

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID – Board Meeting

April 15, 2026 | 7:07 – 9:20 p.m.

Montclair Mezzanine, 488 Bloomfield Ave | In Person & via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Board President Ernst Goldman. He delivered the standard mission statement, noted the meeting is subject to OPRA, and recognized host and sponsor Board Member Amir Kamal at the Montclair Mezzanine.

Board Members Present (In Person): Ernst Goldman, Neil Grabowsky, Matt Horrigan, David Placek, Brian Silver, Jacob Baccus, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Amir Kamal, Deborah Stymest, Nat Testa

Board Members Present (via Zoom): Te'Nijah Bussey, Mary Cumella (arrived mid-meeting), Karen Schloss-Diaz, Joann Smalls, Daniel White, Lamont "Izzy" James

Absent: Rachael Grochowski, Kristine-Ellis Petrik, Aminah Toler, Rahum Williams

Contractors / Consultants: Jason Gleason, People & Places LLC (In Person)

II. ADOPTION OF JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH MINUTES

The January, February, and March 2026 minutes were presented for adoption. One minor amendment to the February minutes was noted. A member also noted that minutes should be distributed further in advance; Secretary Placek confirmed a new workflow is in place going forward.

Motion: Neil Grabowsky | **Second:** Jacob Baccus | **Result:** Passed (12 Yea, 8 N/V)

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were received.

IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Ernst Goldman)

A. Transition Activities – Update

Consultant Jason Gleason of People & Places, LLC's engagement has been formalized through end of October 2026 at three days per week, with an option to continue at two days per week thereafter. The arrangement ensures Gleason is available to help transition a new Executive Director into their role once hired. He also confirmed on the record that he has recused himself from applying for the position. Jackie Apicella has also been engaged for a second day of availability. Treasurer Horrigan reported that the search for a new office is ongoing while the prior lease situation is expected to continue until a reasonable agreement can be made between both parties.

V. HR & SEARCH COMMITTEE (Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa)

A. Executive Director Search Update

Search firm JPM is actively screening resumes, with a recommended candidate list expected early the following week. The eight-member search committee has full authority to make the hire. The board expressed optimism about the applicant pool and noted a new hire could potentially start within six weeks.

B. HR Investigation Update

Committee Chair Garcia-Pedrosa read a formal statement on behalf of the HR Committee (Garcia-Pedrosa, Grabowsky, Stymest). The review into the circumstances surrounding recent staff departures is complete. Conducted in consultation with HR legal counsel, the committee found no evidence of misconduct or wrongdoing and considers the matter closed. The review included an extensive interview with Consultant Gleason, a review of emails, notes, and recorded meetings, and a formal invitation to former employees to meet confidentially, none of whom responded within the window provided. Counsel advised that the legal standard for a hostile work environment was not met.

The board was also updated on outstanding requests from a former employee. Several documents are behind access barriers tied to unreturned system passwords. Legal counsel is monitoring the situation; the board agreed to defer further discussion to Executive Session at a future meeting if warranted.

VI. CONSULTANT'S TRANSITION UPDATE (Jason Gleason)

A. April Updates

Key activities for the month:

- Website maintenance with Taupe Cat Studios; directory and plug-in issues largely resolved.
- Main Street America coordination complete; annual accreditation materials submitted.
- Earth Fest (April 26) permits and Extra Duty Solutions arrangements in place; awaiting final township street closure approval.
- First Experience Montclair mini documentary produced; pending final cut from MCS.
- DMO midterm report submitted & accepted; midterm grant payment (~\$62,000) expected within the week.
- Jazz, Film, and Pride contracts advanced; NJ Transit spring destination ad placed.
- Township conversations underway on sidewalk café permit pricing and district sanitation code.
- Monthly AP/AR cycles complete; Q4 assessment invoice submitted and paid; insurance audit nearing completion; new GL/umbrella policy executed.
- Seasonal mulching complete; banner calendar finalized; planting season underway.
- Approximately 16 new businesses opened in Q1; BID tracking a net positive position.

Initial social media metrics: Montclair Center reached ~24,579 people over 60 days (54% increase); Experience Montclair reached ~23,048 (133% increase). The board was cautioned these metrics appear inflated as they reflect a rebound from a posting pause and should really be assessed over a 3–6 month baseline.

B. Basecamp Tutorial

Gleason walked the board through the Basecamp platform, covering calendar use, message boards, private pings, file storage, and the new attendance/voting worksheet and AI-assisted minutes workflow. Members were encouraged to subscribe to the consolidated calendar feed and use the Docs & Files section for agendas and board resources.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT (Matt Horrigan)

A. Budget Presentation with Township Update

The BID's FY2026 annual budget packet was submitted to Township Council for approval over a month prior with no response received. The Township's municipal budget was introduced April 7th, and the BID's assessment is expected to be included when submitted to Essex County. Members of the board will continue to follow up.

B. FY26 Q1 Financial Report

The Q1 bridge report shows the BID approximately \$69,000 under budget, with a practical surplus of \$30,000–\$40,000 once required DMO spending is accounted for. The primary driver is reduced staffing costs during the transition. The board noted anticipated legal expenses and agreed not to read too much into the current surplus. A Finance Committee meeting will follow for Q2.

C. Main Street New Jersey Grant Application

The board confirmed the decision not to pursue the Main Street NJ Grant this cycle due to staffing capacity in order to execute responsibly. Main Street NJ expressed understanding, gratitude, and confirmed this would not affect future eligibility.

D. Resolution – Sale of Polaris Vehicle

A resolution was presented to sell the BID's Polaris utility vehicle, acquired through grant funding but largely unused due to the shift to a third-party ambassador crew and related insurance and registration challenges. A buyer has been secured at \$11,000 cash.

Motion: Matt Horrigan | **Second:** David Placek | **Result:** Passed (15 Yea, 5 N/V)

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Zine Fest Recap

The BID's \$500 contribution to Zine Fest (March 28–29) supported an event that drew approximately 1,000 attendees over two days and generated the highest social media engagement of the past 60-day period on both BID accounts. The board was enthusiastic about the reach and the diverse audiences it brought to the district.

Upcoming events noted: Earth Fest (April 26), Pride (June 13), Jazz Fest Jamboree (August 15), Montclair Film Festival (October 16–25).

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Summer of Soccer @ Lackawanna Station

Board Member David Placek presented a 39-day activation at Lackawanna Station surrounding the FIFA World Cup (June through the July 19 Final), featuring live screening of all 104 matches, a community soccer pitch, a vendor alley open to BID businesses at no cost, a rotating World Food Hall, community programming slots, and branded way-finding along Bloomfield Avenue. The board was broadly enthusiastic. Discussion focused on extending the activation throughout the full BID district via passport-style promotions, regional advertising, and QR-linked business directories. The Township noted no municipal budget to contribute but is exploring a Church Street pilot closure with potential World Cup overlap.

The Choose NJ grant opportunity emerged on extremely short notice, with a two-business-day window restricted to 501(c)(3) applicants. Because BDP Holdings is for-profit, Placek could not apply directly and proposed MCC apply using the prospectus and sponsor relationships he had developed. Placek acknowledged the conflict of interest and recused himself from the Executive Committee vote; the remaining four members voted unanimously to proceed. President Goldman submitted the application on April 13, 2026. The Executive Committee communicated the full situation to the board by open letter before the meeting.

The board voted to ratify the Executive Committee's actions and adopted a resolution establishing the governance framework: Placek must abstain from all board discussions and votes related to World Cup

events at Lackawanna Plaza while grant funds are in use; he may present and advocate in his capacity as a BID business owner; and President Goldman is named Acting Secretary to certify the resolution. Minor non-substantive language corrections were incorporated prior to passing. The \$600,000 application requires a dollar-for-dollar match; the board agreed a separate bank account and temporary staffing assistance would likely be needed if awarded.

Motion: Ernst Goldman | **Second:** Jacob Baccus | **Result:** Passed (14 Yea, 1 Abs, Placek recused, 5 N/V)

X. OPEN DISCUSSION

Ribbon Cutting Policy: The board agreed to standardize ribbon cuttings to Thursday afternoons at approximately 4:00 p.m. The Consultant will update the business welcome packet accordingly.

Social Media: Board Member Schloss-Diaz encouraged members to share BID content on their personal and business channels to amplify reach.

Porchfest: Status of BID support remains unresolved. It was noted that the organizer stated that he did not want any money from the BID. It was also noted that the organizer also wanted banners purchased and clean-up arranged at the finale by the BID. However, it was also noted that the organizer's nonprofit classification may not qualify them under the BID's 501c3 limitations on charitable giving, and further following its internal three-tier framework for event support. Board members committed to follow-up offline.

Recycling: Board Member Stymest flagged missed recycling pickups in the district. Gleason committed to following up with the relevant township departments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Neil Grabowsky | **Second:** Deborah Stymest

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Next full board meeting: Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 7:00 p.m. at the Montclair Mezzanine.