



Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.  
December 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes  
6:00 PM - Council Chambers

Jane Kobuta called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on December 10, 2019. Kevin Sluka conducted roll call. The following Board Members were present:

Present: Iris Frank, Tony Brokenborough, Kevin Sluka, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Mark Aziz (late), Mike Kerwin

Absent: Jenn Pearson, John Flores

The assembly joined in a salute to the flag.

Rick St. Pierre called for a motion to approve the Nov. 12 board meeting minutes, Iris Frank seconded same.

Yea: Iris Frank, Tony Brokenborough, Kevin Sluka, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

#### Remarks from Chairperson

Jane Kobuta reported that a date should be set to get together about the DSA 2020 budget, as well as discuss appointments for slate of officers. Kevin reported that the bylaws state that officers are annual, and need to be voted on at the re-organization meeting in January. Two board members have terms which conclude in 2019, Rick St. Pierre and Tony Brokenborough. Both officers expressed interest in being re-appointed for a three year term. Executive committee should additionally come together to review DSA personnel.

Jane reported that a discussion should resurface regarding the ban on plastic bags, as the bill banning single use plastic is advancing in the state. Shoprite in Somerville currently reuses bags. Jane recommended pulling in the merchants to gather their thoughts. Mike Kerwin reported that the freeholders are also looking into it. Rick St. Pierre reported that many merchants already use paper. This is a notification that will be coming down the pipeline.

#### Executive Director Report

#### Old Business

Natalie reported that there will not be an update on new business, rather the focus will be a recap of 2019.

#### MSNJ Transformation Strategies Update

Natalie reported that MSNJ will be completing preliminary updates over the next week, and that they are behind in rolling out the information. Natalie mentioned that many complete transformation strategies in other towns are largely operational, and focus on day-to-day happenings and how workload can be broken up to achieve goals. The focus is more so how one can use market research to help plan strategy within their district, rather than long-term plans. Natalie contacted support center and has a conference call on Dec. 17, 2019. They will work to have a long term 5-year plan completed before the first quarter in 2020. Mike Kerwin mentioned that the strategic plan should be focused on one-page priorities. The board discussed that a 3-year master plan would be ideal over a 5-year plan.

#### Holiday Jubilee/ Small Business Saturday Recap

Natalie reported that both events were very successful and that there are thoughts to split up the events next year. Many merchants discussed their feelings about how Holiday Jubilee generally takes the spotlight of the day over Small Business Saturday. TapSnap hosted a survey at Santa's photo booth and data has been recorded regarding how individuals found out about the Jubilee. Most of the responses were via Facebook. Natalie reported that the community and business owners really came together to pull through for this event, and extended gratitude towards Iris and Rick for hot cocoa, and blue sheep for cookies. It is estimated that over 5,000 attendees were present at this event. The board discussed crossing guards for next year as well as whistles for police officers to help with crowd control and make the event safer for the future. The board discussed logistical changes for 2020 including items such as garbage disposal, crowd control, information distribution, hospitality staff, etc. Natalie reported that she is hoping to gain a few more helpers for next year to distribute out maps, give out directions, direct folks, etc.

#### Over-The-Road Banner Poles

Natalie reached out to have drawings done in January. Will adhere to terms not to exceed \$2,500 in spending.

#### Billboard Windows

Natalie reported that approval was received from Greg Storms regarding billboard window coverings over vacant storefronts. DSA will be working with Alphagraphics to add coverings to the storefronts as soon as possible. The next target space is the old Candyland location.

Natalie mentioned that with many vacancies at one time throughout the downtown, each billboard window covering would be different for each property. They would be adjustable based on location, time, etc. For example, Hungry Hound would be a district map, Electrolux would feature demographics about the town, etc. Mark Aziz agreed that it would be beneficial to differentiate each billboard window covering.

#### Smart City Media Kiosks

Natalie reported that Jersey City currently has several Smart City Media Kiosks throughout their district. Natalie has had preliminary conversations with Smart City Media about pricing. Kiosks are approximately \$36,000 for hardware featuring free WiFi, wayfinding apps, directions to social services, information about the town, and a 360 degree camera. Target locations in Downtown Somerville are right outside the train station as well as the top of Division Street. Natalie added the advantage of having this technology as a county seat. Mike Kerwin shared that these systems are the future of downtowns, and it's a matter of when Downtown Somerville should

implement this technology if we desire to be ahead of the curve. The board agreed to do more research on locations, updating technology, and potentially leasing rather than purchasing. Natalie added she will reach out and attempt to schedule a meeting or conference call for more information.

#### Street Plus

Street Plus conducted a walk with Natalie throughout Downtown Somerville and will roll out a proposal. Benefits include a uniformed downtown friendly person throughout the town, which can be decided to only be used on high traffic days. ABS, DSA's current cleaning service team, is currently on a two-year contract. Discussions about ABS services versus Street Plus services and which will better suit the downtown will continue after the proposal is received.

#### Branding Update

Oxford Communications members Chris and Ashley met with Natalie for a walk through Downtown Somerville and are eager to begin work. Oxford has been in touch with MSNJ to receive information so they may create the marketing plan, and will reach out to Natalie if they desire to host a separate focus group with business and property owners. Once Oxford completes this discovery period, they will roll out branding information. Oxford & MSNJ have been conducting their own research, and will ensure the strategic plan and branding are in sync.

#### Igloo Update

Natalie reported that the DSA is still working on finding the right resource for heat. The build for 5 igloos will move forward nonetheless.

Natalie presented a year-end presentation on the DSA's achievements over the last year. Board members were emailed a copy of this presentation at the conclusion of the meeting.

Mark Aziz made a motion to approve finance report and payment authorizations. Rick St Pierre seconded same.

Yea: Mark Aziz, Iris Frank, Tony Brokenborough, Kevin Sluka, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Mike Kerwin

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

No comments were made from the public.

Jane Kobuta made a motion to adjourn the meeting.