



Regular Members of the Committee:

Mayor Richard Onderko
Maria Areno
Sue Asher
Tracy Selody

Adam DeSantis
Denise DeSantis
Joe DeVito III
John Holloway

Suzanne Maeder
Jocasa Perez
Nanette Peterson
Diana Sieberg

Welcome and member introductions

Members introduced themselves. It was agreed that revitalization is necessary to help small businesses on Main Street and throughout the town thrive.

Mission Statement and Purpose

Councilwoman Maeder asked the group to think about “big, hairy, audacious goals.” These should be actionable things we can do in the Borough coming out of COVID. She hopes to identify the resources in everyone’s toolkit as well as the items individuals are passionate about accomplishing.

Open discussion brought forth the following comments:

- Manville is alive
- We need to build a vibrant and prosperous community through business leadership
- We need to attract foot traffic to our downtown
 - Mayor Onderko discussed the \$7.5M “Road Diet” project designed to slow people down on Main St. There are too many varying speed limits on this commercial corridor. The link to the project plans may be found [here](#).
- We need more community engagement.
 - Ideas included:
 - A PE challenge along Main St.
 - A street fair
 - Touch-a-Truck
- We need better communication to make business owners aware of financial support for Main Street/small businesses that have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Mayor Onderko told the group that Governor Murphy has allocated \$1.1B a year for 6 years for Main Street revitalization.
- We need to clean up and beautify Main Street.

- Mayor Onderko reported on the upgrade to the street lights along Main St. through a PSE&G program. The street is now brighter and more vibrant at night.
- Planters were suggested.
- Public art installations were suggested.
- The railway underpass needs to be addressed. Mayor Onderko stated the rail line will only make safety improvements, not beautification expenditures.
- We need to engage the absentee landlords in our beautification efforts.
- We need to increase our online visibility.
 - We need map pins and (5) or more Google reviews per business to make sure consumers in neighboring communities know what is here.
 - Mayor Onderko shared that 2,300 homes in town and in surrounding communities receive the Manville's News insert. Physical copies are dropped at local businesses and the library as well.

Brainstorming session for actionable items and SMART goals

Councilwoman Maeder asked that everyone add comments to mounted flip chart paper on specific topics. She will organize the responses and look for themes to set 2-3 goals for the year.

Transcribed responses:

AESTHETICS

- Guard against too much physical and visual clutter - makes it hard to concentrate on the road
- Overflowing trash can from tenants dumping into trash cans
- Grant for facade improvements/business signage
- Art Gallery
- Murals
- Blade signs - change ordinance
- Window signage - less than 40%

ANYTHING

- Financial resources
- Financial literature - Business & Consumer
- 1st Time Home Buyer programs
- Promotional programs/discounts if you purchase in town (i.e., discount on taxes)
- Business to business discounts

CATCH-ALL

- Change lights to LED / whitelight - night time safety
- Goal - business info packet/marketing by Community Day
- Business tab on municipal page
- Table/chairs, benches
- Recruitment of new businesses

COMMUNICATION

- Manville is open for business
- Spanish language materials
- Develop an app for download
- Promote each other's business on social media
- Promote all town events - churches, businesses, non-profits
- Welcome new businesses
- Community calendar
- Reference USA
- News 12

EVENTS

- Street Fair
- PE Walk
- Touch-A-Truck
- Highlight business for holidays (sidewalks and windows)
- Town Wide Yard Sale
- Business Day
- Small Business Saturday after Thanksgiving
- Competition
- Contests
- Sidewalk Sales
- Restaurant Week

MISSION / PURPOSE

- Manville is alive
- Building a vibrant and prosperous community through leadership
- Attract foot traffic -- Road Diet and Pedestrian safety
- Planters - beautify, nature
- Senior / School members
- Arts - Involve MAC, Building owners / landlords
- How to deal with bad tenant issues
- Consumers - both physical and electronic
- Newsletter - Manville's News

Website Domain Name discussion

Members discussed the (now-defunct) Manville Business and Professional Association.

- Members paid \$100 in annual dues.
- The old website was developed in 2016.
- Sue Asher will contact past MBPA members if possible

The new website should:

- Be a portal to businesses in town grouped by categories
- Have an electronic directory of every business in town
- Have a new web address -- something catchy like Raritan's "makeraritanours.com"

MISSION / PURPOSE (con't)

- Events for businesses
- Provide networking opportunities
- Support and promote Manville businesses

TECHNOLOGY

- Highlight businesses on Borough website
- One website for everything
- Increase presence on Facebook
- Offer educational support to small businesses -- competitive analysis, computer classes, social media

SAFETY

- Police walking up and down
- Police presence shown
- 25 mph - Slow down!
- Sidewalk safety - bumps and cracks

WEBSITE DOMAIN

- Current: manvillebpa.com
- New: MeetmeinManville.com; Manville.biz; Manville.live; manvillematters; manvillemakes
- Social media
- Why? Discounts, events, marketing perspective
- Graphic - banners, stickers, bumper stickers

- The website domain and social media page should be the same
 - Ideas include MeetmeinManville.com; Manville.biz; Manville.live; manvillematters; manvillemakes
 - Please send any ideas to Councilwoman Maeder and she will create a Google form to vote for our favorite
 - Have a Google Map component to show where each business is located
- We need to approach this from a marketing perspective
- People “google” businesses. They don’t go to a website.
 - Older people do not use the Internet
 - We need bumper stickers
 - Stickers in windows with nice graphics
 - Community-based board
 - We should redo the Manville Business packet from 2010 by Community Day
 - We should consider blade signs as they are easier to see than searching for a store front. Our current zoning code does not allow for blade signs.
 - We need some signage on the highways directing consumers to our business district
 - We need to actively recruit a diverse portfolio of businesses to take up residence in our Main Street shops
 - Mayor Onderko reported that the Council will enact an ordinance to prohibit marijuana shops from town

General comments or concerns from Committee Members

Mayor Onderko provided an update on the Rustic Mall. The developer proposed 260 apartments in 8 or 9 buildings. Garden Homes owns the property. They are one of the largest rental companies on the East Coast. They are now asking for a parking garage to be constructed.

Next meeting and discussion of regular meeting schedule

The EDC will meet monthly on the first Tuesday of every month at 5 pm
 Our next meeting will be May 4, 2021 at the Manville Library.

Adjourned at 6PM