

Rahway SID LLC

Meeting Minutes

February 18th, 2026, 3:00 PM

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:05pm in the City of Rahway Municipal Council Chambers.

Roll call:

Jorge Casalins

Peter Kowal

Johanny Fonseca

Darlene Eastman

Corby Pascucci

James Walker

Katalina Bedoya

In attendance: Jorge Casalins, Johanny Fonseca, Darlene Eastman, James Walker, Katalina Bedoya

Absent: Peter Kowal, Corby Pascucci

Guests: Frank Ruggiero; Rachael Faillace, Board Attorney.

II. Reading & Approval of Minutes –January 7th, 2026, meeting

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of December 17th, 2025, meeting as presented.

Motioned by: Walker

Seconded by: Eastman

Abstained:

Result of Motion: Passed Unanimously

III. Treasurers Report

Mr. Ruggiero presented a Treasurer's report that discussed the operating funds and ending balance.

. Resolution: Establishing a New Petty Cash Fund

Motioned by: Kowal

Seconded by: Eastman

Result of Motion: Passed Unanimously

IV. Management Report

Executive Director's Report

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Executive Director's Report

Administration

- Approved at City Council's January 12th 2026 meeting:

- o 2026 SID annual budget

- o 2026 Taste of Spring resolution

- o 2026 Shared Services agreement

Marketing

Completed marketing initiatives and events

Soup Stroll Recap

Soup Stroll took place over four Saturdays in January. There were 26 participating venues. Attendance was strong despite poor weather (rain, snow, cold) on several Saturdays.

- 27,024 total cups distributed, which equals total number of visits

- Downtown restaurants averaged 125-590 visits per week
 - Greater Rahway restaurants averaged 40-140 visits per week
 - Estimated 541 total gallons of soup distributed
 - 1,000+ social media content shares and over 35,000 views
 - Documented visitors from as far as Bergen County and Monmouth County
 - Interactive online map of restaurants was well used
 - Visual aids (ie balloons) were helpful to identify participating businesses
 - Downtown retail businesses experienced increased store traffic
 - 2% growth in net new subscribers to the SID email newsletter via sign up form
 - Participating eateries reported revenue increases over typical Saturday sales. One reported 30%-40% increase in sales on first Saturday.
 - Some used Soup Stroll as an opportunity to test market a menu item.
 - Many reported new faces and new customers.
 - Bella Gina's used the opportunity to market their soon-to-open Rahway location.
- UCPAC welcomed 1st time visitors and gave backstage tours.
- Additional day-of purchases included cakes, drinks, and soup to go.
 - Many out-of-town visitors; marketing strategies needed to encourage return visits.

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Upcoming marketing event

- Taste of Spring – behind the scenes preparations have begun for the April 17th event
- o UCPAC has submitted the Social Event application under their liquor license
- o Restaurant outreach has begun
- o Tickets go on sale March 1
- o Ticket cost is underpriced at \$40 but will not increase this year.

Recommendation for 2027-2029: Ticket cost should increase \$5-\$10

annually to raise event revenue, which will allow the opportunity for more restaurant participation.

Business Programs and Support

- Irving Street bridge closure:
 - o Designed 'Open for Business' street signs to improve visibility of businesses on either side of bridge construction. Installed by County contractor
 - o Press release was issued in late November to raise awareness of businesses affected by the closure.
 - o Follow up press release issued on February 10.
 - o Supportive email and social media campaigns scheduled for Feb/Mar/Apr
- 'Finding Balance in Business' Women in Business Networking Meeting
Thursday, March 19, 6:00 PM, Nancy's Towne House
- Ribbon cutting ceremony: Casa Bagel, 160 NJ-27 (Lincoln Plaza)

Upcoming - Website Improvements

- Quality photos that brand Rahway as a destination for dining, arts, culture, shopping and services
- Website audit: remove outdated information and old links and improve navigation/menu
- Restructured 'For Business' section will provide improved access to resources and information for businesses
- New landing pages in preparation for future advertising campaign

A motion was made to accept the Management Report.

Motioned by: Walker

Seconded by: Eastman

Result of Motion: Passed Unanimously

- V. **Old Business:** Facade Grant program, 9 out of 10 businesses have provided all documentation.

Motioned by: Walker
Seconded by: Eastman
Result of Motion: Passed Unanimously

- VI. **New Business:** Fonseca suggested adding more signage near the Irving Street Bridge for local businesses.
Casalins, suggested the board looks into raising the price for next year's taste of spring.

Motioned by: Walker
Seconded by: Eastman
Result of Motion: Passed Unanimously

- VII. **Public Portion (2 minutes per person)**
At this time, the Chair opened the meeting to the public.

Motion: A motion was made to close the public portion of the meeting.
Motioned By: Walker
Seconded by: Eastman
Result of motion: Passed unanimously

- VIII. **Next Meeting:** March 18th, 2026

- IX. **Adjournment**

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Motioned by: Walker
Seconded by: Eastman
Result of Motion: Passed unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Gustofson, Recording Secretary