cummings, Ashley Cyrus, Emer Featherstone, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Matt Horrigan, Kiahna Malloy, Roger Mazzeo, Jill Montague, Jaji Packard, Alescia Peyton, Hipolito Pollantis, Lori Price Abrams, Elizabeth Rich, Robert Squires, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares  
Absent: David Placek, Caterina Russo  
Staff: Jason Gleason, Pauline Heaney  
Guest: Matt Silverman

### **I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME**

Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

### **II. ADOPTION OF JANUARY MINUTES**

**Emer Featherstone moved to approve the January minutes.**  
**Alescia Peyton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

### **IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **a. Ambassador Accident Report**

Jason Gleason reported that ambassador Christian Lawrence was injured recently while working in the BID. A salt truck driving on Bloomfield Avenue with its bucket up clipped wires and pulled down a traffic signal which fell and struck Christian on the head. He was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital where he stayed for several days receiving care. He is currently in stable condition and working through physical therapy.

#### **b. EDA Webinar/Mayors Town Hall**

Jason Gleason participated as a panelist at the Major's virtual Town Hall "Supporting Small Businesses through the Pandemic." He also chaired the BID's own webinar regarding three grant opportunities for small businesses with NJEDA's Carla Morrison, in partnership with the Feliciano Center for Entrepreneurship at MSU, with Liz Rich and Valeria Aloe. The webinar was a huge success with 225 registrants, and 157 attendees.

#### **c. Black History Month Exhibit at Studio Montclair**

In honor of Black History Month and in partnership with Studio Montclair the BID has sponsored the exhibit “Windows into Black History.” This also features the Montclair African-American Heritage Foundation’s Traveling History wall. “Windows” will likely be the final exhibit presented through the Fresh Air Montclair exhibitions, as the BID revitalizes the *ArtConnects* program.

d. AAPI’s Lunar New Year Event

The BID sponsored AAPI’s Lunar New Year Event, February 12, which was a huge success. It garnered approximately 2,000 attendees, along with many elected officials and Congressman Andy Kim. There were performances, dancers, family activities and vendors for the diverse crowd.

The BID will continue to support these great arts and cultural events taking place in our downtown. It was suggested that perhaps the Township could include a budget line for municipal costs to support these events.

The one sour spot to the day was the large number of parking tickets issued to attendees, many of them families, wrestling strollers and young children. Jason asked that support for events such as these does not have to be only financial but could come as good will gestures from Parking Enforcement.

Of final note, the MSNJ grant application has been successfully received. Porta, a new restaurant on Bloomfield Avenue, will open February 25, and Fresco da Franco now has a liquor license.

## V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Recruitment Committee:

a. What role has it played in the past?

How can it better serve the Board going forward?

The Recruitment, Nominations & Elections Committee is being revamped this year. Previously focused on just running elections, the committee’s role has now expanded to make and recruit a stronger board. It will help our stakeholders learn who we are and what we do, and identify what skills are needed for the board and how to build diversity into the group.

b. Nominations needed: 2 business owners, 2 property owners, 1 councilor  
Ashley Cyrus nominated Alescia Peyton, Kristen Zachares, Jaji Packard, Daniel Garcia-Pedros and Lori Price Abrams to serve on the committee. Discussion took place regarding the nominees.

**Nat Testa moved to approve the nominations as presented.**

**Ashley Cyrus seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

## VI. TREASURER’S REPORT

a. 2021 Wrap Up

Celestina Ando presented a bridge report to tie the revised 2021 budget to the 2022 budget. She said the depreciation expense, which was higher than prior years, will be reviewed further at the next finance meeting. The final 2021 net actual was \$3,000 in the black. The report will be shared on basecamp.

## VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### a. Questions and comments

Jaji Packard stated that every committee except the nominations committee had already had their first meeting. These committee meeting reports were included in the agenda packet. She asked if there were any questions regarding the reports. She mentioned most committees will be meeting again in April.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

### a. Proposed changes to the maximum building heights in the BID

The Montclair Township Planning Board has recommended to the council to reduce the maximum building height from six stories to four in the C1 zone, to create a C1 redevelopment zone and tinker with C1 & C3 zone areas. A discussion ensued with the following highlights:

AP: What's the consensus amongst BID business/property owners?

JG:

- Most asking why is this change being called for? The reply from the Planning Department at Township is that the masterplan calls for it. However, what else in the masterplan do we also need to be adhering to? When is it important, and when is it not? Many of its recommendations for downtown have not been adhered to. Masterplan is a guiding document, but either we stick with it, or we don't.

OTHER STAKEHOLDER SENTIMENTS GIVEN BY JG INCLUDE:

- Reducing property owners' potential by 33% is not a great idea.
- A six-story building is not a monstrosity. Six stories may be appropriate in some areas but not in others.
- It shouldn't be a blanket move for the whole district. We need a more nuanced approach to zoning throughout the entire downtown.
- What's the problem you're trying to solve?
- 491 Bloomfield Avenue is five stories, the top floor is beautifully set back. Six story Seymour Street is set back with wide sidewalks and plaza. Compare these to the Parking Deck on Glen Ridge which is four stories and it is incredibly imposing. Not a friendly pedestrian experience at all. People don't interact with the sixth floor of a building, they interact with their environment on street level.
- We need to have longer debates with experts. Working groups need to be involved. Shouldn't make a decision just because the Master Plan says so, or to make things easy for the planning board.
- It would be devaluing the potential of what's been happening downtown for over 10 years.
- There are many people not happy about this change, especially after parking ordinance change. Lots of protections already in place to make it difficult to approve a six-story building.
- What's needed downtown? More office space, it's needed and desirable. It doesn't bring in children, so no burden to the school system, and doesn't burden parking facilities, but does bring in a lot of tax revenue to the town.
- Why NOT development downtown more? We're not a quaint village. What works in Watchung doesn't work downtown, such as sanitation and parking

management solutions. We are a downtown and need to be treated as such. Same goes for zoning.

- Same people pushing this notion now are the same people who allowed Valley & Bloom, the Sienna Building, the Montclairion, and the Vestry. All these buildings allow us to be a developed, mixed use, historic district.

EF: Is any input being sought from residents, or the business community? These decisions are being made by small group of people. The people of town are being left out.

MH: I agree. What's the goal of dropping it to four stories? It will affect a lot of people. I'd like a say in the process.

JG: Speaking just for the BID and stakeholders, no one has invited us to the planning table. We weren't involved in the last reexamination of the masterplan. Were now trying to be an advocacy role.

EF: Some representative of the BID board should be invited to planning board meetings.

LPA: This hasn't been put on council agenda yet, but council was put on notice by the planner that it would be coming up.

DC: Not just a C1, but trying to conform to original master plan. You should go to planning board meetings.

JP: The 2016 masterplan has six stories.

LPA: Nothing has formally been presented to council – redevelopment areas not in the mix.

MH: What is the process? Zoning board recommends an ordinance, discussion and then council votes?

EF: People aren't being heard. No one ever asks owners/tenants.

JG: There has been a memorandum and ordinance from Janice Tally. There will be discussion at council. A number of property owners who are worried about devaluing potential of the district should be present to have their voices heard. I am curious as to what has prompted the change in the masterplan in the first place though? Are there stacks of plans for 6 story buildings? Are there a lot of complaints because of 6 story buildings?

DC: All these concerns should be brought up at planning board meeting. Listening to what board is saying about BIDs concerns.

MH: Please reach out to stakeholders.

JG: It not policy that is being set at planning board... that is not the conversation...They are merely doing their job in recommending that the council adopt the masterplan. It is Council that sets policy.

LPA: Develop your statement and give to council to educate council and for impacts they may not know about. Give us something cogent. Helpful to have BIDs arguments.

b. Parking in the BID

Jaji Packard presented maps showing how much parking there is in the district, 2,824 spaces, plus 238 curbside meters. Financial figures for 2019 reveal \$7 million in fees. The Township depends on some of these fees to cover expenditures.

She presented a best practice slide, and using all this data the BID was able to provide this overview:

## **BID Parking Management Solutions Overview**

### **Parking Study**

- First and Foremost - district-wide parking study is necessary to understand the FACTS. We also suggest a seasonal, or at least yearly inventory be done for on-street and off-street spaces including occupancy rates, meter conditions, and pay vs permit makeup. One deliverable could also be reports on how we are doing against objectives, i.e. lowering permit usages from 105% to a more manageable 80-90%.

### **Signage**

- Proper district wide signage for the locations of decks is absolutely MANDATORY. ASAP. (Variable messaging is recommended)

### **Meter Operating Hours**

- Current 8am – 7pm (low occupancy in the AM)
- Proposed 11am – 10pm – Stress deliveries in the AM to help alleviate double-parking.
- Eases use for residents doing errand shopping during the day, improve on street parking turnover during the higher use periods (night time)

### **Variable Rates**

- Create variable meter rate structure to meet fluctuating demand periods. E.g. lower rates in the morning and higher priced parking in the evening. This encourages more space turnover when needed.
- Additional meter rate increase should be set into a special parking fund. Baseline (or increased baseline) would be covered, with the excess funds going to support street scape improvements, arts, culture, community, or special parking fund/s.

### **Employee Parking Permits**

- Carve-outs in top levels of decks & lots, and/or strategically located strips of on-street parking located around the perimeter of the BID be set aside for “Employee Appreciation Parking Zones”. LOW cost permits should be associated. \$30/mo suggested. Savings of 60-75% are typical from other towns we have benchmarked around the state.

### **Streamline Permit Zones**

- Evaluate existing permit types downtown and attempt to streamline the program and process. There are too many zones and permit types, and its too confusing.

### **More Loading/Pickup/Dropoff Zones on Bloomfield**

- Whether officiated, or just free 15 mins at the meters, this will help alleviate the double parking for the short term people, and will also encourage deck usage for the long term folks. We would also suggest to move away from single space meters and towards pay stations on Bloomfield Ave. This is both esthetically pleasing, and also allows for easy temporary reallocations of curb usage.

## **Invest in Technology**

- License plate readers (LPRs) and the software associated, coupled with digitizing permits will alleviate paperwork and labor from the towns overhead, and allow for the proper enforcement of all meters which is necessary to keep inventory open.

Matt Silverman: The impact of parking issues is felt most by business owners, it affects themselves, their employees, and their customers. The BID approved a resolution (pre-COVID) recommending the town take some actions to address these issues. Parking is a supply and demand issue. Perception vs fact. From a BID perspective perception is more important. Not a lot of education of why we regulate town as we do, or how do we enforce these regulations. Being able to communicate these things in an understandable way. Should have been some education about where to park at AAPI event. Communication and education are critical.

JP: Have suggestions to bring to Town's Economic Development Committee (EDC) Parking been an issue for years. Now we know we have enough parking.

LPA: Will BID help pay for parking solutions?

NT: Should have a huge "P" with arrow for decks and signage. We are so slow to get with the simple sign program.

JP: If town can fund the decks they need to fund the signage too.

AC: gets asked all day about parking on Seymour. Whoever passed ordinance should pay for signage.

JP: BID already getting a bad reputation for parking at Summit Health.

AC: Wellmont Theater, \$30 per day for show, not posted. Summit Health not clearly telling patients where to park

EF: She's never had to pay at Summit.

Jose B: We have an enforcement issue. As seen from AAPI event, also witness every month at N. Fullerton lot, where every parking officer waits to ticket everyone who has forgotten to display their new monthly pass.

DC: Spoke defending our police department

JG: It is Parking Enforcement who writes tickets, NOT MPD.

JP: Would like to change our meter hours.

JG: Let's reframe debate with 8 bullet points from parking working group, best practices, and benchmarks of cities of similar size. Find holistic solutions, while being mindful of budgets on both sides. The BID can bring support to table by having a working group look into the ordinances and offering a prioritize list with a work plan, budgets and where we might partner on capital projects and variable rates. We can help you balance your budget. ie. If the Town were to charge \$5 an hour at prime metered spots, \$1 of which could be siphoned off into a fund for festivals and other initiatives. Let us add our expertise, we want to come to the table and offer solutions to Township. This is not quick fix stuff, a group of people who work on this for a year or so – implementation plans, investing in technology like license plate readers which would be a huge labor saving.

LPA: Midtown deck set to match Fullerton deck, opening to review for employee parking coming back to this with better practices.

JP: Is it hard to get a working group going at the town? Can we bring to EDC, or an advisory committee?

Move conversations to basecamp to continue dialogue and figure out next steps and put in an action plan.

**Jaji Packard moved to accept eight parking points as presented.  
Emer Featherstone seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

## IX. OLD BUSINESS

### a. Stormwater Resolution

Jaji Packard discussed the Stormwater mitigation resolution, as stated:

**Whereas**, development, infill and increased impermeable surfaces have placed significant, new burdens on the Montclair grey infrastructure (sewer systems, storm drains, etc.);

**Whereas**, one of the effects of climate change is more extreme weather, including two century floods in 2021; and

**Whereas**, the Montclair grey infrastructure was not comprehensively designed for these emerging demands;

**Whereas**, elements of the Montclair drainage and infrastructure are of sufficient age to be at the end of their useful life; and

**Whereas**, the effects of storms over the last few years has had devastating effects throughout Montclair and specifically in Montclair Center, generating millions of dollars of damage just in 2021, and a heavy, uninsured burden on property owners and merchants; and

**Whereas**, the above demonstrate an urgent and costly issue which can only be addressed by government and utility action; and

**Whereas**, the township recognizes the need to address stormwater runoff in the Master Plan approved on 1/11/21. The Montclair Land Use and Circulation element of the Master plan references the heavy demand on grey infrastructure, and the Stormwater Runoff element to the Master Plan addresses stormwater management for new development, but both elements fail to say if or how legacy grey infrastructure will be improved to address urgent problems;

**Whereas**, the Federal Government has recognized a broad need to update aging infrastructure throughout the US, and has passed funding for same; and

**Whereas**, planning is required in order to fund grey infrastructure construction projects; and

**Whereas**, nearby municipalities have publicly initiated comprehensive studies to enable grey infrastructure funding; and

**Whereas**, there is no public record of a comprehensive plan for Montclair’s grey infrastructure and we are unaware of scheduled repairs to address known, critical drainage challenges in Montclair Center;

**Now therefore be it resolved**, the Montclair Center BID strongly encourages the Township of Montclair to act on the urgent problem of grey infrastructure, including conducting or sharing studies and plans for improving grey infrastructure, applying for Federal and other planning and construction funding as it becomes available, and specifically the current round of grant funding available from NJDEP due Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 which encourages green infrastructure projects, and promptly making urgently needed, critical repairs or upgrades; and

**Be it further resolved**, that the township initiate Neglia Engineering to provide leadership at a local and county level in conducting a public, comprehensive, stormwater capacity study for Montclair Center which would include mitigation recommendations and a capital expenditure plan. The Montclair Center BID also encourages the township to initiate a Montclair Stormwater Advisory Committee, assess the feasibility of a Montclair Stormwater Utility, to reexamine and possibly adopt more strict Maximum Impervious Surface Standards for C-1 and C-3 zones specifically, and to incentivize low impact development and other comprehensive techniques to mitigate future damage and losses to Montclair’s currently existing properties, i.e. green roofs, tree bed expansions, and rain gardens.

**Be it further resolved**, that the Township work to communicate plans, challenges, and achievements in an inclusively and timely way to property owners, businesses, residents, Montclair Center BID, and the broader community.

**Ashley Cyrus moved to accept the resolution as presented.**

**Emer Featherstone seconded. Resolution passed 19/21, with 2 abstentions.**

**X. OPEN DISCUSSION – New Ideas, Comments, Questions**

Celestina Ando spoke regarding her photography exhibit 40 Over 40 “I AM”, opening March 12 at Hillside Square Gallery. In honor of Women’s History Month, the collection features 40 empowering portraits of women over 40. Proceeds from the event benefit the (Family Service League) FSL/SAVE of Essex County.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.**

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Mar. 16, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.**