

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

**May 14, 2025  
8 AM**

Meeting held at Work\_Space, 903 Main Street

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Adam DeLaura  
Jim Pearl  
Lynn Sottile  
Kate Sulick

STAFF PRESENT: Caroline Socha, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tarek Ambia, Finance Co-Chair

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS  
ABSENT: Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development  
Millie Texidor - GMCC Representative

**Call to Order:**

- Mr. Mulligan calls the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

**Roll Call:**

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

**Minutes:**

- A motion to approve the minutes of April 12, 2025 is made by Ms. Jeffery, seconded by Ms. Dzialo. All approve.

**Public Comment:**

- None at this time

**O&G Update:**

- Mr. Pearl reports that last week, they tied into the water service on Main Street. The foundation work is about 3 weeks away - they are waterproofing and backfilling. The construction team is planning to erect steel around the end of June. Ms. Jeffery asks if they are working Saturdays now. Mr. Pearl confirms that yes, they are working 6 days per week through October until

the building is watertight. Ms. Jeffery was concerned due to the Second Saturday events and not being made aware of that weekend work plan; there was a lot of noise impacting the event. Mr. Pearl would like a little notice prior to upcoming events to see if there is leeway in what work can be done during the event times. Mr. Datta is concerned about the shaking from the site affecting his property and business and the excessive water flow through his property which has led to long-standing water pools. Mr. Pearl said that they have put some 3/4 stone on the ground to help mitigate that concern and made a drainage hole for the excess water. He believes that once grading is complete it should be evident if that water will be a continuing issue.

### **District Chair Report:**

- Save Downtown Manchester - Mr. Mulligan reports that the District had a request from Save Downtown Manchester to assist in funding their lawsuit. Mr. Mulligan does not know if we have a precedent for donating to an organization for those purposes. Mr. DuBaldo has not yet found records of the District donating to a similar organization for those purposes. Mr. Mulligan disagrees with the Town's position on the lawsuit and feels that the group does have valid complaints. Ms. Jeffery is torn because she would like to see Manchester improve and get better, but doesn't feel that we can speak for all our constituents without getting feedback from them. Ms. Socha recommends legal council prior to committing to anything. Mr. Datta would like to see every business have an opportunity to respond. Ms. Jeffery notes that many businesses have off-hours and/or are appointment only; personal visits could be difficult. Mr. Fagan asks about the completeness of our business owner contact list. He also asks about the timeline of the requested funding. Mr. Mulligan says that there was not a definitive timeline presented to him and it didn't seem like an immediate need. The Board would like to create an online survey for the voting members of the District. Mr. Mulligan will draft some survey questions. Ms. Dzialo would like to know if any projected donations would be better suited for advertising businesses (the District) during the construction phases. Mr. Fagan doesn't feel that we have any answer now aside from creating and processing a survey which can be presented at the next meeting. Mr. Datta would like to see if the Town or Downtown can provide him with some temporary parking assistance for his customers as he has lost a significant amount of revenue monthly due to the new limited parking available on his block. Mr. Mulligan will speak with Mr. Anderson about ways the Town can ease that parking issue.

### **GMCC Report:**

- None present

### **Manager's Report:**

- Nothing additional

**Finance:**

- Ms. Socha reports that there will be end of year fiscal adjustments made in the next few weeks after the Finance Committee convenes.

**Downtown Development Specialist Report:**

- Mr. DeLaura reports that the RFPs for the 942 Main site are undergoing a vetting process.

**Parking:**

- Ms. Socha reports that our handicap signage indicate the minimum fine is \$150, but the citations have only been issued for \$90. The State Statute is that the minimum fine for that violation is \$150, but the Town disagrees with that due to a possibly outdated ordinance. Mr. Mulligan says that the State Statute is unclear if municipalities have the ability to charge less than the state minimum. Mr. Mulligan reports that the Police Department does not feel that it's necessary to swear in new constables anymore. Ms. Socha reports that the Town's parking violations are not in line with ours. Mr. DuBaldo wonders why the Town was so opposed to us raising the violation fines years ago if some of their violation rates are higher than the District's

**Marketing:**

- Ms. Socha introduces Ms. Sulick who is the new marketing assistant. She reports that the Butterfly Stroll went well. Ms. Jeffery remarks that the weather wasn't as nice as last year, but there was a good turnout for the event. Ms. Dzialo reports a 30% increase in attendance in her area. Ms. Jeffery said that business response was positive and there was decent participation. She would like to see some feedback about the event from those businesses. Mr. Mulligan would like to have more clarity on the special events permitting processes. Ms. Socha notes that she was aware that two events "stalled" in the process and needed manual forwarding. It seems to her that the different Town departments appear to have differing opinions on which department should be first in the process. Ms. Dzialo would like to see events like West Hartford where there would be an outdoor vending (sidewalk sale) day or days through the year that don't require additional permits aside from the event itself; that we would provide a "blanket" event process and retailers could take part without creating their own "event". Ms. Sottile recalls that the early days of the District had sidewalk sale days and those events preceded the formation of the District. She feels that permits would be necessary for businesses who want to vend without being at their storefront; but it's clear that the Town has made the process difficult and discussions need to be had with the Town to figure out a way to make it easy and work. Mr. DeLaura notes that Zoning has mentioned that Article 4 section 23 of the zoning regulations could be revised.

- (Mr. Datta exits 8:55)
- Ms. Socha notes that the Town informed the District that there are additional requirements for having the Lutz Museum conduct a petting zoo at a downtown event. The Lutz informed her that they have never had any such additional requirements at any of their other Town events. The State does not have any official petting zoo regulations.
- (Ms. Jeffery exits 9:00)

### **Maintenance & Beautification:**

- None at this time

### **Old Business:**

- Mr. Mulligan states that we received a quote from a contractor for ~\$6600 to paint all the planters (minimum 2 coats). There are approximately 30 planters and 30 trash cans. Ms. Sottile inquires about the replacement cost per planter. Ms. Socha says that it's roughly \$1000 per planter to replace. Mr. DuBaldo is concerned that the planters are moved at least two times per year which increases the likelihood of damage. Mr. Fagan would like to see about retiring some of the really beaten-up planters which would increase the number of flowers/plantings per container. Mr. Mulligan recommends identifying the planters with significant damage.
- (Mr. Fagan exits 9:17, there is no longer a quorum)

### **New Business:**

- Ms. Socha says that Mountain View has planted the planters and have furnished a quote of \$2500-\$3500 to paint all the planters and bins plus supplies. She found some historical data stating that the previous maintenance commitment was good from 2012 through nine years. Mr. Ambia wonders why we would paint them if so many are damaged. Ms. Socha says it's really difficult and expensive to repair them. Mr. Mulligan feels that painting is better than purchasing new ones just prior to the streetscape plan. Ms. Socha says that 50-70% have visible damage. Mr. Mulligan would like to see some alternative quotes. A motion to proceed with the project after receiving approximately two to three quotes not exceeding \$4500 including supplies and with approval or consultation of the Chair. Ms. Dzialo motions, Ms. Jeffery seconds.

### **Public Comment:**

- Ms. Sottile asks about the powers of the District and where money goes when donations or fees are charged to businesses for events. She recalls that all donations and contributions received by the District should have specific purposes attached to them. It bothers her that constituents aren't

informed of things that the District Board is. She would like to see a more formal announcement of Ms. Socha's position and would like to see a more direct communication chain. She would also like to know if Ms. Sulick will be maintaining the Website. Ms. Sulick confirms that was part of her detail sheet. Ms. Sottile remarks that the minutes and agendas aren't up to date on the website. She notes that Silk City Antiques and Jaicoby Scott's spaces are now vacant. Ms. Socha notes that the owners of that Jaicoby Scott building are planning on improving the property. Ms. Sottile asks if contact had been made to find out why those businesses closed/left. Ms. Socha said that Ms. Ringo plans on retiring and that Ms. Socha has been working with the landlord to find new tenants. Ms. Sottile asks if there are rental spaces for businesses posted on the Website. Ms. Socha says not yet. Ms. Sottile recalls that there used to be a space on the old website for real estate postings. Ms. Socha will be working with Mr. DeLaura on integrating to the Town's GIS layers to better showcase those listings. Ms. Sottile asks about the click-through navigation on the website and what people are doing on our website and if we know what they're doing here. Ms. Socha says that we can identify those items. Ms. Sottile would still like to see cross-marketed print materials available for people. Ms. Socha said she did take that idea to market the Butterfly Stroll through print at the Senior Center, Work\_Space, and the library. Ms. Dzialo says that there are some other non-retail businesses that are seeing positive feedback from the events. Ms. Sottile is also concerned about the Facebook postings being slowly posted and relatively out of date; she would like to see more District-wide promotions; the veterans banners are going up today and that should have been publicized. She also doesn't feel that the District should be using District funds to assist in the Save Downtown lawsuit without the blessing of property owners. Mr. Mulligan asks Ms. Sottile if the District should remain neutral or find out about the wills of the constituents? Ms. Sottile says that those business/property owners have signed the petition if they wanted and can donate directly if they want. She would like to make sure that Downtown is beautiful. Ms. Sottile also believes that the District has the money to increase the hours of the manager or marketing assistant which would better help the District grow.

**Other Business:**

- None at this time

**Adjourn**

- There being no further business or a quorum, the meeting is adjourned at 9:38.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder