

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

**January 18, 2023
8 AM**

Meeting held at Manchester Room, Town Hall, 41 Center 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: Esther Jeffery, Lynn Sottile

STAFF PRESENT: Bernie LeBel, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Lipiner
 Tarek Ambia

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT:

Call to Order:

- Ms. Dzialo calls the meeting to order at 8:00 AM

Roll Call:

- Ms. Dzialo noted those present and absent and asks the commissioners to introduce themselves.

Public Comment:

- Ms. Jeffery inquires about the building at 942 Main and whether the Town is buying it to demolish it and then rebuild? Mr. Anderson confirms yes, the Town is planning on doing that, and there aren't any directional changes to Main Street, but there will likely be some changes to the parking entry/exits of that parking lot. He notes that there isn't a time-frame for this right now, but it will be a multi-year construction project and will be phased in a way that it doesn't shut down the street for a length of time. Ms. Jeffery asks if this was a separate vote? Mr. Anderson states yes, the Town has been looking at acquiring that property for some time and now that the library project is moving forward, the Directors felt this was the time to move forward on it. The order will likely be 942 purchase/demolition, library construction, then streetscape improvements.

Committee Reports:

- Finance – Ms. Dzialo notes that attached is a current YTD budget which is also published on the Website and distributed via e-mail to the constituents. We are now beginning to receive monthly deposits of parking violations, we are on track for permit sales, we are also exploring new ways of raising revenue through local sponsorships. We increased our staff rates and added the second constable position; Ryan Fagan and Urban Lodge saved us approximately \$1000 during the Scarecrow Festival. We may see some additional expenses in landscaping (our landscaper declined to continue the contract due to cost hikes and the Town of Manchester will be able to remove significant (12"+) snow windrows if necessary but will charge roughly \$5500).
- Parking – She further states that we are into a full year of the parking enforcement and payment program and we are still learning the system. We received a reduction of the yearly fees based on issues we had with the program and we enforce parking 38 hours per week. We continue to focus on Main Street and will utilize the reports to better keep parking turnover high and have spaces available for patrons. We are in the process of reviewing the new chalking reports. Ms. Jeffery asks Ms. LeBel to assist her in the parking pass renewals.
- Marketing – Ms. Dzialo reports that we have shifted efforts to amplify business' sales and discounts. Our goal is to host events in the Downtown to showcase all of our businesses and increase their reach. We transitioned marketing from the administrative duties of the manager into a separate position.

New Business:

- Highlights of 2022 – Ms. LeBel reports that the District launched a new website through Locable which offers searchable and updateable directories, blog, calendar, local connections. We can use this information to publish content to our constituents through social media and email blasts. We would like to add new businesses to our connections database and offer them support to create that content. Second Saturdays put an emphasis on local businesses and bringing back, Firestone hosted wildly successful markets, Work_Space hosted musicians, we saw huge turnout for the butterfly stroll, Trick or Treat, Small Business Saturday, and Holiday on Main. She also notes that the scarecrow festival was the largest we've had and the Beller's Summer Concert Series was well-received. Cruisin' on Main and the Road Race remain large draws. The DMSSD is thrilled that the library will remain Downtown.
- Goals for 2023 – Ms. Dzialo reports that the District hopes to utilize our new parking data to make the most of our parking enforcement hours and how to best use our parking revenue. We would like to establish and utilize our committees. We would like to grow our business communication and have

more participation on committees and the Board. 2023 is Manchester's Bicentennial; businesses are encouraged to participate with a concentration on the second Saturday in May. While marketing efforts can be expensive, local sponsorships have been a way for us to fund certain events. We are testing out a new model for give-back events, the first will be held in February to fund initiatives like Second Saturdays or Trick-or-Treat. We look forward to supporting the Town in the new library project.

Proposed Budget 2023-24:

- Ms. LeBel notes that there are a few significant increases: Parking rent was increased based on projected revenues. Banner program revenues also increased due to changes in that program. Salaries have increased as we have projected the costs based on the previous six months of data. In expenses, there will be new costs associated with creating the banners; snow removal was not allocated last year but exists now due to the ability of the Town to remove snow from the edge of the sidewalks.

Public Comment:

- Ms. Sottile inquires about fine revenue which has been about \$10,000 in years past and wonders if this is this a real estimate? Ms. LeBel states that the District has taken in over \$4000 over the past 6 months, but we are now getting revenue monthly rather than in bulk at the end of the year as in years prior. Ms. Sottile wonders if there is a way to break out the revenue for tickets? Ms. LeBel will see about getting a report showing which types of citations are issued. Ms. Sottile inquires about the fees for Passport? Ms. LeBel will see about getting reports on the fees for permits, tickets, everything.
- Ms. Sottile would like to know what the \$12,000 for the fund balance was used for? Ms. LeBel informs her that we did not use it last year but it was a placemaker just in case we had any shortfall.
- Ms. Sottile asks if the new website costs are separate or included somewhere? Ms. LeBel believes it is in Print and Other Advertising. Ms. Sottile would like to see a little more breakout of the marketing expenses.
- Ms. Sottile asks if Passport is paying for itself yet. Ms. LeBel responds that the District pays a flat fee of roughly \$20,000 for licensing, additionally, fees for permits etc. but that does not seem to exceed our budgeted costs.
- Ms. Sottile feels that with the previous system of chalking, it seems like the revenue was much higher. Ms. LeBel states that parking sessions are roughly on par, violations are declining some due to the free lots but also due to education of the parking and payment systems. Ms. Dzialo adds that the system now allows visitors to have an option to pay to stay rather than just

have a ticket at the end of the day. What we're seeing is that people are using the program in the way it was intended.

- Ms. Sottile feels the two hour limit seems to be working and asks if the District anticipates having to spend fund balance on this program? Ms. Dzialo replies that with the new reporting features of Passport we should be able to forecast that more appropriately.
- Ms. Sottile questions the sustainability based on the high costs of the annual fees versus the cost of a stick of chalk. Mr. Anderson says that the fees are kind of a secondary consequence, but the biggest benefit was to provide parking options to customers which the first system couldn't handle. Hopefully as reports become easily produceable it would be nice to send those out on a regular basis.
- Ms. Jeffery expresses that there were a number of glitches in the system at the beginning.
- Ms. Sottile notes that she sat in on a few of the Zoom meetings with Passport and they were insistent upon having "full day" coverage; because the District doesn't do that, it seems like it's not fitting their plans. Mr. Mulligan adds that the District also offers free parking options which is totally unusual for them. Mr. Anderson states that we really pushed to maintain those free-parking areas with the Passport system.
- Ms. Sottile has noticed that over the past 6 months, it seems like the website hasn't been updated much and would like to know who is the responsible party for keeping that updated. She feels that the business listing section is one of the most important things on the site as well as the minutes and agendas. She says that for the past three years, agendas or minutes have not been posted on a regular basis. Ms. LeBel is aware of that need and she will work toward getting those items updated.

Adjourn - There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Dan, seconded by Ryan at 8:40. All approve.

Adjourn

- There being no further business a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Mulligan at 8:40 AM, seconded by Mr. Fagan. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder