

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Board Meeting
January 17, 2024, 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at **BID Offices** 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

Board members in attendance: Te’Nijah Bussey, Mary Cumella, Emer Featherstone, Stacey Filé, Ernst Goldman, Neil Grabowsky, Rachael Grochowski, Natalie Haddad, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Liz Rich, Brian Silver, Matt Silverman, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares

Absent: David Cummings, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Jacob Nieman, David Placek

Staff: Jason Gleason, Aysa Gordon, Abhishake Shah

Guest: Lucas Maher (Owner of Connect Clothing Store)

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

President Packard called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

II. ADOPTION OF DECEMBER MINUTES

Jaji Packard moved to approve the December minutes with changes as discussed. Ernst Goldman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Executive Director Gleason spoke about the concerning number of break-ins - mostly in the 3rd Ward. He will meet with Captain Lawler to discuss the issue with affected businesses. Lucas Maher, the owner of Connect Clothing at 402 Bloomfield Ave., spoke to the board about a robbery that occurred at his store. Three intruders entered at 3:50 am using large bricks to break the window. The police arrived on the scene 10 minutes later. Big ticket items over \$300 were targeted, with over \$30,000 lost to theft. Lucas is looking to purchase a high-quality indoor roll-down security gate; however, town ordinances require that gates cannot be visible in or outside of the business. Some other suggestions from the board included using deterrent curtains.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT (*Jason Gleason, Executive Director*)

A. New and Noteworthy in Montclair Center

- Four major businesses have closed since our last meeting: Maddox, Musuko, Eleven South, and Nail Fitness.
- Catfé Montclair is an exciting new cat café business. The very popular business model requires a paid appointment to sit and drink coffee with cats. Visitors can connect with the cats, which are also available for adoption.

- On Jan 6, Immaculate Conception Church and SOMOS celebrated Three Kings Day with a well-attended Kings Parade featuring live camels. The event was very Instagram-able and went viral. Montclair Center BID partnered with this event.
- AAPI Montclair, in Partnership with Montclair Art Museum, will celebrate the Lunar New Year and the Year of the Dragon on Saturday, January 27th at the Montclair Art Museum. Highlights include a dragon parade, dancers, local Asian food, and kid-friendly crafts. Montclair Center BID will also support this event.
- On February 8th, The Montclair Art Museum will present Century: 100 Years of Black Art. The largest exhibition of its kind in the Museum's history, this exhibition celebrates the dramatic growth of MAM's collection of works by Black artists.
- Montclair Film will present upcoming improv shows, including kid's improv and Story Slams, this week and beyond.
- For Black History Month, Montclair Film will present a couple of events. On February 2nd, there will be a free screening of the movie Shaft with a book signing by Odie Henderson, author of a book about Blaxploitation. On February 5th, a free screening of the movie The Space Race with a talk from astronaut and educator Leland Melvin.
- The events calendar on The Experience Montclair website is now live. Assistant Director Shah encouraged the board to let our businesses know that our staff members are happy to help the process along by adding small business events to the calendar. We can add up to 4-5 events per business per month. You can send a request to hello@experiencemontclair.org to get your events listed.
- Nonprofit event makers, including Montclair Film, Out, Latinos of Montclair, Walnut Street Festival AAPI, African American Heritage Foundation, Montclair Center BID, Montclair Flea, and others, have banded together and met to resource share and advocate for fair practices in budgetary items, and to advocate for simplifying the town code for permitting.
- PSE&G aims to expand its substation on Valley Road, where they plan to purchase land and expand a 300'x40' strip as a linear park/plaza. Director Gleason would like to put a work group together from the Clean Safe and Green Committee and Public Space Enhancement and Activation Committee to discuss potential Montclair Center programming at the new park, with PSEG putting together a fund for the BID to maintain and program the park. Director Gleason asked the board members if this idea fits into the bigger picture for the downtown. Anyone on the board who wants to join the conversation can do so on Basecamp. Director Gleason will meet with PSE&G and Montclair's Director of Planning and Community Development, Janice Talley, to discuss the plan further.

V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard, President*)

A. Housekeeping: 2024 Committees

Director Packard asked the new board members to sign up for at least one committee.

- The Clean, Safe, and Green Committee met on Tuesday, January 16th. Its next meeting is on Monday, March 11, at 4:30 PM.
- The Public Space and Enhancement Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 23, at 5 PM.
- The Marketing and Public Relations Committee will meet on Thursday, January 25, at 9:30 AM.
- The Stakeholder Support & Economic Development Committee will meet on Monday, February 5, at 5 PM.
- The Treasurer will set the new Financial Affairs Committee meetings as needed.

VI. TREASURERS REPORT (*Matt Horrigan, Treasurer*)

At the last two board meetings, we ratified and re-ratified the 2024 budget, which includes a 2% property owner's assessment. Montclair Center was under budget for 2023. According to Treasurer Horrigan, Montclair Center is financially good, and he noted that Director Gleason and his staff are doing a great job.

VII. RECRUITMENT, NOMINATION, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

A. Election of the 2024 officers of the Montclair Center Corporation

Board Member Montague stepped in to run the election of the 2024 officers, using the vote as an opportunity to test Montclair Center's new Urality platform. President Packard thanked outgoing 2023 officers.

Board Member Montague moved to open the election, and Board Member Rich seconded. Ms. Montague reviewed the voting procedure for each position, and the board voted.

The results of the election of the 2024 officers of the Montclair Center Corporation are as follows:

President: Jaji Packard

Vice President: Ernst Goldman

Treasurer: Matt Horrigan

Secretary: Kristen Zachares

Assistant Treasurer/Secretary: Matt Silverman

Board Member Montague moved to close the election, and Board Member Rich seconded.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

Update on continuing or recurring Projects and Initiatives:

A. Unhoused Coalition update

Director Gleason spoke about participating in The Unhoused Coalition which brings together service-oriented organizations in the township, county, and state to aid the unhoused. The Monarch group helped us put together the strategic plan for The Unhoused Committee. Initially, many of these organizations were working in silos, but now they are now creating accelerated positive change by sharing information and data across organizations.

Recent positive developments include:

- Even though the township could not procure a large house on Union Street, it continues looking for other options to provide shelter for needy people.
- Mike Callahan, Director of the State Office of Homelessness Prevention, is working with members of Monarch to help hire an Outreach Coordinator to be shared across the towns of Montclair, Bloomfield, and Belleville. The coordinator would work directly with the street population and as an intermediary between different service organizations.
- The original goal of the strategic plan for the Unhoused Committee was to help identify people in this population as near homeless, chronically homeless, or those who choose not to be housed. Doing so would help people get the right kind of service, whether it's housing, mental health, medical treatment, or transportation. Having access to these services would get people back on track for a more stable life.

Director Gleason speculated about where centralized services such as bathrooms and water fountains should be located to help. In downtown Montclair, such places could include the parking decks, Town Hall, and along Church Street.

Board Member Grabowsky asked if there was a social worker acting on behalf of the committee. Board Member Abrams affirmed that there is a town social worker. Assistant Director Shah spoke about his work in child welfare and child abuse and neglect prevention. He reinforced how important it is to have organizations work together collaboratively in this way. He also mentioned having social services at events to offer services if any incidents occur.

B. Vision Zero Update

Vision Zero recently met for the third time in three months. The Township and Committee has been awarded an SS4A Grant of \$420,000 in federal grant money. We will conduct bike lane, cone, and striping work. Murals can now be painted on streets if they don't go over the crosswalks.

C. Restaurant promotion in partnership with Montclair Film

Montclair Film will offer dinner and a movie discount at participating restaurants with a movie stub. If we get a couple of restaurants involved, it will flourish, and other restaurants will want to participate, too.

D. Valentine's Day marketing

Valentine's Day marketing is underway with posters and upcoming social media posts. Montclair Center will be promoting retailers and restaurants offering Valentine's Day specials. There will also be a raffle.

E. Meet & Greet in April

Our Spring Meet and Greet will be held April 25, 6:30 – 9:00 pm at 505 Montclair Film.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mural Project: Theme? Jury?

The mural project has started. Contracts are set with Effie's Gyro and Pilgrim Medical Center for murals. The general themes of the murals need to be clarified. Some general crowd-sourced themes include community, peace, health, love, and "Montclair is welcoming for all." The jury should be a diverse panel and follow best practices suitable for public art. A public call for artists will be sent out to artists worldwide. Additionally, if other businesses would like to pay for a mural on their wall, we can also place a public call for artists and use the same jury to help expedite the process for them.

B. Art Walk (April 11)

Back by popular demand, Art Walk returns to downtown Montclair on April 11th from 4 to 9 pm. The Art Walk model asks the business owners to host an artist, offer some light refreshments, and agree to be open for the allotted time. The business can choose an artist, or we can pair the artist and the business. There was some discussion of how to encourage a high caliber of art to be resumed at the next board meeting.

C. Town Council Elections: Education of candidates; host Candidate's Forum in April; what are major items of concern for downtown?

Director Gleason proposed holding a candidate's forum event for the upcoming election for our township. The forum would serve to educate our constituents

about what our candidates' views are. The goal is to understand what our community members think and feel about issues that affect us. Director Gleason spoke about attracting different kinds of people by having a larger, more festive event at a venue like The Wellmont, Porta, MAMM, or The MC Hotel's rooftop ballroom. Such an event conveys the true character of Montclair Center. Could we tie in another kind of activity, such as music or art? President Packard said that she loves the idea of educating a younger crowd. She said by law, we can educate but not lobby or pick favorites. Board Member Featherstone said that an event of this kind is well-needed. Board Member Zachares made a point of making sure the venue we select is accessible to all.

President Packard moved to proceed with the idea and come back in February with more details. Vice President Goldman seconded.

- D. PUMA Presentation /Earth Day Celebration supporting environmental groups at the end of April.
- President Packard spoke about her experience at the recent IDA Conference. PUMA created a thought-provoking presentation examining the directions in which cities and towns are headed in the next decade. President Packard proposed bringing representatives from PUMA to offer the same lecture to Montclair's civic leaders including Councilmembers and town planners. PUMA creates this study every five years using data-driven analysis across the United States and worldwide.
 - Director Gleason spoke about The Clean Safe and Green Committee using predictive analytics for parking. Assistant Director Shah has created a dashboard using town parking deck data from the Parking Authority. This dashboard can provide data to analyze occupancy and usage of the three (3) parking decks: Bay Street, Crescent, and Midtown.
 - Montclair Center will partner with environmental groups at the end of April for an Earth Day Celebration.

X. OPEN DISCUSSION-New Ideas, Comments, Questions,

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, 7:00 pm at the BID Office