

# Middletown Downtown Business District

Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

## Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair)	Jeff Puglise (Chamber)
Marc Levin (commissioner)	Capt. Mike DeSena (PD)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner)	Annemarie Cannata (Buttonwood)
Patrick Harding (Commissioner)	Cathy Duncan (Chamber)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Kevin Elak (Health Dept)
Tom Ford (Commissioner)	Chief Erik Costa (PD)
Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator)	Ed McKeon (Councilmember)
	Tom Marano (Economic Dev)
	Dave Godwin (PD)
	Adam Hushin (Middletown Press)

**Meeting called to order by the chair at 8:31 a.m.**

## CITY PARTNER UPDATES:

**Mayor- Not present**

**Police-**

Capt. DeSena reported officers are stepping up patrols when possible and bike patrols will increase with the weather. There was an incident yesterday that required investigation. They are now working crisis interventions with River Valley Services in assisting the homeless population and the partnership is working well.

Jen commended the program and noted it is fantastic to see it happening and working.

Chief Costa noted that there was a noticeable increase in panhandling over the past weekend. The CIT program helped in diverting panhandling and steering individuals to other areas for assistance. He stated the program is in its infancy Mon-Fri during the day right now and vowing to get it to 7 days a week with 24 hour coverage. He stated River Valley is an excellent partner because officers are not getting training with the professionals making the department that much stronger. He asked for patience and said by summer the program should be operating very well.

Officer Godwin was present to request that the DBD take over the 2 cement planters at the front door of the Station.

- Motion made by Marc to include the 2 pots at the PD entrance in our planter program.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> made by Tom
- All in favor.

**Public Works-** Chris Holden was not able to be present. Sandra reported he had contacted her to ask that the Seniors be allowed to use the birch sticks from the planters for a project.

Sandra will follow up and ask to collect asap.

### **Economic Development/Parking-**

Tom Marano reported they are very busy with the Riverfront Project finalizing the public's comments and ideas to paper from all the input sessions. Over 100 individuals participated in the Main Street Market space. Total of approximately 300 participated overall.

The consultant will be doing another survey late May/early June. After that they will dive into the regulations.

He noted the Canoe Club is moving along with the new businesses and 180 Johnson St. has increased interest with businesses looking to go there.

He said there is lots of interest in Middletown and the problem is where to find placement for everyone.

There are still a few \$5k grants left and available. ARPA Funding Committee is moving along.

Finally the parking meters are all getting replaced and updated.

### **Health-**

Kevin Elak reported that we are at a pivotal point with Covid. Mandates are disappearing, school mask mandates end next week then up to each district. Currently working with both public and private schools on what the next steps are and how to execute. There are mixed thoughts on the issue and some want mask optional and some want it mandated. Capacity of the school and ability to respond in an outbreak will be major determining factors.

He wants to make clear to the community and businesses that we may need to go back to mandates given circumstances around the numbers and any outbreaks.

Looking at current data, numbers are coming down and we are at the point of removing other levels of protection.

Wesleyan is seeing its highest numbers of Covid. They are identifying students and testing and quarantining as needed. This is a big reminder that Covid is still out there and will find an opportunity when it can.

They are continuing to encourage those not boosted to get boosted and those not yet vaccinated to do so.

Clinics will be every other week after this week at Cross St church. Still offering vaccines and testing.

Warming centers are at full capacity including Grace & Mercy Church.

They have formed Greater Middletown Opioid Task Force. They are hoping this is a way to address the opioid overdose issues in Middletown and bring all agencies together to coordinate resources. Over 50 attendees participated.

### **COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES:**

#### **St. Vincent's-**

Sandra reported the committee Feb. 22 with entire committee, except Maryellen went very well. Discussion was held on specific incidents and the handling of them, improving on the program, etc.

Sandra will meet with Maryellen and discuss budgeting and next meeting agenda, to be held March 22.

#### **Chamber of Commerce –**

Jeff reported that there is good news all the way around with positivity rates dropping.

Chamber has been very busy transitioning back to in person meeting with virtual option, which is most likely not going away.

Legislative Session has begun. 12 weeks. Feb. 9-early May. Chamber's Legislative Committee will keep track of all the bills impacting their members in any way.

Legislative Breakfast scheduled for this Friday will either be moved to virtual or date changes due to the inclement weather expected.

Entrepreneurship Program which is taking an idea and turning it into a professional business is moving along. There are also a number of initiatives through MEWS and all are in various stages of development.

There is lots of manufacturing business interested in coming to the area and we are promoting and educating those businesses on Middlesex County.

Cathy reported that the CBB will meet virtually and in person March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Count is needed for in person, so attendance needs to be confirmed. 40 can be in person.

**Wesleyan- Absent**

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**MINTUES:**

- Motion made Marc to accept Feb. 2022 minutes
- 2<sup>nd</sup> made by Tom
- All in favor

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

- Motion made by Marc to accept
- 2<sup>nd</sup> made by Diane
- All in favor

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Advertising/Promotion- No report at this time.

Beautification/Maintenance- Planter bids were sent out to 4 companies by Sandra and deadline for submission is March. 1. Katie is the commissioner that will review with Jen and make the final decision.

Sidewalk cleaning was discussed, and Tom noted they usually have equipment in May.

Marie and Marc both noticed increased garbage and cardboard in the downtown. Sandra will send email to Chris Holden regarding Saturday garbage pickup and branches after storms.

Gift Cards – No report at this time.

Special Projects- Jen discussed having an Outdoor Décor Matching Grant for up to \$500.

**PROPOSED BUDGET APPROVAL FOR PRESENTATION AT ANNUAL MEETING:**

Jen proposed a change to budget sent out. Would like to increase Planter Program to \$40K from \$35K then numbers for Downtown Brochure and Special Projects can be reduced to make up the \$5K.

Discussion followed on marketing at \$20k and leaving where it is and removing from

- Motion made by Marie to approve draft of budget with noted changes
- 2<sup>nd</sup> by Marc
- All in favor

Marc asked about the March meeting in person or virtual. Jen stated it will be virtual.

**DBD Coordinator Report-** None

**925 Report-**

Sultan Kabob has become Mediterranean Grill.

Old Forbidden City restaurant is being worked on, slowly.

Sandra noted an article in the paper on the Bob's Building. Tom noted that the P & Z meeting was tonight.

Tom noted they are talking to him about parking.

Discussion followed.

Tom reported that Liberty sold 55 High Street to Wesleyan and a Med Spa will be going into Plaza Middlesex.

Marc raised the topic of the sit-down restaurants hurting during lunch.

**Adjournment:**

- Motion made by Marc to adjourn at 9:22 am
- 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom
- Meeting adjourned