



Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.

March 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes

6:00 PM - Council Chambers

Jane Kobuta called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on March 11, 2019. Kevin Sluka conducted roll call. The following Board Members were present:

Present: John Flores (JF), Iris Frank (IF), Mike Kerwin (MK), Kevin Sluka (KS), Rick St. Pierre (RSP), Mark Aziz (MA), Jane Kobuta (JK), Jen Pearson (JP)

The assembly joined the dais in a salute to the flag.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Approval of February 11, 2019 minutes

R. St. Pierre made a motion to approve. Mike Kerwin seconded same.

Yea: John Flores, Iris Frank, Mike Kerwin, Kevin Sluka, Rick St. Pierre, Mark Aziz, Jane Kobuta, Jen Pearson

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Chairperson Statement

No Remarks from Chairwoman Jane Kobuta.

Executive Director Report

Natalie Pineiro thanked Leo Vazquez for coming out to give a primer on Creative Placemaking. Hopes that everyone got a good understanding of what it is and how it could help accomplish strategic organizational goals and improve the DSA and bring the Somerville Community to the table to help Downtown Somerville grow and thrive.

Old Business

Update on Board Training:

prep session 3/25 that will; include NP, Jane and Mike. Waiting to get conf. but proposed training date is 4/5 from 8 am to 11am.

Update for TOS meeting:

NP main concerns with the tour schedule was the Grand Fondo (proposed to take place Saturday 5/26), starting and ending on Main St. Could cause problems with traffic and safety Parking concerns taking place Saturday

JK gave background on situation that started with Mike Malekov distributing an agenda which included closing Main St two days in a row (Sunday and Monday) and moved the Memorial Day Parade to From Mon, Morning to the middle of Sunday afternoon. She further explained that he did all this without contacting the borough. Explained that when you host an event requiring a street closure that is not only effects the merchants, but also effects all of the various public safety entities.

NP Continued, explaining that at the meeting that was had with the TOS organizers and other stakeholders on 3/8 and they indicated that a planning meeting was scheduled for 3/12 to finalize details for the weekend. As of 3/8 only 3 people had signed up for the Grand Fondo.

NP gave additional background: because last year the TOS has the sprint races on the Sunday before Memorial Day, the idea was that they would move the Memorial Day Parade to Sunday and have a day-long schedule of events downtown that would start with a recreational bike tour of Somerset county (Grand Fondo) that would include 3-500 bikers and that was going to start and end on Main. Once it was determined that the Memorial Day Parade would not be moved, what we were left with was a potential for the police to have to close that street from 8am to 12pm, reopen the street, and then close it again from 4-7pm which is when they were going to do the Sprints. In talking to the stakeholders at the meeting on 3/8 it was determined that the Grand Fondo is a great event, we're just not sure if we are ready to do it THIS YEAR.

It was also decided that changes of this nature not only need to be discussed with Borough council, but also with the DSA because of potential impact on merchants. Final decision was that they will either postpone, or completely cancel. In the event that they keep the Grand Fondo, it will not be on Main Street. Will Keep Sprints but they will move back to the same time as last year.

Monday events will continue as regularly scheduled; (Parade and Mem. Parade)

MK commented that he watched the discussion (that took place at the Borough Council meeting on TV) about the TOS, he understands the tradition of having the parade on memorial day. But felt a little guilty over the years that spectator could barely make the parade because it takes place so early. So when TOS mentioned that the Veterans were actually looking to host the parade at a different time that it resonated with him.

JK responded that that wasn't true and advised that Peter Neimic suggested that he had been cajoled into moving the date/time by TOS and that the Veterans Alliance preferred to keep the parade on the original date.

JK continued that the whole point of memorial day is to honor the Veterans, and the ceremony at the cemetery takes place in the area where most of the Veterans are buried. So it's more of a tradition

NP advised that the idea of working with the Veterans Alliance next year to shorten the route/change the time of the parade so that everyone can coexist more happily was discussed at the 3/8 meeting but the main concern of the DSA was more so the addition a of the Grand Fondo and its implications for the businesses.

More details should be available after the TOS meeting on 3/12.

MK agrees with the idea of shortening the route

JK commented that this was something that we should have been discussing with TOS last summer – not two months before the event.

NP mentioned that Tom Maines, who is handling a lot of the logistics for the tour, met with her after the 3/8 meeting and they had a great conversation about working a lot closer to debrief sooner and start the planning process a lot earlier for the following year

JF mentioned that he is familiar with the cycling community and that Grand Fondos are growing in popularity so it would be nice to consider having one. Explained that even with 5/600 riders they leave town and don't return for several hours, so there isn't really a need to shut down the entire Downtown. The benefit for the DSA would be that on their return you have several hundred hungry people who will be in town.

NP mentioned that there was a discussion about having a Grand Fondo, just on a different date.

IF indicated that she didn't believe she had ever seen the proposed schedule and asked that an updated version be sent to the DSA Board.

NP indicated that she would re-circulate as soon as she had the updated version.

JK reiterated the original proposed schedule.

RSP advised that schedule, once updated should be posted on the TOS Website. Also mentioned that changes to the Borough's Family Fun Ride, to better accommodate the TOS were still on the table as well.

KS advised that after speaking with the organizers of the Family Fun Ride, they were baffled as to why changes were needed to the timing since their ride last year was finished with time to spare before the TOS started. He reiterated that the goal this year is just to get the parade and everyone else to start on time, and that should alleviate some of the issues.

KS Reiterated that the Family Fun Ride starts immediately following the Parade. Parade starts at 9am and once the parade clears, the rest of the activities kick off.

RSP asked if NP or KS would be attending the TOS meeting on 3/12. NP indicated that they were not invited to the meeting. RSP suggested that he had some concern about the back and forth with the communication and being caught in the middle of trying to figure out what is true in the communications from Mike Malekov, TOS et al. and would like some kind of back up.

KS went on to correct the fact that TOS had indicated that they believed the Family Fun Ride to be a fund raiser of some sort. KS advised that some years ago, the Borough charged per cyclist. They now charge per family just as a way to solidify their commitment to showing up. Advised that they have had anywhere from 50-150 families that sign up per year.

RSP Indicated that he knows that Mike Malekov would be coming into the 3/12 meeting a little upset because he is going to believe that he didn't get any compromise from anyone.

NP indicated that if RSP so wished she could make herself available to attend the TOS meeting with him on the following evening.

RSP indicate that that would not be necessary but that he just wanted to confirm the details of the Family Fun Ride so that he could be adequately prepared to discuss with Mike and the rest of the TOS team.

Data Collection Update

NP reminded the Board of their decision to cancel their contract with MotionLoft and advised that she was still waiting for them, to get back to her with information on how to go about removing the hardware and returning it.

She articulated that she was aware that despite the cancellation with MotionLoft there was a desire to seek out alternate methods of data collection. She advised that she has done some preliminary research and spoken to approx. 4 companies who also specialize in data collection, and primary issue is that no one offers a method of collection that captures unique visitors because of privacy limitations with facial recognition. Most companies utilize things like motion sensing and heat technology to count people and the number of people in clusters. NP recognizes that this type of data collection does not provide the data or value that the DSA Board and DSA Merchants have expressed interest in and therefore she will continue to research more companies. She indicated that she was hopeful in finding such a company at the National Main Street Conference where there would be a large collection of vendors that focus on solutions for Downtowns.

She also indicated that per an offline conversation with JK they had discussed – based on the feedback from merchants and DSA Board members about the type of data that they were interested in collecting- that it might be wise to get a research firm to come out to do people counting and surveying to garner more accurate information – “direct from the source.”

MK agreed and directed her to contact Jackie Morales from the Tourism office because he recalled that in building the Tourism infrastructure that they had engaged in a similar type of surveying.

Old Business

Jane Kobuta asked if the second Monday of the month is acceptable as the standard DSA, Inc. board meeting date going forward. The dates are 2/11, 3/11, 4/8, 5/13, 6/10, 7/8, 8/12, 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9. All approved the meeting time and dates.

Jane Kobuta and Kevin Sluka gave a brief history of the trees that were selected to be removed in the downtown. Initially 19 trees were to be removed in the downtown. The project went out to bid. and after reviewing the Environmental Commission’s study, it was decided that only 3 trees would be removed. The initial bids were not considered as the project was going to be re-evaluated after reviewing the study. After the re-evaluation, and at this point, it was discussed to do 3 trees a year and have the Borough fund the trees, the DSA fund the sidewalk projects and the DBiz Loan would not be fully utilized.

? made a motion to approve to discontinue using the DBiz Loan and R. St. Pierre seconded same.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Natalie Piniero advised the Board that she received an estimate of \$2,100 for the Executive Board orientation. It was decided that an 8 am to 11 am time during the week would work for the Board.

R. St. Pierre made a motion to approve the Board orientation date and amount and ? seconded same.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

R. St. Pierre commented that Motion Loft was hired to help monitor downtown movement; but that the cost was very high, and the data was not quantifiable. It was decided; however, that a system to gather data of the downtown foot traffic is necessary.

? made a motion to discontinue the contract with Motion Loft and Rick St. Pierre seconded same.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Jane Kobuta opened up the discussion regarding committees. The Finance Committee members are Rick St. Pierre, Mark Aziz and Jane Kobuta. The committee will have their first meeting on Friday, February 15th at 3 pm.

Kevin Sluka and ? discussed when the Infrastructure Committee could meet. Kevin Sluka stated that both he would be available for meetings during the day. It was also decided that Rodney Hadley should be included in the Infrastructure meetings.

Natalie Piniero commented that the Marketing Committee has a standing meeting for February 19th.

New Business

Jane Kobuta stated the DSA, Inc. has a year-long commitment from TAP Into for marketing and advertising. Natalie Piniero also mentioned that TAP Into is proposing to give the DSA, Inc. feature space and advertising space for the year. It would appear in the Somerville, Bridgewater and Hillsborough sections of TAP Into. It was decided to submit for a four-month proposal, subject to the Marketing Committee running the metrics and marketing strategy to see what would work for the DSA, Inc.

? made a motion to have the Marketing Committee work on the four-month proposal and move forward with the contract with TAP Into without it being reviewed by the Board.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Kevin Sluka commented that he would draft RFQ's to hire a marketing firm and a company to do the street work. He will have a draft in place before the next meeting to present to the Board for approval.

Comments from the Public

Jane Kobuta made a motion to open the public.

Brittany Burton from Revive Consignment asked if the committees were fully formed. Natalie Piniero responded that Events Committee could use more members. She also commented that a number of business owners met and discussed the digital kiosks throughout the town; however, it was decided

that it was too expensive. Iris Frank stated that she is working on a loyalty app for her business and maybe something like that would work for the downtown.

Jane Kobuta closed the public portion of the meeting.

Payment Authorizations

Natalie Piniero mentioned that two additional bills that were added to the PO report.

? made a motion to approve the payments and Rick St. Pierre seconded same.

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

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Jane Kobuta closed the meeting at 7:19 pm.

Prepared by: Natalie Pineiro on April 6, 2019

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