

# MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

## MONTCLAIR CENTER BID - BOARD MEETING

May 21, 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:** Natalie Haddad, Ernst Goldman, Jacob Nieman, Jaji Packard, Matt Silverman, Rachael Grochowski, Kristen Zachares, , Neil Grabowsky, **Board Members attending via Zoom:** Mary Cumella, Karen Schloss-Diaz, Rahum Williams, Emer Featherstone, Matt Horrigan, David Brennan, Te’Nijah Bussey, Nat Testa, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Officer Wadley, **Staff:** Abhishake Shah, Lauren Barnas, Jackie Apicella **Absent:** David Placek, Stacey File, Aminah Toler, Brian Silver, Lt Williams, Stephen Marks (town manager)
- II.  
*The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm,*
- III. ADOPTION OF MARCH MINUTES (attachments) (2 MINUTES)  
*March Minutes passed by Board President Goldman and seconded by Board Member Jaji Packard. The motion passed unanimously.*
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES PER VISITOR)
- V. PRESIDENT’S UPDATE (Ernst Goldman) (15 MINUTES)

### A. Committee Updates

#### B. Stakeholder Support & Economic Development

Board member Jacob Nieman reviewed the past stakeholder support meeting, noting a trend in not only many new businesses opening but many businesses closing.

#### C. Clean, Safe, and Green/Parking – homeless community meeting

Board Vice President Silverman reviewed the past CS&G meeting, highlighting the garbage ordinance and seeking help from the town in issuing violations. Also covering the draft of the baseline service agreement that needs to be finalized. Graffiti removal is scheduled to start the week of the 26<sup>th</sup> and hopefully turn into a twice yearly initiative. Vice President Silverman brought up the point that graffiti removal is the property owners responsibility. Executive Director Shah noted that it’s become a service we provide to the businesses through CDS. The idea of call-in requests for removal was brought up. Board Member Grabowsky noted that the longer a tag stays up the more tags show up. When tags are taken down the next day they realize it’s not worth tagging at all. Board Member Grabowsky also brought up the deterrents he uses to prevent people from getting to the roofs to tag.

Vice President Silverman mentioned that CDS submitted a proposal for providing quality of life ambassadors to help support businesses needing assistance with unhoused-related issues. Board Member Grabowsky mentioned the idea of a social worker being on call to offer support. Executive Director Shah noted that grant funding for programs like this is scarce. President Goldman urged the need for forming a marketing committee.

#### **D. Main Street Conference - report**

Board Member Packard recounted her time at Main Street Conference. There were many sessions and she notes one regarding how BID's always need to be improving and reassessing programs. There was also sessions about how the Northeast is getting hotter and shade spots are becoming necessary for places like Montclair. A session discussed changing regional demographics, partly affected by a higher death rate vs. birth rate. Demographic changes will affect tourism and economic growth in town. Economic displacement and parking issues in successful main streets was also an issue brought up at the conference that is relevant to Montclair.

President Goldman shared his experience at Main Street; taking a tour of a participating town, taking courses about crowdfunding over taking out loans and how it engages the business community. Executive Director Shah attended Director specific courses, being data driven and staying on track. He noted that previous conferences seemed more tailored to rural downtowns as opposed to urban and crowded downtowns like the ones in New Jersey. He announced that he will be sitting on the Main Street Collaboration Board. There as lots of networking and positive conversation throughout the conference.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (*Abhishake Shah*)**

(15 MINUTES)

##### **A. New and noteworthy in Montclair Center**

Executive Director Shah announced that Sneakers and Cream is closing, which is the latest in a string of 4<sup>th</sup> ward businesses that have closed lately and that there needs to be investigation into why business owners can't stay open in that area. Board Member Apicella mentioned that some business owners struggle because they can't be open during the times that would make them money. Board member Haddad expressed concern that the influx of new restaurants and fewer retail may not be good for the district.

Executive Director Shah welcomed PO Wadley and Lt Williams for joining the board as Montclair Police representatives.

##### **B. Meet and greet – public safety**

Executive Director Shah thanked everyone for coming to yesterday's meet and greet covering the recent crime in Montclair. There have been several meetings about the unhoused population becoming more rowdy and we are still at a loss for a definitive solution. A look into creating enforcement around panhandling, public indecency, and other minor issues was brought up. A fact sheet about managing unhoused people in crisis was provided. A recap of yesterdays meet and greet was also provided for Board Members that couldn't attend. Executive Director Shah said he and Lt Williams will be going door to door to speak with businesses to hear their concerns face to face and on a personal level.

##### **C. Festivals – update**

Executive Director Shah gave an update on the progress on Pride festival and that the BID office will be used as a production office day of. Councilor Toler suggested that the BID print leaflets advertising PRIDE and that they should be posted at bus stops throughout the district.

VI. TREASURERS REPORT (*Brian Silver*) –

(5 MINUTES)

**D. Budget reforecast**

Shah reviewed staff changes and how that relates to the budget. Revenue is projected to be down about \$143k and Shah has been cutting costs as much as possible. If we get the DMO grant we will be in better shape. \$20k is lost in supportive events funding from MSNJ. Graphic Design funds have been eliminated. An Assistant Director position is still up in the air. Executive Director Shah mentioned that alternative revenue streams would be good to create a buffer especially if we can't keep raising the assessment. Vice President Silverman urged to vote on the decision to fund events at full price, as previously discussed at the previous special meeting conversation. Board Member Featherstone and Board Member Horrigan suggested the finance committee be the one to vote on that matter due to the fact that it's a finance issue. Board Member Apicella gave her insight about DMO funding and how that affects event funding

President Goldman moves to vote on funding Out Montclair's Pride and Montclair Film Festival, for \$20k and \$25k respectively. For Pride, 3 abstain, 11 yes. Montclair Film is 13 yes, 2 abstain

**E. 2026 budget schedule – call for ideas/suggestions (e.g., pizza contest)**

Did not get discussed

VII. OLD BUSINESS

(15 MINUTES)

- **A. Vision Zero – Complete Streets update (Jacob Nieman)**

Board Member Nieman shared that Complete Streets has passed. Affordable housing has been approved in the form of already existing spots like churches, without a need to build new affordable housing. Board Member Featherstone questioned what would happen to historic preservation and other aspects if every church allowed an influx of affordable housing communities.

**B. BID Events – Art Walk (VOTE), Summer Sunday**

Art Walk seems positive in theory but there is a divide between the labor that is required from business owners and the enjoyment from property owners. Director Shah stated that the amount of staff resources, time, and money taken up by Art Walk is not worth the outcome Art Walk gets from the perspective of small businesses that host and the artists. Board Member Zachares gave her perspective of Art Walk, stating "We're the ones doing it, not the property owners. We're the ones that have to get the food. We have to do the organization. We have to set up our spaces. We have to advertise it. We have to be there late- and with no money." Shah also states that Art Walk takes away from the art museum and various galleries in town.

President Goldman moves to vote on doing Art Walk this year.

VIII. **NEW BUSINESS** (*Abhishake Shah*)

(10 MINUTES)

Ran out of time to cover this.

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

(TIME PERMITTING)

### **ADJOURNMENT**

*President Goldman moved to adjourn the meeting; Board Member Nieman seconded.*

*Next full board meeting will be **Wednesday, June 18, 2025**, 7 pm at the BID office.*