

**Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 28, 2014
330 Main Street, Middletown, CT**

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Attendees

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| Diane Gervais (Chair) | Gary Nagler (commissioner) |
| Jennifer Alexander (commissioner) | Bill Russo (Public Works) |
| Marc Levin (commissioner) | Sean Moriarty (Police) |
| Peter Harding (commissioner) | Anne Marie Cannata (Buttonwood Tree) |
| Geen Thazhampallath (Parking) | Shane Grant (Downtown Business District) |
| Nicole Castrogiovanni (downtown manager) | |

Downtown Manager's Report

Brochures. The Spring/Summer 2014 Downtown Business District brochures were printed and delivered.

Planting. The summer planting for the welcome islands in the North End has been completed. We used buds and blossoms (came in with lowest quote). The City has taken back their planters around Mellili Parking Department will cover the cost of upkeep. Overall, the DBD is under budget on the planters. The new schedule will be a year round with planting for spring, summer, fall and winter. The DBD will be using just one contractor for the year. The expectation is that a single planter will reduce the issues in transition the planters between the seasons.

Guides. We have selected one guide to start with us. Her name is Sonia Balram. She is a Wesleyan graduate currently working at the North End Action Team and has a strong understanding of Middletown. We have also ordered new guide uniforms and they will be here shortly. Shane Grant, our lead guide, is here to present a report. At next, meeting Sonia will be here as well. We would like to have guide meet with officers. Officer Moriarty agreed and will work with Nicole to set up guide meeting.

City Account Funding. The remaining funds about \$5000 that are required to be in DBD accounts are in our account. The City will no longer hold those funds but it will go directly into our DBD account.

Office Facelift. The office has been undergoing some changes. Office chairs have been steam. New carpeting will be installed and there will be a new sofa as well. Our landlord, Marie Leary offered to do a carpet replacement and it would only cost the DBD an additional \$400. In addition, there is a proposed painting project.

Website. Website committee had first meeting. There have not been any final decisions as of yet.

Main Street Awards Gala. Gala will take place on Monday June 9, 2014. Bill Warner will be honored at the event. Nicole can RSVP for anyone that would like to attend. The event will take place in New Haven.

Car Cruise. The DBD will be giving a sponsorship of \$1500 for the Car Cruise. The commissioners advised that the figure will need to be double-checked to make sure that is included within the flat \$5000 sponsorship give to the DBD yearly. In addition, any prior promises for sponsorship should be confirmed with the commissioners.

Quorum has been reached.

Minutes

- Motion made to approve April minutes.
- 2nd motion by Peter Harding.
- Minutes approved.

Treasurer's Report

- Motion to accept treasurer's report by Peter Harding.
- 2nd motion by Marc Levin.

Mike was not present but Nicole provided the treasury report. Jen Alexander indicated that for future meetings the Board Report should be presented showing the year to date approved budget alongside the profit and loss. Furthermore, she advised that we should check in with Mike to see what makes the most sense to print and present. She recommended that we can have both the monthly report and board report emailed to commissioners and we should then just print the board report. Nicole advised that she would clarify and follow-up on the matter.

Website

The DBD has had meetings on the website mapping and possible designers but they have not yet made any final decisions on the designer. Jen advised that if anyone had a website they would like to recommend that is particularly well-designed and informative (Gary), to please share to help with making future suggestions.

Marketing Report

None

Maintenance Report

Tom is not present to give report. However, Peter advised that the streets were cleaned. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, the beautification planters are done.

Lead Guide Report

Before Shane's report began, Marc reached out to thank Shane personally for all of his hard work. He appreciates that Shane is always visible and welcoming.

New Guide. Shane advised that he has just met with Sonia yesterday. Shane believes she has great ideas for working to make people feel welcome to the city. Things have been going well thus far.

Panhandling. Shane advised that this past Friday there were several panhandling incidents. As an example, Jen mentioned Lisa, the New London woman, who has a repeat history of asking for money for bus fare. Jen stated that they had a long talk with her on the issues and letting her know that it should not be done. Shane says that there are new players that have been panhandling. There was one person who was particularly aggressive. In these instances, Shane advised that he goes to the police station and speaks with a front desk officer. Captain Moriarty advised that the police department could not make an arrest without written statement. In those instances, officers can walk by to make sure everything is all right. A question was raised on whether or not guides should pursue arrests. Jen recommended, for aggressive panhandlers, the guides should go the route of having arrests made. Jen asked for some clarification on what would be needed to have arrests made. Captain Moriarty confirmed Diane's statement that if someone is particularly aggressive/persistent at panhandling to someone, Shane could go to the police station, indicate he is a witness and file a

written complaint. This should be done to target aggressive cases of panhandling not recidivism. Diane asked that this also be mentioned to MPD front desk staff; and Sean Moriarity advised that he would.

Police Report

Sean Moriarty advised that aside from panhandling, things have been running smoothly on Main Street.

O'Rourke Gas Leak Traffic Jam. Last Friday, the Sean advised that there was a serious traffic issue in the St. Johns area due to a gas leak at O'Rourkes. Police officers were out into the night to move traffic along. Diane indicated that situation was handled well.

Escaped CVH Patient. Diane raised the issue of the Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) patient who walked away from the facility and was still at large. Sean advised there was a serious communications issue. CVH did not promptly notify the police. The issue fell under the jurisdiction of the State police. The State police failed to send out a timely reverse 911 which would have notified the public and reduced public safety concerns. In the end, the Middletown Police stepped up to notify the public. Overall, the situation could have been handled better by the State Police and CVH. Immediate notification to police and public would have alerted the police and public to take action and precautions, respectively. As a note, since the patient is not technically guilty of a crime because of their health issues, his movements are not restricted by devices etc. (*Note: Since then, the patient has been found.*)

Public Works.

July 3rd Fireworks. Bill Russo that the next upcoming event is the July 3rd Fireworks happening in the evening. The fireworks is public works biggest event. Public works will pick up garbage on the 4th since restaurants will open on the previous night.

LED lights on Boardwalk. Public works commission has approved LED lighting for the boardwalk at Harbor Park. The cost of lighting will be \$19000 but with available credits the cost is reduced to \$11000. Bill Russo advised that things have been going very well. The public is enjoying fishing walking and biking. Police officers have been doing a great job patrolling the area. In addition, the cameras in Gene's office have also been well

Wesleyan Graduation. Wesleyan's Graduation went off well Sunday.

Memorial Day Parade. The parade went well.

Summer Concerts. The summer concerts moved to Harbor Park on the waterfront. The move will hopefully promote business in the area. The Concert series location will be at the Gazebo near the boathouse and canoe club. The band will have its back to river and concert-goers will have a view of river while watching the concert. Jen Alexander advised that it is a paved area and so clarification was needed on the available parking. Bill Russo advised that the City owns two parking lots at both ends of boardwalk. The City also has control of a parking lot on South Side of the Canoe Club. Across the street, there was mention of vendors being present. Jen wanted to clarify a location and parking because she with submitting a proposal to the mayor regarding a Saturday morning program on behalf of the Buttonwood Tree. Bill asked that a copy of the proposal be sent to him. Jen suggested that the City bring a cart with chairs for the public (the cost of which should be minimal). Bill advised that this is something to test and the City will assess the response.

Parking Report.

Planters. Geen advised that the Parking department has will be maintaining the planters around Mellili Plaza.

Arcade Construction. Current structure of what is referred to as the Arcade is crumbling. We are working with Police department to shuffle cars there. The rough cost is \$85000 in repairs. This will cover cost of adding netting and fixing

joints. The facility is way past useful life and needs to come down. The repairs will allow it to continue functionality for another two years.

Referendum for New Garage Structure. Currently, there is work being done to draft a new referendum for a new garage structure. The approximate cost will be 17 million. This will also cover basic road and rebuilding of pedestrian walkway between Peters building and Police Station. The parking department is working on allocating money for project. They expect the total cost to reach 22 million. There is already 6.9 million dollars in federal money for project. In August, there will education around the referendum so the public is prepared to vote on the issue.

Metro Square Development. The Common Council has approved contracting for \$60000 dollars for funding. The parking department will provided some funding for potential development. Garage needs to be replaced.

Black sleeves over silver poles. The parking advisory is looking to have black sleeves over metallic poles. It is purely aesthetic. They are \$63 dollars each. All of silver poles would be refitted with Black poles. They would also refit poles in Kid City Lot. Commissioners would not like to see a rate increase. Diane indicated that she is fine with having the meters go later in evening. Both Jen and Diane expressed an inconsistency between parking fees for meters and parking lots. Customers parked at the Mellili Lot and the lot on Grand and Main are required to pay the meters until 8:00 PM while street parking meters only run until 6:00 PM. Marc indicated it would help him if meters started later until 10:00 AM. It would help him out to have customers park freely in the morning. Nicole indicated that she liked the aesthetic value of the sleeves.

While Jen and other commissioners liked the black sleeves, Jen raised concern about costs \$20000 plus labor given the current project deficit in parking fund. Jen advised that if you are looking to raise parking rates, people will complain when changes are made to rates. While the aesthetic value is apparent, from financial perspective this does not seem reasonable. For the City to put more money into the parking budget and increased rates go up while we are getting new poles, does not seem like a fair tradeoff.

Diane indicated that the real issue is with changing the ordinance.

Geen advised that he would like to hear from the DBD whether or not they like how the black sleeves. Further, he indicated council had not yet approved this proposal. For raising concerns with financing, there would be a separate parking advisory commission meeting. Diane went over that date and time to attend the meeting.

In response, overall the commissioners do like it aesthetically; however, the concern comes down to cost and parking budget.

North End Report

No North End representative. The North End will be having brick walkways.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Revised Meeting Schedule. There is an issue with dates in November and December. Diane asked if there should be any changes. Commissioners decided to keep the schedule as is.

- Jen moved to submit new schedule to Town Clerk for notification and posting.
- It was seconded and passed. The schedule would also have to be mailed out.

Office Expenditures.

1. Proposed expenditure for painting. Diane indicated the need for some additional spending for the office painting. Nicole provided two quotes for \$2300 and second quote for \$1500. Peter voted for the \$1500 quote. Jen said she would prefer to approve other costs before she approves painting costs. Peter expressed a need to paint the office. Jen moved to table vote on \$1500 painting quote until other expenditures were discussed.
2. Professional SLR camera. The cost is \$500 for a used SLR camera. Nicole could use the camera herself and can do any subject matter. DBD can maintain a personal photo archive.
3. Laptop Purchase. There is a HP laptop which runs from \$500 to \$700 or a MacBook which is about \$1000 and would have more creative value. Jen advised that the MacBook would be best and they should raise budget to \$1500 to cover software.
4. The total cost is \$4000.
5. Jen advised that if you will buy a MacBook, should do it at Wesleyan.
 - Jen put forth a motion to vote yes on everything.
 - Seconded and passed.

Metro Square Storefronts. Marc asked if the Metro Square storefront is closed and was advised that it was in fact closed. Currently, Sabroso, Tandoor and Subway are still present.

Shane advised that he has spoken with the business owners and both are happy but the rent is high. They are looking for other location.

Additional Guides. Originally, the DBD had spoken about hiring multiple guides. Upon reviewing the budget, the DBD was only able to hire two guides. Nicole proposed hiring an additional guide for the summer months for an additional 9 hours in June, July and August. We have a second student candidate that would be a good fit. The cost would \$1200.

Jen indicated we need to have work for everyone to do as guide. This depends on the number of visitors. Realistically, we do not want to see repetitive guide reports on the same lighting issue. On special event days, all guides should be working. Marc indicated that they should be working evenings and weekends. Right now, we will be trying Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday during the day. They will try this combination for two months three months. If we need to edit down the line, we can.

- Diane motioned to adjourn.