

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

February 20, 2019

A regular meeting of the South Orange Village Center Alliance was held at Village Hall offices at 76 South Orange Avenue on February 20, 2019 and called to order by Chairman Pedigo at 8:34 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, Courtney Bryan, Cat Fisher, Jonathan Javins, Michael Maza, Matt Wonski, Steven Schnall, Fahim Abedrabbo, Sunny Uberoi

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

Absent: Freddy Arsenault, Leslie Pogany, Danny Harrison, Adam Loehner

Public: Alyssa Aronson (Resident), Emma Magenta (Business Owner, South Mountain Yoga), Anna Rulnick (Business Owner, MOD Studio), Bill Agnellino (Business Owner, Reservoir Restaurant)

Next Meeting Date: March 20, 2019

Adoption of the Open Minutes for January 31, 2019:

A motion was made by Director Murphy and seconded by Director Maza to approve the Open Minutes for January 31, 2019, all were in favor.

Board Report Summary + Budget Update

- BOT approved our 2019 budget.
- South Orange Days (Pirates game) - discussed process for keeping track of the weather
- Sloan Street Lights - old lights not working are being removed. SOVCA Clean Team removed most of the old lighting. DPW will remove the rest. Director Pedigo suggested setting a deadline of March 31 for completion.
- ED Zuckerman will be serving as chair of new task force of downtown NJ committee on liquor license reform. Big question is how does the state compensate existing license holders.

Board Committee Reports

Business Retention:

- Bob will meet with 2-3 local businesses per week and track the info on a shared google doc.
- 7 initial businesses picked. Some of the data will be in his board reports - 3 positive notes and 2 non-positive notes.
- Use Permit applications will also be included in the board report.
- Next meeting fine tuning business council
- How to Do Business Guide in SO guide - Bob is working on it and will deliver a draft by 2/28.

Beautification:

Spiotta Park

- Committee would like to go along with Scalora master plan. Cost is roughly 6k. Timeline is weather pending. 3/15 starts spring cleaning and goes to April/May.
- Native NJ plants - could be an angle to include in marketing/messaging, to help Scalora and could be a learning/teaching opp as residents are interested in doing this in their own backyards.
- Musical instruments will also be included. Emma Magenta (South Mountain Yoga) asked what instruments will be included and indicated that what is currently there is soothing. Director Murphy will share the links with Emma, the board and neighboring businesses.
- Director Murphy motioned to approve the Scalora master plan expenditure and Director Bryan seconded. All in favor. No one opposed.
- Next up, devise a communications plan

Walkway Activation:

- Next Project. Bob meeting with the arts council to discuss public arts. Sandy Martiny from Cultural Affairs is putting it together. After that meeting will be a call for artists for murals on BOA and Grid Iron. Also includes cutting back hedges, possible adding benches, bistro lighting, possible new artistically functional bike rack (parking authority would possibly contribute that). Deadline is June.
- By March meeting, they can have an estimated budget (if the Arts Council piece of the puzzle progresses.)

Windows

- ED Zuckerman will connect with Adam about using storefront improvement grant for this.
- Director Hartwyk asked how the board feels about investing in the temporary beautification project on Blockbuster space. Could be about 5k.
- Consensus is it's worth 2.5K if town matches with grant.

Marketing and Communications:

- Black History Month promotion: Cat sent a graphic with a sampling of our businesses to Village Green. Melissa did a lot of work/research to get information from our other Black Owned businesses which we will use throughout the next few months and next year. Focusing on Women's Owned Businesses now.
- Village Green ad spend will be 6k this year and we are focusing on how to better use our ad space.
- Tap Into Soma: Fred just sent over a proposal for us to use.
- Event Calendar: Sent to press, still to come in Village Green.
- Content / photos: Directors Engel and Fisher asked that board members snap photos around South Orange and send to them to use across social media.

Fundraising:

- ED Zuckerman stated he is still revising the sponsorship deck with Freddy.
- Went out to Mark Slade for main sponsor of UnderCover. Directors Engel and Murphy suggested he ask Vanessa Pollock if Mark passes.

Events

Food Stroll

- Met with MEND last week as restaurateurs discussed having percent of ticket sales donated. They will bring the Green Bean bus at the event.
- Cat suggested getting them info that can promote the Food Stroll at the Gala on 3/9. Bob said he received tickets and may attend.
- Sign up form for businesses will be distributed week of 3/4.
- Bob need help covering the ticket booth as Melissa will be out of town. Suggested reaching out to Seton Hall Volunteers.

UnderCover Music Fest

- Meeting scheduled tomorrow (2/21). Artists picked. Fox and Falcon interested in doing beer festival.
- Assets to start rolling out in March.

Candidate Forum

- Checking on dates with SOPAC in April. If can't get SOPAC, will do it at the Baird.
- Will focus on downtown (nothing else).

Discussion: Plastic Bag Ban

Trustee Schnall gave background. Environmental Commission leading this. They've tried in the past to do education outreach; they are volunteer. They suggested a policy with education and a penalty of 5 or 10 cent penalty. It's controversial because who bears that pain. BOT is looking to put \$ in village budget to support promotional outreach.

Chair Pedigo remarked if you haven't read the ordinance, read it as there are many exemptions. He summed up the timing of this, concurrent with new NJ state legislation around PTO and minimum wage. Exec committee made suggestions that were not included in the original ordinance.

1. Question about the fee - should it be 5 cents or 10 cents. Should it be consistent to Maplewood.
2. Should there be a longer grace period - maybe a year.
3. Two things that were not part of the ordinance:
 - a. The BOT give money for the education piece
 - b. Village put aside a budget for reusable bags

Business owners were surveyed. There are mixed emotions, but consensus is to say that many want the plastic bags gone but penalty continues to be real sticking point. Chair Pedigo remarked that he asked the Environmental Commission for the behavioral research they referenced that shows charging fees help consumer habits change.

Director Javins (Pet Wants) commented: 50% of their business yesterday was delivery. How does that work? They use paper bags already, but charging someone to put something in a paper bag at their front door - in West Orange, Livingston, etc. - outreach needs to be farther than SOMA. With regards to enforcement, Director Javins has concerns about overreach of inspections. They try to be eco-friendly - they don't even print receipts. "We are there in South Orange but we are bigger than South Orange."

Anna Rulnick (MOD Studio): Built the cost of her packaging into her cost of goods. Takes affront to having to line item charge the cost of a bag when it's already built into her cost. While she has an experiential component, she is a kids clothing store. She competes against Amazon (lots of packing material), Target (all plastic). When people are paying a premium for clothing or experience, they want it packaged nicely, put in a bag so clothes don't get wrinkled or damage. If someone is spending more than what they would spend at a Target and she has to nickel and dime them for a built in cost, it feels like an overreach. And when she gets questioned, she can't

even say it's a tax because she's keeping the funds. She doesn't want to have those conversations. None of the other business owners she spoke to even know about this ordinance. Beyond that she's reached out to friends - no one has heard of it. A lot of people in town don't support it in its current state. She finds it troubling that the BOT will vote on it without outreach to residents in the town - maybe it should be a townwide vote, not a BOT vote.

Director Bryant: What other communities like ours have done this. Trustee Schnall heard Maplewood passed it last night at 5 cents. No other towns mentioned.

Chair Pedigo: Do we generally agree that we should remove plastic bag from retailers and if so, how do we get there. Debate doesn't seem to be about plastic,

The question was raised - Why are we starting with plastic and not styrofoam?

Bill Angelino (Reservoir) - This ordinance will not have a great impact at the local level. If it's passed, it should go state-wide. Our garbage goes to the local incinerator. If someone gets a plastic bag, it will go to the incinerator. Second - the government can't tell someone that they have to charge for something - is that legal? And then what's next - can't give out plastic silverware? Containers? Where's it going to go? That's where it gets dangerous. A dry cleaner uses more plastic than anyone else in SO. They are not mentioned in the ordinance.

Chair Pedigo reminds folks that whatever we say, it seems like the BOT will pass some form of this ordinance. How do we eliminate some of the pain points about it. Do we push for a lower fee? Do we push for an education fee? Do we push for the bags?

Director Fahim: Look at state legislature. Murphy vetoed this same bill. He said it's got to get done, but vetoed the same bill because it was not sustainable as written.

Chair Pedigo suggests the Alliance issue a letter saying that a longer roll out should be incorporated, and ask for a delay indefinitely as a task force of retailers, citizens, environmental commission is formed to inform the process.

ED Zuckerman stated that this year should be a year of education about the harm of plastic. Next year maybe we deal with the implementation of of the plastic bag ban.

Chair Pedigo asks how can we better engage our retailers and have them at the table if we want this to pass.

Director Fisher states that we need to let retailers know to come to the next BOT meeting on March 11 if they are doing a second reading of the ordinance.

Board Transition and Governance

Chair Pedigo is leaving, moving to Austin, TX. Will finish his one year term. Transition will start in April.

- Consider term limits on executive committee.
- Space needs for the alliance.
- Our role in the co-retailing space.

Public Comment

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

Alyssa asked about Jane Curtain's building facade. ED Zuckerman says she does not want to spend money to do any improvements.

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

Executive Session: Staffing Performance Review – Suggested Plan and Process

Trustee Schnall motioned to open executive session and and Director Hartwyk seconded.

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 10:05 a.m.