

MONTCLAIR CENTER **BID**

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID - BOARD MEETING

February 19, 2025 7:00 – 8:45 p.m.

In Person at **BID OFFICES** 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

(5 MINUTES)

Board Members in attendance: Mary Cumella, Stacey File, Ernst Goldman, Jacob Nieman, Jaji Packard, Brian Silver, Matt Silverman, Nat Testa, Kristen Zachares, Karen Schloss-Diaz, Matt Horrigan

Board Members attending via Zoom: David Brennan, Rachael Grochowski, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Te’Nijah Bussey, Rahum Williams, Aminah Toler, Emer Featherstone, Mayor Renee Baskerville (8pm attendance)

Staff: Abhishake Shah, Lauren Barnas

Absent: David Placek, Jackie Apicella, Natalie Haddad, and Neil Grabowsky

Public: Jerry Rafalovich, CDS Manager

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm

II. ADOPTION OF JANUARY MINUTES (*attachments*)

(2 MINUTES)

President Goldman moved to approve the January Minutes after revising an attendance issue with Natalie Haddad being both present and absent. Jaji Packard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

(3 MINUTES PER VISITOR)

IV. PRESIDENT’S UPDATE (*Ernst Goldman*)

(15 MINUTES)

A. Board Meeting Changes Contemplated

President Goldman reviewed wanting to reduce the amount of monthly board meetings to 6-7 as proposed by Director Shah. Director Shah suggested using the time saved in March to hold the meet and greet. President Goldman suggested holding board meetings at the place of businesses of the Board Members for a change of scenery and to be more engaging. Vice President Silverman suggested having presentations from the different committees as well as check in’s from the Board Members regarding their businesses as a way to better engage with each other.

B. By-Law Task Force

President Goldman mentioned that the by-laws haven't been updated in 8 years and suggested a review to improve and revise. Vice President Silverman encouraged fellow Board Members to review and make suggestions to improve the by-laws to make them work better for the BID. Board Member Testa volunteered to sit down and review them. Director Shah suggested making a group on Basecamp to make it more accessible for Board Members.

C. Committees – need Marketing lead

President Goldman mentioned that the BID needs a marketing lead for the Marketing Committee and reiterated what other committees are active. Vice President Silverman requested an overview of which Board Members are on which committees. Board Member Brennan stepped up to join [?? committee] Board Member Packard is stepping down from Economic Development Committee and Vice President Silverman will join.

D. Main Street Conference - Two staff & two board members

Director Shah gave an overview of what the Main Street Conference is; including debuting new tech, networking, green practices, economic forecasts of other downtowns, etc. Board Member Diaz- Schloss expressed interest in a day pass. Vice President Silverman requested sending a link to the agenda- which will be posted on Basecamp.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (*Abhishake Shah*)

(15 MINUTES)

New and noteworthy in Montclair Center

*Director Shah reviewed the recent ribbon cuttings and new businesses opening including Greymade, Creations From Heaven Floral Boutique, Math Momentum, Tous Les Jours, BFT and more. There were also businesses that closed including Royal Bagel, Fiamella, and more. Net positive of 8 new businesses. Vice President Silverman expressed his concerns with the pace of businesses coming vs going and how it compares to past turnover. Director Shah assured that we can find data on historical turnover rate. Vice President Silverman recounted his experience with Creations from Heaven trying to find a location and that they mentioned how appreciative they are of how the MCBID helped them move into Montclair. Director Shah urged fellow board members to recommend the BID if they run into new businesses trying to move into the district. Director Shah noted a **[MISSING NUMBER]** visit rate for January and they are staying about two hours when they visit. Vice President Silverman suggested a line graph to show visits by month to illustrate how traffic compares between warm and cold weather.*

Director Shah reviewed the sanitation efforts of CDS and how to make trash collection more efficient from business to business. Vice President Silverman mentioned the garbage ordinance has not been updated in 25 years. Visitor Jerry Rafalovich of CDS was consulted on his expertise of bulk pickup and that Montclair is doing far better than the next comparable town. He explained how his reporting app helps him and the BID ambassadors improve the cleanliness of the downtown and keep track of garbage maintenance. Director Shah reiterated that CDS is supplemental, yet often have to pick up the slack of the town sanitation. Vice President Silverman suggested moving on with the meeting in the interest of staying on task and time.

A. BID Staffing Update

Director Shah reported that as of January 31st, Aysa Gordon, Administrative Assistant is no longer with the BID. Lauren Barnas, Community Coordinator will be taking over the bulk of Aysa's role. Additionally, Rayalou Flandez has come on board part-time as an Events Coordinator to help with event planning and execution, as well as Experience Montclair initiatives. Rayalou has previously worked with the BID helping with event prep and day-of volunteering.

B. Marketing Report

Montclair Center BID has been celebrating Black History Month by highlighting Black-owned businesses on social media and showcasing banners for the Montclair African American Heritage Foundation's 35th anniversary. The district has welcomed over a dozen new businesses in the past six weeks, and despite winter challenges, retailers and restaurants had a strong Valentine's Day. However, wellness businesses are struggling due to illness surges, and gift card purchases can help support them. Montclair was featured in NJ Monthly's "Weekend Getaways" section, spotlighting top destinations and restaurants. The "Made in Montclair" campaign launched and was picked up by Visit NJ, while Experience Montclair is now an official township DMO. Marketing efforts for 2025 include print and digital ads in major outlets like NJ Monthly, Jewish News, and Edible NJ, plus influencer collaborations and Montclair State University student guides. On social media, Montclair Center BID gained 607 new followers since January 20, reaching 6,535, with a 42% increase in link clicks thanks to the success of the Made in Montclair blog and event calendar. Vice President Silverman suggested leaving the marketing report in the agenda and not go over it each meeting and having Director Apicella come in every 3rd meeting to give a verbal summary.

C. Annual Report

Board Member Zachares suggested having a contingency plan regarding grants and the current political climate.

D. Skip the Stuff

Director Shah will be sending out materials regarding Skip the Stuff. Customers will have to specifically ask for utensils and napkins when getting takeout at local businesses in an effort to curb plastic waste. This will go into effect March 1st, and Director Shah will be taking the streets to hand out signage to let customers know about the new ordinance. Board Member Horrigan questioned what the enforcement of the ordinance will be and if there will be a warning or something more severe. Board Member Toler assured that there will be some type of enforcement whether it be spot checks or otherwise.

E. Festival Updates

Director Shah addressed the concerns regarding the Pride Festival and will hopefully have an update in the coming weeks.

VI. TREASURERS REPORT (*Brian Silver*)

(5 MINUTES)

A. Treasurer Silver noted some formatting cleanup is needed before submission. There will be quarterly finance meetings. No other notes provided. Vice President Silver brought up preparing

for grants and being prepared as the year progresses. Director Shah suggested being proactive with grant acquisition and finding new avenues for grants.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

(15 MINUTES)

A. Vision Zero (*Jacob Nieman*)

Asst. Treasurer Nieman reviewed reporting on Vision Zero and that the initiatives are progressing. Mayor Baskerville noted that reports are in review but will not be ready by their next meeting.

B. MSU – Collaboration

Vice President Silverman mentioned the 5-10 college students suggested by MSU professor Tina Huesing. No definite answer has been given, there are concerns that the students will need to be supervised and Director Shah does not have the resources available to do so. Vice President Silverman suggested training the student to interview the businesses in Montclair Center as a value add. Director Shah reminded the board that the students are only available at 8-10 am and may not have the maturity to be a good reflection of the BID and Montclair Center. It's leaning towards not being a good fit at the current moment. Board Member Zachares suggested that perhaps volunteer efforts like these would work better with oversight of a committee. This has the potential to expand and strengthen our volunteer network.

C. 2025 Committees

Was discussed previously.

D. Dntwn Montclair

President Goldman moved to go into executive session. Board Member Packard seconded.

Director Shah reviewed the troubles surrounding Dwntwn Montclair and now Visit Montclair. He reviewed how Dwntwn is causing confusion among business owners and blurring the lines between the BID and Dwntwn. They are using our logo, branding, tagline, etc. Director Shah asked Board Members to clarify who the BID is when approached by members of Downtown Montclair. Director Shah suggested we send out an email outlining who we are vs who Dwntwn is. Friendly, yet firm. Vice President Silverman consulted the Board on what they suggest on how to handle this issue- with the overwhelming majority of members present suggesting legal action be taken even if it's simply advice. Board Member Horrigan cautioned not to go the route of lawyers due to the cons of a lawsuit both personally and professionally. Asst. Treasurer Nieman suggested playing our strong suits and doubling down on our messaging and branding as a way to combat this issue.

President Goldman moved to exit executive session; Board Member Packard seconded.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

(10 MINUTES)

A. Meet & Greet

Director Shah reviewed plans for this year's meet and greet- aiming for early March. The location is still TBA.

B. BID Events

Director Shah discussed Art Walk and Summer Sunday, proposing merging both events for June 21th, framing it as a type of "Montclair Fest" with art, shopping, music and community

engagement. Board Member Toler mentioned that she has a Juneteenth planned for the 21st and is open to collaborating with this event.

- C. Art Walk/Summer Sunday June 21st
See above

IX. **OPEN DISCUSSION** - New Ideas, Comments, Questions

(TIME PERMITTING)

No comments mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT

President Goldman moved to adjourn the meeting, Asst. Treasurer Nieman seconded.

*Next full board meeting will be **Wednesday, March 19, 2025**, 7 pm at the BID office.*