



Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.
September 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes
6:00 PM - Office Evolution

Mike Kerwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on September 12, 2022.

Kevin Sluka conducted roll call the following Board Members were present:

Present: Theresa Bonner, Alison Masick, RanD Pitts, Ed Rebenack, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin

Late: None

Excused: Tony Brokenborough, Iris Frank, Sejal Sharma, Rick St. Pierre

Chairman Remarks

Mike Kerwin began the discussion on the audit and form 990. The 990 was reviewed by the board.

Mike gave an update on the ED search.

- Job description went live on the Borough website, Indeed, and the Downtown Somerville website. The board eagerly awaits applicants.

Executive Directors Report

Old Business

CJJF Recap

The Central Jersey Jazz Festival returned yesterday. Around 3,000 people came to the district. This event could not have been made possible without our sponsors. We look forward to working on it next year.



Update on Streetscape Capital Plan

A contract has been signed with Arterial Streets. We are currently in the process of vetting dates for a community forum. We will receive an updated schedule as to how long the process will take to complete this plan.

Grant Update

We are finishing up our application for SCCHC Local Arts Program Grant Potential for admission to the NPP Program. We are currently applying to do a Paul Robeson sculpture that will live on Division Street if we are approved. We have quotes from two different sculpture artists. The NPP Program is not looking for any applications currently.

Big Belly Update for Division Street

There is a 10% increase on cost if we purchase under 10 units. That will bring our total cost per can to \$175 per month. There is currently a 3-4 month wait for those trash cans. We will be able to implement them for the winter and spring season.

New Business

Hometown Heroes Banner Program

The DSA partnered with the Borough of Somerville to create a Hometown Heroes Banner Program. Somerville and Branchburg residents are eligible to apply for the program. The application is on the homepage of our website and posted on our social media.



New District Banners Featuring New Logo

We have adopted our new logo and will be working with the marketing committee to select new banners that will go up in the district.

Discussion to move October meeting due to Columbus Day

The board agrees to keep our October board meeting on Columbus Day.

Committee Reports

- **Marketing Committee:**

- Update on social media audit (recommendations from Oxford): Continue with tiktok, collaborate and leverage our universal groups, creative that is native to platform and not graphic heavy

- **Public Art Committee:**

- Update on Courthouse Lawn Project: We met with the Weingarten Art Group last month and we narrowed down our artists to two. One is a duo from NJ the other is a collective out of Brooklyn. We will evaluate their proposals and present them to the county on September 21st.
- RWJUH Joint Mural Project: We received approval from JSM to use the frontage that is to the left of Mannion's. It takes up two store fronts. We are working with artist Michelle Delita, she grew up in Somerville and is excited to be working with RWJ and the DSA. It is a two part mural, some in Downtown Somerville the other on campus at RWJ. Verbiage is "Better Together". Completed and put up by the 1st of November.
- Giardina Walk: We have not yet decided on what will go up in the walkway but we are using our feedback from social media to create a visual masterpiece.
- Beautiful Bend Project (Partnership with Pioneer Family Success Center): We are going to use our leftover lumber from our parklets to create backless benches. Working with artists to commission them to paint the benches. We will reach out to Somerville HS, Immaculata, & Middle Earth to create the concepts of the benches.



Sponsorship Policy Approval / Adoption

As the DSA grows in popularity we find that many people are looking for the DSA to sponsor their events. Our sponsorship policy is clearly defined guidelines that we can reference when it comes to outside organizations looking for sponsorship from the DSA. If the event does not reach the eligibility criteria then we would be unable to sponsor the event.

Kevin Sluka made a motion to approve the sponsorship policy. Kevin Sluka seconded same.

Yea: Theresa Bonner, Alison Masick, RanD Pitts, Ed Rebenack, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Recuse: None

Abstain: None

Resolution to Approval Salary Adjustment for Nicole Zaliwski

RanD Pitts made a motion to approve salary adjustment for Nicole Zaliwski. Kevin Sluka seconded same.

Yea: Theresa Bonner, Alison Masick, RanD Pitts, Ed Rebenack, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Recuse: None

Abstain: None

Presentation from NJAW re: Sewer Sale

The Somerville sewer system is in need of significant upgrades. Per New Jersey American Water, the investment required to improve the Borough's sewers will come at a tremendous cost to residents if Somerville keeps it.

By supporting the Somerville sewer sale, your water company, New Jersey American Water, will stabilize rates and take ownership and responsibility of the system. This will result in a \$16.5 million investment in Somerville that includes a \$7 million payment to the Borough to reduce municipal debt and \$9.5 million in infrastructure repairs to improve the system and protect the environment.

- ***Infrastructure Investment:*** Somerville if voters approve the sale:
 - \$7 million purchase price to pay off utility debt and reduce Borough debt
 - \$9.5 million investment into much needed sewer improvements in the first 10 years



- **PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT:**
 - New Jersey American Water will make investments in the sewer system and partner with local officials to address overflows and sewage contamination at Chambres Park. This sale will protect our environment while supporting community recreation.
- **Stabilize Rates:**
 - Under New Jersey American Water's ownership, sewer collection system rates will be stable over the long-term and regulated by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, like your gas, water and electric rates. Upon the closing of the sale, likely in 2023, a seven-year rate plan will begin so customers can know what to expect while critical system improvements are made. For two years starting in 2023, rates will be frozen. Then, rates will increase 3% per year for the next three years and 4% per year for the last two years.
 - Once the initial seven-year period ends, rates will be adjusted every few years like your water rates. Sewer treatment charges from the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority are pass-through charges and not subject to our seven- year rate plan.
 - If the Borough were to maintain ownership and undertake half of the needed improvements proposed by New Jersey American Water, rates would increase drastically and there is the potential for rate spikes. Under New Jersey American Water ownership, Borough residents would see an estimated \$7,000 savings

Other New Business

Theresa Bonner brought attention to some concerns of Division Street business owners. Some businesses have agreed that separating Small Business Saturday and the tree lighting actually hurt the businesses and do not help them.

- Rationale behind separating the events was to encourage more people to come Downtown to shop
- Secondly, in terms of staffing it is an extremely long day for staff. We can put it back on the table for discussion to combine both events for this year.



Finance Reports

Mike Kerwin made a motion to approve the payment authorizations. Alison Masick seconded same

Yea: Theresa Bonner, Alison Masick, RanD Pitts, Ed Rebenack, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Recuse: None

Abstain: None

Payment Authorizations

Mike Kerwin made a motion to approve the payment authorizations. RanD Pitts seconded same

Yea: Theresa Bonner, Alison Masick, RanD Pitts, Ed Rebenack, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Recuse: None

Abstain: None

Comments from the Public

No comments.

Adjournment

Mike Kerwin adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm on September 12, 2022.