

# **MONTCLAIR CENTER BID**

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

## **MONTCLAIR CENTER BID BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.

In Person at The Montclair Mezzanine, 488 Bloomfield Ave, or via Zoom

### **ATTENDANCE**

**In Attendance:** Ernst Goldman, Neil Grabowsky, Matt Horrigan, David Placek, Jacob Baccus, Te'Nijah Bussey, Amir Kamal, Joann Smalls, Deborah Stymest, Daniel White

**Via Zoom:** Rachael Grochowski, Karen Schloss-Diaz, Nat Testa, Rahum Williams, Lamont "Izzy" James

**Absent:** Brian Silver, Mary Cumella, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Kristine Ellis-Petrik, Aminah Toler

**Consultant:** Jason Gleason, People & Places LLC (In Person)

### **I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME**

President Ernst Goldman called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and welcomed the Board and guests. He noted that the BID represents and serves more than 500 businesses and 150 property owners with approximately \$500 million worth of real estate in Montclair Center, and restated the BID's mission to create a visually appealing, prosperous, and inclusive downtown through continuous cleaning, beautification, programming, marketing, economic development, and advocacy. He reminded attendees that meetings are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act and that minutes are posted to the BID's website and available upon request.

### **II. ADOPTION OF APRIL MINUTES**

The April 2026 minutes were distributed digitally in the board packet. The President invited corrections or amendments; hearing none, a motion was made to approve the minutes as presented.

**Motion:** Neil Grabowsky

**Second:** Matt Horrigan

**Yeas:** 11

**Abstain:** 0

**Result:** Motion carried. The April 2026 minutes were adopted.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Reverend Alan Sheldon of Good Success Academies addressed the Board regarding his college and career readiness program, which has operated for fifteen years in partnership with Montclair State University and has served more than 500 area students through workforce exposure, job preparation, and summer employment placements with local businesses. He described the program's summer farm stands, which provide approximately twenty jobs for area high school students, and presented a near-term request for roughly \$6,000 in sponsorship from Montclair Center businesses to support a farm stand and youth stipends, along with a longer-term vision for 2027 of expanded business-sponsored summer jobs throughout the

district. Board members thanked Reverend Sheldon for his impactful work in the community, and several expressed interest in supporting youth employment. The President will share the program materials with the full Board on Basecamp for further discussion and follow-up.

#### **IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Ernst Goldman)**

##### **A. Office Update**

Vice President Neil Grabowsky reported that, following an extended negotiation, a signed amendment is in place for the BID to return to its existing office at 26 Lackawanna Plaza on substantially the same terms as the prior lease, with a modest monthly rent increase and a corresponding adjustment to the security deposit, and a three-year extension of the term. Rent obligations will not resume until the BID can fully use the space, with reoccupancy realistically expected in mid-to-late June. He noted that the landlord's ongoing renovations, including a fully revamped second floor, benefit the organization and provide flexible options for staff placement and potential subletting. The Board expressed appreciation for the Vice President's work in bringing the negotiation to a successful conclusion.

##### **B. Resolution to Amend Lease**

The President read in full the Resolution Authorizing the Board of Directors to Adopt the First Amendment to the Lease at 26 Lackawanna Plaza, which authorizes execution of an amendment extending the lease term for an additional three years on substantially the terms presented to the Board. Prior to the vote, Secretary David Placek stated for the record that he holds no ownership, management, or other interest in the property. The Executive Committee had reviewed the amendment over the preceding weeks. Following discussion, the resolution was put to a vote, with members participating via Zoom individually confirming their votes.

**Motion:** Ernst Goldman

**Second:** Deborah Stymest

**Yeas:** 15

**Abstain:** 0

**Result:** Motion carried. The resolution was adopted.

##### **C. Unified Governance Policies (Updated 2026)**

The Board reviewed the updated Unified Governance Policies included in the board packet, which consolidate the organization's existing financial, procurement, document retention, and related policies into a single governance framework updated to current best practice. The consultant explained the background and purpose of the consolidation, noting that the substance reflects the organization's established policies with limited updates, and that the document is intended to be reviewed and signed annually by board members. The Executive Committee had reviewed the document over several weeks without substantive changes. Several members requested additional time to review the document and compare it against the predecessor policies, while others, including the consultant, recommended adoption in advance of hiring a new Executive Director. Following discussion of timing and the merits of board-level review, a motion was made to table the item to the next meeting. The consultant will post the predecessor policy documents together on Basecamp to assist the Board's review.

**Motion to Table:** Joann Smalls

**Second:** Jacob Baccus

**Result:** Motion carried by voice vote. The item was tabled to the June meeting.

#### **V. HR & SEARCH COMMITTEE**

## **A. Executive Director Search Update**

In Committee Chair Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa's absence, Deborah Stymest provided the update. The Search Committee has interviewed a total of nine candidates and reported a stronger slate than anticipated. The Committee is compiling its evaluations to identify candidates to advance to in-person interviews, with the expectation of being in a position to extend an offer in the coming weeks. Members praised the work of search consultant Thomas Czerniecki of Jersey Professional Management for a thorough, organized, and even-handed process, and credited the Committee's diligence throughout.

## **B. Resolution to Hire Executive Director**

The President read in full the Resolution Authorizing the Executive Committee to Extend an Offer of Employment and Hire an Executive Director. The resolution ratifies the search process, authorizes the Executive Committee to receive the Search Committee's final candidate recommendation, and authorizes the Executive Committee to extend a formal offer and execute an employment agreement between board meetings, with compensation consistent with the approved budget and a report back to the full Board. In discussion, members sought and received clarification on the respective roles of the Search Committee and the Executive Committee, the at-will nature of the position, the publicly posted salary range, and the search consultant's role in negotiation and onboarding. The Board's council liaison shared perspective from the township's recent hiring experience and a preference for broader board participation in the final selection; members responded that the current process was deliberately structured and agreed upon following lessons learned from the prior search, and the Board affirmed the established approach. Following discussion, the resolution was put to a vote.

**Motion:** Ernst Goldman

**Second:** Rachael Grochowski

**Yeas:** 14

**Abstain:** 1 (Rahum Williams)

**Result:** Motion carried. The resolution was adopted.

## **VI. CONSULTANT'S TRANSITION UPDATE (Jason Gleason)**

The consultant reported that, following the annual reapplication process, Montclair Center has been reaccredited as a Main Street America organization. Earth Fest was a strong success, drawing over 1,100 attendees across the four-hour event, with more than 150 trees and native plants given away, 26 vendors, four bands, and electric vehicle test drives; the township was pleased with the event and the partnerships and protocols involved. All documentation responsive to recent organizational requests for information has been provided. The BID's budget passed its first reading before the township by a vote of 7-0. Following requests from businesses, the Executive Committee has authorized the return of the second annual Bastille Day French shopping day in partnership with the French Alliance, with a grand prize of round-trip tickets to Paris and additional prizes and raffles; marketing will begin shortly. The consultant also presented the monthly marketing recap: Montclair Center's social media engagement was up 43% over the prior thirty days and Experience Montclair was up 21%, with events content and features on local businesses performing strongly. He additionally shared positive attendance analytics from the recent Porch Fest downtown, noting the event's strong demographics and dwell time, and suggested that a future partnership could be worth exploring should the organizers obtain charitable nonprofit status. Members shared positive observations about Porch Fest's impact on downtown foot traffic and individual business activations during the event.

## **VII. TREASURER'S REPORT (Matt Horrigan)**

The Treasurer reported that the second reading of the BID's budget before the Township Council is scheduled for June 9, and encouraged members to attend. Members discussed improving communication around township meetings and board notices generally, including challenges with Basecamp adoption; members were encouraged to enable Basecamp notifications, and assistance was offered to those needing help with setup.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Earth Fest Recap**

The Earth Fest recap was provided during the Consultant's Transition Update above. Upcoming events were noted for the Board's awareness: Pride on June 13, Bastille Day on July 11, Jazz Fest Jamboree on August 15, and the Montclair Film Festival October 16–25.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Summer of Soccer**

David Placek presented an update on the Summer of Soccer at Lackawanna Plaza, beginning in approximately twenty days, at which World Cup matches will be aired throughout the tournament. A press release, dedicated website, and RSVP system are planned for the coming week, with attendance management identified as a key consideration. Planned elements include interior viewing and activities, a food hall, rentable vendor booths, a community events calendar populated by area nonprofits and other groups, and screen time between matches featuring local businesses at no charge. He noted that the event is not a BID-supported event and responded to questions about coordination with Pride, which takes place the same day, with Pride occupying the exterior of the property and match viewing held indoors. Members also received an update on Pride's smaller footprint this year and discussed increased vendor participation costs at Pride; the Board's town council liaison offered to inquire with the township regarding fee relief for Montclair businesses at local events.

## **X. OPEN DISCUSSION**

The Board held an extended discussion on how the BID can best support district businesses during the World Cup period. Topics included proposed street banners designed by Joann Smalls; the destination of the banner QR code; refocusing digital advertising to drive regional visitors downtown during the five-week period, with Instagram and Meta advertising viewed as the most impactful channels; outreach to businesses to gather and promote their World Cup-related activities; and the existing World Cup landing pages and automated events aggregation on the BID and Experience Montclair websites. The discussion included differing views on the appropriateness and best practice surrounding the use of BID funds for promoting events hosted by a single for-profit stakeholder, and the Board weighed the distinction between supporting community-wide events and supporting an individual business. Members were encouraged to post additional ideas to Basecamp.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn.

**Motion:** Neil Grabowsky

**Second:** Deborah Stymest

**Yeas:** 13

**Abstain:** 0

**Result:** Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 p.m.

*The next full board meeting will be held Wednesday, June 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Montclair Mezzanine.*