MONTCLAIR CENTER BID
GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID – Board Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2026
In Person at the Montclair Center Office, 26 Lackawanna Plaza, or via Zoom

Attendance

In Attendance: Ernst Goldman, Neil Grabowsky, Matt Horrigan, David Placek (departed before leadership votes), Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Rahum Williams, Amir Kamal, Kristine Ellis-Petrik, Daniel White, Nat Testa, Lamont "Izzy" James, Jacob Baccus, Joann Smalls, Karen Schloss-Diaz, Matt Horrigan, Te'Niijah Bussey, Tricia Haggerty-Wenz

Absent: Mary Cumella, Aminah Toler

Consultant: Jason Gleason, People & Places, LLC

I. Call to Order & Welcome

President Ernst Goldman called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. and welcomed the board. He noted that the BID serves more than 450 businesses and approximately 200 property owners, representing roughly $500 million in real estate in Montclair Center, and restated the BID's mission to create a highly appealing, prosperous, and inclusive downtown through continuous planning, education, programming, marketing, economic development, and advocacy. Minutes are posted to the BID website and available on request.

II. Adoption of Prior Meeting Minutes

The draft minutes from the prior meeting were distributed in the board packet. A clarification was noted in the budget section regarding the budget year 2026 references. The vote to adopt was taken up following the Treasurer's Report.

Motion: To adopt the prior meeting minutes as amended
Moved: Matt Horrigan
Second: Karen Schloss-Diaz
Yeas: All Others Present
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Result: Motion carried

III. Public Comments

No public comments were recorded.

IV. Upcoming Events

Event Calendar

The board reviewed the fall event calendar:

- Ribbon cutting for a new retail shop, A Wonderful Time, in the atrium of The Clairidge, October 1 at 4:00 p.m. The owners also run Universal Yums, an international candy subscription company, and the new shop will offer an eclectic gift and specialty mix.

- Pride, October 11
- Montclair Film Festival, October 16–25
- A downtown fashion event on Saturday evening from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., hosted by Downtown Montclair on Church Street, with the street closed. The BID will contribute the use of its stage and contribute to the marketing effort.

Ribbon Cutting Scheduling

Members observed that board attendance at ribbon cuttings has been light and agreed that a stronger board presence is important to represent the BID and Montclair Center. Discussion centered on scheduling. Weekday daytime events conflict with members' work schedules and with lunch service for restaurant owners, while many businesses prefer late Friday afternoons. Members suggested clustering ribbon cuttings into set windows each month so the board can plan around them, such as Friday afternoon time slots paired with Saturday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to noon. There was general support for designating recurring weekend dates, possibly the second or fourth weekends of the month, with the understanding that the current lack of staff limits how quickly this can be put in place.

Communication with Businesses on Street Closures and Events

Several members raised concerns that businesses affected by the upcoming fashion event and the summer Church Street closure pilot were not notified in advance, and that the board had limited opportunity to shape the pilot's hours or programming. Members acknowledged that the closures were Township-led initiatives and discussed where responsibility for notifying businesses should sit when the BID is a partner rather than the organizer. Members recalled that the BID previously sent regular stakeholder emails and posted notices in affected residential buildings, a practice that has lapsed without staff.

A Township representative noted that working relationships are stronger when the BID is fully staffed, and reported that the Township is working with the Fire Department to update a business contact database and with Township communications on district-based text and email alerts through its Everbridge system. These tools are in development but not yet ready.

The board reached general consensus on the following:

- For any event or initiative the BID collaborates on, partners will agree on messaging and ensure notices go out to affected businesses.
- Board feedback on the Church Street closures will be gathered after the remaining closures this fall.
- The Township's project lead for the closure pilot will be asked to share results and intended next steps, and affected businesses should be surveyed on their experience.
- Improved business communication will be among the first priorities once staffing is restored.

V. President's Report

Board Resignations

President Goldman reported three board resignations this year: Brian Silver, Rachael Grochowski, and Deborah Stymest, each for personal reasons. The President noted that the door remains open for Deborah to return at a later date this year.

HR Committee Appointment

With Deborah stepping down from the HR Committee, President Goldman appointed Kristine Ellis-Petrik as the committee's third member.

Recruitment, Nominations & Elections Committee

The board reviewed the proposed membership of the Recruitment, Nominations & Elections Committee, the one committee whose membership requires full board approval under the bylaws. With several vacancies and term-limited seats, this will be an important recruitment year. The committee runs both the board election and the internal officer election that follows about a month later. Proposed members: Te'Niijah Bussey, Karen Schloss-Diaz, Neil Grabowsky, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, and Councilor Rahum Williams.

In response to questions, it was clarified that board terms are one or three years, with a six-year term limit for all seats; a member reaching the limit must step off the board for one year before becoming eligible again. It was also confirmed that every board member is expected to serve on at least one committee.

The motion was initially made by the President and seconded by David Placek. Following a procedural clarification later in the meeting, the motion was restated and voted on again.

Motion: To appoint the Recruitment, Nominations & Elections Committee as presented
Moved: Amir Kamal
Second: Nat Testa
Yeas: All present
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Result: Motion carried

VI. Consultant's Report

District Foot Traffic

Jason Gleason shared Placer.ai foot traffic data for Montclair Center as a district.

- Summer (since the last board meeting): approximately 1.8 million visits by 704,000 visitors, up 5.7% year over year, with an average visit frequency of 2.55 and an average dwell time of 90 minutes.
- Notable days: August 15 (Jazz Fest Jamboree Day) drew about 34,000 people entire downtown; July 19 (World Cup final day) about 26,000; and August 21 (Joshua Henry performance on Church Street) about 25,000. The Fourth of July was down roughly 33% year over year at about 12,400, likely reflecting residents away for the holiday weekend.
- Year to date: approximately 6.1 million visits by 1.4 million visitors, up 3.6% year over year, with a visit frequency of 4.39, which compares well against major destinations. Average dwell time of 77 minutes was identified as an area for improvement.

Event Performance

- The World Cup final watch party, a partnership with Latinos of Montclair, the Wellmont, and Township partners, drew roughly 1,400 attendees with an average dwell time of 149 minutes.
- The Joshua Henry performance, presented with Montclair Film and the Township with sponsor support, drew about 2,100 attendees with an average dwell time of 86 minutes.

- Jazz Fest data is under review by Placer.ai due to overlapping geofences from prior years. Official figures will be shared once corrected.

DMO Grant

The prior year's DMO report was submitted and accepted by the State, and the final voucher has been paid. The BID was awarded the DMO grant for the coming year and has submitted a reworked budget. The State noted the BID was among the first to report and commended the report's thoroughness.

Operations

- Intern assignments were developed with the former Executive Director to audit district assets (banners, planters, trash receptacles, and other capital assets) and to update the business inventory door to door. The program is on hold until staffing stabilizes.
- The office is being reorganized and repainted. A roof leak during recent heavy rain has been addressed by the roofer.
- Outreach by the former Executive Director reached more than 50 businesses in person, with 35 surveys returned. Top concerns were the cost of doing business, the perception of parking, and limited foot traffic, followed by the unhoused population and the Church Street closures.

In response to board questions, Mr. Gleason will prepare a weekday versus weekend breakdown of the foot traffic data and will request social media performance metrics from the BID's marketing vendors, sharing both with the board by email or Basecamp. He noted that Placer.ai, funded through the DMO grant, is the industry standard for foot traffic and place data.

VII. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Matt Horrigan reviewed year-to-date financials through August for the 2026 fiscal year, which follows the calendar year.

- The BID is running approximately $145,000 in the black. Accounting for roughly $50,000 in committed DMO and event spending, the effective position is closer to $90,000. The variance reflects staffing costs well under budget, partially offset by consulting costs over budget.
- A revenue entry recorded as a foundation grant (approximately $11,250) reflects the sale of the BID's Polaris vehicle and will be reclassified.
- The Finance Committee met on August 24 and reviewed a first draft of the 2027 budget. A second Finance Committee meeting will be scheduled, open to all board members, before the budget comes to the full board in October and then to the Township Council.
- Following an Executive Committee review of Valley National, Citizens Bank, and Capital One, the BID is moving its accounts from Citizens Bank to Capital One, which offered the strongest package, including a substantially better interest rate. A member suggested New Jersey Liberty Bank as another option for comparison.

VIII. Old Business

There was no old business.

IX. New Business

Executive Leadership Transition

President Goldman reported that the Executive Director has resigned for personal health reasons, and the board extended its best wishes. He outlined the transition options before the board, including a new search or alternatives presented to the Executive Committee earlier in the week. Consultant Jason Gleason was dismissed prior to the board's discussion.

Upon motion by Jacob Baccus duly seconded, the board entered executive session at approximately 8:10 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. The board returned to open session at 9:36 p.m. upon motion and second by Christine Ellis-Petrik with all in favor. No action was taken in executive session.

David Placek departed prior to the following votes. Both votes were taken by roll call.

Motion: To extend an offer to Jason Gleason for the role of Executive Director, with the HR Committee to negotiate terms
Moved: Kristine Ellis-Petrik
Second: Amir Kamal
Yeas: 14
Nays: 1
Abstain: None
Result: Motion carried

Motion: To extend an offer to Laura Wagner for the role of Assistant Director, in consultation with Jason Gleason, with the HR Committee to make the offer. The offer is extended by the board and is not contingent on the Executive Director offer.
Moved: Karen Scholss-Diaz
Second: Rahum Williams
Yeas: 14
Nays: 1
Abstain: None
Result: Motion carried

X. Open Discussion

Members publicly thanked President Goldman for his leadership and steady commitment to the BID through a demanding period.

XI. Adjournment

Upon motion and second, with all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:41 p.m.