

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

**Montclair Center BID - Full Board Meeting
October 19, 2022 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at BID Office or via Zoom**

Board members in attendance: Celestina Ando, Jeff Beck, David Cummings, Ashley Cyrus, Emer Featherstone, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Elizabeth Rich, Robert Squires, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares

Absent: David Harrison, Roger Mazzeo, David Placek, Hipolito Pollantis

Staff: Jason Gleason, Pauline Heaney, Jaime Izurieta

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF SEPTEMBER MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the September minutes.

Celestina Ando seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (*Jason Gleason*)

A. New and noteworthy in Montclair Center

Jason Gleason noted five recent business openings, including Don Alex Restaurant, Organic Sun Market, Whole You Detox Spa, and Hamburguesa, who had a very busy grand opening offering free hamburgers. There are also many businesses coming soon, including Mud Clay Studio, Pasta Ramen, Nami Nori Sushi, Brick City Vegan, Cornbread Farm to Soul, Halton Interiors, and Roosters Hot Chicken. Meanwhile, there is lots going on at the Wellmont Arts Plaza, and the store & Son is moving to a larger space on Bloomfield Avenue.

Good Bottle has sadly announced they are closing in January. It has been a rough time with construction and street closures on Glenridge Avenue and the parking deck not opening. In addition, the private Church Street lot behind Faubourg will be closing November 1, due to new construction.

The Latinos of Montclair had a very successful event at MAM for Hispanic Heritage month. Even though rain caused the event to be held inside, 500 tickets were sold for a packed event, with live music, Mariachi band, dancing, food trucks. The organization was grateful for the BID's support and assistance for the event.

The bike lane on Glenridge Avenue has been striped. BikeWalk Montclair is now working to ensure there is proper signage and safety measures in place, such as delineated bollards for bike lane safety. New plans for continuing the bike lane and construction further down Glenridge Avenue was briefly discussed. David Cummings stated he wants to get Lackawanna Plaza completed first.

David also mentioned that the change of traffic direction on Glenridge Avenue has had a significant impact on congestion for residents from Forest and N. Willow Streets. Jason said traffic flow should be a longer, and broader scope in terms of planning. It should consider who uses the street, for what purpose (how to get into the parking deck, how people get downtown, how children get to school safely, people with disabilities, etc.) How best can we support and advocate for these factors?

There are conflicting stories regarding the opening date of the Glenridge Avenue parking deck. They are awaiting delivery of the railings and then concrete for the ramp can be poured. We will share as soon as we have a fixed opening date.

- B. Office staffing changes coming. These will support envisioned programs and initiatives and our Strategic Plan.
Jason is hiring a new assistant director and program manager. The new hire will work hand in hand with the ED on planning and execution of all major programs and events. They will work on big picture strategics such as economic development and public space enhancement, particularly in planning and zoning. They will then do a deep dive into stakeholder support, and take some of the meeting burdens from Jason, allowing him to concentrate on larger issues.

V. **OLD BUSINESS** (*Jason Gleason*)

- A. Ambassador Program Update
The final contract from CDS will be signed tomorrow. It has been reviewed by the working committee, David Harrison, along with our attorney, as well as Paul Burr, the Township attorney. There are some MOUs to discuss between CDS and Township, and eventually they may be able to initiate a shared services agreement. CDS, who have hired both Johnny Graham and Jason Field, will start on Friday. The company has been very easy to negotiate with and are very open and accommodating. Jason stated that there is a clause in the contract with an option to renew and renegotiate terms at the end of the year.
- B. We got the grant! Introducing the District Marketing Organization
We have been awarded the grant for \$144K each year for three years. The Montclair Center BID is one of only 17 funded DMOs in NJ and is one of only five BIDS in the state who have its own DMO (others being, Newark Ironbound, Elizabeth, the Wildwoods, and Atlantic City.) In total, there were 31 applications for the grant. We received 87 out of 92 on our application, which is a great score. The DMO will essentially be a sister organization within the BID with the goal to attract tourism to the area. This will look different for each area or event, and might include day trippers, mural tours, theater, film festival, overnighters,

hotels, business and trade events, conferences, event spaces. Investment and media tours will bring in investment dollars, trade, and jobs, and be of huge economic impact. Eventually outside businesses will be able to buy into the program on a member basis and be a part of our marketing through the grant funding.

Judy Ross is the leading candidate for the DMO director position. She was a consultant with us, helping write the initial grant application. She has served as NJ DMO board president for the last five years and has been instrumental in bringing the DMO and NJTIA boards together. She served as director at the Elizabeth DMO and Meadowlands DMO and is highly experienced with a great many connections within the industry.

The DMO contract must be completed within the next 22 days, with a first report due in January. The DMO fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30. She will give a report at each board meeting. There was a question regarding salary, Celestina clarified she has committed to bringing in revenue to offset her salary, so net cost to the BID budget is \$18K.

- C. The Mercator Project all grown up
Nine months later, we have some fantastic new tools!

Jason introduced Jamie Izurieta, a contractor who has worked with us for two years. During the pandemic he served our businesses as Storefront Mastery, now he is working with the large data project, Mercator. He has helped with strategies, conceptualizing, and data collection.

Jaime said, Mercator, named after an old mapmaker, is a data collection project, which assesses the BID's commercial spaces, for decision making, recruitment and curation. It will help turn Montclair Center into a destination, aiding both the BID and DMO. Data helps us know who we are, what we have to offer, and helps inform decision and use resources more efficiently.

Each commercial space in the district has been catalogued, resulting in approximately 60 columns of data. The data comes from NJ tax records, placer.ai, Montclair Center's survey and Mercator data drive - by foot, online and database creation (by cataloguing every light pole, tree, treebed etc.)

The project toolkit consists of the database, Google maps (marking points such as reporting light pole outages), GIS Map (different layers for set categories) Placer.ai, and the BID's own CRM, Personify/Wild Apricot.

As part of the project the district has been divided into villages or sectors by streets and commonalities, such as East of Elm, Glenridge Village, Wellmont Arts. Each village offers different experiences with their own unique flavor. This allows for more focused branding, recruitment, and support.

Mercator is connected to the strategic plan in the following ways:

- Clean, Safe & Green – identifying tree beds and trees

- Marking & Communications - understanding clusters and trends – tailor branding/messaging
- Business Support - create segments and tailor support, address retail mix, business recruitment
- Public Space enhancement - placemaking, banners, light outages, murals

Mercator can identify what services a particular village needs. Is there an obvious 'art' center within the district? (We have murals in four of our villages.) Mercator will also help in the construction of our automated banner website.

Mercator will also aide in:

- Branding - with active wayfinding/tailored branding
- Recruiting - anchors/partners that are needed to fill vacancies
- Curating – acupuncture interventions, (using small-scale interventions to transform the larger urban area, e.g., outdoor seating, lighting)
- Enhancing - placemaking experiences – murals/asphalt art

A comment was made about who will have access to this data, we must be careful how and with whom we share it. Jason said we will be able to offer pertinent data as a service to our business owners.

VI. TREASURER'S REPORT (*Celestina Ando*)

A. A look at the proposed 2023 Budget

The Financial Affairs Committee met four times within two weeks to go through the budget. Celestina first reviewed the two major strategic changes; the DMO grant, and CDS outsourcing. The DMO grant would be a net expense of \$18K, but if more sponsorships/member dues are brought in this could become an income position. With outsourcing the ambassador program to CDS, after salary, vehicle, insurance, equipment savings, offset by our contracted services gives a net expense of \$11K.

Next Celestina presented a bridge assessment, comparing the modified 2022 budget with the planned 2023 budget, noting anything with a variance of more than \$5K. There are savings in the banner program, being a one-time expense for 2022, with outgoings for beautification and public art, mainly due to the MSNJ grant allocation.

The new assistant director position transitions from part-time to full-time for an added expense, but we have savings in business marketing. We still have \$16K in escrow for Extra Duty Solutions.

There are increases in general administration with salary increases and accounting services, and savings on contracted services with the one-time banner website, insurance fees covered by third party, and computer and software fees covered by the DMO.

The budget total increase in proposed 2023 budget is \$256K, but less other income the proposed BID assessment is 6.7%, which is in line with inflation.

Once approved by the board, the budget is then presented to the township manager to be voted on by March 4.

VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard*)

- A. Roger Mazzeo is leaving the board. He is busy with his hospitality business in NYC. Jaji thanked him for his service and wished him well.

- B. The Nominating and Recruitment Committee needs recruiting assistance for the 2023 Board of Directors, particularly for Business Directors, and those from the 4th ward.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS (*Jaji & Jason, Discussion*)

- A. Montclair Film Festival starts this Friday. We would love representation at the film we are sponsoring, a documentary called *Louis Armstrong's Black and Blues*. It is being screened this coming Sunday, October 23 at 3:30 p.m. at the Wellmont Theater. The film's producer will be at the event for a Q & A. More tickets are available at this and all the other nine days of events.

- B. Winter Wonderlands Weekends
Since we are running late on time, an email will be sent out regarding the details of this event.

IX. OPEN DISCUSSION – New Ideas, Comments, Questions

X. ADJOURNMENT

**Jaji Packard moved to adjourn the meeting. Jill Montague seconded.
Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.**

NEXT MEETING:

November 16, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.