

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Board Meeting
June 21, 2023 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at BID Office 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

Board members in attendance: Celestina Ando, Emer Featherstone, Ernst Goldman, Rachael Grochowski, Natalie Haddad, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jacob Nieman, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Matt Silverman, Robert Squires, Kristen Zachares
Absent: David Cummings, Ray Ketchem, Elizabeth Rich, David Placek,
Staff: Jason Gleason, Judy Ross, Abhishake Shah, Aysa Gordon
Guest: Reverend Alan Sheldon

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF MAY MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the April minutes as amended.

Matt Silverman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reverend Alan Sheldon, a minister in the Montclair area, runs a youth group matching older, high-school aged kids with local jobs in the downtown Montclair Center and is seeking funding for a youth-run farmstand at the Unitarian Church between July 22 – August 22. There is also an existing farmstand in Upper Montclair. His program also offers interview skills classes as well as other job-related skills classes. He is also looking to expand his program to internships with MSU. The board will discuss the request and then get back to him.

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

A. Welcome to Abhishake Shah

Jason introduced Abhishake Shah as the new Assistant Manager and Program Director. He has been fabulous so far and wonderful to have in the office. Abhishake is looking forward to working with everyone and is happy to be of assistance.

B. New and Noteworthy in Montclair Center

Fascino has closed after 25 years, and Gioia Mia will be replacing it. Forever Welded Jewelry, Fusionista, ASIL catering, and the relocated Mikki and Als are all new this month. Haus Freya, Brick City Vegan, Cornbread Farm to Soul, Fata Con Amore, Libelula, and The Juice House are all coming soon.

Make Music Day was a big success this year with lots of local musicians and a musical workshop playing at the Montclair Center downtown businesses and parks on the day of the Summer Solstice.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT (*Matt Horrigan*)

Quick books are up to date and Montclair Center BID is in good standing. As of May, Montclair Center is 25K underbudget due to a salary variance. Looking forward, the Financial Affairs Committee will be doing a six-month deep dive with the upcoming budget and then do some reallocation once the June numbers are available. The Town Council approved the Montclair Center BID budget.

VI. DMO UPDATE- End of Grant Cycle 1 is July 1, 2023 (*Jason Gleason*)

Launching the DMO: We are at the end of the grant year for the DMO. Judy and Jason have done quite a bit of relationship building. New members include: The Montclair History Center, Yogi Berra Museum, and The Montclair Brewery. Judy has also reached out to Mountainside Medical Center and Montclair Culinary Institute among others for relationship building. Judy is a member of the NJ Tourism Industry Association Executive Committee and chair of the Annual Tourism Conference. These provide peer to peer industry learning and networking. She is also a member of the American Bus Association and the US Travel Association which provide industry learning and travel show opportunities.

Travel Conferences: The ABA Marketplace and IPW conferences offered the opportunity to meet one on one with tour operators, travel planners and travel writers to introduce Montclair to a wide variety of groups and travelers. The shows combined yielded over 60 appointments. Judy has also had the opportunity to meet with two travel writers and Jason was interviewed by a travel themed radio show.

Marketing: Early advertising includes a launch logo, profile sheet for travel conferences, ads highlighting Montclair as a dining destination.

Festival Promotion: Partnering with Out Montclair, the DMO invested in poster distribution on NJ Transit and Path train platforms. Additionally, the DMO invested in an email blast on TimeOut NY with over 77,000 total opens. Further advertising included NJ PBS spots and ads and content on NJ Spotlight News.

Branding Exercise: Civic brands conducted two focus groups. Experience Montclair was chosen as the new name going forward for the DMO.

VII. OLD BUSINESS (*Jason and Discussion*)

A. Pride Festival: Reactions and first approximate numbers.

The Montclair Pride Festival showed a 50.35% increase from 2022. The median age was 37.5. 70% of attendees came from a 10-mile radius of Montclair. 25% of attendees were residents of Montclair. The total number of attendees was

21,500. The DMO advertising dollars generated an additional 670 visitors yielding \$59,398 additional revenue for the businesses minus the cost of advertising dollars.

Jason, Matt, Celestina, Jill, and Kristen all mentioned positive responses to the event in terms of customers, sales, email sign-ups, and overall joyful energy throughout the day. Jason will be updating the Board with a summary of responses from the post Pride event survey. Security issues were minimal. There were a few minor EMS cases due to overheating.

B. Overview: Summer into early Fall Events, programs, initiatives.

Summer Sunday will be July 16 with over fifty businesses joining, live music, a community mural, and Montclair Film to show Top Gun to follow at Lackawanna Plaza.

The Jazz Fest Block Party is August 12.

The Downtown Jamboree follows on September 9th with the same footprint as last year. Given the size of recent festivals, the turnout is expected to be quite high.

C. Grants

1. Main Street Grant Applications:

- a. NJ Fiscal Year 2022-2023: \$27K grant has been submitted.

We believe it will be approved and will be hearing back shortly. This grant breaks down to: 10k to vision zero taskforce, 7k to SMS added to CRM program, and 10k to Pilgrim Medical Center mural.

- b. NJ Fiscal Year 2023-2024: \$70K grant application not yet issued by NJ.

2. National Endowment for the Arts Grant:

Up to \$150K BUT requires a 1:1 nonfederal grant match with a rolling application date. We CAN use Main Street grant for our portion of the match. It's called Our Town grant and is for a variety of art projects. This needs a plan b in the event of we don't get awarded the grant.

3. Other Grants in process (by partners and friends):

We wrote a NJBPU/PSEG grant from the DMO/BID to bring two electric charging stations to Crane Park. This grant is in conjunction with the Township Environmental Sustainability Office and The Parking Authority. Two Bloomberg grants currently out to do public art installations to wrap public utility boxes. For this grant, Abhishake put together a presentation about the power of public art and how it affects mental health and pedestrian safety. Another grant is for a Rainbow crosswalk. Urban Park Renewal Grant from NJBEP would bring Wi-Fi to Crane Park along with lighting and signage upgrades. US Forestry Service and USDA Urban Tree Canopy grant to bring missing trees back to Montclair. Our Montclair Mercator tree location data was used to help support this grant application.

D. Montclair Master Plan revision initiative: Update (Jacob Nieman)

The most recent Planning meeting was about housing. The key point is that more housing is necessary, specifically small-lot, single-family housing. The development focus for housing is in the third and fourth ward, but some say that

development should be distributed evenly throughout all wards. Affordable housing and rooming house housing were discussed as well.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING DATE CHANGE.
PROPOSED Tuesday, 9/19/23. Consensus reached to change date on Basecamp.

- B. REVIEW OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN (*Jaji Packard and discussion*)

Discussion: It's been two years since The Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan was written. It's time to review the plan.

1. Post COVID Growth. Montclair received a population increase and business "bounce" after COVID. East of Elm businesses have been growing slowly. The lack of development at Lackawanna has placed a tourniquet around our district. It's a stopping point that makes the area feel like a new town. Conversely, the development around The Wellmont has brought revitalized energy to that section of Bloomfield. How do we get people to the East of Elm for business and for events? Could we enlist a cohort of people to offer strategic input on drawing energy to that area?
2. Events. We have moved away from more frequent, smaller events to fewer, larger sized events. We've let other organizations have control of the overall event organizing, meaning we can do more with our staff. Summer Sunday takes effort and time from our staff. Another approach would be to focus marketing events that are already happening within Montclair Center.
3. Ideas from the group. Montclair Center can help new independent businesses by doing ribbon cuttings. Also, we can also focus more on attracting creative, unique new businesses- especially retail- to the downtown area. What kind of organization are we and what are the priorities? This subject will be revisited in future meetings.

IX. OPEN DISCUSSION

Lori Price Abrams asked if the changes in the light patterns on Bloomfield Ave. have regulated the traffic flow. The consensus is yes. Jason stated that there needs to be a way to make a left onto Glen Ridge Ave. It is difficult to get to Glen Ridge Ave. businesses and onto the Mid-town Parking Deck. Jacob Nieman said that the light sensor at Fullerton does not register bicycles.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Next full board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 19, 2023, 7 p.m.**