



Ad Hoc Business, Arts and Culture Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 1, 2024, 5:00 PM - 6:30PM
In Person at Hamilton Stage, 360 Hamilton Street

Committee Members in Attendance:

Deanna Hunt – UCPAC

Joann Gemenden – NJ Clean Communities

Laura Lopez – Millie & Joy

Michelle McTamney – Edward Jones

Nick Rosal – Atelier Rosal

Absent: *Jeff Spelman – The Coffee Box, Danni Newbury – City of Rahway,*

Armanii Saahd-Tann – Rahway Dance Theatre, Dawn White – Hannum's Harley Davidson

Staff: *Anthony Armando – Special Improvement District, City of Rahway*

Karin Napier – Special Improvement District, City of Rahway

Guest: *Kim Farrier - UCPAC*

SAVE THE DATE: The next committee meeting is Monday, June 3rd at 5:00pm at Hamilton Stage.

Welcome: Anthony Armando opened the meeting and updated the committee on a variety of projects and then opened discussions for new business amongst committee members:

- I. **SID Business Improvement Program and Facade Improvement Program Update:** The committee was updated that 40 eligible businesses have been funded. Another 10 businesses continue to progress. The FIP program reports that 4 applications are complete and 10 more businesses will have their outdoor façade work scheduled in the Spring.
- II. **Women in Business Networking Event Recap:** A successful 2-hour meet-up, presented by Wizdom Media, had a full house with 48 attendees. The workshop topics had tips & methods for integrating marketing into your day, time blocking, utilizing automation, mentorship connections, certification with NJ for WOB/MOB and spotlighting certain WOBs in Rahway. Guest speakers were Heidi Loder Rosal, the President of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce, and Karla Alvarez, President of SASS. The Women in Business series of networking events will continue this year with some smaller groups focusing on a specific topic. Dates will be announced once planning has been finalized.
- III. **Social Media and Branding Program:** Applications are open for small businesses to apply for a grant that will allow a social media specialist to work with three finalists. The program to assist with content creation. Deadline for submissions is Friday, April 12th.
- IV. **SID Upcoming Projects & Events:**
 - a. Website Revamp – Wizdom Media is hosting and designing the website, with a completion date in late Spring.
 - b. Merck Relationship – Progress continues slowly to work with Merck to coordinate information with them about the goings on in Rahway.
Action item: Discuss with Merck an employee weekday discount program to drive business to the downtown.
 - c. Taste of Spring – April 5th – the 21st annual event is sold out.

- d. NJ Transit Arts Express – May 4th. UCPAC co-promotion with Avenel Arts. There will be a mural dedication of Arts District Park, performances at both stages and an outdoor vendor market on East Cherry Street.
- e. Hot Rods & Harleys Music Festival – May 11th

V. Open Discussion / New Business:

Anthony updated the committee of upcoming work in the downtown area such as: NJ Transit completed one replacement of stairs and will be returning to replace the second closed stair case located on Milton Avenue. Gas main replacements are completed on Main Street. The company is focusing next on all the buildings and this portion of the work is going to take longer, they have to reach each property owner. He opened up the floor for open discussion to the committee and suggestions made were as follows:

- More wayfinding signage is needed throughout the city.
Action item: Anthony will research and will inform the committee of his findings.
- It was suggested that the Soiree En Blanc event be a theme-based event. Ideas suggested were a Caribbean or Dessert theme to start and to consider planning the date for August or September.
Action item: Anthony will research and inform the committee of his findings with the suggestion.
- Create new media functions regarding “generational update” on communications as the current formats are not reaching or impacting millennials and Gen Z’s.
Action Item: Invite Wizdom Media to an upcoming committee meeting regarding design changes/adaptions as well as focus on Small Business Saturday planning (August meeting)
- It was expressed by a committee member that he thought this change in timing would make it easier for patrons to park for dinner and would not likely have any negative impact on permit commuters.
Action Item: Work with City Council on ordinance allowing free surface lot parking after 5PM (currently 7pm).
- Share a restaurant guide on plastics usage at the Taste of Spring event.
Action Item: Joann will send the guide over to Anthony for review.
- Holiday Lighting and seasonal banners: A few committee members advised that Irving Street does not have enough lighting, and looks desolate at night. Please look into adding more lighting as well as décor to brighten up the street. It was also suggested that the City consider more Fall Events and decorations. Make a scarecrow at the Recreation Center, etc.
Action Item: Anthony will research and inform the committee of his findings with this suggestion.

VI. Ribbon Cuttings

- a. **Tribeca Pediatrics – 1501 Main Street**
 - i. Mayor Giacobbe officially welcomed Tribeca Pediatrics to downtown Rahway on March 12th. Committed doctors and staff bring high quality pediatric care to the downtown and strive to raise the bar for their patients by providing convenient accessible care with a personal touch.
- b. **Plantabis Dispensary – 2077 US Route 1**
 - i. On March 15th, New Jersey Senate President Nicholas Scutari joined Mayor Raymond Giacobbe, Councilman Jeffrey Brooks, and Councilman Al Parker at the grand opening of Plantabis, Rahway's first recreational cannabis dispensary. Plantabis is a certified woman- and minority-owned business that has received full licensure from the State of New Jersey and The City of Rahway.

Future ribbon cuttings are planned for: Rahway Primary Care and Aesthetics on 1531 Main Street (Park Square)
Buckle My Shoe Learning Academy on Second Baptist Church on 378 East Milton Avenue
R&J Pizzeria located on 1300 Westfield Avenue (participating in Taste of Spring).

Adjournment: Anthony Armando thanked everyone for and the meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.