

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Full Board Meeting
December 21, 2022 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at BID Offices 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

Board members in attendance: Jeff Beck, David Cummings, Ashley Cyrus, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, David Harrison, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jaji Packard, David Placek, Hipolito Pollantis, Lori Price Abrams, Elizabeth Rich, Robert Squires, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares

Absent: Celestina Ando, Emer Featherstone, Ernst Goldman

Staff: Jason Gleason, Pauline Heaney, Judy Ross

Guests: Rachel Grochowski, Natalie Haddad, Cary Heller, William Scott, Matt Silverman, Ira Smith, Lori Testa

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the November minutes with changes as discussed. Daniel Pedrosa-Garcia seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Welcome to visitor William Scott, former member of the Housing Commission, member of the NAACP and the Rent Control Board, long-term resident, and landlord.

IV. CARIE HELLER: ADDRESSES THE BOARD re: LACKAWANNA PLAZA

Cary Heller is owner of the building at the corner of Glenridge Avenue and Lackawanna Plaza. Current tenants include Professional Physical Therapy, LabCorp, and The Little Gym. He requested to speak to us about the Lackawanna Plaza Redevelopment.

Cary spoke of his local real estate development projects, positions on various land use and economic development boards, and experience with SID's, establishing his knowledge and understanding of the planning and redevelopment processes. He then gave a history of the Lackawanna site and the problems and inadequacies of past plans to redevelop this site. He also touched on the 2017 litigation to the site and the reasons for his involvement in it. His main concerns and questions with the current redevelopment plans include:

- Congestion and traffic issues from potentially 3,000 to 4,000 cars coming to the grocery store daily.

- Problems with egress and ingress to the grocery store, which include safety issues for drivers, pedestrians, and the bike lane on Glenridge Avenue.
- Daily deliveries from trucks and large trailers to the grocery store pose a huge problem both in congestion and in maneuverability by not having wide enough turning radiuses. Also, the trucks should be off the town streets in the daytime for safety and congestion, but that will impact local residents if evening/night deliveries are put in place.
- The parking garage is another huge issue. The project calls for a two-story garage; will this meet the needs of a 40,000 sq ft supermarket? Cary doesn't believe that bringing the traffic onto side streets (Glenridge & Lackawanna) to access the parking is sufficient. Will cause too much strain on the small streets. Parking would be better served having additional access from Bloomfield Ave. Also believes that there needs to be parking at ground level for quick stop shopping. Will the parking be free or metered? Cary stated the parking lot should be hidden from view for esthetic reasons, giving examples of how this was achieved with other local lots. He also wanted to know what the parking deck will look like and what kinds of material it will be made of since it will directly impact the view from his property.
- The proposed structures are massive in both height and density. In his opinion there are not enough setbacks to support the scale of the buildings; Especially on the eastern parcel that fronts Bloomfield Ave and both parcels facing Glen Ridge Ave.
- There is no synergy from one piece of property to the other since Grove Street divides the two sites. Should this be considered two separate development sites?
- Infrastructure issues have not been addressed well enough in the plan, which should include mitigating flooding issues from the underground culvert, as seen with severe issues caused by hurricane Ida just last year. Three rivers that flow under the site are not at all addressed in the plan and need to be recognized. Should this be an Area in Need of Study?

Cary says he wants to hold up or even stop the Lackawanna project until the town has done a complete study of traffic/parking/access. His aim is to protect the town and its residents. He said we cannot leave this to the planning board. Construction is likely to take years, with severe disruption to primary and secondary streets. The Redevelopment Plan needs to be done right before proceeding.

After the presentation, discussion ensued. Jason Gleason asked if there was a ranking system to the problems. Cary claimed all the issues were crucial but that issues that related to traffic and parking were most significant, and also mentioned stormwater issues again. Jason asked Cary if he thought it would be sufficient if the plan called for strict adherence to FEMA and NJDEP standards. Cary said yes. Jaji asked, in terms of flooding, if redevelopment plans usually cover stormwater retention, etc? Can the planning board can ask for this? Should we?

Both Ira Smith and Dave Placek addressed issues raised by Carey in attempt to correct or clarify some of his statements, including parking NOT being allowable from Bloomfield Avenue as recommended in the town's Master Plan. Placek also

said the images being shared were a massing and articulation study, and that it was not the site plan with all architectural finishes. The redevelopment plan already calls for parking to be hidden and that materiality for parking structures IS addressed in the design standards.

Jaji proposed the BID put together a working group before the end of January when the next meeting is scheduled to address our concerns and possible recommendations to the council about the Lackawanna Redevelopment.

V. TOWNSHIP UPDATE

Councilors were asked to give an update regarding Township issues. David Cummings said the residents in the 4th Ward want a comprehensive traffic study of the Lackawanna Project. Another community meeting will be held January 5th. Lori Price Abrams stated the issue is complex; three independent firms have been recommended to undertake this study.

The councilors were unable to discuss the investigation into the behavior of the Township manager due to pending litigation. So far acting manager Brian Scantlebury is working well with the BID. He was very receptive to BID concerns about a problematic street closure imposed by a construction company.

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

New and noteworthy in Montclair Center

- The district was a net positive of one business since the last meeting. Jason said he was personally sorry to see the DLV Lounge close after 50 years in business. It is a big loss to our community.
- Parking meters were bagged for the holidays, thanks to Gary Obszarny, Manny Germano of the Parking Utility, and other Township leaders for helping to get this done. Questions about bagging meters for next year need to be addressed earlier so everyone is on the same page going forward.
- Winter Wonderland marketing snapshot:
 - 17 dedicated posts on social media with excellent engagement
 - The top post reached 4,891 accounts with 134 shares
 - The top five posts combined received 1,400 likes and 424 shares
 - Instagram gained 678 new followers since the Winter Wonderland marketing campaign launched.

More in depth analysis, with Placer visitation data and business surveys will be available at the next meeting.

- Jason commented that at the last Council meeting four new Township job positions were introduced via resolution. One included that of Business Coordinator for a new Small Business Office, but only a job title and salary range for this position was included in the resolution. Though the council ultimately removed this position (and another) before passing the other two, Jason specifically took issue with Councilor Cummings' question and the related subsequent dialog between Councilor Cummings and Acting Manager Brian Scantlebury which mischaracterized that Jason had been collaborating and working on this project. Jason said that though he was

briefly told on three occasions that a Small Business Office may be in the works and that Mr. Scantlebury had ideas about it, the BID was never consulted about this directly, NOR was he included in any dialogue regarding the creation of this office or position. Jason also acknowledged he is not the only small business advocate in town.

VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard*)

Our thanks to Jeff Beck and Nat Testa for six years as board members. Jaji praised both outgoing members for their dedication and presented them with thank you gifts. Jason mentioned he had joined the board with both Nat and Jeff, before he transitioned to ED, and said what a pleasure it has been to serve with them, and how instrumental they have been in both his and the BID's growth.

VIII. TREASURER'S REPORT (*Jason Gleason for Celestina Ando*)

The BID finished the year in a healthy position due to payroll savings and extra grants. A further year-end reporting will come in January/February. The Financial Affairs committee did meet about the capital and strategic reserve fund. We will be diversifying from the one current account.

IX. RECRUITMENT AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (*Jaji Packard*)

A. Results of the district-wide election of candidates to the 2023 board of directors.

Business Owners:

Natalie Haddad, Monty
Ray Ketchum, Magic Door Studios
Julian Payne, The MC Hotel

Property Owners:

Ashley Twyman-Cyrus* Grabowski Development
Rachael Grochowski, RHG Architect & Design

At-Large:

Emer Featherstone*
Jacob Nieman
Elizabeth Rich

Non-Profit:

Jill Montague* Montclair Film

Resident:

Matt Silverman

*Incumbent

Jaji thanked all other nominees and asked them to continue to be part of the BID by serving on committees or working groups.

- B. Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa announced that nominations for officer positions for 2023 board of directors are now closed.

For executive committee the nominees are:

Jaji Packard, president

Ashley Cyrus, vice president

Elizabeth Rich, secretary

Matt Horigan, treasurer

Ernst Goldman, assistant secretary/treasurer

These nominations will be ratified at the next board meeting.

X. OLD BUSINESS (*Jason Gleason and Discussion*)

Judy Ross, Director of the MC DMO, chaired the NJ Conference on Tourism stating it was their best year yet. Some stats from presenter Adam Sacks of Tourism Economics include:

- NJ welcomed 96.6 million visitors in 2021
- Visitors spent \$37.3 billion- recovering half the losses from the pandemic
- Tourism supported 1 in every 20 jobs
- Visitors generated \$4.6 billion in state and local taxes (equivalent to \$1,400 savings per household).

Judy is developing a launch logo for the MC DMO, and a profile sheet for travel shows. She has arranged for our DMO to join national organizations such as the American Bus Association (ABA) and U.S. Travel Association's IPW. She has made 75 appointment requests along with developing relationships with local key stakeholders.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

6 Gates Mural Project: What does "appropriate" mean in the context of a large mural in our downtown?

Jaji suggested we table this discussion for another meeting. Perhaps create a working group, and have a discussion thread on Basecamp, about what to give to a jury panel to guide them to what is appropriate to us.

Jaji also mentioned the Montclair Housing Commission, the Environmental Commission and the Historical Preservation Commission are all issuing opinions on the Lackawanna development. Should we add our voice to this discussion? Topics include: what this would do for the BID businesses from an economic development viewpoint? Tax implications? How would it change the downtown's business center? Jason mentioned that since the BID is on the Township's organizational chart under the Economic Development Commission, we should have a seat at the table for any economic development issues.

Jaji Packard moved that the BID submit an opinion paper to the Town Council and the Planning Board about the Lackawanna Plaza Redevelopment Plan currently in front of the Planning Board. Nat Testa seconded.

After discussion the board voted to approve the motion, with two abstentions: David Placek and Lori Price Abrams.

It was agreed that a working group be established, and that the group prepare highlights on a couple of issues to focus on.

XII. OPEN DISCUSSION – New Ideas, Comments, Questions

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Matt Horrigan moved to adjourn the meeting. Ashley Cyrus seconded.

Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

January 18, 2023 • 7:00 p.m. • Montclair Film, 505 Bloomfield Avenue