



MEETING MINUTES  
November 21, 2022  
At the Metuchen Senior Center

**PRESENT:** Carmen Balentine, Joe Castronova, Bob Diken, Mark Harris, Lisa Hyman, Deborah Kmetz, Judy Lee, Aaron McCoy, Lynne Mueller, Wendi Richards, Carissa Sestito, Grace Shackney and John Sharp.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Co Chair Grace Shackney called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. She acknowledged the Sunshine Law – meaning that all are welcome to attend the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF October 17, 2022 MEETING.** Grace asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Mark Harris so moved. The motion was seconded by John Sharp and approved by all present.

**FINANCIAL/BUSINESS REPORT of FOMA (Friends of Metuchen Arts)**

Bob Diken, President of FOMA reported the following: Financials: \$15,937 Total with \$1500 in secondary account of restricted funds. Bob noted that a \$1500 check was received into the Network for Good website for FOMA. \$26,000 has been raised since July 2021. It includes the gift of \$7500 from Westerhoff School of Music and Art. Donations have been received from the 5 Board members plus 49 other donations. Averaging \$334/donor. There are 14 Founding Members (\$500 or greater plus one Arts Patron. Bob read the names of the 14 people. Pending interested donors include: Amboy Bank and Hailey's Pub & Harp. **Forward Actions:** Giving Tuesday: Bob and Board Member Charu Bakshi will develop a campaign. Then there will be a Year End Campaign using Social Media but not to the same people contacted for Giving Tuesday. Spring 2023 – Gala – Bob has been in talks with Meximodo – the new restaurant that will be coming to the Metuchen Plaza in 2023. Meximodo is interested in hosting the FOMA Gala in Spring 2023. Meximodo is interested in supporting the arts. FOMA is seeking Board members who are interested in doing fundraising and ideally already have fundraising experience.

**PROGRAM DISCUSSION:**

Upcoming Scheduled Events:

- *December 3, 2022:* Holiday Pop Up at Papillon & Co: "Eat, Drink and Buy Art" with 7 Artists: Joe Castronova, Mark Harris, Danny Ackerman, Kim Ackerman, Ellis Eisner, Linda LaStella And Bob Diken. Bob responsible.
- *December 11, 2022* – Trumpet & Harp at Papillon & Co. with Marcus Printup and Riza Printup \$30/person. 40 people maximum. Per agreement with FOMA, space is provided FREE as part of a special FOMA Sponsorship Package with select merchants per Bob's initiating it. Lynne responsible.
- *January 2023 date to be determined:* Drawing night with model at the Senior Center. Fundraising \$20/person. Artist Ed Wetzel helping organize it. Bob responsible.
- *February 14, 2023* Special Valentine's Day Jazz Event at the Parlor at Hailey's Pub & Harp.- Special FOMA Sponsorship Package with Bob's initiating it. Lynne responsible.

**PROGRAM DISCUSSION**

Grace Shackney presented the proposed programming and projected budget for 2023. Discussions were as follows. Note that the vote on the budget will take place at the January MAC meeting. Lisa pointed out that the absence of Theatre in the scheduled events is disappointing. Grace pointed out that Dragonfly is on the program schedule for y2023 and Dragonfly has asked MAC to provide \$2100 to cover the

space rental at St. Luke's. It was pointed out that no new ideas came in via MAC or FOMA social media platforms. MAC looks forward to financial support from FOMA on specific projects.

Two potential programs that are not listed in the budget but were previously discussed are Plein-air painting of historical Metuchen Homes and the Mural on the Green Drop Building. A committee needs to be formed to explore the plein-air painting project. The mural project is a candidate for a 2024 Middlesex County grant application.

Bob proposed a one-day Arts and Music Festival reminiscent of June Bug Art event done in Metuchen years ago. Ted, the owner of The Greek on Main, spoke to Bob enthusiastically about this idea and suggested the street could be closed. The more money we make the more we can spend, per Bob.

John Sharp asked about Tiny X project that was done several years ago which involves the placement of artwork of symbols of Metuchen made by artists and placed in "secret" place for people to find. Two of the 3 pieces were damaged and removed. Project coordinator Charly Santagado was in the process of determining to where the damaged ones had been moved. The one by the Metuchen train station still remains in place.

Joe Castronova expressed concern about The Rotunda Gallery. He needs help with the organization of it if he is to continue as director.

Carissa Sestito with marketing expertise - and associated with Hailey's - had a question re budget and marketing. Grace indicated that MAC would like to copromote with Metuchen Downtown Alliance (MDA) but there is no community calendar listing all events in Metuchen.

Social Media Discussion -- Charu and Mara are the "social media team." Aaron did the graphic for FOMA. New websites for FOMA and MAC have been designed similarly. There has been a "hole" in ability to publicize events in Metuchen since the Metuchen Mirror closed down. It continues to be clear that what is needed is one community calendar where everything happening in Metuchen is listed. Lisa Hyman as a member of Borough Council recognized the concerns of all. Bob brought up that Channel 15 should be used more and that the town should have its own "brand."

#### **EVENT REPORTS:**

- **Saturday, November 5, 1:00 p.m.:** ArtCycle Greenway Gallery Opening Celebration at the Trailhead on Middlesex Avenue. Ribbon Cutting. Mayor and Middlesex County officials attended. A fabulous event! Getting a lot of PR traction.
- **November 13, 2:00 p.m.:** Cornerstone Jazz at the Library featuring Multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson and his Quartet was a big success with about 60 people in attendance. Kudos to the Library our partner in Jazz events at the library.
- **November 19, 1 – 4 p.m.** Reception at The Rotunda Gallery. Art Cycle works by students. Event was underattended. 2 students, 1 teacher and families.

#### **OTHER REPORTS**

**MDA Report:** Lynne Mueller reported:

1. **Dawn Mackey takes the stage as MDA Executive Director:** Her focus will include communication --"breaking down silos", assuring that the MDA follows its mandate and By-Laws and co-producing events with other organizations, including Metuchen Arts Council within the confines of MDA By-laws.
2. **Ribbon Cuttings -Business Openings/Recognitions:** From now on Ribbon Cuttings will only be done in the "District." The successful ribbon cutting on the Greenway for the Art Cycle was

possible because the Mayor and County Commissioners attended. Jenny Lai and Diana Callinan are responsible for managing ribbon cuttings.

3. **Publicity at Train Stations:** No further discussion at 11/18/22 MDA Board meeting on this topic reported earlier at the October 17, 2022 MAC Board meeting. (Reference to Oct 17, 2022 report: "Dan Cea of MDA reported that Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce reached out to MDA that it has received a grant for publicity at NJ Transit stations. MDA has agreed to participate with Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. Note: this is something MAC and FOMA should consider exploring with MDA.")
4. **MDA Strategic Plan Review / Updating** MDA Board members met from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM on November 18<sup>th</sup> working on updating the original MDA strategic plan. Courtenay Mercer, AICP, PP of Mercer Planning Associates led the discussion. Courtenay and her assistant will issue all the findings and conclusions in a report.

#### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

1. Carmen Balentine reported that The Metuchen Milers running club will have a Holiday Party on December 2 at 6 PM at Hailey's Parlor. Open to all. Food and Live music.
2. Suggestion by Carmen: Have a concentrated section maybe 15 minutes in each MAC meeting where a topic could be presented. It might be 15 minutes to promote events.

All business being concluded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.

The next Arts Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2023 at 7:30pm at the Metuchen Senior Center.

Submitted by,

Lynne Mueller substituting for  
Meg Loftus Suchan, Secretary