

Middletown Downtown Business District
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 24, 2020

Attendees: VIA ZOOM MEETING

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| Marie Kalita (Chair) | Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator) |
| Diane Gervais (Commissioner) | Capt. Rich Davis (MPD) |
| Marc Levin (Commissioner) | Mike Inglis (Head of Traffic MPD) |
| Mike DiPiro (Commissioner) | Chris Holden (Public Works) |
| Jen Alexander (Commissioner) | Cathy Duncan (Chamber) |
| Tom Ford (Commissioner) | Matt Lefebvre (Middlesex Music) |
| Patrick Harding (Commissioner) | Trevor Davis (363 Main LLC) |
| | Maryellen Shuckerow (Director St. Vincent's) |
| | Mike Sokowlowski (Guilmartin, DiPiro, Sokowlowski) |

CALL TO ORDER - Meeting called to order by Chairwoman Kalita at 8:30 AM.

Police Report

Capt. Davis reported they have looked into other communities like West Hartford in handling the panhandling issue. Every community handles it differently. The courts are extremely backed up. Police are following the ordinance of aggressive panhandling, which is subjective. The Chair stated she will send a letter off to the Mayor from the Commission asking for what progress has been made regarding the panhandling issue and a plan for moving forward. Jen suggested noting the timing and that Spring is coming quickly and now is the time to strategize because it will be too late. Sandra noted that when she and Capt. Davis walked Main Street, this was the number one issue of restaurants owners.

INTRODUCTIONS TOOK PLACE AROUND THE ZOOM SCREEN (ALL NOTED ABOVE)

St. Vincent's

Director Maryellen Shuckerow reported she is in her role about 16 months and are part of Main Street and they have their challenges. She believes actions have consequences. She has cleaned up the building inside and out and is working on unwanted behaviors. She frequents restaurants and businesses and the behavior of her clients is unacceptable. She has no problem with them being arrested and having consequences to their actions. She is also moving the agency in a different direction with respect to workforce development. She noted that she understands that the behavior of some of the people they serve is simply unacceptable and she has a 3 strikes and your out policy. Sentence determined by behavior. She does not have a 100% solution, but she is all about behaviors having consequences with compassion. New initiatives: benches being raised in back yard soon, healthier foods being served, keeping kitchen open past 1:30 for clients to have somewhere to go, she has people cleaning sidewalks, and is setting up a cleaning crew for Main Street and they get a stipend to

do that. Interested in hearing out problems and wants to support and be partners and not detract with their operation on Main Street. She will come to our meetings and help find solutions.

Chair noted this was huge for our downtown and that she was a shining star for the DBD. She gave out cell phone number for us to call her when an issue occurs with any individuals and she can deploy staff to help diffuse the situation. Marie asked about another number to call to get someone in the social work area to help.

Jen noted that we all want to be compassionate and we all understand the issue because we need a viable downtown. She is noting that Maryellen will continue to work with Sandra and keep communication open.

Conversation continued with some details to assist Maryellen with where she can help the most with the panhandling and homeless at this time.

PROPOSAL DISCUSSED AT THIS TIME:

Jen proposed the possibility of closing Main St. from Washington to College or Williams from spring to fall. She realizes there are pros and cons to this idea but this is the time to consider it.

Chris Holden noted last year this was brought up last year and there is a petition for business owners to request parking spaces. No one has taken them up on that. They also looked at other areas like Melilli Parking lot, but not adjacent enough. Cost also came up with respect to paying for tables and chairs, heaters, barriers, etc. Jen asked how that was distributed because she didn't hear it mentioned at any DBD meeting.

Chris checked in with the Mayor and they are working on a panhandling plan. What if it was a loitering ticket as opposed to panhandling.

Rich noted loitering is not the way to go. Sandra noted that based on research soliciting is the better word to use.

Jen asked about traffic with this plan. Mike Inglis from PD Traffic discussed the traffic flow to one lane would be major problems. Jen noted state portion to Washington only. Mike noted Washington to William gets very backed up with lights with two lanes now. Jersey barriers in the parking spots could also pose an issue. Feels it could be done, but not sure how it would work out. Rich noted we would lose 80 stalls.

Diane noted it would be a hard sell to give up parking spaces. Cutting down to one lane and keeping parking is more appealing. Visioning it looking festive and not chopped up, for example, doing only in front of restaurants.

Chris noted that expanding for restaurants costs money and they were not interested in that.

Jen noted any problems can be solved. We have issues but we need to address them to try to make Main Street better. She would love it to come from the Mayor's Office or restaurants themselves. Jen noted we need to continue being a destination downtown and work with ideas to allow that.

Planning Report - No Report

Parking Report – No Report

Public Works

Chris Holden reported focus has been on snow removal. Taking active role in keeping sidewalks cleared. Ordinance updated a few years ago. South end of town has the most challenges and they are on top of it. City can clear off sidewalks and fine owners, trying not to take that route.

Marc commended Public Works entire staff for keeping Main Street clear and working so efficiently to remove the snow. Chris noted the amount of storms and snow and that we are lucky to have such a good crew.

Health Department – No report

Chamber of Commerce –

Cathy Duncan noted the upcoming programs at the Chamber. Rosa DeLauro is upcoming on the 8th of March. The 15th is Gino Auriemma. The 9th is a Time Management program. Next CBB is March 4th. They are getting ready for in person meetings, but will continue to offer virtual options. There will be a Business After Work in the Spring outside when weather gets better. Pride is being planned virtually.

Minutes-

- Motion by Marc to approve minutes.
- 2nd by Jen
- Minutes accepted.

Treasurer’s Report

Mike noted we are in good financial shape with cash of about \$200,000. Request made by Sandra to collect any monies in DBD account at the City.

- Motion made by Jen to approve report.
- 2nd by Tom
- Treasurer’s report accepted.

Commissioners Reports

Marie-

Asked Sandra to read the slate approved by the Nominations Committee. Sandra read the names:

Commissioners: Jen Alexander, Tom Ford, Marc Levin, Diane Gervais, Matt Lefebvre, Katie Hughes, Patrick Harding.

Alternates: Marie Kalita, Patrick Harding

Marie noted this slate will be presented to all property owners at the Annual Meeting on March 24 along with the proposed budget sent out in packets. This is the budget going out to property owners.

Motion by Jen to approved proposed budget.

2nd by Marc. All in favor.

Marie noted Sandra is working with Tax Assessor, Collector and Endecom Computer to create new database for the DBD and will have an update next month.

Jen-

Proposed two items:

1. A refund to the businesses that have paid marketing packages to date as a way to help and assist our businesses.
2. Offer a free marketing package (church to church on Main St) and include them for the next fiscal year in all marketing items and allow them to accept our gift cards. It will help them hopefully, and will help us.

Motion by Jen to approve the items above.

2nd by Marc.

All in favor.

Sandra noted 5 business have paid for a total refund of \$1, 125.

Noted Lenscrafters may be looking to change location. We need to look at keeping them downtown.

Tom-

Chi Lash is a new beauty school opening retail next week. School opens April 1st. Lastrina Bridal will be expanding on April 1st as well. Sandra requested contact info.

Diane-

Reported that everything is going ok. DBD cards are selling fairly well, not crazy but pretty steady. She reported that she needed to purchase a small receipt printer and will send in receipt for reimbursement.

Marc-

OTHER BUSINESS

Sandra noted she is meeting with Rani as WESU to collaborate on how to connect our downtown businesses with the WESU community. At this time, they are not allowed to be downtown but this will be reevaluated on March 8th.

Tibetan Kitchen, Thai Garden and Cheese Spread had issues with gift cards, but this is now resolved.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn by Marc
- 2nd by Jen
- Meeting adjourned at 9:40 AM ~~Adjourn approve~~