

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Full Board Meeting
September 14, 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, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Matt Horrigan, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares

Absent: Emer Featherstone, David Harrison, Roger Mazzeo, Jill Montague, David Placek, Hipolito Pollantis, Elizabeth Rich, Robert Squires

Staff: Jason Gleason, Pauline Heaney

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF JUNE MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the June minutes.

Ashley Cyrus seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Overview of a Sizzling Summer in Montclair Center

A. Jazz Festival

- Jamboree, Block Party, Soundcheck Series

Jason said the events were great for the community, and the artists at the Jamboree were awesome. Danielle Ponder, the headliner, brought the house down. Danielle said it was the largest and most diverse crowd she had ever played to and loved Montclair's community vibe.

A survey went out to our stakeholders. A very thorough report will be presented at the next meeting with results from this survey and data obtained from Placer AI. A qualitative and quantitative hard look and cost benefit analysis for the Jazz festival will be completed. We had a very bumpy year with the festival production. There were many problems concerning Jazz House vendor applications, which was hampered by the late start and huge turnover of Jazz House staff. It was a huge tax on the office, with approximately 140 senior staff hours, a cost of \$52K of in-kind support

We should weigh the cost of doing business like this, to how much of a drag it is on this office and our partners. Festivals of this magnitude are a great

benefit for our community, seeing our district and businesses on show garnered great press, along with the support of our elected officials. However, we should find a better way to do this next year.

B. New and noteworthy in Montclair Center

- The district had four business openings and no closings since the last board meeting. This is less than the same period last year, possibly due to last year's post-COVID surge. Also, larger spaces are maybe being held as LOI for marijuana dispensaries, and parking ordinances maybe having an effect also.
- Jason is honored the BID has been sought-out to participate in Essex County 2045. The goal is to help the County plan out transportation improvements over the next 20+ years and will consider the comprehensive needs of all the County's transportation system users including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users while addressing emerging issues such as economic recovery, social equity and post-COVID-19 needs.
- Communication from the Township regarding closures to Glenridge Avenue for milling, paving, and striping has been very haphazard. Some businesses received notices concerning the construction, most did not, and no one was informed the day the work actual took place. There have been many complaints and business owners are very angry.
- There is no new communication regarding the parking deck. No work is currently being done. Township states they are awaiting a date from the contractor to start work on the ADA compliance measures. Meanwhile, Jason does have a weekly meeting with officials for regular updates and to address other issues. These are very helpful, and he is thankful for these liaisons.
- Banner equipment is finally going up tomorrow.
- Invitations will soon be sent by Studio Montclair for the ribbon cutting on September 29 at the Leach Gallery. Studio Montclair and MAM are exhibiting paintings inspired by the renown local artist George Innis. This is a cool transformation of the space and can give us an idea of what other programming we can do here. The BID was happily instrumental in helping foster the relationships between BDP Holdings, LLC, Studio Montclair and MAM.

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

A. Short financial update with YTD

Celestina reported we are on target. We have a significant savings of \$43K. The auditor's report has been reviewed by Celestina and Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa. There is a small correction, but the audit will be finished soon.

B. Quick review of our budgeting process and calendar.

First budget meeting Tues, Sept. 27, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

The budget is in process, and will be presented at the October meeting. Much depends on whether we are awarded the DMO grant.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard*)

A. EXECUTIVE SESSION - Executive Director Review

Survey results: Executive Committee has conducted a review. Review results and recommendations. Discussion as needed. Vote.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jaij Packard said September committee reports will be posted to Basecamp after the Stakeholder Support Committee meets on Thursday.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Ambassador Program

- *Current status (Jason)*

The Ambassador Program has been very problematic this year. It started with the accident with Christian Lawrence in January, who is still out on Worker's Compensation. Another ambassador also filed a Worker's Compensation claim earlier in the year. The loss of the Ambassador Supervisor has left a gaping hole in the program. Meanwhile, it has been incredibly difficult to hire ambassador staff to fill the open positions. Finding good quality, experienced personnel is even harder.

The program is an incredible tax on the executive director's and administrative assistant's time. Approximately 35% of Jason's time has been formulating work plans, troubleshooting equipment issues, besides the huge HR undertaking. By outsourcing the program there will be significant decreases in costs associated with insurance, liability, for both HR and vehicles and equipment.

It was suggested when the BID completed the Strategic Plan in 2021 that the BID look at third party vendors for these services. In order to develop best practices, outsourcing these services to an experienced company will likely provide greater efficiency and effectiveness for our stakeholders, along with supplying more resources.

An RFP was put together whose responses were reviewed by a working group, followed by the executive committee, and then presented to the whole board.

- *Review and recommendations of the RFP Working Group (Nat)*

Nat stated a BID our size is ready for outsourcing as suggested in the Strategic Plan. The RFP was drawn up to be very specific for our needs. We had three companies initially interested in providing these services, one of the three companies dropped out. This left one company from New York City and one local company. Both companies were strong contenders and highly

qualified. The working group met several times, discussed the merits of each and completed a specific rubric.

The NY firm, StreetPlus, came in slightly more expensive and were found to be less personal or responsive, more of a boiler plate of the 45 BIDs they serve in Manhattan. CDS had a more local, personal touch. They are familiar with the local area, service BIDs in Newark and other similarly sized suburban areas. The owner of the company drives through our district daily to work, so would have a first-hand view and vested interest in how the district looked. They also came in 10% cheaper than StreetPlus. CDS also offered eight workers free of charge for the Jazz Festival.

Nat concluded that the working group preferred CDS. The cost to outsource this program is approximately \$12K more than current in-house costs, however, it would relieve Jason and the BID of this huge burden. Both companies said they would seek to hire our current ambassadors.

- *Observations from Jazz Fest (Jaji)*

Jaji said the district was spotless the day after the Jazz Festival. The crew; eight BID ambassadors, eight CDS crew, and workers from Montclair DPW were all on top of all cleaning efforts and garbage removal for the festival. Sanitation was so much better than last year, and everyone was very impressed.

- *Discussion and Vote*

Discussion among the board took place. Celestina Ando mentioned the caveat that the CDS quote had a 10% increase each year and could perhaps be negotiated down. The commitment would initially be for a year. Minimum wage ramp-ups, insurance caps, workers comp and health insurance increases are also a factor.

Jaji Packard moved to accept the CDS RFP proposal as presented and give permission for Jason Gleason to commence contract negotiation with CDS. Ashley Cyrus seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

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

A. Montclair Film Festival October 21-30

Jason said this is the first time ever the BID is sponsoring the Film Festival. It will be a year-long commitment, with \$17K for the festival with in-kind staff support for district programming. We are discussing how to leverage our brands together. Montclair Film has good brand awareness for us. We are also working with them on exciting AR (augmented reality) initiatives, including new marketing and ultimately wayfinding technology.

B. Hosting a Town Hall about Zoning in November

Jason is shortly to host a Town Hall about zoning. Up to now discussion has been largely the same talking points; density, school overcrowding, traditional zoning etc... The education process needs to happen and make zoning accessible to all. At the Town Hall the various types of zoning can be explained,

true statistics and information can be disseminated. Subjects such as decoupling parking regulations, the economic benefits of form-based code, negative economic impact from downzoning, how many children does a typical Montclair family have in comparison to the national average, can all be addressed. Only after misconceptions are explained can real debate and dialogue take place.

Jason is looking to have the event at the library auditorium in December for 70-100 attendees. He would love to include zoning guru, Bernice Radle, founder of Buffalove Development, LLC, along with local expert Ira Smith, consultant for the redevelopment committee. Other panelists to include the Montclair town planner. We could get Courtney Mercer from Downtown NJ to be the moderator.

C. Winter Wonderland Weekends

The BID is partnering with the Wellmont Theater and Pharmacie Bar among others to bring a winter wonderland to the plaza on Saturdays. Starting with Small Business Saturday, November 26, and the following three Saturdays we will have programming from 11- 4 PM to include Santa and Mrs. Claus, carolers and high school choirs. A free gift-wrapping station, live music, Mochinut, Stuff By SJ and One River School donut, cookie and ornament decorating may also be on hand. A 35ft fir tree will adorn the stage area, and we hope to get a menorah and kinara to round out the holiday theme.

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

XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Ashley Cyrus moved to adjourn the meeting. Nat Testa seconded.
Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.**

NEXT MEETING:

October 12, 2022 • 7:00 p.m.