



Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.
February 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes
6:00 PM - Virtual Meeting

John Flores called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on February 8, 2021. Natalie Pineiro conducted roll call. The following Board Members were present:

Present: Kevin Sluka, RanD Pitts, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson (late)

Absent: None

The assembly joined in a virtual salute to the flag.

Rick SP made a motion to approve the January 2021 meeting minutes. Kevin Sluka seconded same.

Yea: Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Iris Frank, RanD Pitts

Nay: None

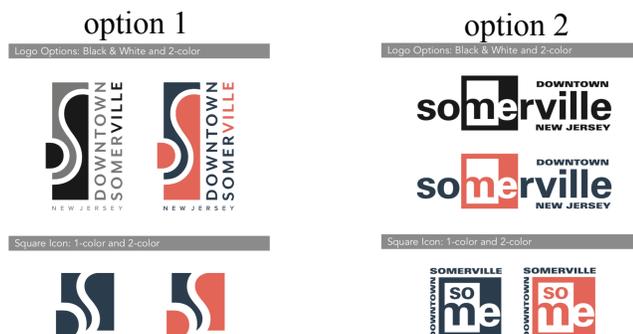
Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Presentation of Updated Logo/ Branding Options by Oxford Communications

Oxford Communications presented the Downtown Somerville Alliance with four new logo options as part of the DSA rebrand process. Two new versions were shown along with two reiterations of previous versions. Consensus is that the board would like to move forward with two options, as they feel as though they best represent the evolution of Somerville. The DSA will continue by asking the public for an emotional reaction to those two options. These options are to be presented with an example color palette, rather than full color palette options.

Logo options are as follows:



Chairperson Remarks

John Flores reported that now that vaccines have been administered, we're one step closer to getting Downtown Somerville where we want it to be. John added that he is looking for the board in enhancing our efforts to reopen Downtown Somerville safely.

Executive Director Report

Natalie presented an overview of DSA board responsibilities, adding that there is a need for additional board involvement including volunteering at DSA events and attending new business ribbon cutting ceremonies. Upcoming events include a Black History Month Installation ribbon cutting ceremony, Mo Grill & Sweets grand opening ceremony, and volunteering for Valentine's Day activities.

With Valentine's Day approaching, Sam Shaw (DSA Program Coordinator) has designed Valentine's Day "at-home" boxes for community members to still be able to shop, dine and enjoy Downtown Somerville safely at home. These boxes included dinner, dessert, and an experience.

Natalie reported that there has been significant press coverage for the Black History Month installation. Both Tina Jalloh & Freeholder Chanel Robinson have both been featured on this installation as local Black trailblazers. A promotional video was filmed at the installation today by Media x Marketing, and a projected final video will be completed and published by Wednesday, February 10. Natalie added that the DSA is hoping to host a ribbon cutting for the installation, with invitations to the press (weather depending).

Update on Street Fairs

Natalie reported that the SBPA has been hosting spring street fairs and a craft fair in September on Downtown Somerville's Main Street. The board discussed that the September craft fair is welcome, however closing Main Street has been detrimental for the business community due to visibility and the come-and-go crowd that is attracted during these events. The borough has been encouraging that this event take place elsewhere, such as Grove Street or Bridge Street. Additionally, the Somerville Street Fair presented by streetfairs.org takes place in June and October. The town hopes to permit only one fair, in October.

The Borough of Somerville would like to engage the Downtown Somerville Alliance and receive the opinion of the DSA regarding moving forward with these events. As we work together, Somerville Borough Council will take the lead from the DSA regarding events hosted by outside organizations. The current DSA recommendation is to relocate the spring craft fair off of Main Street and onto Bridge Street or Grove Street, and if groups are not amenable to this, denying the applications for the event. An additional recommendation was made to the Borough Council to allow one single street fair, provided

that they work with the town to ensure quality vendors will be attending the event - no MLM's, insurance agencies, etc.

The DSA Board added that they are additionally hopeful to host more markets hosted by Downtown Somerville, such as artisan markets. The DSA has been working with Arts On Division on this. The DSA is also hoping to plan a "Somerville reopening" block party in June.

Tour of Somerville being moved to Labor Day

Public Art Plan

Natalie reported that a public art survey has been distributed to help with the DSA art plan, hoping to get this plan into action by end of March. This plan will have recommendations for the DSA, not just for Division Street art installations but additionally Main Street as a whole (i.e. in front of Verizon Building, Giardina Walkway, Courthouse Lawn, and other spaces in the district).

Arts On Division

Natalie inquired the DSA board on how the DSA can have a relationship with Arts On Division (AOD) that has the highest impact on our district. Various topics have been discussed such as AOD becoming a subcommittee on the DSA board, AOD sponsoring the DSA, or having AOD put together a list of projects they want to see happen in the district which would then be present to the DSA to see how we might be able to sponsor those projects and provide in-kind services. When applying for arts grants, a standalone arts organization is needed within the district. There are additional opportunities for Arts On Division to exist and conduct similar types of art projects outside of the Special Improvement District (SID) (i.e. arts in the park, etc).

Sidewalk Grates

The DSA board discussed the responsibility of the DSA regarding maintaining the ongoing sidewalk infrastructure. There is currently an ordinance on the books stating sidewalks are the responsibility of the property owner. The hope is to honor the Borough's desire to remove the "graveyard" grates that surround sidewalk trees. The DSA wishes to support redevelopment and investment in Downtown Somerville, however reiterating municipal ordinances that the DSA does not take on the responsibility to fund those sidewalks and new sidewalk improvements. The DSA currently takes on infrastructure projects every year including funding a certain number of sidewalk trees throughout the district, etc. The DSA will meet with the infrastructure committee to discuss how we will move forward with ongoing maintenance.

Talks of Paul Robeson Representation

Natalie inquired the DSA board on their thoughts in looking into adding a statue of Paul Robeson on Division Street. Princeton, NJ and Rutgers University have both claimed Paul Robeson, and Somerville is equally prominent given Paul Robeson's achievements and growth in Somerville. The board discussed adding a mural in conjunction with the greater art plan, along with the idea of adding more murals in town. John Flores added celebrating Paul Robeson beyond the art implementation, such as creating a specific day, or celebrating his birthday downtown. Adding a mural at the underpass/ under the train tracks was discussed, along with other locations with higher visibility. Natalie plans to send an email creating a sub committee, including Jim Somerville, Art Adaire, Marge Sullivan to discuss where this tribute can be placed.

The **Snow Removal Discussion** will be tabled to the Infrastructure Committee Meeting next week.

2021 Budget Presentation

Natalie presented the 2021 budget to the DSA board of trustees. A general summary includes a 2020 budget shift (from digital kiosks and an art plan to district safety and COVID-19 relief). Original 2020 budget planning is to be revisited in 2021, including a refocus on the rebranding process and a public art plan. Current event budget removes Girls Night Out along with the St. Patrick's Day Parade due to current COVID-19 restrictions, with a hope to return back to a normal event schedule by summer. The DSA also plans to add a farmers market, run by a separate organization, with a process starting in November or December of this year.

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve this preliminary budget as presented, and authorize Natalie to present this budget to the Borough of Somerville. Mike Kerwin seconded same.

Yea: Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson

Nay: None

Abstain: RanD Pitts

Recuse: None

Approval of Payment Authorizations

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the January 2021 payment authorizations, Mark Aziz seconded same.

Yea: Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, Iris Frank

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Approval of Finance Reports

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the December 2020 and January 2021 finance reports, Mark Aziz seconded same.

Yea: Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts, Iris Frank

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Comments from Public

Somerville Borough Council President Fred Wied thanked the DSA board for bringing up the issue of added recognition of Paul Robeson, as the current existing familiar spots are limited to Paul Robeson Boulevard, a plaque outside of the middle school, and a painting in the Giardina Walkway. He added additional thanks for the discussion on the street fair, which has been long overdue for a revamp. Lastly, he expressed his gratitude and amazement for the current Black History Month installation on Division Street adding that this was inspiring and great to see local Black trailblazers featured.

Adjournment

Rick St. Pierre made a motion to adjourn the February 2021 meeting, Jenn Pearson seconded same.

Yea: Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Mark Aziz, Jenn Pearson, RanD Pitts

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Meeting minutes are provided by Samantha Shaw, Program Coordinator, on January 11, 2021.