

# South Orange Village Center Alliance

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Bob Zuckerman, *Executive Director*

Melissa Hodge, *Events and Operations*

## Board of Directors

Steven Pedigo

Mark Murphy

Mark Hartwyk

Deborah Engel

Courtney Bryan

Cat Fisher

Danny Harrison

Jonathan Javins

Michael Maza

Leslie Pogany

Sunny Uberoi

Matt Wonski

Freddy Arsenault

Fahim Abedrabbo

Steven Schnall

Adam Loehner

## Open Minutes

December 19, 2018

A regular meeting of the South Orange Village Center Alliance was held at Village Hall offices at 76 South Orange Avenue on December 19, 2018 and called to order by Chairman Pedigo at 8:35 a.m. The meeting was certified by Director Engel as being duly advertised.

### Meeting Notice Statement:

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the press in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A 10:4-6. In addition, notice of this meeting was posted in Village Hall and on the Village's website, and has been filed by the Office of the Village Clerk. Official action may be taken.

A roll call of those in attendance was taken.

**Present:** Steven Pedigo, Mark Murphy, Mark Hartwyk, Deborah Engel, Freddy Arsenault, Courtney Bryant, Cat Fisher, Danny Harrison, Jonathan Javins, Michael Maza, Matt Wonski, Steven Schnall, Adam Loehner, Fahim Abedrabbo

**Also Present:** Bob Zuckerman (ED) and Melissa Hodge (EOA)

**Absent:** Leslie Pogany, Sunny Uberoi

**Public:** Alyssa Aronson (resident)

**Next Meeting Date:** January 31, 2019. Will serve as our Annual Public Meeting.

### **Adoption of the Open Minutes for November 20, 2018:**

A motion was made by Director Hartwyk and seconded by Trustee Schnall to approve the Open Minutes for November 20, 2018, all were in favor.

### **Board Report Summary + Review of Final 2018 Budget**

#### ***Director report:***

1. Congrats to Adam Loehner as new Village Administrator.
2. The DPW Director is on an extended leave of absence and may not return. Mike Candarella will be the new point of contact during Director's absence.
3. Train station mural is complete and lights are up.
4. Fitting Room Gala is opening today. The owner is keeping her Valley Street St. location open for events.
5. Noodlefan is permanently closed and 1 South is closing at the end of the year.
6. Planning to host SHU Days February. Tentative date for the men's Seton Hall game is Feb 20 at 7pm. Working on a date for Women's game.

#### **Edit to 2018 Budget:**

The 2019 board approved budget will be introduced to the Board of Trustees in January for approval. We will be receiving \$1,000 from the Investors Bank Foundation instead of the \$5,000 originally promised for PlayDay due to foundation cutbacks. SOVCA was not the only grant recipient affected by Foundation cutbacks.

### **Board Committee Reports**

***Business Retention:*** Focusing on retail shops on Valley Street and put together a grassroots approach to connect with those businesses. Will put together a cohesive strategy and brand for the area. Down the line, brand each area of the village and have a representative attend SOVCA meetings. ***Business Visits:*** Joy (Indulgence) and Mark will meet. Cat met with Ampy. Deb to meet with Elitist Coffee.

***Beautification:*** Three focus areas: 1 - Spiotta Park - getting estimate/master plan for the space and repairing the kids toys and furniture. Looking into winterizing. Could Spiotta Park have new signage (donor signage or a name for the park)? 2- Circle in front of Fire Station and Gazebo - cleaning, fountain winterizing, stone repair and weeding - can we use part of Fire Dept area for landscaping? 3 - Mural in passageway between Bank of America and Grid Iron Waffle Shop. 4- Steve Schnall is looking into kiosks. 5 - Blockbuster windows - Mark Hartwyk reached out to the company that did the Springfield Business District. Second vendor is coming to measure the windows. Chairman Pedigo asked when should the board expect to see the beautification plan with cost. Director Hartwyk said that the work is slated to happens in the spring but the plan for the funds will be earmarked by early Q1. After meeting with the landscaper they will have a plan for how the money will be spent. 5 - Outdoor Summit from the Environmental commission. Neil Chambers presented on open space in the village. Start thinking about the parklet.

***Marketing and Communications:*** Press release on Master Plan going out. Facebook and Instagram growing. Task force to meet in Q1 with the goal of gaining a list of volunteers to help.

**Fundraising:** Fundraising efforts for annual appeal.

### **Looking to 2019**

- 2019 Trustees Presentation Feedback: Positive feedback about presentation.
- Q1 Action Plan: Next Steps: 2019 events calendar draft in packet, Business Advisory Council meeting upcoming, Workshop through Google coming up in Q1, business resource and how to do business guide, property owner breakfast in Q1, fundraiser event, farmer's market recruitment, inventory of second floor businesses.
- Board Meetings for Q1
  - Thursday, January 31, 7:30-9:00 PM (Will serve as Annual Meeting). Combining the Annual Meeting with an open board meeting instead of big annual event since we already hosted a Business Summit.
  - Wednesday, February 20, 8:30-10:00 AM
  - Wednesday, March 20, 8:30-10:00 AM

### **Discussion: Student Housing Development**

Trustee Schnall gave background on the development. The Village only gets involved if the current landowner and the new developer are seeking any variances (otherwise a private transaction). Valley Street is undergoing a transformation and auto shops may not be the best fit for the area. The scale of buildings like 3rd & Valley and 4th & Valley are hidden because they are up against train tracks; not the case with this building since it hits up against resident houses in Academy Heights. One use that could work for this particular property (with revenue generated, etc.) is student housing. It would be privately owned (so they would pay taxes) and could help move students out of the single family homes they are currently occupying. Fair housing act says you can't say who lives there, but the thought is this is for millennial students. Trustee Schnall said his opinion is it's a good use. Director Fisher said neighbors are nervous about the housing being for younger people, but the bigger problem for the Academy Heights district is that there is zero affordable housing on site. Discussion ensued about student tenants. Members of the board wanted to know how long the students would be around (changed from semester to year long leases). Director Hartwyk said that the project is not asking for a PILOT and they brought in a national company to manage the building. Affordable housing - tradeoff in dollars to create affordable housing elsewhere. Also concerned that down the line Seton Hall will buy the building and then we lose the taxes. Trustee Schnall said the understanding from Seton Hall is that they will not outright purchase land.

Director Harrison said he knows the developers. One of the reasons they are leaning toward student housing is the slope, and if they went to market they don't think they'd rent the units that are on the slope since they won't have sunlight. Director Harrison also said it can't just be student housing. He likes the idea of it being all student housing to bring people downtown. In a mix of students and others, he doesn't think the community will build. If others would move in, then there should be affordable housing. ED Zuckerman said they are renting by the bed (how many non-students would want to do that). Trustee Schnall said 4th and Valley is a great example of how the town listened and hope to use that as a model in getting community engagement. Trustee Schnall also questioned how patient the developer will continue to be since it has now been two years.

Chairman Pedigo said that there are plenty of case studies proving that if you bring students downtown they will use downtown. He also pointed out that this is not affordable student housing - it is more expensive. Chairman Pedigo asked the Seton Hall rep if the university does anything for professor housing and the answer was no. Director Murphy asked for financials. With the variances, the property is far more valuable than without. Trustee Schnall said he is concerned that the price the developer is paying maybe inflated. Appraised for under 2 million for land and property, purchase price is 3.2 million. Director Arsenault said with his Tuxedo Park hat on, there is a problem with empty houses over the summer. Director Javins said anything that increases pedestrian foot traffic is a benefit to his business.

Chairman Pedigo said that in general we seem in support of student housing but have concerns about affordable housing and the financials of the project, use of community spaces and artist housings. ED Zuckerman to draft a letter a letter of support with SOVCA's opinion and concerns. The board would also like to learn more about the project.

### **Staff Time Off Policy**

Chairman Pedigo mentioned that this organization has never had an official written policy. A draft has been presented to the Executive Committee but the group has not come to a consensus as yet. Will open it to the full board at the next next meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Trustee Schnall motioned to open public comment and Director Hartwyk seconded.

Resident Alyssa Aronson asked about the following:

1. Asked about SOVCA's wish list for next year: She was informed that our 2019 plans are outlined in the action plan.
2. Asked about ribbon cutting ceremony. She was informed that the ribbon cutting for Hearth Realty happened and at this time we do not have any other ribbon cutting ceremonies scheduled.

Director Abedrabbo mentioned that the SHU fraternities on campus would like to get more involved in South Orange especially with beautification initiatives. He asked that we be mindful of finals and midterms schedules. Director Harrison said he has a friend that wants to bring a boutique boxing ring to the Downtown. The board mentioned that we already have a boxing ring at D&I Fitness.

A Motion was made to close public comment made by Director Hartwyk and seconded by Trustee Schnall.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Schnall and seconded by Director Hartwyk; all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.