

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

**March 12, 2025
8 AM**

Meeting held at Work_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
 Sophia Dzialo (phone)
 Esther Jeffery
 Ryan Fagan

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

ALSO PRESENT: Bernie LeBel
 Nick Sanguinetti
 Lynn Schultz

STAFF ABSENT: Caroline Socha, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Daniel Mulligan, Chair
 Joseph Datta
 Tarek Ambia, Finance Co-Chair

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
ABSENT: Millie Texidor – GMCC Representative

Call to Order:

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

Roll Call:

- Mr. DuBaldo noted those present and absent.

Minutes:

- A motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2025 is made by Mr. Fagan, seconded by Ms. Jeffery. All approve.

Public Comment:

- O&G Industries – Mr. Sanguinetti reports that things are moving quickly; the building is down and the foundation is about to be removed. Some of the geothermal wells have been completed, but there's still a little more work. Scope and bid reviews are in process and some have been approved by the building committee. He states that it will be a bit busier and noisier shortly. Mr. Anderson notes that Ms. Zackin has expressed appreciation about the installation of the banners on the fencing. Mr. Sanguinetti says that concrete will be roughly 4-6 weeks but we won't see a start to that for at least another 4 weeks. Ms. Sottile asks if there will be a basement or slab. Mr.

Sanguinetti says it will be a mechanical basement with a little bit of room for staff. He feels that the building will be beautiful and quite purposeful.

District Chair Report:

- None present

GMCC Report:

- None present

Manager's Report:

- Ms. Socha reports that we are showing slight overages on a few items, but they should balance out with some of our line items under budget. Namely, two of the events were over budget by \$1330; but salaries are under budget. While we're down one constable and the marketing assistant hasn't had much billable time there is a significant underage there. Will table any budget movements until Finance is available. The Mountain View Landscaping contract was renewed at a 2.5% increase and she will have a walk-through soon to talk about issues from last year and re-review the scope of the work to be performed. The Work_Space building is for sale with an interested buyer. She also states that we applied but were not awarded a grant from the Town for marketing.

Finance:

- None present

Downtown Development Specialist Report:

- Mr. Anderson reports that it's just about outdoor dining season; the permitting is simple especially if the business has done it before and he notes that it is required if there is table service outside. The weekend Purnell closures are still on schedule for Thursday through Sunday beginning around the start of April. Mr. Fagan notes that we had decided last year that the parking space conversions to dining had run their course and the Board doesn't feel that we would change the position. Mr. Anderson says that there could be space available where there aren't parking spaces like at Firestone or perhaps at 942 Main. Regarding the sale of Work_Space, he says that an existing Downtown business has expressed an interest in building and maintaining a "Downtown Business Incubator" at Work_Space. However, there are questions about all the arts&culture things in the first floor which would need to be moved at some point in the next two years after July 1, but the gallery will still operate and look as it is until then. Mr. DuBaldo asks about retaining the District office through the two year plan. Mr. Anderson will be talking with the new owner about things like that but it would seem that he would be interested in retaining tenants especially on the first floor. Ms. Socha would like to see a lease agreement through the two year plan.

Ms. Jeffery would also like to have clarity over whether the District would still have access to the gallery. Mr. Anderson feels that yes, that section of the building would still be rented to the gallery and we would be able to retain the status quo. Ms. Socha asks if the District meetings would qualify as a Town meeting in the 15 year plan. Mr. Anderson will explore adding that to the existing agreement. He also states that the 942 Main Street RFP is out and responses are due April 17; there has been good feedback but no way to know about the responses until the deadline especially considering the rising costs of construction. He also reports that Save Downtown has chosen to sue the Town to prevent the streetscape project and retain 110 spaces in the Forest Street Lot.

Parking:

- Ms. Socha reports that she, Mr. Fagan, and Mr. Mulligan have talked about doing a walkthrough with the constable to see what all the processes are. Dates for that activity will be coming along shortly. Based on what is seen on the walkthrough, a determination about the viability of Passport should be made. Ms. Socha has been meeting with other vendors to explore their processes; but some don't offer all of the services we currently use.

Marketing:

- Ms. Jeffery reports that we had our first District social which had a great turnout. We saw new faces and people seemed happy with the event. The committee would like to offer the hosting to other businesses if anyone else is interested. She states that Second Saturday event dates have been set and we are planning those events out. Ms. Jeffery presents a gift to Ms. LeBel for her retirement.

Maintenance & Beautification:

- Nothing further

Old Business:

- None at this time

New Business:

- None at this time

Public Comment:

- Ms. Sottile asks about the 110 spaces, will that entire lot be sold? Mr. Anderson says that the RFP states that those proposals need public parking access in the new development but it's not very specific. Ms. Sottile has some questions regarding the expenditures of fund balance: she spoke about using the fund balance to pay for beautification items like new planters. Ms. Socha would like to see those come through with the

streetscape project. Mr. Anderson says there will be an opportunity for folks to express their desires for those types of updates in the project. Ms. Sottile is concerned about the District having something forced on them, and whether that would mean that we lose any of our historic district labeling. She feels that the District is unique in that aspect, and it's part of who we are. Mr. Anderson says that while he didn't care for the signage, he does appreciate the historic aspect and we do need to retain that going forward. Though, not everyone will agree with whatever decisions are made and we would like to survey to come to a best compromise or selection. Ms. Sottile asks if after analyzation, would the District be on the hook for maintenance of all the plantings and planters that are currently proposed? While the proposed updates look beautiful, Main Street needs a refresh and we need to be proud of where we live and work. She notest that there were some garden areas in the plan (some of which she feels will likely never happen) but the planters we have are in such rough shape. Ms. Jeffery wonders if we could at least powerwash and paint them. Ms. Sottile also notes that there's at least one cracked bench and wonders what can be done to give a quick touch-up to get us by until the updates take place? Ms. Socha notes that she had conversed with Gary about electrical outlets being able to run decorative lighting in the new plans. Ms. Sottile recommend self-watering planters to ease the burden on the landscapers. Mr. Fagan asks if there would be opportunities for people to paint he planters like they did with the concrete barriers? Mr. Anderson recommends meeting with Mark at Public Works do discuss that. Ms. Sottile asks if the Town would be willing to supplement any planter costs now. Mr. Anderson can't answer definitively, but would assume no. Mr. Fagan would like to see what the options are and see which would be viable. Ms. Sottile says that Imagine Main Street was in charge of the benches, some of those are really old and may be past their service life. Ms. Sottile also recommends Mystic's parking program to see what they are using. Ms. Socha asks about the Gateway Garden and whether the letters could be moved to the top of the wall due to lack of visibility due to the landscaping. Mr. Anderson would see if that could be incorporated into the streetscape project.

Other Business:

- None at this time

Executive Session:

- A motion to enter executive session to discuss personnel is made by Ms. Dzialo at 9:11, seconded by Ms. Jeffery.
- A motion to exit executive session is made by Mr. Fagan at 9:44, seconded by Ms. Jeffery with no actions taken.

Adjourn

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Fagan seconded by Ms. Jeffery at 9:44 AM. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder