

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

**September 13, 2023**

**8 AM**

Meeting held at Work\_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Mulligan, Acting Chair  
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary  
Sophia Dzialo  
Ryan Fagan  
Esther Jeffery

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

ALSO PRESENT: Kathy Hatch, Tom Tomko, Faith Stinson, Cece Ndlovu

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair  
Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS  
ABSENT: Millie Texidor – GMCC Representative

**Call to Order:**

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:06 AM

**Roll Call:**

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

**Minutes:**

- A motion to approve the minutes of August 09, 2023 with a change to the Chair position is made by Mr. Fagan, seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

**Public Comment:**

- Mr. Tomko introduces himself to the Board and others and states that he has some comments on the conceptual plan for the redesign of Main Street. Regarding the concept to convert a lot of the angled parking on Main Street to parallell parking would affect his properties quite a bit. He states that the businesses in his building sees 7000 patients; they originally built the property with 28 stalls, there are 8 on the street in front of his building, wuth the plan as presented, it would bring the street parking total to three. Also, consider in winter with snow removal not being the greatest, that available parking spaces would likely reduce from 3 to 2 or even one. He believes that it will likewise be detrimental to other businesses like Manchester Hardware

who have many 15 minute patrons who pull in and go. He thinks that the term “equity” is thrown around a lot and while we in the District have paid taxes for 30-some years, there hasn't been a plan to actually increase the parking at the north or south ends. He feels that there isn't much convenient parking available to tenants either and the Cottage Lot doesn't have much value being so far removed from the street. There's a proposed office building in the Forest Lot (Mr. Anderson interjects that there is no proposal yet just a concept), Mr. Tomko's professional opinion is that the office market is dead and he doesn't think we'll see another office building built in the Downtown; the medical field is taking over hospitals, insurance is working from home; his business has had office buildings available for sale for years; they aren't moving. He has an idea about a strategy for the betterment of Downtown; firstly he would like to see another conceptual plan with no turn lane in the middle. He mentions that when he was on the board years ago, there was an awful time getting traffic to slow. He'd like to see traffic slow down without a turning lane. With that change, he feels there would be enough space for angled parking. He would also love to see snow plowed to the middle and cleared, but doesn't see that happening. He had been told that the funding hasn't been made available for the whole project yet, but he believes that if the Town or Downtown could acquire some housing along Main Street, those buildings could be knocked down to create parking. He states that if there is a major reconstruction, there will be businesses put out of businesses.

Ms. Hatch believes that this two year project will put people under. She feels that the Downtown doesn't have enough parking as it is, with the turn lane, it will turn into a passing lane like on Broad Street. She fears that the street will become a raceway if the plan as presented is constructed.

Mr. Tomko states that the average traffic count is over 16,000 cars per day.

Ms. Hatch asks how will foot traffic work around the rotary? Will pedestrians just walk out in the middle and have the traffic stop? Will there be a bridge? What about the soccer fields and access to those? She feels that many residents don't know anything about this project and she would like to reach out to residents to get their opinions and then meet with the Town.

Mr. Anderson says that this is the beginning, a concept. There will be public outreach and comment available; he would like to meet with Ms. Hatch and others to get input on the project before anything becomes set in stone.

Ms. Hatch also expresses concern about potential issues with Mass schedules.

### **District Chair Report:**

- Nothing at this time

## **Manager's Report:**

- Ms. LeBel reports that she and Cece have been visiting businesses, which has been great. During one of their visits, the owner of Sukhothai expressed that he would like to have the trash can outside their building moved slightly so it doesn't affect their diners. Ms. LeBel notes that Mr. Bockus' department has moved the can. There was a flooding issue on Birch Street at last month's meeting; the flooding happened again. Keith Volkert mentioned that they will be removing the mulch from the parking lot. Ms. LeBel was also able to meet with Dale Rival who asked about a strip of concrete which didn't have mulch and only had weeds, Ms. LeBel was able to verify that strip should have been mulched and weeded; the contractor will make that adjustment next year. She also met with Filomena's, who explained that the banner he had installed on the light pole was for the Cruisin' on Main event and he removed the banner. Ms. LeBel received an email from the police department who had conducted compliance checks on Ginza Spa and have shut them down; they have since reopened. Ms. LeBel reports that she received a phone call from an individual representing an person in the Market on Main building who isn't able to park nearby his property due to the close spaces being occupied by non-tenants. She also states that she had a meeting with Sono Studios (doing the Town of Manchester rebranding), which was a lively discussion. This was a preliminary meeting about other logos and colors.

Mr. Tomko states that the City of Bangor did a jingle years ago which, in his opinion, was exceptionally effective and good.

Ms. Lebel further reports that at that particular meeting, it was brought out that Manchester usually does things with a youthful spirit and states that there will be another meeting this month. Ms. LeBel has not received any applications through the online permit application yet. There was talk among the Town as to whether the permit would be needed on private property. Ms. LeBel received an email from Cronin (a Marketing agency) to raise awareness about a small business boost fund. Since then, she has had several conversations with them to pass along business listings; the agency will be training canvassers to talk to those businesses. She also informs the board that there is a statue dedication at Bennet tomorrow.

## **Finance:**

- 22/23 YTD - The new fiscal year just started, so revenue is only just coming in. Ms. LeBel would like to start working in on the annual budget. She notes that there was a slight overage of \$26.54 on the embroidery costs due to needing to install a patch on the reversible jacket.

## **Parking:**

- Ms. LeBel reports she received an update from Passport about a hand-held license scanner; the cost is \$1000, with a monthly cost of \$200. At Constable Hartnett's last day, he performed a walkthrough with training for Ms. LeBel on the Passport handheld. The job posting is open with 12 applicants so far and is "open until filled."

### **Marketing:**

- Ms. Dzialo reports that the Marketing Committee has had a few meetings so far regarding the fall initiatives; scarecrow festival, Halloween Happenings, etc. The Marketing Committee would like to do a trick or treat bag decorating event prior to the trick or treat event. So far, there haven't been many responses to the form. The current plan is to hire an activity shuttle for Small Business Saturday to assist people in moving up and down the street (Forest Street and up).

Ms. LeBel reports that she called an individual about volunteering as Santa, he has volunteered to be on the shuttle this year. Regarding the pumpkins, Mr. Mulligan and Mr. Fagan volunteer to provide trucks if necessary for delivery of the mini pumpkins for the decorating event. Ms. LeBel states that the welcome packet has myriad information about the Downtown which can be provided to new tenants.

### **Maintenance & Beautification:**

- Ms. LeBel put the banner contract up to bid there were two bids (it closed yesterday) \$12,090 for two years, creating, installation, takedown, etc. Downtown Decorations did a two-bid contingent upon the decorations contract as well at \$15,191 without, if they have the contract for decorations; it's \$11,611. Because we have not put the bid out for the holiday decorations contingency, options would need to be considered. Lynn Sottile provided another possible design alteration to banner #3 which was the selected banner. There is no strong preference, but pink was a slight preference. The banner sponsor deadline is currently September 30; Ms. LeBel would like to see about extending the deadline a few weeks.

### **Constituent Support Report:**

- Not at this time

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

- Downtown Specialist Report - (Economic Development Specialist) – Mr. Anderson reports regarding the ARPA grant programs; we talked about signage requirements in the past and his department is working on a friendly reminder about moving/flashing signs. Through COVID, that aspect of signage enforcement was not active but due to uptick in violations, it is necessary to resume. The Board of Directors has assigned Mr. Anderson's department to be the conduit for grant funds to businesses. He notes that

there will be a Facade & Signage Program and a Business investment fund (similar to the Downtown 2020 program). Grant amounts are available between \$2,000 and \$10,000 with a dollar for dollar match. The Business Investment Fund grant is \$10,000-\$120,000 with a three to one match required by applicant and 50+ year buildings prioritized.

**Old Business:**

- None at this time

**New Business:**

- None at this time

**Public Comment:**

- Mr. Tomko inquires as to the status of the reserve fund. Ms. LeBel informs him that the reserve fund is still in-place.

Mr. Anderson reiterates that his department will continue to perform outreach about the improvement program and the number of parking spaces on the street will not be reduced.

- Mr. Tomko states that when he was involved in the original Main Street reconstruction that Board was told that DOT required 4 lanes and certain street lighting. Mr. Tomko states that it's "our Main Street", and that we need a plan to get what works for everybody. He further mentions that real estate is a tough game right now, we may not see that status change in the next 15 years or so; he notes that even the mall is suffering right now.

**Adjourn**

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Fagan at 9:12 AM, seconded by Ms. Jeffery. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder