

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

January 31, 2019

A special evening annual public meeting of the South Orange Village Center Alliance was held at the Baird on January 31, 2019 and called to order by Chairman Pedigo at 7:36 p.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, Danny Harrison, Jonathan Javins, Michael Maza, Steven Schnall, Matt Wonski

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

Absent: Freddy Arsenault, Courtney Bryant, Cat Fisher, Danny Harrison, Leslie Pogany, Sunny Uberoi, Adam Loehner, Fahim Abedrabbo

Public: Alyssa Aronson (resident) + many others

Next Meeting Date: February 20, 2019.

Adoption of the Open Minutes for December 19, 2018:

A motion was made by Director Hartwyk and seconded by Director Maza to approve the Open Minutes for December 19, 2018, all were in favor.

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Pedigo introduced the present board members.

Review of 2019 Action Plan and Events Calendar

Chairman Pedigo walked the public through the 2019 Action Plan previously presented to the Board of Trustees and available on our website. Bob walked through the 2019 calendar of events, which will be posted on the website.

Board Committee Discussion: Key Objectives and Deliverables

Business Retention (Mark Murphy)

Director Murphy discussed the goals of the business retention committee. The committee is excited by the retail opening on Valley street and have thought to brand the area, but with South Orange Township branding changing, the decision was made to wait. The committee will focus on two areas:

1. Connecting with business owners; Bob will be visiting 2-3 businesses a week to capture data events and then use that feedback and data to inform what we're doing.
2. Create a business council comprised of people not on our board to give them a voice in the org – retail, service, restaurants and second floor – want them to be an active sounding board to the decisions and bring them into our committees and board meetings to give them some time to talk and offer their thoughts

Beautification (Mark H. and Mike)

Directors Hartwyk and Masa discussed the current goals of the beautification committee:

1. Blockbuster – exterior wrapper on storefront to enhance color and activity along the street. Using Springfield township as an example.
2. Spiotta Park - phase 1 completed last year, phase 2 this year. Maintain last year's efforts with lawns and regrowth but now have master plan from landscape for that park – will take place in may/june.
3. Activate the passageway between BOA and Grid Iron Waffle. Artist murals on the bank of america ... bistro lights draped, far end by parking lot new bike racks.
4. Sloan Street – Clean gazebo (power wash, paint, etc), and netting to help with the birds. Will look at park benches and seating for updates. Working with design review board for fountain painting before reactivated.
5. They would like to look at the traffic circle, but that has its own issues due to fire dept – want to do something in the center seasonally but not confirmed.

Chairman Pedigo opened questions to the public about beautification.

6. Karen Hilton asked about plants in the ground. Director Hartwyk said it has to be a collaborative effort with public works. Plantings at the very least would help, but it is moving slowly due to budget constraints. It is something they are looking to reevaluate with the change in leadership at Public Works. It was noted that this will also be the first full season with cleaning completely in-house, and some of the job details include checking the beds, the landposts, etc.
7. Someone asked about the train station and the arches. The Design Review Board is spearheading those efforts for archways, interiors and viaduct passthrough. Trustee Schnall added there has been progress with lighting and the mural. Bob says now we have to focus on the other side. Schnall also brought up the digital kiosks which have been cost prohibitive thus far but investigating other options.

Marketing and Communications

Director Engel reported that they are focusing on:

1. Improving how we communicate with our businesses
2. Improving how we communicate about our businesses
3. Improving workflows and cutting costs on outside vendors by taking a more DIY approach on graphic design.

Fundraising

Bob presented for the committee and noted as a 501c3, a charitable community organization, for the most part donations can be written off. With volunteer help from board member/SOPAC rep Freddy Arsenault and South Orange resident Hannah Zollman, they raised double their goal for the holiday campaign.

They are looking to tap into other potential donors and residents in town who might want to help fund some of our initiatives like public art murals. They are focusing on how to build donor lists and looking to do donor cultivation event in spring.

Board Discussion

South Orange Plastic Bag Ban

Trustee Clarke presented about the plastic bag ban. The Board of Trustees passed the first round on Monday, which would start the ban for retailers only beginning 6 months after the second reading/vote. The ban says no plastic, and a 10 cent fee should be charged to customers who take a paper bag. Retailers are encouraged to give or sell reusable bags.

Questions were raised about the fee (it's to help change consumer habit) and the cost to retailers. Someone asked about Shop and Stop's plan, and it was reported that the Manager there supports the ban. When asked about how it will be enforced, Trustee Clarke said it will be up to code, fire and health to enforce. Director Harrison suggested they research options cost-effective options for reusable bags for business owners. George from Miti Miti said perhaps the businesses can all pool together to get a better deal. He also mentioned that this would be

extremely hard for take-out. Anna from MOD Studio said she could never pass a 10 cent fee to her customers and would have to eat the cost and it would be a struggle. She also brought up the gift wrapping (in paper bags) being a service customers expect. Trustee Schnall suggested she turn it around and bring about a positive message that shows the businesses value the environment. Director Wonski asked how businesses can educate themselves, and Director Engel pointed out that the Board of Trustees should be approaching the businesses to let them know - not the other way around. Chairman Pedigo then asked if the BOT can delay their next reading/vote to allow more time to educate the business owners. Village President Collum proposed they hold off another two weeks to 2/25 for the next reading/vote and Trustee Clarke agreed.

NJ Minimum Wage Increase

Exec Director Zuckerman talked about the new NJ minimum wage legislation that passed that day in NJ. The new law requires \$10 hour as of July 1, \$11 per hour as of 7/1/2020 and then for it to continue to raise by \$1 every Jan until \$15 in 2024.

Exceptions for small businesses with five workers or fewer, full service restaurants with tips and for seasonal workers (May 1 - Sept 30). These businesses will have a longer step-up to the \$15 per hour.

SOVCA Candidate Forum and Board

Chairman Pedigo suggested that the Alliance, as a non-partisan organization, hold a Candidate Forum for the Board of Trustee and Village President Candidates in April in partnership with The Village Green. He thinks this will be a good way to ignite a talk about the state of our downtown.

President Collum suggested they look at alternative formats (instead of the typical 2 min intros + rebuttals). Trustee Hilton asked about the target market - the voters of SO - and suggested we partner with another organization who has planned these forums before (like the League of Women Voters). She also suggested we highlight the lack of voter participation and poor public turn-out of years past. Resident Larry Hirsh mentioned he organized the Governor Forums and could help.

SOVCA Updates

Upcoming Events: Food Stroll, Undercover Music Festival, and PlayDay

Executive Director Zuckerman gave updates on upcoming events.

Food stroll is confirmed for 4/28/19, a little earlier this year based on feedback from businesses in order to pull in Seton Hall students before finals, and an earlier time of 4-7pm to make it more family friendly. In addition, there will be two stations for tickets – one on sloane street and one up the other end toward prospect st.

Undercover music fest will have a beer garden and is confirmed for 6/1 from 5-11pm (6/2 rain date)

Play Day is confirmed for 9/15 (rain date of 9/22). Beginning sponsorship outreach. Committee forming.

Time Off Policy

Chairman Pedigo gave a brief outline of the updated Time Off Policy for staff. Director Murphy motioned to bring the policy to a vote, Director Engel seconded. The motion passes unanimously.

Finances

Bob walked through the current finances.

Public Comment

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

Executive Director Zuckerman asked President Collum about Village Hall. She reported that there was vandalism on interior of the building and the project is waiting for approvals from the Historical Society. Preliminary project timeline – Landmark anticipated 15-18 month turnaround from beginning of construction. They've cleaned out interior, they have dumpsters, remaining items are historic pieces that were vandalized. As soon as approvals come through, they will start.

Other questions included:

- Will the SID hire more staff? No
- Will you move downtown and out of 76? TBD.
- Suggestion to plan an event Girls Night Out like or anything to bring foot traffic.
- Lusbader Development – President Collum said the final piece is the parking agreement.
- Small Biz Saturday - asked if SOVCA can do a better job to 'romance' the day. Ideas included live music, education on where to go to grab a drink. The Business Retention Group will discuss.
- New store openings: Moon River any second. Looking for businesses for empty K Kakes, Noodlefan, 1 South and vacancies on Academy Street.
- President Collum asked if we can celebrate our different type of business owners in South Orange via our communications around the celebratory months coming up (Black History Month, Women's History Month).

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

Adjournment: There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Schnall and seconded by Director Wonski; all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.