



Draft Minutes of the Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 7:00 PM

Room 208, Municipal Bldg.

245 deKoven Drive, Middletown, CT

Hybrid – To Be Held Both In-Person and By WebEx

In attendance

Lee Godburn, Chair
Pam Steele, Vice Chair
David Wolfram
Charlotte McCoid
Kate Ten Eyck
Sandra Russo-Driska

Also in attendance

Kisha Michael
(Arts Coordinator)
Julia Faraci
(Admin. Secy)
Ed McKeon,
Common Council
(via Webex; arr 7:08 PM)
Ben Florsheim, Mayor
(left 7:43 PM)
Jen Alexander
(via Webex, left 7:32 PM)
Stephan Allison
(by phone, arr 7:18 PM)

Absent

Domenique Thornton, Secy.
Anthony Pandolfe
Mike Marino, Common Council

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order by the Chair at 7:01 PM.

2. Public Session: Ben Florsheim, Mayor, and Jen Alexander, Downtown Business District, were in attendance.

3. Approval of Minutes: February 22, 2023 Meeting

- Motion to approve Minutes raised by Ten Eyck and seconded by Steele. Discussion of two revisions: correction to name of Russo-Driska on the minutes, and the ARPA grant funding a trip to the Hartford Atheneum and the Old State House was successfully completed February 22. Motion passed with above corrections, Russo-Driska and McCoid abstaining.

4. Approval of Agenda:

- Chair Godburn asked that the order of the agenda be revised to move discussion of the Riverfront Reconnect Proposal (item 6. b) a. i.) to the beginning of this meeting to accommodate the schedules of Mayor Florsheim and Jen Alexander. Motion made by Russo-Driska and seconded by McCoid to approve agenda as revised. No discussion; passes unanimously.

5. Remarks from the Chair

The Chair introduced Florsheim and Alexander and expressed appreciation for their response to the Riverfront Proposal. He thanked Ten Eyck for her work on the project.

6. Old Business –

B. Committee reports

a. Public Art



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i. Riverfront Reconnect

Michael commended Ten Eyck for her work on the Riverfront Proposal, and asked how best to move the Proposal forward. Ten Eyck said the Riverfront Proposal needed to get City permission. The Downtown Business District has ARPA funding, a grant of \$100,000 in place for the improvements on Main Street, so that would be the first thrust of the project.

Alexander noted that Public Works has expressed approval of the project, but that it needs endorsement from the City. State Sen Matt Lesser added the Riverfront project into the state budget two years ago.

Alexander suggested using this ARPA funding to get artists in place to create a display on Main Street. For the first cycle of this grant, 3' x 3' panels would be created by artists for Main Street storefronts. These panels could be moved to the Tunnel if the Riverfront project moves forward, but still have the option to remain on Main Street.

Ten Eyck noted that the portability of the panels would offer flexibility for artists; they would be under less pressure than having to work at the Tunnel. She has reached out to the Wesleyan community to offer participation to students as a service learning course, and will approach other interested parties including Middlesex Community College, Wesleyan Potters, Middletown Public Schools, the Free Center, and The Buttonwood Tree.

Alexander noted that the DBD cannot administer the complicated administrative and reporting ARPA requirements for the second round of funding, an additional \$100,000. It was suggested that the City is better able to follow those requirements. The Arts Coordinator noted it was important to make sure that the City follows the grant guidelines, and that CT Office of the Arts okays the project.

Michael noted that the project includes cultural, artistic, historical, and scientific components, of interest to many different communities. She recommended a working group to include an MCA Commissioner, Public Works, City artists and community members. Steele suggested putting the issue before Common Council for approval.

McCoid motioned that the Arts Coordinator and the MCA work with relevant City Departments to take over the State grant from the Downtown Business District, seconded by Steele. Godburn, Steele, Wolfram, McCoid voted aye; Ten Eyck and Russo-Driska abstained.

Mayor Florsheim will work with the Arts Office to connect with the City Departments that need to be involved.



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6. Old Business –

A. Staff Report

Budget – Arts Coordinator reported the checking account balance of \$19,857.50.

Stipend for guest curator - \$300 was withdrawn for an emergency stipend for the guest curator on the Art Excursion. Procedure has been put into place for future curator stipend payments.

Letter for retiring Commissioner – A letter was sent to Barbara Arafah, thanking her for her decades of service to the MCA.

John Risley proclamation – The proclamation plaque has been sent to his family.

MCA By-laws – The Arts Office is streamlining the By-laws booklet. Commissioners and the public will be directed to the City website for items that change frequently. A new booklet will be given to all Commissioners by the end of the fiscal year.

Committee timelines – The Planning and Projects Committee has adopted a “Year at a Glance” timeline for its tasks. Michael recommended that each Committee create timelines so that the Arts Office is apprised of the status of their work.

Grants Resolution – The Resolution has been sent to Common Council for approval with support from Ad Hoc Council Member Mike Marino.

Joe Fonda concert – PSG grant awardee Fonda has changed his performance date from April 1, and will now have his concert in the fall at The Buttonwood Tree.

Grants Review – The Arts Coordinator recommended that the Grants Review Committee meets before the grants season opens on 7/1/23, so that applicants have time to submit fully fleshed out grants, instead of submitting at the last minute.

Arts Office activities – The Arts Office submitted its budget to the Mayor and Chief of Staff on March 16th.

Amistad – The Arts Office asked to fund the \$10,000 port fee for the Amistad’s visit. The Arts Office has been the best resource to make sure that the Amistad visits Middletown, and to give residents an opportunity to attend ship tours and other events. Michael and Florsheim briefly discussed whether the docking fee could be added to the annual budget.

Budget expenditures – Michael has set up expenditure documentation to be self-explanatory and transparent; she welcomes any questions.

Kids Arts –

Registration: To date, 25 Teeny Tiny and 59 Core participants have been registered. Michael will also do in-person registrations at the Easter Egg Hunt on April 1st and at the Kids Health and Safety Day on May 13.

Fees: After reviewing the program over several years, the Arts Coordinator recommends that the Kids Arts program double its fees over the next several years. The program will continue to meet the needs of residents where they are financially, in terms of discounted and waived fees. She requested this issue be added to the agenda for the next regular meeting.



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Art Excursions – in collaboration with the Recreation Department and Russell Library, the Arts Office will run more Art Excursions on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during school break in April, to Yale Museum, Mashantucket Pequot Museum, and the New Britain Museum of American Art.

Professional Development for Artists – The Arts Coordinator is planning a professional development excursion to the American Mural Project for Middletown art professionals. The event is aimed to bring Middletown’s visual artists together, to develop community building and civic mindedness, and facilitate transition to mural art.

Artist Endowment Fund – The Arts Coordinator noted that a number of Middletown organizations were awarded funds by the CT Office of the Arts.

B. Committee reports

Chair Godburn suggested Committees set up meetings at the same time every month in order to facilitate scheduling.

b. Planning and Projects – Committee report is attached.

i. Arts Advocacy Award –

Godburn nominated Anne-Marie Cannata McEwan, formerly of The Buttonwood Tree, for the individual award, and the Middlesex Music Academy for the group award. Steele motioned to accept this recommendation, Russo-Driska seconded, motion passed with no discussion.

ii. Artist Laureate –

Discussion of whether the position of Poet Laureate should become an Artist Laureate position. Discussion included publicity, recruitment and outreach for nominations; expectations of duties, in terms of events, appearances, demonstrations; compensation and MCA support of the Laureate. Steele stressed need for support for writing in the schools. Arts Coordinator suggested research into what other towns are doing with the Poet Laureate position.

7. New Business

A. Middletown Pride -

Arts Coordinator noted planning for display table for Pride; sponsorship includes Pride publicity giveaways. The Office still has some Arts Office giveaways from last year, including “What’s Your Art?” buttons. Godburn mentioned some ideas for the Arts Office’s display, including face painting for adults by drag queen artists, culminating in a collage of photos of “Faces of Pride” to become part of the City Art Collection. The Arts Office / MCA will look to recruit marchers, and will reach out to the band “Funky Dawgs” to play.



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B. Open Air Market –

Steele moved that the MCA pay Wadsworth Mansion \$75.00 fee for a table at the Open Air Market, McCoid seconded; the motion passed with no discussion.

C. Public Art -

Relocation of City Art -

The Arts Coordinator approached Middletown Military Museum about displaying the “Iwo Jima” and “Liberty and Justice” paintings there; they happily accepted. Steele moved that “Liberty and Justice” and “Iwo Jima” be relocated to the Military Museum, Ten Eyck seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

The Senior Center requested new public art. The Arts Coordinator suggested “Carmela” by Abby Carter, currently displayed in the Arts Office. Russo-Driska moved that “Carmela” be moved to the Senior Center, Steele seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

A wall track system has been purchased for City Art, which will facilitate easy hanging and changes of art displays. The Arts Coordinator asked the Commissioners to review the art in the hallways.

The Arts Coordinator noted that City Art needing restoration has been identified, and will be sent to local framers to be restored.

8. Announcements

Steele noted that the display at Middletown Adult Ed looks good.

Russo-Driska praised the artist display at Irreplaceable Artifacts, and mentioned that Cassandra Day is doing an article about the artist Kendall Soliwoda. Steele said that the artist made a good impression by coming into the DBD shops and introducing himself to shopkeepers.

9. Adjournment

Russo-Driska moved to adjourn, Ten Eyck seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Att: [Planning&Projects Committee Report-APandolfe 3-22-23](#)

Julia Faraci
Admin. Secretary III,
Arts & Culture Office