



Downtown Somerville Alliance, Inc.  
October 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes  
6:00 PM - Virtual Meeting

Jane Kobuta called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm on October 12, 2020. Natalie Pineiro conducted roll call. The following Board Members were present:

Present: Jane Kobuta, Tony Brokenborough, Mike Kerwin, Iris Frank, Kevin Sluka, Jenn Pearson

Absent: Rick St. Pierre, Mark Aziz, John Flores

The assembly joined in a virtual salute to the flag.

Iris Frank made a motion to approve the board meeting minutes of August 2020. Jenn Pearson seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Jane Kobuta, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Mike Kerwin made a motion to approve the September 2020 Bills List, as the September 2020 board meeting did not occur. Jenn Pearson seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Jane Kobuta, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin, John Flores, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Executive Director Report

**Update re: Virtual Arts/ History Walk**

Natalie reported that the Downtown Somerville Alliance is moving forward with the Virtual Arts/ History Walk project and met with Arts on Division representatives and Historical Society members in Somerville to discuss parameters and coordinate further details regarding the 10-15 locations used for this video. Two DSA board members, Jenn Pearson and John Flores

will also be involved with this project. The hope is that before the end of 2020, the DSA will have a finished product including filmed locations and narratives on each location available on [www.downtownsomerville.com](http://www.downtownsomerville.com), [www.somervilleathome.com](http://www.somervilleathome.com) and all other associated Somerville websites and social media pages.

***Update re: Billboard Windows***

Natalie reported that Speedpro, the company being used to produce new billboard window coverings that will be going up to replace the old Asian market windows (currently covered in graffiti-style art panels), required a few updated photos with higher resolution in order to move forward with production. A new graphic has been sent with updated photos including a new Paul Robeson photo, and new Hispanic Heritage Month photos. Speedpro is currently moving forward with production. The DSA is aiming to have these window coverings up by the Holiday season.

***Update re: Main Street Banner Poles***

Kevin Sluka reported that the DSA conducted a walk with Loumarc to discuss potential areas for banner poles. A few areas had infrastructure challenges, based on lines that run underneath the road which may present challenges. It may be possible that banner poles will sit in front of the DOT right of way, and the DSA may also require permission from property owners to place banner poles on their facade. Loumarc created a draft estimate and will analyze prime spots. Kevin Sluka added that he spoke with property owner Tom Genova who is amenable to having poles between two of his properties, given that they would not block any windows. The DSA is hoping to complete this project by next spring, and will look into any potential issues with DOT as well as drafting contracts with property owners.

***Update: Vacancy Report***

Natalie reported that Downtown Somerville currently has 17 vacancies, with 7 projected to be filled. A few businesses moving in are Pureflo Yoga, a hot yoga studio previously set to open at the old Electrolux location but will now be moving to the old Studio Barre location as well as Yokohama Japanese Restaurant moving from the West End of town to replace Chicali Mexican Grill.

***Update: Branding/ Strategic Plan***

Natalie reported that the last strategic planning session was conducted at the end of July, and the DSA will be conducting a meeting this Wednesday from 2pm-4pm for a final draft which will be available for publication soon thereafter. DSA board members are welcome to join this meeting at Office Evolution, 50 Division Street Suite 501.

***Update: Som-Pop***

The Downtown Somerville Alliance received a \$40,000 Regional Center Challenge Grant to conduct the Som-Pop pop-up incubator business program. Natalie reported that she met with property owner Greg Storms to discuss using two storefronts, the old Electrolux location as well as the old Hungry Hound location on Main Street. The DSA will work out lease terms with Greg Storms, an application will be drafted, and the DSA has approximately 9 months to begin this program.

**Report from Retail Consultant**

Natalie presented a Retail Report & Recommendations powerpoint presentation informed by Richard Cohan, Retail Consultant and presented by Natalie Pineiro, Executive Director. This presentation includes current retail statistics, new business statistics through the pandemic, strategies for retention and recruitment, post COVID-19 business opportunities, changes in tourism, etc. This presentation will be available in the October 2020 board meeting packet.

### ***Post Covid Visioning***

The Downtown Somerville Alliance has been actively engaging business owners to discuss activating discounts and loyalty programs for Somerville residents and Somerset County workers during traditionally slower days (Mon-Wed).

Natalie reported that the DSA will not be hosting their annual Spooktacular this year. A message will go out to the community stating that there will be no organized event, however a list of businesses that will still be handing out candy will be provided along with a list of restaurants that are doing specials or individual events for Halloween.

Natalie added that the Downtown Somerville Holiday Jubilee will be a virtual program this year, given last year over 1500+ residents were present on Division Street anticipating Santa's arrival. The DSA will be joining a conference call with a production company later this week that will assist in putting together this virtual program. The idea is to include virtual messages, virtual performances, and the Somerville Fire Dept./ Santa Claus for a live stream of Santa's arrival and the tree lighting ceremony. The DSA will also be putting a heavy focus on Small Business Saturday, and smaller-scale activities will also be scheduled between Thanksgiving and the Christmas season for community members to enjoy.

The DSA board discussed bringing back igloos on Division Street, as many restaurants across the state are currently providing igloos during this time. Board members discussed concerns with restaurant tents. As of now, Natalie reported that by November 30, 2020 tents will need to come down or businesses will require construction permits in order for tents to stay.

The DSA discussed pros and cons regarding igloos, and decided if the plan is to move forward, igloos will only be open on certain days with certain hours, and will be sanitized after each use to ensure cleanliness. A record will be kept of who has been in each igloo, and when each igloo has been cleaned. The DSA is also considering having "hosts" for each igloo to monitor more closely. Kevin Sluka added that igloo discussions may be premature, given rules will change within the next 15 days. The DSA board is open to bringing the igloos back, but will table this decision to the November meeting provided by that time there will be final decisions by the Governor regarding indoor dining at 50% capacity.

### ***Division Street Smoking Ordinance***

Kevin Sluka reported that the Borough Council has tabled this ordinance a few times, and is looking to the Downtown Somerville Alliance to provide their thoughts on this matter.

The Downtown Somerville community is looking to create an ordinance regarding no smoking on Division Street. The Borough of Somerville may create a designated smoking area, which would be designated at the discretion of the governing body.

The DSA has endorsed a no-smoking policy, as Natalie reported that family-oriented businesses have formally complained that they are suffering as a direct result of smokers on Division Street. The board discussed endorsing a guideline that specifically states "no smoking during events," or no large-group smoking. In regards to creating a specific outdoor smoking

area, the DSA board discussed the difficulty with managing and maintaining that area and believes that the town considers the future vision and use for Division Street. Natalie reported that she will communicate with Jane to coordinate passing along the message to council.

***Payment Authorizations/ Finance Report***

Kevin Sluka made a motion to approve payment authorizations, Iris Frank seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Jane Kobuta, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson  
Nay: None  
Abstain: None  
Recuse: None

Kevin Sluka made a motion to approve the finance report, Iris Frank seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Jane Kobuta, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson  
Nay: None  
Abstain: None  
Recuse: None

***Public Comment/ Adjournment***

Jane Kobuta opened the meeting for public comment. No members of the public were present.

Kevin Sluka made a motion to adjourn the August 10, 2020 board meeting. Jane Kobuta seconded same.

Yea: Tony Brokenborough, Jane Kobuta, Kevin Sluka, Mike Kerwin, Iris Frank, Jenn Pearson  
Nay: None  
Abstain: None  
Recuse: None

Meeting minutes are provided by Samantha Shaw, Program Coordinator, on November 6, 2020.