

CRANFORD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD MEETING
MINUTES – JULY 17, 2020

Present:

Joe Colangelo/resident
Dennis Concha/business owner
Tom Connolly/business owner
Anthony Durante/chairman
Paul LaCorte/property owner
Ashley Legg/resident
Jean Maisonneuve/Township Commissioner
Kristen Mider/resident
Steve Needle/property owner
Steve Oliveira/property owner
Gabe Bailer/Director
Michelle Stavrou/Social Media Coordinator
Caren Demyen/Administrative Assistant

Absent:

Margaret Sacco/ business owner

Mr. Bailer called the meeting to order at 8:31am. Announcement made that the meeting was posted as required by law.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Motion to approve June 2020 minutes by Mr. Durante, seconded by Mr. Connolly.

TOWNSHIP COMMISSIONER REMARKS – Commissioner Maisonneuve

- Commissioner Maisonneuve said there have been a lot of conversations about street closures with businesses. He said that there is a balance and he wants to figure out a way to serve businesses appropriately. The latest conversation in the township workshop was possibly having parklets and/or closing parking. Commissioner Maisonneuve is asking the DMC to come up with their best plan to share.

CHAIRMAN REMARKS – Anthony Durante

- Mr. Durante thanked everyone for attending. Mr. Durante said that the street closures seem to be going well and active but he doesn't feel that we are done. The next step will be thinking about a larger plan for the Downtown with either potential expansions or making the spaces we have more aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Durante officially welcomed Mr. Concha to the Board and said that they are very excited to have him here.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Gabe Bailer

Monthly Project Report

- Mr. Bailer said as of now there are six closures – Eye Level Learning Center, Annealed, Flic Spa, Zensational You, Pairings and Two Rivers Bank. Supposedly there is another bank going in that location. Potential closings include Fromage Grill (currently for sale) and Lidia's Cuban Kitchen.
- Old Little Buffalo space will be rented by Folklore Taco. He has two other restaurant locations and is established.
- Pastosa's is expanding to the CBD Bakery location.
- Burger IM will now be an Indian restaurant – Spoonful Masala. Mr. Durante asked if we were going to have a socially distancing ribbon cutting. Mr. Bailer said that he will also follow up with Tomassello Winery on their ribbon cutting.
- Ani Ramen is close to opening.
- Annealed location has been rented by Reach for the Stars. Reach for the Stars location has been rented.

- Interest in renting of the Pairings location. Currently no interest in Flic Spa and ice cream location.

NEW BUSINESSES

- Mr. Bailer reviewed the street closure plan. Mr. Bailer says that this has been a learning experience but he sees this as an opportunity and look to see everything we can do to create more pedestrian space.
- Alden Street is open from 3pm on Thursday to 8am on Monday. Emma's unexpectedly closed – the contractor was doing work without a permit. Right now Ambeli's is the only restaurant using the space and they are doing very well. Oasis originally had seating but logistically it was tough for them and the demand was not there. Yoga has been very successful – HOME yoga and Alluem are currently using the space. ArteVino will be doing painting Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening. Dreyer's was kind enough to lend trees to the space to help with aesthetics. There is an intern that is helping the DMC office – she does the counts of how many people are using the space every day during the closure from 5-8pm – ranges from 7 up to 38. Feedback from Ambelis has been positive but other restaurants have complained that they are the only restaurant benefitting.
- Eastman Street is open from 3pm on Thursday to 8am on Monday. Restaurants participating are Vinny's, Craven BBQ and Yale Terrace. Both Vinny's and Craven are open for lunch which helps with consistent traffic. Fire Me Up did a painting class which was very positive. Vinny's offered the participants a discount on items ordered. Counts are similar – ranges from 9-36 people. Feedback has been positive but some improvements are aesthetics as well as not making good use of the entire space. Mr. Durante asked if we could try to find ways to use the space with more activities. His other thought was perhaps reopening the street and make it two lanes and permanently close the curbside next to the business.
- Mr. Bailer reviewed options such as purchasing plants, getting more donations from Dreyer's, putting out the Downtown Cranford bistro tables, customized umbrellas, tent rentals, etc... The restaurants would be willing to help with the clean up of the tables. Rui is working on Sundays for an hour to clean up the garbage cans on Alden and Eastman. Ms. Mider suggested that we need to figure out what our goal is and have a step by step plan to get there. Mr. Connolly suggested having Eastman closed permanently. Mr. Durante suggested we work on making more of a cohesive plan and possibly rethinking the spaces we have. Mr. LaCorte said we are looking at this piecemeal and we need to look at something for the entire district – we need to make Downtown a destination and we need to go big. Mr. Durante said that time is of the essence. Mr. Lacorte, Ms. Mider, Mr. Connolly and Mr. Concha offered to help make an overall plan. Mr. Colangelo feels we should use this time to permanently close Eastman – make it aesthetically pleasing and inviting.

BOARD COMMITTEES

- Application Review – Mr. Durante mentioned that Dunkin Donuts is still on the table for the former gas station site on South Avenue. Ani Ramen is putting signs up which were approved.
- Maintenance – Mr. LaCorte asked to get the bus turnaround area fixed by the train station. The bus keeps running over the grass and curbing. Mr. LaCorte says the curb needs to come up and be redone. Mr. Cryan said he will look into this and get back to the Board by the next meeting.

Motion to go into a closed session at 9:22am by Mr. Durante. Mr. Colangelo seconded. All were in favor.

Respectively submitted,
Caren Demyen, Administrative Assistant