

MINUTES

ANNUAL MEETING
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT
JANUARY 24, 2018
8 AM
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM
494 MAIN STREET
MANCHESTER, CT 06040

MEMBERS PRESENT: Don DuBaldo, Chair
John Tunila, Vice Chair
William Bayer
Winfried Quast

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development

ALSO PRESENT: Leyda Quast, Quast Media
Dana Hebert, Beauty by Dezn

STAFF PRESENT: Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Rebecca Gentile
Bob Sulick

EX OFFICIO ABSENT: April DiFalco, President, GMCC

STAFF ABSENT: None.

Call To Order

Mr. D. DuBaldo called the meeting to order at 8:02AM.

Presentation of Proposed 2018-19 Budget

Mr. D. DuBaldo reviewed the proposed budget. Mr. Tunila noted that the proposed budget does not present any radical change in activities.

Priorities for the Upcoming Year

The 2017 Annual Report was made available to all attendees. Mr. D. DuBaldo reviewed the priorities for the coming year.

Highlights of Accomplishments of the Past Year

Mr. Tunila asked that the 2017 Annual Report be placed in the record. In presenting the list of accomplishments Mr. Tunila noted that the small band of commissioners that make-up the SSD Board of Commissioners works hard and have done a great job. He

noted that this is a volunteer board with one full time staff person and two part time parking constables. Working with a small budget this small group has accomplished a lot.

Mr. Tunila noted accomplishments in four key areas. First and foremost the SSD is the Parking Authority. It also carries out parking lot maintenance and snow removal. The recently concluded Downtown Parking Lot Improvement Project supports the SSD work. The SSD is hopeful it will be an anchor. The SSD also collaborated with the Town on the Downtown Wayfinding Sign Project with a goal of improving customer flow.

The SSD's second priority is to promote business Downtown. The SSD doesn't have resources like the Town has to renovate buildings. Over the past year the SSD developed a new Mini Grant Program to help businesses develop buildings and improve the quality of the tenants. The SSD, in cooperation with the Town, held a Strategic Planning Workshop involving constituents. Communication with the Town Board of Directors has been a consistent focus.

Third, the SSD worked to keep Downtown beautiful. Seasonal beautification programs include: banners, planters and holiday décor.

Finally, the SSD worked on general promotion including special events to expose people to the Downtown.

Mr. Tunila noted that the SSD achieved significant accomplishments in each of these four areas over the past year.

Looking towards the future, Mr. D. DuBaldo pointed out that representatives of the commission are a part of a new joint committee – The Roles & Responsibilities Task Force - with representatives of the Town Board of Directors. The group is reviewing the roles of the SSD and the Town in Downtown development and operation. He feels very positive about this effort and is confident that a stronger partnership with the Town Board of Directors will be the result.

Comments & Questions

Ms. Quast noted that the absence of constituents at the meeting speaks to the need for improved communications. She asked how we can get businesses excited and more involved in what we are doing.

Mr. D. DuBaldo welcomed ideas on how to improve access and engagement. Mr. Quast suggested changing the format of the Annual Meeting into more of a networking event.

Mr. Bayer noted that he hoped the Board of Directors will find value in participating in the Mini Grant Program. For example, grants to help offset the cost of elevators would open-up upper levels to more businesses.

Mr. D. DuBaldo noted that the Downtown Economic Development Committee is working on the recipe for what ails Downtown.

Ms. Hebert suggested trying to recruit college students to live in Downtown second stories.

Mr. D. DuBaldo noted that we currently have issues with the quality of our space. The first step is to bring second story space up to a certain standard. Our current efforts include gap financing through the Mini Grant Program.

Mr. Anderson noted that although there is demand from young people to live Downtown it is very expensive to bring spaces up to the necessary code level. Grants are needed.

Mr. Quast asked if the Town Board of Directors have goals for the Downtown. Mr. D. DuBaldo responded that in the context of the small group meeting they expressed the desire to help Downtown. Mr. Tunila said that the Board has concerns regarding the direction some of the tenancies are taking.

Ms. Quast asked if there were successful examples of use of gap financing in other Downtowns. Mr. Anderson cited the *Come Home to Downtown* program of the CT Main Street Program. He further noted that the Town Board of Directors understands the physical challenges of Downtown properties and the fact that if we make progress on one property it may be a catalyst for other development.

Other Business

None.

Adjourn

Mr. Tunila moved to adjourn. Mr. Bayer seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The meeting adjourned at 8:43AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager
Recorder