

**CRANFORD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD MEETING
MINUTES – JUNE 16, 2023**

Present:

Joe Colangelo/Business owner
Tammie Crispino/Business owner
Paul Gallo/Resident
Paul LaCorte/Property owner
Kristen Mider (Chairwoman)/Resident
Kendall O'Brien/Resident
Steve Oliveira/Property owner
Doreen Sayegh/Property owner

Caren Demyen/Director
Michelle Stavrou/Social Media Coordinator

Brian Andrews/Mayor
Lavona Patterson/Administrator

Absent:

Dennis Concha/Business owner
Anthony Durante/Resident
Kathleen Miller
Prunty/Commissioner/Liaison

Ms. Demyen called the meeting to order at 8:36am. Announcement made that the meeting was posted as required by law.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Motion to approve May 2023 minutes by Ms. Mider. Mr. Colangelo seconded. Ms. O'Brien abstained. Minutes were approved.

TOWNSHIP MAYOR REMARKS – Mayor Brian Andrews

- Deputy Mayor Jason Gareis is stepping down to join the Prosecutor's office. Democratic Committee put forth 3 names to fill the role. Decision will be made at the next Township Committee meeting.
- Mayor Andrews thanked the DMC for the Pride events it held last month.

CHAIRWOMAN REMARKS – Kristen Mider

- Ms. Mider congratulated Ms. Crispino on Fire Me Up Studio's 10-year anniversary. She also thanked the DMC office for its work on Pride.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Kendall O'Brien

- Ms. O'Brien stated that the report is a draft. She thanked Lavona Patterson and Bryan Flynn for their help. Presentation included historical and competitive context for the DMC budget, areas needing further financial support and next steps. Largest area of need is in maintenance and beautification. These increases would be needed just to maintain downtown's current events.
- The current DMC tax assessment is .21 % resulting in a 2023 budget of \$180,745. Over last 10 years, budget has grown significantly less than the municipal budget and inflation.
- Mr. Colangelo presented information comparing Cranford's municipal budgets to other towns. Cranford's SID budget is .38% of Cranford's overall municipal budget and is the lowest % of the municipal budget in the comparative group.
- Downtown vacancy rates, residential/business rental rate increases and home prices are favorable to surrounding areas. Committee believes downtown Cranford is a key contributor to favorability.
- Mayor Andrews stated that the town has under-invested in many areas. He supports an increase in the SID budget and feels it's long overdue. Downtown is a big draw.

- Ms. Patterson asked about other town's SID tax rates. Ms. O'Brien said she'll follow up. Ms. Patterson said that the bottom line is that the budget hasn't been increased in 10 years.
- Ms. Sayegh said that, speaking as a business owner, she sees the return from the SID and feels the increase would be worth it.
- Ms. Mider asked what the next steps are. Ms. O'Brien said that the Finance Committee plans to bring an updated proposal and workplan, incorporating a discussion with property owners, to the July DMC Board meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Caren Demyen

- Ms. Demyen asked the Board to vote on holiday parking.
- Motion to approve holiday parking for November 24 and 25, and December 9 through December 25 passed.
- A resolution on holiday parking will be forwarded to Township Committee for approval
- Ms. Demyen thanked the Finance Committee: Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Colangelo, and Mr. Oliveira.
- The DMC office hosted a workshop with New Frontier for businesses. New Frontier will help the Downtown Cranford office develop a new website.
- Gift Cards – Over \$5,000 was spent in businesses last month

Business Highlights

- Article on NJ.com on best Cranford restaurants
- Social media and website traffic update has increased
- Recap of past ribbon cuttings and update on future businesses

Capital Budget Projects

- Enovate has wrapped up collecting data for the parking study.

Maintenance

- 5 large grey planters have been added throughout the downtown area
- Playa Bowls will be adding extra trash pickup days to accommodate trash
- Summer maintenance worker should start in early July.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Mr. LaCorte said that RFPs were due on June 15 for the North Avenue project. No proposals were received. He believes that the economy and interest rates had an impact, as well as the limitations of the site itself.
- The Redevelopment Committee plans to talk to people who looked at the RFP to get their feedback. Cranford has a March 2025 deadline for work to start.
- Ms. Mider thanked the Redevelopment Committee for their hard work and said they did what they were asked to do.
- Mayor Andrews also thanked the Redevelopment Committee and said he hopes the committee will continue. Ms. Mider asked Mayor Andrews to define what the DMC Redevelopment Committee is now tasked with, if they continue. Mayor Andrews agreed that would be helpful.

Events

- Upcoming events include Summer Sounds, films at Cranford Theater, story time, sidewalk sales, Dinner and a Movie, and Lego Night.
- Recap of past events including Taste of Cranford, Pride, and Kids Day Out
- Ms. Demyen provided an overview of the Halloween events planned for October.

Motion to adjourn at 10:06 am. All in favor.

Respectively submitted,
Michelle Stavrou, Social Media Coordinator