

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

**July 26, 2023
8 AM**

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sophia Dzialo, Chair
Daniel Mulligan, Vice-Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair

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

ALSO PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Lynn Sottile, Esther Jeffery, Joy Press

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Lipiner
Ryan Fagan

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:05 AM

Roll Call:

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of June 21, 2023 is made by Ms. Dzialo, seconded by Mr. Ambia. Mr. DuBaldo notes that there will be some spelling corrections to the minutes. All approve.

Public Comment:

- Nothing at this time

District Chair Report:

- Nothing at this time

Manager's Report:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she followed up on the handicap accessibility complaint from last month's meeting and noted that the proposed

streetscape plan would bolster the accessibility. She further reports that the online permit process is still in-process and the police department may have a working system on-line shortly. Artisan Ink still has the constable jackets for embroidery - they are awaiting suitable backing materials. Ms. LeBel was in contact with the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and they are going to attempt to have a member attend our monthly meetings as they have in the past. Ms. LeBel also reports that in response to the aggressive panhandling noted last month between Purnell Place and Oak Street, the police will send an officer to the affected area. She also addressed the issue previously raised regarding Ginza Spa; there may be some licensing compliance concerns there. Following up further on the community gift card program Giverrang, the processing fee is \$1 + 4% for an e-card, +\$3 +4% for a physical card. She notes that there is a process for businesses to allow use of the Giverrang system at their point-of-sale. Ms. Press believes the on-boarding system they offer is better than the geofencing option they also offer. Ms. Dzialo expresses concern about getting businesses to "buy-in" and support the program. Mr. DuBaldo is concerned about asking a customer to effectively spend \$110 in order to buy a \$100 card through the Giverrang system. Ms. LeBel would like to gauge interest within the Downtown to see if there is enough potential support to explore this program. Ms. Dzialo feels that if we as the Downtown are considering absorbing the fees, there may be other options or better avenues to explore. Mr. Mulligan would like to see Ms. LeBel include the question in her in-person appointments with Downtown businesses. Ms. LeBel further reports that Ken Burkamp is still looking for someone to deliver pumpkins for the Halloween Happenings; Dzen Farms has responded that they will be able to quote pumpkin purchases with delivery around Sept. 1. At last month's meeting, it was noted that there were dead plants in the planters, but the plant in question is umbrella sedge and was not dead. Ms. LeBel informs the Board that she will be on vacation from Friday of this week through Friday of the following week. She would like to know if the Board would like to state a position on the Downtown Streetscape Project. Mr. DuBaldo would like to see more input from the businesses and constituents down here prior to making a position. Mr. Anderson says that his department will be reaching out to the Downtown constituency to garner more input from the Downtown businesses. Ms. LeBel says there has been a bit of conflict about the outdoor dining barriers in that other businesses do not appreciate the loss of parking caused by the barriers. Mr. Anderson states that he receives similar feedback and feels that it's a landlord/Downtown decision. He clarifies that Main Course, Angry Egg, Work_Space had them, so it was not many establishments. Ms. Jeffery would like to note that utilization of the space should be considered; for places that don't have sufficient indoor space it may make more sense than Work_Space (for example) which has plenty of indoor space and doesn't appear to utilize the outdoor space though the parking spaces are blocked off for their use.

Finance:

- 22/23 YTD – Ms. LeBel reports that May's citation revenue was input incorrectly in the Town's system, but that will be corrected. ~\$1700 and ~\$500 respectively.

Parking:

- Ms. LeBel followed up about correcting the parking signage and was informed that the reason the Oak Street lot doesn't have signage is due to underground utilities. She also asked about the historical sign previously installed near Urban Lodge, and was told it may be "quite a while" before that is reinstalled. She asked about wayfinding signage being updated during the streetscape program and Brianna Smith noted that her department could include updates. The rebranding vendor will be holding a tour on August 25; the intent is to bring the vendor Downtown to get them more familiar with what is here to properly create/craft a brand image.
- Ms. LeBel called the residents who have multiple cars on their permits. She noted that one customer complained about the lack of parking available. She reports that Passport will not allow residential permits to add more than one car on a permit. There was another permit owner who was not in the District and that individual has been notified that they will be unable to renew. Mr. Anderson notes that on the open market, most apartments of the size rented Downtown would have only one parking space available. Ms. LeBel mentions that there are parallel spaces near CVS which aren't usually monitored are being used by people using the soccer field. She also reports that the constables will be spreading out their hours to accommodate rolling Saturday shifts.

Marketing:

- Ms. Press has been working with the Planning Department on updating the original checklist to remove specific names and include hyperlinks for departments and regulations.
- New Business Information – Ms. Press reports that there will be both paper and digital packets available, however getting the landlords to let the District know about prospective tenants prior to their arrival would be appreciated. Mr. Anderson would like to note that the most commonly "forgotten" information is about signage; whether it's a permit application or facade changes.
- Ms. Press would like to see if there is any interest amongst the commissioners in a meeting to plan for upcoming events. Ms. Dzialo volunteers

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Ms. LeBel will be working on the Downtown Decorations contract. She will talk to Woodland Gardens and the Garden Club about multi-season plantings or possibly planter sponsorships to reduce our installation and maintenance costs for the planters. Mr. Anderson wonders if spraying for weeds is in the maintenance contract as it's getting a little weedy along the sidewalks. Mr. DuBaldo mentions that previous contractors would use string trimmers to combat weed growth along the sidewalks. Ms. Jeffery would like to have the District state what and how the District will benefit businesses who sponsor things like the planters. She believes that doing so could increase the response rate of the sponsorship requests.
- Regarding the 2024-25 banner program Ms. LeBel reports that there are 39 potential banner locations available. The Town has stated that the poles will be replaced as part of the streetscape program. Another concern is whether the veterans program will be expanding and if the District can plan on having poles available for our banner program. Ms. Dzialo would like to see our program rates remain the same.

Constituent Support Report:

- None present

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Mr. Anderson would like to have two items on the agenda next time; one will be a program similar to the 2020 program about code improvements and the other is for fascade and signage improvements.

Old Business:

- None at this time

New Business:

- Nomination of Esther Jeffery for interim position on the Board of Commissioners – Ms. Dzialo motions to nominate Ms. Jeffery for an interim position on the Downtown Manchester Board of Commissioners, Mr. Ambia seconds. All approve.

Public Comment:

- Ms. Sottile has brought some mock-ups of potential banners. Also, she would like to ensure that the flags remain and that the District should recommend that one or the other go to the pedestrian level. She notes that District banners will be larger and multi-sided. She feels that there is some competition for color with the veterans banner. She believes that if the District chooses to move banners to the pedestrian level in the future, we would need new mounting brackets. Also, if poles will be moved or altered as a result of the streetscape program, we would need to make adjustments

anyway especially if locations change. Ms. Sottile reports that she has started updating the sponsorship flyer.

- Ms. Sottile would like to express her opinion on soliciting donations/sponsorships for Downtown; she believes that the marketing efforts do need to focus on the businesses who aren't able to promote themselves due to cost. She notes that we are a diverse area and have a wonderful array of services offered here.
- Ms. Jeffery states that the Locable blog is a very good, free option to be able to increase business visibility. She asks if part of the Downtown packet could also include an offer to assist with Locable? Ms. Dzialo states that is available on the Website and help is still an option available both in-person or through the phone.

Executive Session:

- A motion to enter executive session to discuss employment is made by Mr. Ambia at 9:29 AM, seconded by Ms. Dzialo.
- A motion to exit executive session is made by Mr. Ambia at 10:07 seconded by Ms. Jeffery with no actions taken.

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Ms. Dzialo at 10:07AM, seconded by Ms Jeffery. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder