

Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.

June 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes

6:00 PM - Virtual/ GoToMeeting

John Flores called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on May 10, 2021. Kevin Sluka conducted a roll call. The following Board Members were present:

Present: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Absent: Mark Aziz, Iris Frank

The assembly joined in a virtual salute to the flag.

Chairman Remarks

John Flores reported that it was great to see smiling faces at the PRIDE mural reveal and that Downtown Somerville is buzzing once again. Sixty-five percent of adults are vaccinated but experts claim we will not be reaching herd immunity. John noted the success of Downtown Somerville relies solely on our communities collective health. As community leaders there is a large variable of responsibility to encourage our community to stay strong and hopefully get vaccinated.

Executive Director Report

Update on New Intern Hires

Natalie reported that two new interns have been hired and she is actively working on getting them DSA shirts so people can identify them as they walk through the district meeting business owners or changing out signage. Along with day-to-day tasks the new interns have taken on more extensive roles (i.e. walking the district in the morning and taking photos of trash or new graffiti).

Update on Events

Natalie reported that Dmitri from Somerville Provisions, Carmela from Lure Lash, Lorenzo from Cafe Picasso, and Elizabeth from Lucid Coffee are now proud members of the events committee. The reveal of the Pride mural had a great outpouring of people attend. There will be Pride night on Thursday June 24th from 6pm-9pm. The DSA will also be continuing with some of their classic events like the movie series, artisan market, and other great Fall events. The events committee has been hard at work approving outside events that will take place on Division Street. The approved events are: Family fitness night with the JCC, Studio Barre in Bridgewater, and Pureflo Yoga.

Update on Destination Bootcamp "Town Hall" with Jon Schallert

Natalie reported that she has contracted with Jon to this webinar for the local business community. event season is starting earlier this year. His expertise is in creating consumer destinations. The Town Hall will take place Tuesday, June 22.

Update on Program Coordinator Search

Natalie reported the DSA received a total of 50 applications for the Program Coordinator position. The applications have now been narrowed down to the top 6 contenders and interviews will be scheduled within the next two weeks to meet each applicant.

Update on Logo Focus Group

The DSA will be conducting a focus group on Wednesday, June 23. Oxford Communications identified a few of the people that commented on our post when the DSA was vetting options. Those who commented as well as those who took the survey will take part in a virtual focus group to hopefully narrow down the new logo.

Update on Floral Installation in Giardina Walk

The installation is coming along the front and back of the installation are complete but is still awaiting proper signage and final pieces of floral. The addition of the installation has also helped deter those of the transient population from sleeping within the greens.

Public Art Plan Presentation - Lea Weingarten, Weingarten Art Group

Adoption of Public Art Plan

Lea from Weingarten Art Group reported on the final plan for the public art plan. Public art contains measurable impacts with some of them being economic growth and stability, cultural identity, attachment to community, social cohesion and public health. The Weingarten Group conducted a SWOT Analysis on Downtown Somerville regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Mike Kerwin started a discussion focusing on one of the weaknesses from the SWOT Analysis (i.e. funding). He then told the board that Somerset County was getting \$50-60 million in federal funding with the opportunity for some of it to be used for tourism to promote the county. John Flores asked Lea Weingarten how large a weakness it is to have a lack of dedicated facilities for public art. Lea views this more as a long term goal to eventually have a cultural venue and possibly use some county funding to create said venue.

The overall plan is to further Somerville's brand as a cultural destination and focus Main Street public art placemaking efforts by incorporating a rotating and permanent artwork program. Mike Kerwin noted in the photograph containing the Somerset County Courthouse - the landscape might need to be changed with the art plan due to the massive tree covering the historic courthouse building. Natalie and Lea opened up the floor for comments - no one had any specific comments. Natalie also noted that not only will the federal funding from the county help but the DSA as well as board members can also apply for any art grants.

Mike Kerwin asked for non-board members to comment. Patrick, commented and pointed out it is better to do the big ask and take the 5-year plan and push it into 1 year. This gives Downtown Somerville a flag in the ground to proclaim itself as the art destination of Somerset County.

RandD Pitts made a motion to approve the public art plan, Mike Kerwin seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Nay: None
Abstain: None
Recuse: None

For Approval: Permanent Placement of Live View Units

Natalie reported that the live view unit was up and running. Although there was a minor technical issue, customer service came out on Memorial Day to fix the issue with the camera.

Tony Brokenborough reported how the live view unit has been a positive deterrent for bad behavior that has taken place on Division St.

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the live view units, Tony Brokenborough seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores
Nay: None
Abstain: None
Recuse: None

Recommendation: DSA to Produce Somerville Portion of Jazz Fest

Natalie reported a recommendation for Somerville to produce their portion of Jazz Fest. There was discussion among the Executives of each town involved in Jazz Fest to produce the actual event. Rick St. Pierre commented that the DSA producing the Somerville portion of the event brings a whole new marketing aspect to Somerville & the DSA.

RandD Pitts made a motion for the DSA to produce the social media and marketing for the Jazz Fest, Kevin Sluka seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, John Flores
Nay:
Abstain: Rick St. Pierre
Recuse:

Reconfiguring of Parklets to Benches / Repair of Lighting for Giardina

Natalie said she got a quote from PK Construction to use the material / lumber they used for the parklets to build out benches for the Giardina walkway. Rick St. Pierre made a comment questioning the location of the benches. Natalie recommended that the discussion of the lumber and location of said benches be moved to a discussion during the infrastructure meeting.

Natalie also said she got a quote from PK Construction regarding refurbishing the lighting on Giardina walk.

Mike Kerwin made a motion to move bench discussion to infrastructure meeting and approve repair of lighting, RandD Pitts seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

For Approval: Haunted Somerville Tour

Natalie reported that she was contacted by Jane Mclaughlin to host a haunted Somerville Tour. The company creates a script and gets actors to perform during the tour. Tours start at 6PM - 9PM with 15 minute intervals. The cost is \$2,500.

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the haunted Somerville tour, Jenn Pearson seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Discussion Item: Moving back to In-Person Meetings

Kevin Sluka said from a corporate standpoint having virtual meetings makes sense because those whom we represent have the opportunity to see us and hear what is going on. John Flores also noted that many businesses are moving to a hybrid model of meetings / work.

Payment Authorizations

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve May 2021 payment authorizations, RandD Pitts seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Finance Reports

Tony Brokenborough made a motion to approve May 2021 finance reports, Rick St. Pierre seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, RandD Pitts, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, John Flores

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Public Comment

John Flores opened up the meeting for comments from the Public. Fred Wead thanked the DSA and the Board for a wonderful Pride event.

Adjournment

John Flores adjourned the meeting.

Meeting minutes recorded by Nicole Zaliwski, Program Coordinator on August 31, 2021.