

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

**July 23, 2025**

**8 AM**

Meeting held at Work\_Space, 903 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Mulligan, Chair  
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary  
Joseph Datta (8:03)  
Sophia Dzialo  
Ryan Fagan (p)  
Esther Jeffery (p)

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Edward Firestone  
Glenn Gerhard  
Tana Parseliti  
Lynn Sottile

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Sulick

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tarek Ambia, Finance Chair

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

STAFF ABSENT: None

**Call to Order:**

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

**Roll Call:**

- Mr. Mulligan noted those present and absent.

**Public Comment:**

- Ms. Parseliti would like to express her concern about the turnover of staff since her departure because that's indicative of a problem. It's worrisome to her that staff has left under unhappy circumstances. There was some enthusiasm over reducing the manager's hours in the past, but to her it seems that hasn't been effective. She is concerned that there is a lack of connection with the constituents in the Downtown; it seems that it's an issue of time of the staff to not be able to meet and connect with the constituents, not a lack of desire or ability.

- Mr. Gerhart would like to know if the position will be a full or part time position. Mr. Mulligan says that it would likely be a 30 hour position. One issue with full-time is benefits and figuring out how the District can afford to absorb that. While the 30 hour position is technically a change, it's the same individual handling the 20 and 10 hours at this time.
- Ms. Sulick expresses her gratitude for the opportunity. She is grateful for being able to work as a team to get through the last few weeks of challenges. She has a great love of the town and the Downtown in particular. While it will be a lot of work, she believes it should also be a lot of fun to serve the community.
- Mr. Gerhart asks if she would be interested in the position after the interim position.
- Ms. Sulick feels that if it works out past the 90 day period that she would like to continue in the position if it's beneficial for everyone.

### **Manager Update:**

- A motion to appoint Ms. Sulick as Interim Downtown Manager at the current pay rate of the previous manager is made by Ms. Dzialo, seconded by Ms. Jeffery. All approve.

### **Public Comment:**

- Ms. Sottile asks for clarification about the salary rate. Mr. Mulligan says that it would be at the same hourly rate. Ms. Sottile asks about the previous manager's exit interview. Mr. Mulligan says that while there was no specific interview, there was a discussion but much revolved around the difficulty working with the Town. Ms. Sottile asks if Ms. LeBel (the previous manager) had the same concerns. Mr. Mulligan says no, not directly. Ms. Sottile asks what the District will do to get back on track with the original intent of the District so that the Manager can actually manage the district? Mr. Mulligan says that the Board is working with the Town to work closer with the District to alleviate some of the hurdles we've had between the various departments. Ms. Sulick feels that many of the other managers have not had the relationships developed and were more transactional. She also says that being able to shift events to third parties rather than running them completely through the office will allow the manager to have more time to work on the whole District issues rather than just the events. She is really interested in having this huge responsibility to be the conduit between the businesses and bringing the District back to life.
- Ms. Dzialo says that while she wasn't on the Board at the time of the first major transition, the new hire of the Downtown Developmental Specialist being a solid additional resource, shows more than just a promise of support between the Town and the District.

- Ms. Sottile would like to reiterate that events are not the core of the District. She feels that the manager should be working for the constituents to find out what they need and figure out how to spend the money to better serve them. While she believes that a few core events are necessary, it should be a focus to get people down here doing business continuously not just on event days; and this should be a major commitment. She notes that the District was formed to have the manager work for the individual businesses; she feels that the previous managers were burned out because of the endless stream of events.
- Ms. Jeffery says that while she hasn't been on the Board too long, there has also been a lot of turnover in the Town. So, while Ms. Parseliti was in the position, that turnover hadn't happened and she had those long relationships with those individuals and could get things done because she knew everyone. Getting information now is very difficult and one email quickly turns to 10 emails trying to figure out who is responsible for certain things in the Town. The hope is that Ms. Sulick can talk to people to build those relationships. The Board is all in agreement that the Manager should be a visible person within the Downtown.
- Ms. Sottile would like to know who would be responsible for maintaining the website? We had to give up our business news section for town-wide rentals. She reminds the Board that agendas should be posted well in advance of the meeting so constituents can plan to attend or not. There needs to be communication between the manager and the constituents. Things like the construction updates especially where there are hazards.
- Ms. Sulick would like to know if there is a preferred contact schedule for those updates.
- Ms. Sottile suggests monthly at minimum.
- Ms. Parseliti says that she had a close relationship with the Town and they were very communicative with her. Perhaps the Town is a little stymied with their turnover as well. There is a benefit to Ms. Sulick having such a long history in the Town.
- Mr. Firestone says that when he was District Chair he would walk up the street with Ms. Parseliti to meet the businesses as well as new Town employees.
- Mr. Datta says that he really missed that aspect of Ms. Parseliti's position; as simple as coming in to introduce themselves and to inquire about what problems may be and how to come up with solutions.
- Ms. Sottile believes that 30 hours will be beneficial to the position. She believes that finding the correct balance of mixing time on the street with office time is essential.

- Ms. Pareseliti believes that trust and value are very valuable traits for this position.
- Mr. Gerhard would like to know about the specific funding for the District. Mr. Mulligan says that it is primarily through assessment and that parking essentially pays for itself. We are looking into having outside help to really straighten up the budget to make it easier for the manager and figure out what funds are available.
- Ms. Parseliti believes that our membership with the CT Main Street Association is very useful. There are some problems universal to main streets and there may be very good knowledge and experiences to find there. When she had questions or issues, she was able to ask other managers directly through her contacts with that Association.
- Mr. Firestone remembers meeting with West Hartford to look at the wooden blocks demarcating Blue Back Square before it was Blue Back Square.
- Ms. Sottile says that someone commented to her that the parking lots look "shabby". Mr. DuBaldo asks if that was before or after the re-mulching. Ms. Sottile says it was yesterday and so, after.

#### **Executive Session:**

- None needed

#### **Other Business:**

- None at this time

#### **Adjourn**

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting is made by Ms. Dzialo at 8:33 AM, seconded by Mr. Datta. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder