

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

December 13, 2023

8 AM

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Mulligan, Acting Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair
Sophia Dzialo
Ryan Fagan

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

ALSO PRESENT: Richard Clark, Tom Tomko, Joe Datta, Pamela Marvasti,
Concilla Ndlovu

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Esther Jeffery
Joseph Lipiner

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: Millie Texidor – GMCC Representative

Call to Order:

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:09 AM

Roll Call:

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of November 8, 2023 is made by Mr. Fagan seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

Public Comment:

- Mr. Tomko states his intention to join the Commission again. He feels that he has some ideas about marketing and branding in particular that he would like to share and help with.
- Mr. Clark noticed that in front of the law offices next to Angry Egg (Diana, Conti, and Tunila) there's an elevation issue with the sidewalk which needs to be addressed; he believes it's a trip hazard. Also, in front of the Thai restaurant (Sukhothai), there's a patch of concrete missing which makes for

a non-level surface. It was recommended that he use the Town's "Mark-it" system to alert the Town of those deficiencies.

- Mr. Datta expresses concern about someone breaking windows in the area. He mentions that he has reported the issues he has seen with the police, but doesn't know if there's any way to prevent those issues going forward. He would like to see an increase in police presence Downtown which may curb that activity.
- Mr. Clark would like to see the police sub-station staffed more frequently to make it easier to "pop in" and talk to them.
- Mr. Anderson suggests the District could re-invite the police to attend meetings periodically to give status updates every few months.

District Chair Report:

- Nothing at this time

Manager's Report:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she received a voicemail about a lift in the Brown lot in a space which is usually utilized for leaf and snow piles. An e-mail was sent to Chris Sovers to inquire but she has not heard back yet. Mr. Tomko mentions that the building owner has purchased an adjoining property with the intent of creating a parking lot. Mr. Anderson says with the construction taking longer than anticipated, the lift will likely be there for a while.

Ms. LeBel received an email from Christine Ladd who was a vendor at the Spruce Street Market which happened on the same day as "Holiday on Main." She mentioned the Spruce Street Market had disappointing turnout that day and was hoping that in upcoming years, the events could be joined. Ms. LeBel plans on explaining our events and planning and that it wasn't a Town event (like the Spruce Street Market is). Cynde Acanto would like to cross-promote with us next year.

Emma from Silk City Coffee asked why there weren't any recycling containers available on the street. Mr. DuBaldo said that in the past, the reasoning has been costs involved in maintaining the containers as they had been treated as trashcans rather than recycling. Mr. Fagan feels that if they would like to put their own can out during business hours and maintain it on their own they might be able to do so.

2024 monthly meetings - the dates have been proposed and will be presented at the annual meeting in January. Mr. Tomko asks Ms. LeBel if she has contact information for each business/property owner. She said that she has most. Ms. Dzialo notes that we are required to communicate certain things (like the annual meeting) through certain methods such as postcards.

Ms. LeBel states that in the past, some people had mentioned that morning meetings might be prohibitive to attendance.

Ms. LeBel got a sneak-peek at the Jamaican restaurant - they are hoping to have the restaurant open at the end of December and are very excited to be opening. Mr. Anderson asks if they have submitted any sign applications yet, Mr. Ambia has not seen a proposal from them yet.

Ms. LeBel and Ms. Parseliti met briefly on December 11 to get more guidance on how to best perform her managerial tasks.

Manchester High School asked if the District would sponsor their winter sports schedule cards for \$350.

Finance:

- The proposed budget has been updated with a salary breakdown and Holiday on Main (due to the increased costs for that event). While Ms. LeBel was updating the budget, she noticed that MUNIS did not have an entry for our Passport fee; she reports that the Town did not pay that on-time but have since expedited it. Ms. LeBel called the Assessor's office to inquire about any potential increase in revenue due to the town-wide re-evaluations but they have not been able to respond to her. Mr. Mulligan notes that our expenses have been going up and we will need to figure out what rate the taxes should be set and how much we would need to tap the reserves if needed. Ms. LeBel mentions that there is a carry-over line for Print and Other Advertising income set as \$6000 which doesn't seem to be utilized at the rate it is set. Ms. LeBel notes that the salaries line may need to be adjusted. Ms. Dzialo states with the success of Small Business Saturday, it's evident that the experiences we had there can contribute to adding more events of similar effect. It may be time to ask if there's a candidate who can contribute the hours that we're asking the marking assistant to perform so that those tasks can be handled by someone other than the Downtown Manager.
- Holiday Lights - Ms. LeBel reports that the update from Downtown Decorations has been received, the costs for banners and decorations was significantly higher than anticipated (the snowflakes and costs have risen significantly) but we could trim some costs by having the decorations on half of the poles. Mr. Mulligan would like to see more consistency in the decorating as there are sections where it's not every/other pole and there are gaps of at least four poles without wrapping. Mr. Tomko asks if in the future, the contract could be set for a spring renewal so it doesn't happen mid-install/removal. A motion to approve an expenditure not to exceed \$1000 for the purpose of installing the banners separate from the removal of the holiday decorations is made by Mr. Ambia, seconded by Mr. Fagan all approve.

- Ms. LeBel notes that the maintenance contract is up for renewal, JScape is not willing to renew even with the CPI. There are some changes from last time which will need to be adjusted prior to the bid package going back out.
- Ms. LeBel also notes that the Holiday on Main event likely will need a increase but that was a very successful event. Print and other ads would be reduced due to lack of consistent usage, but as that contains the marketing budget, it will remain as-is. Banner ads are estimated at \$8700. Mr. Tomko would like to see loop advertising as a method to explore.

Parking:

- Ms. LeBel reports that the Town has started construction of EV charging stations in the Purnell Place parking lot. Also, that the parking committee offered the constable position to Patrick Dooley who accepted the position. He worked with Constable Rick for a few days and seems to have picked up the system quickly and appears to have a good work ethic. He noticed and reported a worn-out sign which the Town quickly replaced. Ms. LeBel informs the Board that she put a help ticket in to Passport for individuals which didn't renew their parking permits correctly. In July, Bernie received an email from an individual who inquired about the lack of handicap accessible parking in the Purnell Place lot; Jim Mayer looked at the lots and determined that Purnell Place is short one handicap space but one cannot be installed until spring.

Marketing:

- None at this time

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Ms. LeBel reports that she called Woodland Gardens about the flower choices and reordered the pansies and grasses for next year.

Constituent Support Report:

- Not at this time

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Ms. Ndlovu reports that grants have been awarded to Beahive, and one to Wooster Street Pizza, to relocate to the Lenox Plaza. Her department is going to start doing little Reels within the area businesses to assist in driving traffic to the local businesses. The first of the series will be El Sol; there will be a signup for the future and run throughout the year. There is also a number of influencers who work with towns to assist in driving traffic. Mr. Tomko asks for more information about the grants which she assures him she will provide. Mr. Tomko would also like to know if businesses in the Tong building

were paid to leave and if those businesses also received or will be receiving grants.

Old Business:

- None at this time

New Business:

- Mr. DuBaldo reports that the Tree Lighting ceremony was well attended.

Public Comment:

- Ms. Marvasti expresses concern about the situation on Spruce Street where an individual brandished a firearm.

Other Business:

- None at this time

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Fagan at 10:00 AM, seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder