

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

**May 6, 2020
8AM**

Due to COVID19 Pandemic May 6, 2020 meeting will be by conference call.

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
PRESENT: Gary Anderson, Director Planning and Development
Robert Pagani, GMCC Representative
Beth Stafford, MACC Downtown Churches Representative

ALSO PRESENT: Lynn Sottile
Michael Gerrity

STAFF PRESENT: Danuta Wolk-Laniewski, Downtown Manager

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rebecca Gentile
William Bayer

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

- Mr. D. DuBaldo noted those present and absent.

Minutes

- January 29, 2020; March 4,2020; April 1, 2020 – Mr. Sulick motions to accept, Tammy seconds. All approve.

Public Comment

- Not at this time

New Business

- **St.James Parking Lot Lease:** Ms. Wolk-Laniewski - The constable noted that the parking lot is in poor condition. There is one light which needs to be replaced and some maintenance work likely due to plowing damage which needs to be completed in order to restore pre-winter conditions. Ms. Wolk-Laniewski notes that our current lease is month to month. Mr. D. DuBaldo

recognizes that there is a distance between the board and the church on lease terms. The church would like a good portion of repairs included in the lease but the final agreement at this point is that the District will be month to month which means that we don't have enough dedication to warrant completing any significant repairs without a long-term lease. We are not able to commit to any major financial obligations at this time, but if there is something which makes the lot unsafe (like lighting) those issues should be addressed promptly.

- **Events and COVID-19** – Ms. Wolk-Laniewski wonders if we should be planning for Halloween Happenings and the Tree Lighting Ceremony due to the current health situation. Mr. D. DuBaldo would like to know when the absolute latest cutoff date would be needed in order to make that decision with the most accurate information as it seems imprudent to cancel an outdoor event or events in October and December when it is only May. Mr. Sulick assumes that even if we haven't incurred costs for those events yet, we should plan on having them until we know more decidedly.
- **Plans to Accommodate Additional Outdoor Dining** – Mr. Gerrity and Mr. Anderson have engaged in conversation about the potential for Purnell Place to become pedestrian only even if on a temporary basis. Urban Lodge would like to create more space given social distancing requirements and needing a larger capacity. Could a trial period of pedestrian only on Purnell Place be in place for Thursday or Friday through Sunday? Mr. Gerrity feels that it would be nice to come out of this health situation with a nice splash. Mr. D. DuBaldo as a property owner, is okay with inquiring at local businesses to get their opinions for a trial like that on Purnell Place, he doesn't feel that he or we have the ability to accept a permanent shutdown at this time. We would have to do the trial for multiple businesses because we can't and shouldn't shut a street (even for a trial) for one particular business. Mr. Anderson has discussed the need to reach out to the businesses, Mr. Gerrity has been handling that personally. Lucky Taco is on-board provided there isn't a negative impact on their pickup/delivery, ML Fitness did not have an issue with it, Sukothai was not reached, Mr. Gerrity is waiting for the building owner to follow up with him. Ms. Gerhard is likewise looking at other spaces to expand and asks if non-abutting businesses can join in. Mr. Anderson is still looking for guidance on the proposed May 20 opening date for food businesses, the Town is looking for a temporary waiver or loosening of zoning regulations which conflict with the executive orders and would enable us to expand outdoor dining temporarily. Additionally, Tana Parseliti has been doing some research and application work on this at the Town's end, looking at parking lots, front spaces, rear spaces, non-adjacent spaces... There may be the ability to have bumpouts or parking stalls used (case by case). The Town should have something more solid by the end of the week. The Health Department will be reaching out to all businesses with a 10 item list to assist them in reopening. Ms. Gerhard inquires about the ability to have ("pick-up or takeout signage") in the rear of their building without zoning issues? Mr. Anderson assures her that the Town will be working on that and that she may want to get an application ready with a signature of the tenant and landlord to expedite the process. Non-restaurant businesses may want to have signage as well so the landlord will have to have some say. Mr. Sulick has talked to the Health Department and Tana, while his business wouldn't be interested in street parking for outdoor dining, but the existing tables outside could extend laterally to ensure proper distancing but

that would require certain approvals as well. Mr. Anderson concurs yes, the extension laterally is one of the issues his department is trying to work on with zoning. Mr. Sulick would also like to say that as it is right now, there is a lot of confusion about outdoor liquor and when there is a dining space or a party space. If there's no ability to have alcohol outside, then his business won't put tables out at all. Also, if anyone on the board knows of a restaurant who is having issues with these new health guidelines, to please have them contact him so that he can help. Mr. Pagani asks Mr. Sulick if the CT Restaurant Association is working with the State or individual health departments? Mr. Sulick replies that they are working with the State. Ms. Gerhard wonders if Purnell Place is closed for outdoor dining would it be open seating or dedicated seating? Mr. Anderson notes that it will likely depend on alcohol control. Mr. D. DuBaldo feels that there may be an ability to have mobile seating areas to balance the ebb and flow of the alcohol areas. Mr. Gerrity would like to find out how to make the space as "open" as possible as that would be the most desirable outcome. There is a substantial decline once spaces are marked off for certain businesses. Ms. Gerhard motions to support the Town's pursuit of outdoor dining space increases within the Downtown, Mr. Quast seconds. All approve.

Old Business

- **Election update** - Mr. Tunila indicates that we are expecting an election with primarily mail-in votes and that Ms. Wolk-Laniewski has received 8 ballots so far. From here, we will have a telephone conference for the vote-counting meeting. He asks if we need to pick up the ballots by 6:00 that evening and if we are all on the call, can we talk about next term's goals and officers?
- **Public comment time limit** - Mr. D. DuBaldo notes that this item has been addressed at a previous meeting and will be struck.

Finance Committee

- **YTD Budget vs Actuals** - Ms. Wolk-Laniewski sent out the budget and most of the line items are within their ranges with few small exceptions. Mr. Tunila notes that about 1/2 of the income is in from the banner program. Ms. Stafford will make any contacts to reach out to those who have indicated they will be purchasing/renewing their banner and have not yet paid. With parking passes we are expecting \$52,000 and are at \$50,000 likely due to the COVID pandemic. There is a possibility that there will be a decrease in the purchase of 6 month permits but we are near target. With holiday lights, we have made our last payment of that program but there is an additional fee for hanging the flags. Mr. D. DuBaldo recommends that the flag hanging could fall under beautification or another line item not specific to holiday lights.

Marketing Committee

- **Marketing Committee** - Mr. N. DuBaldo reviews plans for the "reopening" of businesses on Main Street. These marketing plans include a series of advertisements including a banner over Main Street to help make the businesses on the street more visible to the thousands of cars which travel the street daily. There are provisions for print ads, digital ads as well as a giveaway.

Mr. D. DuBaldo asks if there can be a moving list of businesses open and their adjusted hours on our website? Mr. Anderson replied that Ms. Parseliti has been doing some of that outreach for the Town, so she could reach out to individual businesses and if it's within her purview may be able to handle that. The Marketing Committee could also benefit to include Brianna from the Town's marketing department and ensure message continuity between the Town and the Downtown. A motion for the marketing campaign to spend up to \$2000 on their proposal for the Downtown "reopening" is made by Mr. Sulick, seconded by Ms. Gerhard. All approve. Ms. Sottile would like to reiterate that the email blasts will be critical at this point because they don't cost the District anything. There's a pending blast which should be out before Mothers' Day this weekend; there will also be more coming. She feels that business people should also take responsibility about making sure their hours are posted and that customers know which businesses are open. Ms. Wolk-Laniewski would like to heavily leverage social media during this campaign. Mr. N. DuBaldo mentions that part of the latest design of the website we will have the ability to have connectivity between our website and social media to ensure continuity of messages and improve message composition efficiency.

Parking & Maintenance Committee

- **Parking Report** - Constable Rick has been using his discretion regarding ticketing. The majority of tickets written since the COVID crisis have been going to business employees parking on the street. Initially there was some negative feedback about ticketing but that has not continued. Mr. Sulick inquires about a certain individual with alleged thousands in unpaid tickets. Ms. Wolk-Laniewski notes that the individual has 80 tickets amounting to \$2000. The Manchester Police Department states that the individual shouldn't be able to register their car with those outstanding tickets. Mr. D. DuBaldo reminds the Board that the District doesn't have anything to do with collection, only issue and waivers. As a district, we support the Town reporting tickets to the DMV so there wouldn't be abuse of the ticketing system but it's not the District's duty to even discuss collections or ramifications. Mr. Sulick notes that the Parking Committee has not received any waivers in roughly 3 months, and would still like to have a regular communication with the parking committee. Mr. D. DuBaldo reminds the committees that they should be meeting prior to board meetings to streamline the process so issues can be properly reported upon at the board meeting. Ms. Wolk_Laniewski has created an updated spreadsheet for the waivers to see the ticketing patterns and identify whether ticketing is a result of lack of proper communication or simple parking abuse. Mr. Quast had a business complain to him about ticketing during the crisis and he recommended that individual call-in to the meeting for that individual to speak to the board directly.

Other Reports

- Gary Anderson - Director of Planning and Development – nothing further. Mr. Tunila inquires about businesses that have permanently closed during the crisis. Mr. Anderson has heard rumors only but nothing official Downtown; there will probably be some, unfortunately.
- Ms. Stafford - MACC Downtown Churches Representative – Full Gospel Interdenominational and St. James Churches have donated enough for MACC to serve about 10,000 meals.

- Mr. Pagani –Chair GMCC - not present at this time

Administration

- Manager's Report – Nothing further

Public Comment

- Ms. Sottile feels that if it will help getting people to return their ballots, maybe a second reminder in a week or so could remind folks? Mr. D. DuBaldo would like to see a simple note with few words which might be more effective than a long, drawn out email. Ms. Sottile would like to thank Mr. D. DuBaldo, Mr. Bayer and Mr. Quast as they depart the board.

Adjourn

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn is brought by Mr. Quast at 9:13, Mr. Tunila seconds. All approve.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas DuBaldo, Secretary DMSSD

Recorder