

MINUTES

**ANNUAL MEETING
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT
JANUARY 16, 2019
8 AM
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM
494 MAIN STREET
MANCHESTER, CT 06040**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Donald DuBaldo, Chair
John Tunila, Vice Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
William Bayer
Tammy Gerhard
Winfried Quast
Robert Sulick

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development

ALSO PRESENT:

Lynn Sottile, Schultz Design
Beth Stafford, Bistro on Main
Rhiannon Bentley Crawford, Forensic Accounting
Steve Pedneault, Forensic Accounting
Tom Mitchell, 180 Barbershop
Jason Carrilo, 180 Barbershop

STAFF PRESENT:

Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rebecca Gentile

EX OFFICIO ABSENT:

April DiFalco, President, GMCC

STAFF ABSENT:

None.

Call To Order

Mr. D. DuBaldo called the meeting to order at 8:04AM.

Presentation of Proposed 2019-20 Budget

Ms. Parseliti presented an overview of the proposed budget. She noted that the FY 19-20 budget represents significant savings to Downtown taxpayers. This is a direct result of the SSD restructuring agreement contained in the Downtown 2020 Initiative.

The Town absorbed just over \$100,000 in District expenses including:

- Transfer of Downtown Manager position to the Town with revised responsibilities.
- Parking Lot lighting and repair.
- Line stripping

- Parking Lot snow removal.
- Video camera.

This allowed the District to:

- Restructure Downtown administrative staff at a more cost effective level.
- Create a Downtown Sidewalk Snow Removal Assistance Program.

Overall cost savings provide for a mil rate of approximately 3.03 for FY 19-20, a decrease of almost 50% over the current rate.

Taken together with the 2020 Initiative Loan Program and proposed Capital Improvements Projects, reduction in the mil rate is viewed as a positive economic development force.

Downtown core services are expected to remain roughly the same.

Ms. Parseliti called for questions. Mr. Tomko requested an explanation of the parking lot snow removal costs and the sidewalk snow removal assistance costs. Mr. D. DuBaldo explained that parking lot snow removal is currently a flat rate contract. The parking lot snow removal will transfer to the Town in FY 19-20. The sidewalk snow removal assistance will take effect in FY 19-20 and will be funded by the SSD. Program details are still to be worked out. He reiterated that the purpose is to assist property owners by pushing/blowing snow from the curb line into the gutter for removal by the Town on a predetermined schedule.

Priorities for the Upcoming Year

The 2018 Annual Report was made available to all attendees. Mr. D. DuBaldo reviewed the priorities for the coming year contained in the Report. He made a point to recognize the work done by the Downtown Economic Development Committee. The work of the committee laid the groundwork for the Downtown 2020 Initiative.

Mr. D. DuBaldo entertained questions. Mr. Tomko asked if acquisition of land for parking at the north end of Main St. was a Downtown priority. He also asked Mr. Quast if the Downtown was moving forward on a Downtown Branding Program. Mr. Quast invited Mr. Tomko to join the Downtown Marketing Committee which is meeting on Jan. 24.

Mr. Tomko would like to see movement on the LWLP Strategic Planning Workshop of 2017. He likes the Wayfinding Sign System and the idea of an arch across Main St. which will add to a sense of place Downtown. Mr. Tomko thinks that the current market trends see retail shifting back to Main St.

Mr. Sulick observed the recent Town Board of Directors Meeting and felt there seems to be some support of the Downtown Capital Improvement Projects.

Downtown 2020 Initiative

Mr. Anderson reviewed the program, referencing the informational sheet included in the meeting materials. He noted that the Initiative came out of many workshops held over the past year. Obstacles identified included:

- Downtown assessment is too high.
- the cost of building rehab is too high.
- more intentional development and marketing of the Downtown is needed.

Mr. Anderson played a video that provided an outline of the 2020 Initiative. He noted that complete details can be found on the Initiative website Downtown2020.com

Mr. Anderson noted that a menu of proposed Capital Improvement Projects was presented to the Board of Directors for the first time on January 15th. The board gave preliminary approval to:

- alleyway improvements.
- Purnell Place lighting improvements.
- murals.

They will review the other projects presented. Mr. Anderson noted that large scale projects were also on the list such as acquisition of property to create parking at the north end of Main St. along with construction of a plaza and improved connection to the St. James Parking Lot. He asked constituents who have a preference to advise him or the SSD.

Mr. Pedneault inquired as to the status of the Tong Building. Mr. Anderson noted that it is privately owned; current on its taxes and that the owners are under court order to repair their roof. Mr. D. DuBaldo noted that the SSD shares the public concern about the condition of the property but our hands are tied.

Mr. Tomko had several comments and questions. He noted that several properties at the south end and north end of Main St. have a shortage of parking. Mr. Tomko asked who he should speak with if property on Gorman Place becomes available. He is concerned about the necessity of quick response to purchase opportunities. He further questioned who would be in a position to purchase property if it became available. Mr. D. DuBaldo responded that he is optimistic that the Town would work with the SSD to make that happen.

Mr. Quast noted that the redesigned SSD website is up and running with more tools available for business to post their events and list properties for sale or lease.

Highlights of Accomplishments of the Past Year

Mr. N DuBaldo reviewed SSD accomplishments over the past year noting that we are now seeing the fruits of our labors that took place over the past several year.

He noted that we have made the Downtown fresher. The Downtown Mini Grant Program has been helpful to businesses and our new website will be helpful to businesses and visitors.

The Downtown business base grew over the past year. The new Wayfinding Sign System has a great updated look and is helpful to businesses and visitors. We continue to regulate parking for the benefit of the entire Downtown and the commission maintains a focus on cost containment. New self-watering planters that would reduce watering costs were tested. The District supported a schedule of special events to bring people Downtown.

In conclusion, Mr. N. DuBaldo noted the strong working relationship that the SSD cultivated with the Town. The integration of the SSD with the Town Board of Directors has helped to get things done. He looks forward to continuing the momentum.

Mr. D. DuBaldo took the opportunity to speak to the benefits of the Downtown Mini Grant Program. The Mini Grants are designed to assist prospects with obtaining code analysis to help them forecast costs. Code analysis is a part of the requirements for application to the Downtown Code Compliance Loan Program that is a part of the Downtown 2020 Initiative. Assembling and utilizing the financial assistance programs put together over the past two years will help the Downtown move forward.

Public Comments

Mr. Tomko asked if there is much panhandling Downtown. Ms. Parseliti replied that it tends to be seasonal. She advised any business that experiences panhandling to call the SSD office and she will put them in touch with the Downtown Community Policing Officers.

Mr. Tomko complimented the new bus shelters which were coordinated by Mr. Anderson.

Ms. Sottile questioned how the SSD will be able to continue marketing and special events efforts under the restructured part time administrative position as these activities are time intensive. Mr. D. DuBaldo felt the part time staff would be able to handle it.

Other Business

None.

Adjourn

Mr. Bayer moved to adjourn. Mr. Quast seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor. (7-0-0) The meeting adjourned at 8:47AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tana Parseliti, Downtown Manager
Recorder