Middletown Downtown Business District (Draft)
Meeting Minutes - Annual & Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 27, 2022
363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

ATTENDEES:

Jen Alexander (Chair) Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner) Cassandra Day (Press)
Matt Lefebvre (Commissioner) Trevor Davis
Patrick Harding (Commissioner) Cathy Duncan (Chamber)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner) Kevin Elak (Health Dept)
Marc Levin (Commissioner) Annemarie Cannata (Buttonwood)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner) Chief Erik Costa (PD)

The meeting was called to order by Jen at 8:32 a.m.

CITY PARTNER UPDATES:

Mayor- Not present

Police- Chief reported on progress of body cams and car cams are in process being fully operational. In process of hiring Accreditation Manager to be in charge of accreditation. I2025 accreditation is required by 2025. This position will oversee these types of programs.

PAL program and Explorer Program are underway.

Looking to increase patrols on foot and on bike with warmer weather and events coming up in May, June, July etc. to be sure we are addressing panhandling and other issues that arise with outdoor dining and events.

Chief introduced Lt. Godwin to discuss PAL Program. Chief gave brief description of the program and Lt. Godwin noted kick off is May 7 and growing. Excited about the event. Lots happening and being donated.

He offered for the DBD to have a table, or any local business is invited to have a table.
Looking ahead to music programs at Middlesex Music Academy and to partner with Metro Movies for movie nights. Looking for games to be donated if anyone has games. Looking to have a variety of interests for kids. Asked if DBD can give $15 gift cards for their raffle in way of prized. Also looking for businesses to donate. If anyone wants to reach out, he will have a listing of donors. Check out: MiddletownPal.org
He thanked Middletown PAL for partnership.
**Public Works** - Chris Holden reported they are working on brown mulch, and are picking up garbage on Saturdays and added to schedule and should have enough in budget to keep it going. Also added holiday pickups. Anyone that wants to meet on new garbage containers they are happy to meet with us and Kim O’Rourke. Tree pruning from ground and bucket truck is in progress to get trees back to normal.

Sandra noted the electrician believed we had an extra snowflake strand and asked Public Works to check on the pole that he believed was purchased. No pole was found by PW. Diane noted her knowledge is that is was the reverse, we had the pole but not the strand. Chris will look into further.

Jen asked about graffiti and reporting. The Chief asked for DBD to call items into central dispatch to be logged and it would be addressed. Chris noted that Public Works tries to stay on top of reports.

Chris noted that sidewalks will be addressed along Main Street, especially problem areas like the Historical Society. He mentioned still working with Eversource about poles at Washington Street.

Jen asked about the pole that was removed at the bottom of Old Church that one of our wayfinding signs was one and asked about replacement. Chris believed they have the pole and will investigate replacement.

**Health** - Absent

**Economic Development/Parking** - Absent

**COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES:**

**St. Vincent’s** - Sandra reported that Maryellen submitted the budget for outreach manager to the Mayor’s Office and was told it would be supported. Jen recalled that the DBD had funded this as a pilot program last year for 6 months and then the City picked it up and said they would continue to fund the program. We will continue to monitor.

Panhandling and specific incidents/ideas. Saturdays and Sundays have picked up. Discussion followed on how to address with PD and St. Vins.

**Wesleyan** - Absent

**Chamber of Commerce** - Cathy reported that Sandy Heinly has left the Chamber. Cruise Night on Main will be handled by Haley. Danielle also left the Chamber and Cheryle Tine has replaced her. Sara has taken most of Jeff’s duties. Career Fair coming up. Summer Youth Employment Program gearing up. Next Business After Work will be outdoors in July. Pride is being planned for June.
APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Motion made by Marc to accept April 2022 minutes
- 2nd made by Diane
- All in favor

TREASURER’S REPORT:

Patrick noted that the 2nd collection of $75,000 came in and so we have a healthy balance of $200,000 after bills. Outdoor Grants have been going out.

Marc asked about applicants to the grant and Sandra noted there were 14 applicants, and 5 checks cut.

- Motion made by Marc to accept April financials
- 2nd made by Mike
- All in favor

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Advertising/Promotion - Nothing to Report on Advertising/Social Media going great. Sandra is doing a great job and many of our businesses are stepping up their social media game and tagging Downtown.

Beautification - Sandra noted Tom Ford said first week of June will be when sidewalks are cleaned. Planters are all in and first round went great. Sandy gave a shout out to Joe Fazzino, Director of Water/Sewer for allowing Winterberry containers to fill up there if needed. Next round is summer planters end of May/June.

Gift Cards – Jen noted our Wesleyan staff person will once again be checking all businesses that accept gift card so Sandra can address all issues. It allows things to work much more seamlessly. Our Wesleyan student also keeps our online calendar updated. Sandra noted she wants to start getting the event calendar out on social media more as well as quick videos.

Jen noted to look at Downtown website, all places are listed with events and fully loaded now, and we promote events that are good for all of Middletown as well, not just downtown.

Special Projects - Outdoor match up to $500. 5 granted so far. Not all spent $1,000, some spent much less. Jen noted we may not spend the entire $10,000 and was hoping to another small round of event grants.

Jen noted this would be targeting marketing to get people downtown. We would focus on events like: Middletown Arts Fest, sponsoring stage at Holy Trinity if we can work out those details, Middlesex Music Academy, basically outdoor things that bring people around.

Marie asked about how much would be needed. Jen stated $10,000 for the targeted items. We may not use all of it in this round.
Motion made by Marie to allocate $10,000 for targeted events with outdoor events for summer

2nd made by Patrick

All in favor

Jen thanked the commission for their support and noted that as the fiscal year comes to an end, we like to reevaluate where we are with our goals.

**DBD Coordinator Report**

Sandra reported she is doing the Brochure Swap planned by the Chamber on Monday. She is also moderating a seminar on May 24th with the CT Main Street Group on running a Gift Card Program.

Jen asked the commissions feeling on donations. Gift cards, sponsorships, etc. Marc said he felt that donations are part of marketing and so he felt we should give PAL $500 donation/sponsorship.

Diane had mixed emotions, would like to donate, but she knows how many requests come in and so asked how we can structure it so that we can give to those events that we feel are important.

Marc felt we should do donations on a case-by-case basis with the commission voting on the item. Mike felt that if it’s something that directly enhances downtown then maybe we consider a donation, but this is a tough topic.

Jen noted that if there is a way to support, like we did with the St. Vins Outreach Manager program, we consider doing things like that, and don’t do gift cards, and do items with impact.

Sandra noted that Maryellen asked for money to add second day to the cleanup crew. That sounds exactly like what we are looking to do. Jen asked how much, and Sandra noted we gave $500 last year.

Motion made by Diane to give St. Vincent’s $500 for 2nd day of cleanup crew.

2nd made by Diane.

All in favor

Jen noted this a great way to be supportive of our partner and true to our mission.

**925 Report**

Discussion followed on topics like Charles IT moving to old Rite Aide building, Joe Samolis leaving, and Bobbye Peterson will be acting Director of EDC for now and all of the projects happening downtown.

Jen noted JR Hargraves and Dominick have ARPA apps in and we are looking into applying.
Annemarie asked about when cleaning crews would start and also asked about No Smoking signs in front of businesses and enforcement. She is interested in programming on stage if that happens.

Marc thanked the commission for the beautiful orchid in honor of his mother.

Marie announced she is retiring from her current position and taking a new job as of July 1. She will leave the communications office and will be the Alumnae Director part time.

Adjournment:
- Motion made by Marc to adjourn at 9:28 am
- 2nd by Marie
- Meeting adjourned