

DMCC Meeting Minutes October 21, 2025

Community Events and Engagement

The community center successfully hosted the **2023 Hot Pepper Festival**, which raised close to **\$200 for each of the fire department, ambulance, and Damascus Community Center** through donations, showing strong community involvement and support.

- The event featured **25 pepper varieties combined into one hot sauce** given only to attendees, highlighting a unique product creation that engaged participants deeply.
- Organizers plan to expand the festival in **2026 with added attractions like a mariachi band**, aiming to grow attendance and community spirit.
- The success was driven by widespread local participation, including growers, volunteers, and video makers, showing effective grassroots mobilization.
- Laura emphasized the importance of community love for peppers and local support as core reasons for the event's ongoing popularity.

The **Clothes and Object Exchange** event faced challenges due to poor timing and weather, with only a limited number of attendees accessing the **75 donated coats**.

- The event's Thursday afternoon schedule coincided with the food pantry distribution, leading many visitors to leave quickly rather than browse coats.
- Tracy stressed the need to move this event indoors and hold it on a **Saturday in November**, with heavy promotion through churches, radio stations like **WJFF and WVIA**, and community groups to boost turnout.
- There is openness to partnering with other local organizations, such as the **Callicoon Youth Center** or nearby organizations to distribute the coats.

The **Trunk or Treat event** scheduled for the upcoming weekend is expected to run smoothly with support from the **ambulance corps, fire department, and 4H club**, providing a safe, candy-free environment for neighborhood children from **2 pm to 4 pm**.

- Although advertising was delayed due to staff vacation, flyers are being scanned and rapidly distributed to local groups to maximize awareness within limited time.

- The event includes educational giveaways like **Highlights and High Five magazines**, emphasizing community safety and engagement over sweets.

Organizational Structure and Governance

The community center is actively building its **board of directors** with **four volunteers including Dustin, Brett Ott, David, and Linda (president)**, but aims to reach at least **five members** to fulfill bylaw requirements.

- Board members are expected to represent diverse community sectors such as agriculture, finance, and arts to bring varied expertise.
- The board will oversee broad community center operations, separate from officer roles.
- The bylaws, finalized two months ago, outline roles and election processes.
- It was agreed to hold **board and officer elections by the end of the year**, with a plan to dedicate part of the **November meeting to candidate Q&A** before voting at the **December meeting**. Dustin agreed to oversee this process.
- Members can self-nominate or volunteer for board positions by submitting brief bios, enabling transparent and inclusive candidate selection.
- A motion to continue monthly meetings through winter was passed unanimously, maintaining momentum and community connection despite earlier concerns about attendance dips during colder months.

Communications and Marketing

The community center's **website is fully operational**, maintained by Emily, with regular photo updates including recent event galleries like the Pepper Festival, supporting ongoing community connection.

- The existing **Facebook page is inactive due to lost administrative passwords**, limiting interactive community engagement.
- Jerry proposed contacting Facebook support to retire the old page and create a new, actively managed page to restore social media outreach.
- The group agreed on the need for multiple administrators to prevent future access issues and ensure consistent updates.

- Bernadette and others have been reposting event info across multiple Facebook groups and **Nextdoor**, multiplying reach, but there is room to improve timely and coordinated posting.

The **yard sale event on September 27** faced low turnout partly due to **late signage deployment (Wednesday before Saturday)** and conflicting local events, illustrating the need for earlier and more concentrated advertising.

- Suggestions included condensing future yard sales to **4-hour windows (e.g., 1 pm to 5 pm)** to create urgency and better vendor engagement.
- The committee acknowledged the crowded local event calendar requires staggered scheduling and focused promotion to avoid audience fatigue.

Health and Safety Initiatives

The community center is scheduling a **blood drive on December 8**, rescheduled from December 2, with early donor sign-ups indicating strong community interest ([37:40](#)).

- The **Red Cross manages advertising and logistics**, minimizing workload for organizers. Flyers will be distributed to local businesses to boost turnout.
- CPR and life-saving training remains a priority but is currently on hold due to cost and scheduling challenges; the group is exploring alternative programs focusing on major injury response, including tourniquet use.
- Funding from health-related budgets could cover class fees if enough participants sign up, as noted by Tina.
- The center aims to offer broader life-saving skill classes beyond CPR, recognizing the rural setting's delayed emergency response times.

Facilities and Operations

The noise from the **food pantry fridge** is a persistent issue; a sound-attenuating folding screen with foam panels was proposed to reduce disruption without blocking airflow.

- Implementation requires approval from township supervisors and pantry management to ensure ventilation is not compromised.
- A committee will be formed to develop a detailed proposal and cost estimate before proceeding.

Recycling efforts continue smoothly as a township project with ongoing community support, but hazardous waste disposal for items like half-full paint cans and pesticides remains a challenge needing expert assistance.

- The community center supports recycling with refreshments like coffee and donuts to encourage participation and warmth during collection events.

Program Scheduling and Adjustments

Yoga classes led by Liz will shift to **Thursdays starting mid-November**, with communication already sent to participants and updates planned for the website and other channels.

- The community center's schedule remains flexible to accommodate seasonal changes and community preferences.

Other programs such as **Game Nights and CPR classes are currently paused**, reflecting a strategic focus on higher-impact or better-attended activities during winter months.

- Planning will revisit these programs in spring when weather and attendance are more favorable.

Action Items

Emily

- Post upcoming events on UDC network and social media where possible
- Assist with website content updates and photo sharing

Jerry

- Contact Facebook support to retire old page and help create a new administrative Facebook page
- Assist Linda with Facebook administrative transition

Tina & Bernadette & Linda

- Follow up with school council and churches to identify families for holiday assistance

David

- Send out bylaws document again to membership for review
- Continue planning Friendsgiving potluck and send flyer

Dustin

- Coordinate voting on board members and officers at December meeting
- Lead section during November meeting to clarify board and officer roles before voting in December

Tracy

- Support coat exchange promotion and help manage coat distribution