

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DOWNTOWN MANCHESTER SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT**

**January 29, 2020
8AM**

**LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM
494 CENTER STREET, MANCHESTER, CT 06040**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Donald DuBaldo, Chair
John Tunila, Vice Chair
Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary
Tammy Gerhard
Winfried Quast
Robert Sulick

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
PRESENT: Robert Pagani, GMCC Representative
Beth Stafford, MACC Downtown Churches Representative

ALSO PRESENT: Lynn Sottile, Constable Rick Johnson, Rich McCain, Tom Tomko,
Carina Duffy, Pam Marvasti, Ellen Dougan

STAFF PRESENT: Danuta Wolk-Laniewski, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rebecca Gentile
William Bayer

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

Call to Order

- Mr. D. DuBaldo called the meeting to order at 8:03 AM

Roll Call

- Mr. D. DuBaldo noted those present and absent, and also thanks everyone for the assistance in making this meeting happen, especially Ms. Sottile for her work getting the design elements of the handouts completed.

Presentation of 2020-21 Budget

Mr. D. DuBaldo notes that last fiscal year the DMSSD finished a little under budget other than on a few small items and that the DMSSD would like to take this coming budget year in a similar approach with no income increases (~158,000), and approximately the same expenses as last year with respect to a few small changes.

Priorities for the upcoming year:

Mr. Tunila discusses the District's priorities; namely as a parking authority. The District has tremendous parking resources which we are required to maintain, expand and enforce. He notes that it is very difficult to please all of our constituents uniformly be they residents, business owners, property owners; they have different needs. Mr. Tunila recognizes that the District also has a very antiquated parking permitting system which involves purchasing a piece of paper from Town Hall. While the District has not yet found a cost-effective solution better than that, we are still trying to come up with a system which would allow people to never have to worry about overtime parking and ease the process of purchasing a permit. The Town of Manchester has acknowledged that the historical taxing system is burdensome upon the building owners and this year reduced the rate by 50%. Hopefully this will lead to increased property values and further improvements. This shift caused us to reduce our budget by roughly 50% as well. There have been significant accomplishments in the Downtown area: the District now has a full-time development officer; there have been a number of grant programs to fund code compliance and rejuvenation of buildings in the Downtown (like The Firestone). There has been considerable success in those programs and the District is evaluating how the next steps can be taken with as much success. Mr. Tunila would also like to extend his appreciation to the people who are and have helped beautify the Downtown with the planters, benches, snowflake decorations; and help property owners beautify their own properties. There are a number of events in the Downtown, such as the ever popular Christmas Tree Lighting, the District needs to work in conjunction with creative folks to make sure the feelings and events stay fresh as well as look for new things to add to our popular events.

Highlights and accomplishments of the past year:

Mr. D. DuBaldo adds some comments about the incentive program which is very similar to Gap financing. These old buildings have good bones, but ADA and fire compliance are difficult as these buildings don't have normal tenant fitup codes; there are other issues which need to be addressed prior to a new tenant. By finding ways to update these compliance issues, it makes property owners more likely to be able to renovate and update, which in turn make buildings more attractive to investors. Mr. D. DuBaldo would like to extend the invitation that if anyone knows a person or business interested in a Downtown property, this is the last year of the incentive program and the District would like to see as many completed properties as possible.

Mr. Tunila indicates that the District is also seeking nominations for the Board of Commissioners, and if anyone is interested to please speak with himself, Mr. D. DuBaldo or Mr. N. DuBaldo. The District is currently in the midst of renewing our Downtown banners, anyone who doesn't have a banner or would like more than one banner, please contact Beth Stafford.

Introductions by the commissioners: The commissioners present identify themselves.

Comments and Questions

Mr. Tomko – Mr. Tomko feels that the DMSSD is doing a great (but difficult) job. Some of the accomplishments like the lighting on Purnell, would have been "too risky" when he was on the commission 20 years ago. While he thinks that the Downtown is in pretty good shape, he doesn't think we'll see a big retail component down here in the future when even the big boxes are struggling. He inquires about any movement on the Tong building? Mr. D. DuBaldo responds that the DMSSD has not had positive updates from the Town.

Mr. Tomko feels that he has a plan to alleviate some of the lack of available parking on the north west end of Main Street. He notes that Myrtle Street has parallel parking along the street and he would like to see about shifting those spaces to angled parking. He would also like to see that same scheme on Linden Street to encourage people to use the parking and make access to the park easier and more frequent. Ms. Wolk-Laniewski will put that on the agenda for February meeting.

Mr. Tomko inquires about Tana's new position – Mr. D. DuBaldo explains that she is now part of the EDC not DMSSD.

Ms. Sottile would like to know if there is a timeline for replacing the second constable? Mr. D. DuBaldo would like that constable replaced as soon as possible.

Ms. Dougan knows the Downtown has been moving more toward the service industry, but have there been any studies that will help drive the younger people or provide an enticement to make Main Street a walking path to window shopping and make it more beautiful to do so? There has always been a consideration for slowing down the traffic, speed bumps are not really possible on a throughway like Main, a center median has always been fought by the Manchester Road Race, what else can we do to have traffic slow down? Mr. D. DuBaldo would like to take those questions one-by-one. Regarding retail on Main, there was a market study of the Downtown taken within the past 10 years- at that point, specialty retail was identified as a system of retail that can survive down here, in addition to restaurants and services. As for slowing Main Street, the commission has discussed it for years; the crosswalks that were installed and taken out were supposed to help with that. Thankfully, there is a capital improvement plan to reconfigure Main Street as its last design was 30 years ago. The downside is there isn't a specific timeline for the reconfiguration and at this point, it isn't clear due to limitations what can be done aside from stepping up enforcement.

Mr. Sulick would like to thank Ms. Dougan for coming. To his memory, she may be the first Board of Directors member to attend our meeting in recent years. He feels that this Downtown is a place where businesses can build out at a reasonable price and there's plenty of opportunity. He would like it known that while Main Street is very busy, it seems that few drivers here take consideration to crosswalk signs and that is something that needs to change.

Ms. Dougan expresses an interest in helping to beautify the storefronts.

Mr. Tomko would still like to see Main Street rebranded.

Ms. Wolk-Laniewski has heard positive feedback from people that have recently moved to town that it does seem that Downtown is on its way in a positive direction. Social media does have a way of making that possible and there is a lot of positive feedback found there.

Ms. Dougan expresses a concern from a constituent regarding a constitutional ban on chalking tires and that area resident hopeful that this will end parking enforcement.

Mr. D. DuBaldo informs Ms. Dougan that according to the Town Attorney, that ruling does not affect us yet. If it ever does, we will adjust because we need to continue enforce. While we do still offer free parking, we would like to have the option for people who attend a seminar or daylong activity can park in a normal lot for a nominal daily fee. This would also necessitate the Police Department to upgrade their system to work in conjunction with us.

Other Business - None at this time

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn is made by Mr. Sulick at 9:00, Ms. Gerhardt seconds. All approve.