

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT**

**March 29, 2023**

**8 AM**

Meeting held at Work\_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT:        Sophia Dzialo, Chair  
                                 Daniel Mulligan, Vice-Chair  
                                 Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary  
                                 Ryan Fagan

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:  
                                 Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development

ALSO PRESENT:            Peter Conyers, Esther Jeffery, Lynn Sottile

STAFF PRESENT:           Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT:        Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair  
                                 Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS  
ABSENT:

**Call to Order:**

- Ms. Dzialo calls the meeting to order at 8:03 AM

**Roll Call:**

- Ms. Dzialo noted those present and absent.

**Minutes:**

- A motion to approve the minutes of February 15, 2023 is made by Mr. Mulligan, seconded by Mr. Fagan, all approve.

**Public Comment:**

- Peter Conyers is a member of the Manchester Board of Directors and he is acting as the liason for the Manchester Veteran Advisory Committee which is interested in honoring local veterans through a banner program. He notes that one of the areas the committee has discussed is putting banners celebrating local veterans on the Main Street light poles. He also informs the board that there were discussions with the Board of Directors, and that names and donations (~\$250) have been submitted for candidates who will be honored with a banner and that there are private and civic organizations who have donated to this program. The committee hasn't made broad efforts for support mainly to limit the numbers of candidates while the

committee learns about how to make this program happen and gauge the amount of interest. He notes that it was meant to be small in the first year (10-15) and grow from there, but the current projection is roughly 25 banners. Mr. Mulligan would like to know how long the banners will be displayed. Mr. Conyers responds that there isn't a set timeframe yet but they are thinking of Veterans Day - Memorial Day (5-6 months in total). Mr. Conyers also mentions that they would like them up at least from the Bicentennial through Cruisin' and that the committee wouldn't want to push out the existing Downtown banner program and would look to utilize the flagged light poles. Ms. Sottile notes that these banners are significantly smaller than the Downtown banners and would benefit from hanging lower and on the pedestrian side for better viewing. Mr. Conyers notes that South Windsor doesn't have a Main Street like ours and hangs the banners somewhat anywhere and so he is open to both options. It is of his preference that people who are walking actually notice the banners rather than the banners competing with the high-speed traffic on Main Street. Ms. Sottile feels that installing them on the pedestrian side rather than street-side would give that project its own focus rather than trying to mix or clash with the existing banners. Mr. Conyers also mentions that if the family of the veteran requests it, they should be able to keep the banner after display and that the South Windsor program gives banners back to the donor business for at least one year before the business usually donates it to the family. Ms. Sottile inquires about displaying near or at the Vietnam Memorial? Mr. Conyers agrees that some Vietnam vets preferred to be up there if possible, however the committee preferred having the banners on larger poles rather than just poles mounted in the ground. He also clarifies that the focus this time is on Manchester's living veterans, but the future may change that. Ms. Sottile would really like people to be able to read and take the time to actually see the entire content of the banner. She remarks that even the Downtown's banners are very difficult to read in their entirety. While she can't speak for vets, not being one, but wants to make sure that if any flags displayed on Main Street come down for the new banners that the veterans would be acceptable to that. Mr. Conyers responds that from what he has heard, that yes, the veterans would tolerate the usage of the poles for these banners rather than removing the flags for any other purpose. Ms. LeBel mentions that the banners could be no longer than 18" by 42" per Town Engineering. The sample banner is 24" by 48". A motion to support the Veterans group hanging their banners on the alternating poles on the pedestrian side is made by Mr. Mulligan, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

### **Manager's Report:**

- Ms. LeBel reports that she was contacted by an individual in February about the bench outside their business where a person has apparently made residence on that bench. The constables have verified that individual's statement. The individual asked about moving the bench. Ms. Dzialo feels

that it would be a project if the District has to move every bench due to the benches being used. Ms. LeBel clarifies that the complaintant states that the individual in question is drinking and relieving himself on nearby buildings. Mr. Mulligan doesn't think we should be moving benches for the sake of moving the problem from one place to another. Ms. Dzialo would like to see MACC get in touch with the business to better assist them and the individual in question. Mr. Mulligan would like to remind the complaintant that they should contact the police whenever there's illegal activity.

- Special Event Permit App – Ms. LeBel is still trying to get the permit process online. She has not been able to arrange a meeting with Chief Darby. There is a template made with input from different departments as to their requirements but the chief wants to retain the existing form which lacks the information those other departments require. Ms. Dzialo notes that we have been waiting more than a year for contact from the Chief. Mr. DuBaldo believes that the permit application questions can be pulled from our form and be used to populate the police form, so the data we (and the other departments) can have the data needed and the police can have the data and order *they* require. Mr. Anderson recommends getting in touch with IS to see if they could assist with the construction of those forms.
- Town of Manchester Special Event Permit – Ms. LeBel was contacted by Harold Jacobs about holding the farmers market in the Forest Street Lot as they have in years past. The Board feels that their long history of successful and beneficial markets should continue as long as that parking lot is able to support their endeavor.

### **Commissioner Reports:**

- Chair – Not at this time
- Vice-Chair – Not at this time
- Secretary – Not at this time
- Finance – Not present

### **Finance:**

- 22/23 YTD Budget – Ms. LeBel reports that the adopted budget has been finalized with the Town; the budget attached does not include February's parking nor the banner revenue.

### **Parking:**

- Ms. LeBel went to the free lots to take pictures of the existing signage so that the incorrect signage at the Yellow lot at St. James lot can be corrected. She further reports that she is still trying to fine-tune the chalking reports from Passport; there is a long delay between when she asks for things and

when they follow up; the reporting right now is not very user-friendly.

### **Marketing:**

- Ms. Dzialo reports that the marketing committee had a meeting March 3; there hasn't been much response from businesses to engage with events we are trying to hold. Ms. Press is currently getting the Butterfly Stroll set up and some of the non-profits will set up in the Forest Lot (this needs an activity). The staple events are also being planned out (Holiday on Main, Scarecrows, etc.) for the coming seasons.

### **Maintenance & Beautification:**

- Ms. LeBel reports that the award for the maintenance contract went to JScape Landscaping as he was the low-bid and his references all checked out. She notes that he was quite personable and organized; he is also friendly with the previous contractor. She received word that the pansies are ready for pickup and that our planters are being installed this week.

### **Constituent Support Report:**

- None present

### **Downtown Development Specialist Report:**

- Mr. Anderson reports that the barriers will be out around April 20 and he hopes the weather will be good. The development RFP for the former Tong building is due April 26 and that Ms. Dzialo will sit on the committee. He notes that there is a lot of activity about the former Lucky Taco property. He mentions that there are some other vacancies (Foran Nutrition and the former location of Forest Wine & Liquor). Mr. Fagan informs the Board that Urban Lodge has taken over Lucky to Go to they can operate food and beverage in-house. He expects to be up and running late summer (September-ish).

### **Old Business:**

- CT Main Street Center Annual District Assessment - Ms. Anderson and Ms. LeBel met with Carl Rosa about the annual assessment review. She reports that some of the suggestions he made were to have an inventory of businesses and employees on Main Street so we can identify the purchasing power of this area. He also suggested a better branding logo/slogan to put on bags, mugs to bring in revenue. He had also asked us to consider having an inventory of our public art. Mr. Rosa also reiterated updated strategic plan and work plan as well as a fund development strategy. He highly recommended having a database of volunteers would be helpful and allow for making a way to recognize them at the end of the year much easier. Ms. Jeffery would like to see volunteer shirts for the large events so new people and visitors can be assisted in finding whatever they are looking for.

- Constable Jackets – Ms. LeBel reports that the order has finally arrived and that the jackets were slightly less expensive than originally anticipated. She also notes that they will need to be embroidered.

#### **New Business:**

- None at this time.

#### **Public Comment:**

- Ms. Sottile would like to know how the DuBaldo expansion will be affected with the Urban Lodge expansion? Mr. Mulligan replies that there may be some change but isn't sure yet. Ms. Sottile would like to know what the \$12,000 and \$1,000 use of fund balance shown on the budget is. Ms. LeBel replies that it's used as a cushion. Ms. Sottile notes that Mr. John Rainaldi's office has a listing of the businesses currently located within the Downtown and wonders if the District would be allowed access to that information? Mr. Anderson says that it's harder to identify businesses by address and easier by taxable entity. Ms. Sottile commented that she has read through the Manchester NEXT proposal and it looks like the Town is looking to update the logo and branding for the Downtown, and there are a lot of things already in place rather than starting from scratch. She is also concerned that nowhere in the Bicentennial program is the District mentioned. She feels that this plan with a managed district is meant to support all of the businesses and it's a little awkward to ask certain businesses to donate without supporting all the businesses. She believes that the Butterfly Stroll and Scarecrow Festival are great events because they involve use of the entire street. However, she feels that the marketing strategy is great if the District were the old Imagine Main Street and she doesn't think that there is staff or time for properly supporting the businesses down here which is what the District was formed to do. People want the District to be clean, safe and have awareness of the entirety of the street. She also doesn't feel that Holiday on Main should be lumped in with Small Business Saturday; having events that bring kids doesn't equate to people shopping.
- Ms. Jeffery would like the Board to ensure that the businesses feel included and want to be part of the District's plans. She cautions that not everyone has money to donate. She believes that it starts to get a little "cliquy" when it's only certain businesses paying in and benefitting from the District's activities. It doesn't have to be that every activity is focused around Firestone, for instance, and that everyone wants to be wanted.
- Ms. Sottile would also greatly appreciate it if businesses could even just clean up their windows. She mentions that there will be a swarm of events from May on which means the Downtown needs to look beautiful. There are some Main Street memory boards in storage which some businesses would love to have and display during the bicentennial celebrations.

- Mr. Fagan would like to see some sort of meetup of the business owners to build camaraderie.
- Mr. DuBaldo notes that in years past the District did have a business social which was usually held on an annual basis.
- Ms. Dzialo would like to clarify that the giveback isn't necessarily to exclude anyone.
- Ms. Sottile believes that the job is still to support everyone in the District not just those who "give back" in advertising. She mentions that the low participation could be due to confusion if there isn't constant communication. She feels that the website doesn't give her the information she needs when she needs it. She propounds that perhaps it's more of a "we need your help and need your response" even if it's Ms. LeBel who needs to get in touch with people. She would like to know what would the Main Street Association would think of the manager's hours being reduced to 20 hours? She feels that there's only so much interest and attention in that short time.

### **Adjourn**

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Mulligan at 9:20 AM, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder