

Minutes of the Pico Improvement Organization Board Meeting
Sept 13, 2023
ZOOM Teleconference

*The September 2023 PIO Board Meeting was conducted on the ZOOM teleconferencing platform.

ATTENDANCE

Directors: Chairperson Sharon Town Lee, Angie Zubia, Tom Zehnder, Lois Bostwick, Pam Stollings

Residential Members: Amy Bishop Dunbar, Yolanda Lewis

PIO Contractor: Dana Moorehead

SM City & Affiliates: Ava Lee (City Liaison), Halima Barreto (SMPD), Edgar Navarro (SMPD), Cayla Turain (SMTT)

MINUTES

- I. Sharon Town Lee called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.
- II. Opening remarks by Sharon Town Lee
 - a. Sharon Town Lee reminded that Public Comment is open to all, and limited to two minutes per person. Questions or Agenda item requests can respond to before adjournment of the meeting, but if further discussion is needed, they can be continued to the next meeting. She reminded requests for documentation from PIO take a about a week, sometimes longer, if people are on vacation. Before adjournment of this meeting, topic suggestions for future meetings are welcomed. She encouraged merchants to submit materials to be posted for free on PIO social media platforms, to amplify their marketing efforts.
- III. Public Comment
 - a. Lois Bostwick said Morgan-Wixson Theatre upcoming show is The Addams Family, and tickets are on sale at their website. Lois praised the Gandara Park Sunday concert, as did others present.
 - b. Cayla Turain (SMTT) updated that the Volley-ween Event is Oct. 25th, the American Film Market is coming on Oct 25th and asked for specials to be submitted from Pico merchants to be promoted by SMTT at no cost, and announced the Extra Bedroom Program dates thus year are Nov13 – Jan 29.
 - c. Amy Bishop Dunbar shared that Unurban Coffee's Friday Open Mike Night is active and fun. She reported that Pam Stollings has recently noticed sex workers near her corner in the evenings.
 - d. Merchant Tim Heritage asked for a contact list with all PIO merchants with name, address and phone numbers listed. He said all 350 merchants should be included in any activity PIO does, like the Pico Art of Recovery Portrait Project, and it was unfair only twelve were included, and he wanted to be included. He said it was a conflict of interest to have Sharon Town Lee's business included in the project. He wants to know all the details about the street banners,

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and why it was a secret that the artwork of Chris Saunders was illegally used. Tim asked what the PIO storefront space is used for, and it should be open to the public, but he sees it used as a private office for the Merchant Engagement Director, who he said should be on the street 8 hours a week. Tim said he doesn't get any business from PIO efforts.

- e. Chris Saunders shared that the tiger mural art used in PIO's streetlight banner mural celebration, Art Blooms on Pico, was used without his permission, that he contacted PIO and asked they be taken down or he be paid a licensing fee, and he continues to pursue a licensing fee from the City of Santa Monica and PIO. He said he was told by a merchant that PIO and Chair Sharon Town Lee are trying to cover up the matter. Sharon Town Lee briefly responded that on April 3, 2023, PIO did get his email asking that the banners be removed or a licensing fee paid, and PIO responded that same day, apologizing as there was no awareness of the issue until he contacted PIO, and that the issue was shared at the PIO Board meeting, and that there was no cover up, but full transparency. She said on April 20, PIO wrote Chris Saunders that the banners would be removed at the earliest date possible, and they were taken down, on April 26th.

IV. July and August 2023 minutes were approved.

1. Police report provided by Office Navarro and Halima Barreto. There were 8 shoplifting incidents, primarily at Rite Aid, but also at Sofia Kaman Jeweler. A man with a knife tried to rob Starbuck's at Stewart, but only got some baked goods, as employees said no. Halima warned not to leave wallets in shopping carts when shopping, and that merchants should keep their personal items in a safe place. Rite Aid had Pico's first organized retail theft, with 3 people clearing an entire shelf of otc medication, and jumping into a waiting car. He encouraged merchants to request free safety training for their staff from SMPD. Amy Bishop Dunbar added that some of Pico's streetlights are out.
2. Guest speaker Dina Araniva presented a proposal for SMDP Tis the Season Holiday Guide 2023, with the print edition out on Nov 24th (Black Friday) and a digital component, and a motion was approved by the board to participate for \$3,000.
3. Sharon Town Lee announced the temporary appointment of McCabe's Tom Zehnder as interim PIO Treasurer with the resignation from the PIO board of US Bank's Kamran Najibi due to transfer to another branch in Century City. Tom reviewed the August Treasurer's Report and the Annual Budget for 2023-24, and the board approved the report and the proposed budget.

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4. Sharon Town Lee proposed the need for a PIO Board General Election, normally conducted in the Fall at a meeting. With so many projects on the table now, she proposed an electronic election. First, an email will be sent to the entire PIO membership to announce the election, and any member can nominate themselves, or another member. Once response is carefully collated, a second email ballot will be sent for voting on the nominees, and results returned will be counted in an organized, transparent process.

6. Dana Moorehead updated the board with a presentation of the Art of Recovery Merchant Portrait Project. It has been shot, and photographer Sam Comen is refining the images of the employees at twelve Pico merchants, representing 41 Pico workers. She said the October gallery opening & reception is planned for Oct. 26th from 5-7pm at 3018 Pico Blvd., and multi-platform social and press outreach will support it. Other efforts include facilitating beautification projects in support of individual merchants, holiday decorations at VAP including a lighted Gratitude Tree, a family craft event with multi-cultural decorating options, a holiday market where merchants can participate, and plans for a monthly PIO newsletter for 2024.

6. Sharon Town Lee closed the meeting asking for any topics for future meetings, and talking about the behind the scenes work that goes on to support merchants. She gave the example of rounds of nominations and voting the PIO does to highlight Pico merchants in the Most Loved Businesses contest. With merchant Tim Heritage present, she noted that his business was nominated by PIO and voted in the top 5 nominees for Most Loved Art Gallery/Art Store, for the first time. Tim Heritage said he would like all his concerns added to future agendas. He also added an item to the future topic list about perceived problems with four planters distributed in 2022.

ADJOURNED 7pm