

**CRANFORD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION  
BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES – FEBRUARY 18, 2022**

**Present:**

Brian Andrews/Commissioner/Liaison  
Joe Colangelo/Business owner  
Dennis Concha/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

**Absent:**

Anthony Durante/Resident

Ms. Demyen called the meeting to order at 8:30am. Announcement was made that the meeting was posted as required by law.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Motion to approve January 2022 minutes by Ms. Mider. Mr. Andrews seconded. Minutes were approved.

**TOWNSHIP COMMISSIONER REMARKS** – Commissioner Brian Andrews

- Mr. Andrews said at last week's Capital Budget meeting Ms. Demyen presented her requests for replacing the holiday wreaths and a street study.
- The second time the ordinance for South and Chestnut will be voted on should be this week.
- Work continues with Topology on the sign ordinance.
- The vacant lot on North Union should have permits submitted for development in the next few weeks. It will be two storefronts.
- Mr. Andrews is working with NJ Transit to get netting under the Centennial Avenue bridge to stop birds from nesting there.

**CHAIRWOMAN REMARKS** – Kristen Mider

- Ms. Mider thanked the DMC staff for their work on the Souperhero Stroll and Galentine's event.
- She hopes the Capital Improvement Plan is approved as there's a need for an overall plan for the downtown.
- Ms. Mider said that the DMC Board needs input from the Township Committee regarding the role of the Redevelopment Sub-Committee. She wants to make sure that the responsibilities of the sub-committee are clear and welcomes more information from the Township Committee regarding this.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT** - Caren Demyen

- The relationship with UCEDC is going very well. The DMC office continues to work with them on one-on-one sessions and training sessions.
- In regards to office updates, last month Ms. Demyen attended a meet and greet with other local Downtown Directors.
- The Elizabethtown Gas project has been slightly delayed.
- The statewide plastic bag ban takes effect on May 4. The office is currently working on posters and signage.

- The office would like to do a feature on each member of the DMC Board to be shared on social media. Ms. Mider feels it would be helpful to make it clear to the public what the DMC does and doesn't do.
- Next week there will be a movie filming in town at Cranford Theater and Craven BBQ.
- Ms. Demyen provided an update on recent downtown pop-ups. Ms. Stavrou provided an update on the social media statistics, which continue to show steady growth, and Ms. Demyen followed up with website and WiFi numbers.
- The office held a ribbon cutting at Glow Ink and more will be coming up in the next few weeks, including California Burrito, Vine & Oak, and The Garrison.
- Yellowbear Cleaners will be closing, and a refillable station is looking to take over the space.
- The Artist Framer will be moving to the former space of Rekemeier's, which has closed.
- Downtown Cranford Gift Card Update
  - As of Feb. 16, over \$4k put back into Downtown businesses
  - Ms. Demyen says that she feels that we need to spread the word about people using the gift cards. About \$25k of gift cards have been purchased since December.
  - The idea was raised about doing a campaign to encourage people to use the gift cards.
- Events
  - Souperhero Stroll had very positive feedback. The business owners were very happy and it brought in a number of people from outside of Cranford. Donations from sponsors helped offset some of the costs.
  - Restaurant Week was successful for many of the participating restaurants.
  - Galentine's Day event was a little quiet this year, but the bags did sell out.
  - Upcoming events include \$22 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Fire & Ice, Peeps-tacular, Breakfast with the Bunny at Garlic Rose, Spring Hop, and Ghostwalk Tour.
- Maintenance Updates:
  - NJ Wineseller put up a new sign after the office reached out.
  - Ms. Demyen plans to work with DPW on a spring/summer sidewalk repair project.
  - The sign ordinance project continues.
  - The archway will be installed on Monday.
- Finance
  - Ms. Demyen presented to the Township Committee for the capital budget requests. This year's requests were \$50k for a Capital Improvement Plan and \$60K for new holiday wreaths.
- Parklets
  - Oasis, Old City, Playa Bowls, Ambeli, Garlic Rose, and Vinny's want to have the parklets again this year.
  - Ms. Demyen reached out to other businesses and found that a number are not in favor of the parklets. There are also certain areas that don't allow for parklets.
  - Ms. Mider said that there are valid points from both sides. She would like to hear feedback from the Board.
  - Ms. Demyen said that approval has to be given from the Township Committee. The DOT needs to be contacted for approval of parklets within a certain distance of North Avenue.
  - The current cost for businesses is \$9/day, which is the cost of the parking spaces. However, there is a cost to DMC and DPW for the materials, labor, and time.
  - Mr. Colangelo feels strongly that there should be parklets.
  - Ms. Mider said she would like to have a vote that the DMC Board is in favor of another year of parklets if the businesses agree to pay ahead and maintain them. She also thinks there should be a forum for those business owners who are unhappy.
  - Ms. Sayegh said that you're never going to make everyone happy and they should do what's going to benefit the most businesses.
  - Ms. Mider recommends telling those business owners who disagree with the DMC Board's recommendation that they're welcome to attend the next Township Committee or DMC Board meeting.
  - The parklets would be out from May 1-October 31.
  - Mr. Colangelo suggested contracting with a landscaping company and passing the cost on to the restaurants. It would help maintain the parklets and keep the look consistent.

- Ms. Mider made a motion to recommend to the Township Committee to have parklets installed for those who want them. Those businesses must pay up front, pay for a landscaper, and agree to maintain the parklets. Mr. Oliveira seconded the motion. All who were present were in favor except for Mr. LaCorte.

### **COMMITTEES**

- Business Development: Mr. Concha suggested having more business owner meetings.
- Finance: Mr. LaCorte said the process should be started to increase the DMC budget.
- Maintenance: Rui DeJesus should be returning in March to the DPW. Mr. Andrews said that DMC Board members can always reach out to him with maintenance concerns.
- Redevelopment: Ms. Mider asked Mr. Andrews to email her so they can start scheduling meetings. Mr. LaCorte said there was a meeting held with residents of South and Chestnut where the top concerns raised were parking, flooding, and design. Mr. Colangelo asks why Cranford is doing reach out for this project, as it's not a township project. Mr. Andrews said that the developer will be reimbursing Cranford for the fees paid to Topology.

***Motion by Mr. LaCorte to go into closed session. Seconded by Mr. Oliveira, all in favor.***

Returned to open session.

***Motion to adjourn at 9:57 am by Ms. Mider. Seconded by Mr. LaCorte, all in favor.***

Respectively submitted,  
Michelle Stavrou, Social Media Coordinator