



**Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.
October 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes
6:00 PM - In-Person / Office Evolution**

John Flores called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on October 11, 2021. Kevin Sluka conducted a roll call. The following Board Members were present:

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

Late: None

Absent: None

The assembly joined in a salute to the flag.

For Approval: September Meeting Minutes

Natalie sought approval for the September Meeting Minutes

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Jenn Pearson seconded same.

Yea: Mark Aziz, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, John Flores, Iris Frank, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Chairman Remarks

John Flores opened up the meeting stating that as a board it is important to experience other downtowns so we can create a vision for our own. "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery".

Executive Director Report

International Downtown Association Conference

Natalie reported she will be attending the International Downtown Association Conference in Tampa and hopes to bring back tons of useful information.

Finance / Executive / and Nominating Committee Meetings

Natalie said the board needs to schedule a finance and executive committee meeting in order to approve the budget for the next year. The DSA has 3 seats expiring and therefore, the nominating committee will need to hold a meeting to pick new candidates for the board.

Old Business

Halloween Events

Natalie gave an update on upcoming Halloween events. Friday, October 15 on the courthouse lawn will be a special showing of Beetlejuice. Haunted History Productions will host their "Haunted Somerville" Ghost Tour on Saturday the 23rd - thus far 200 tickets have been sold. Lastly, at the end of the month the DSA will be hosting their Spooktacular event with Somerville Recreation, EmPower Somerset, and Pioneer Family Success Center. After the main event will be another movie on the courthouse lawn at 7:00pm.

Diversity Festival Recap: Sponsorships and Restaurant Participation

Natalie and Nicole gave a recap of Somerset County's Diversity Festival. Nicole stated that although the weather was gloomy, within 20-30 minutes of the event starting there was an overwhelming amount of foot traffic throughout the event. The county was extremely thrilled with the outcome and we look to build on this relationship with them as being sponsors for their events and eventually working on events together. Some of our restaurants participated in the event by offering promotions or deals for pedestrians at the event.

Hispanic Heritage Event Recap

Despite the appearance of rain the DSA HHM celebration ended up being a huge success and brought a great deal of foot traffic to the district. We had a salsa band, flamenco performance, and more cultural performances. The DSA partnered with RWJUH Somerset for this event.

RWJ: Breast Cancer Warrior Banner Program

Natalie took to discuss our partnership with RWJUH for Breast Cancer Awareness month. The DSA and RWJUH created a banner program for community members to honor their friends and loved ones who have battled the disease both living and deceased. The banners will go up for two consecutive years throughout the district. The DSA would like to schedule a photo op with RWJ and the participants within the next week.

Reminder about Oct. 13 Ribbon Cutting for Art by Chad

Natalie gave a reminder for the upcoming ribbon cutting for Art by Chad. The art gallery will hopefully liven up the area.

Update: Hurricane IDA Fundraising Update/ Schedule Check Presentation for Photo Op

Natalie reported that we raised over \$7,000 in Hurricane IDA donations. The DSA is looking to coordinate a photo op and check presentation for donations to the Somerville Civic League.

Oxford Communications Branding: Logo Color Palettes - New Orange Provided

Oxford Communications sent over the logo color palettes with a new orange. The DSA board was in full agreement that color palette "A" was the favorite. Natalie said she would let Oxford know of the color palette choice.

Update on Grant Writer

Natalie provided everyone with an update on the grant writer. The DSA will be working with the grant writers moving forward.

Update on Tree Program

To fulfill our treescape program the items that we would need are extremely backordered. The DSA will be forgoing the treescape program and taking the time to do resealing on Division Street. Construction will begin on Monday, November 1st and will be completed in phases. Fixing cracks and holes patched with asphalt, powerwashing, and resealing. *Businesses require timely notice for sealant as it can destroy food.

New Business

Discussion on standard time for ribbon cuttings

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings at 6:00pm would be the best days and times for future ribbon cuttings. Mark noted that he sees a very wide spectrum of attendance for these events. The DSA might need to note what the best relationship is among new businesses and the DSA.

Discussion on pursuing a new / comprehensive Streetscape plan

Natalie suggested putting out an RFP for a comprehensive design plan. Use the original documentation to show continuation of progress. Main Street is a complicated piece of real estate as we have many different entities converging onto one piece of real estate. There are a lot of moving factors - demographic has changed, streetscape has lost

function, transitory demographic. Next step infrastructure committee meeting. An opportunity to get students involved - show us what you think the perfect design plan would look like.

For Approval: Motion for Matching Grants for Ida Recovery Program (for district businesses)

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to resume monthly in-person meetings. Mark Aziz seconded same.

Yea: Mark Aziz, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, John Flores, Kevin Sluka, Iris Frank, Rick St. Pierre

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Discussion: Art All Day Panels

The county has requested use of the art panels to create their own mini art installation that will go on the courthouse lawn. The county would co-sponsor this with the DSA to put the panels on the lawn.

Discussion to add representative from RWJUH Somerset to DSA Board

Natalie requested to add Sejal Sharma from RWJUH to be the holder of our corporate seat for the DSA board. This would create that bridge between one of our major community partners and our district. Sejal will start January 1, 2022 - the nominating committee will make a formal recommendation.

Payment Authorizations

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the payment authorizations. Mark Aziz seconded same

Yea: Mark Aziz, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, Iris Frank, John Flores, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre

Nay: None
Abstain: None
Recuse: None

Finance Reports

Iris Frank made a motion to approve the finance reports. Mark Aziz seconded same

Yea: Mark Aziz, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, John Flores, Kevin Sluka, Iris Frank, Rick St. Pierre

Nay: None
Abstain: None
Recuse: None

Public Comment

John Flores opened up the meeting for comments from the Public. Council president Fred Weid asked about the depth of sponsoring our community partners have in each event - is there any financial support being provided. Weid also asked about how the local restaurants can avoid food waste. Rick St. Pierre noted that the restaurant owner's hands are essentially tied. According to the Department of Health it is illegal to give away any food so what it boils down to is restaurants owners / chefs making conscious efforts to avoid food waste through their menu.

Theresa Bonner from Third Child Wellness Boutique introduced herself and gave background on her store. She says the DSA is extremely helpful and without their support and help she isn't sure what she would have done as a business owner.

Natalie suggested starting up the quarterly webinars / seminars for businesses owners with topics including marketing, best business practices, etc.

Adjournment

John Flores adjourned the meeting.

Meeting minutes recorded by Nicole Zaliwski, Program Coordinator on November 2, 2021.