



# Minutes of the Meeting

Wednesday, May 24, 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  
Charlotte McCoid  
Anthony Pandolfe  
David Wolfram  
Sari Rosenblatt (arr 7:04)  
Kate Ten Eyck (arr 7:16)

## Also in attendance

Kisha Michael  
(Arts Coordinator)  
Julia Faraci (Admin. Secy)  
Ed McKeon, Common Council

## Absent

Pam Steele, Vice Chair  
Mike Marino, Common Council

## In attendance via Webex:

Domenique Thornton, Secy.  
Sandra Russo-Driska

## Members of the Public:

Anne-Marie Cannata McEwan

**1. Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by the Chair at 7:02 PM.

**2. Public Session:** Anne-Marie Cannata McEwan was in attendance.

**3. Approval of Minutes:** April 26, 2023 Meeting

- Motion to approve Minutes by Pandolfe, seconded by Wolfram, passed unanimously with no discussion.

**4. Approval of Agenda:**

- Motion to approve Agenda by Wolfram, seconded by Pandolfe, passed unanimously with no discussion.

**5. Remarks from the Chair**

Concentrating on PRIDE this meeting, Godburn requested that artists, supporters, and Commissioners join the MCA for the PRIDE march, which will be meeting at noon. .

Godburn welcomed Sari Rosenblatt, new Commissioner. He also welcomed McEwan who was visiting the meeting.

**6. Old Business –**

### A. Staff Report

**Budget** – Arts Coordinator reported the checking account balance of \$16,186.01. Expenditures included PRIDE sponsorship and the MCAAAA prizes.

**New Commissioner** – Sari Rosenblatt was onboarded by Arts Admin Secy Faraci. Commissioners agreed that the onboarding is a helpful procedure.

Three new Commissioners have been appointed by the Mayor; they will be brought to Common Council for approval at their June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. They are Gary Wallace, Sharon Riley, and Renee Soares; all are Democrats. The remaining seats must be filled by Republicans or Independents.

City Art Collection – 4 Risley prints were brought to Ursel’s Web for framing and re-matting at a cost of \$77.00 each; total \$308.00.

Two patriotic-themed artworks were rehomed at the Military Museum, just in time for Memorial Day, and the “Carmela” painting was relocated to the Senior Center; all recipients were pleased.



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**FOIA** – Arts Coordinator recommended review of FOIA regulations for Commissioners and will arrange training.

**Shenker Fund** – in 2000, the Arts Office was gifted \$10,000.00 to use to promote arts and culture in Middletown, with prior approval by the MCA. The Finance Department advised the Arts Office to transfer the funds to the Arts line in the City Budget from the Rec line. Godburn suggested that the funds be assigned to Planning & Projects for public art or a scholarship. Item tabled for next month's agenda, when full Commission is in attendance.

**Emergency Grant for CT Ballet** – Having missed the grant funding deadline, Connecticut Ballet requested and was offered an application for an emergency grant. As Connecticut Ballet's dance series is popular every summer in Middletown, this grant benefits the City. Common Council approved an emergency grant of \$1,200.00 for them, through a resolution made by McKeon. The dance concert will be presented at the Wadsworth Mansion, and the Commission will contact the director to give suggestions on how to reach out more to the community.

**Arts Excursion – American Mural Project** – The excursion, which is open to 20 participants, will take place on June 3. Ten people that the Arts Coordinator hoped will attend will be participating. The Commissioners were asked to share this event, as there is room for more participants. Unintentionally, the trip does conflict with PRIDE, but is expected to return by 3:00 PM.

**Arts Office Events** – The Arts Coordinator commented that the Arts Office is “multi-tasking” with Kids Arts, the Fireworks Festival, PRIDE, and many other events at this time.

**Upcoming Downtown Events** – upcoming events include the Memorial Day Parade, First Fridays, the collaboration amongst Main Street businesses, PRIDE, and Juneteenth. Farmers Market will start the end of June.

**Rec Center Mural** – The mural on the Rec Center was accomplished with the collaboration of the Arts Office, the Rec Center, and Artolution; Cathy Lechowicz and the Rec Center particularly wanted to represent public art.

The Chair reminded the Commission that murals can be created indoors as well. Commissioners were asked to watch for possible locations.

The Arts Coordinator noted that adding programs such as this must be intentional because of the out of office time they demand from staff. McKeon suggested another full-time person in the Arts Office.

### B. Committee reports

#### i. Planning and Projects

- a. **Artist Laureate** – Committee Chair Pandolfe suggested that the Laureate position can be flexible and can include poetry and arts. He will draft an outline and present to the Subcommittee before the next regular meeting.

Commissioner Rosenblatt contacted the editor at Wesleyan University Press to ask about local poets; an intern from her office may be a promising candidate. Further discussion of the position description and application procedure is necessary.



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- b. **PRIDE** – Funky Dawgz band is booked. Marchers need to be recruited – four are needed to carry the Commission’s heavy banner. Some potential marchers are signed up with other groups. Commissioners discussed on how to recruit marchers. Contact to be made with the Pride group at Middletown High through their advisor Trevor Charles. A recruiting email has been drafted.
- c. **Youth Commissioner** – Arts Coordinator recommended Commissioners review Youth In Government fact sheet; there is already “something existent we can give our youth leaders.” City Ordinance provides guidance for this position, which was put on hold by Covid. Committee Chair Pandolfe is in contact with Kimberly Rodriguez, Band Director at Middletown High, in reference to recruiting for Youth Commissioner; Justin Carbonella of Youth Services Bureau is also a resource. Pandolfe himself was a Youth Commissioner, and will assist. Item to be followed up at next Planning & Projects meeting.
- d. **Inspiration Grant** – Discussion of a grant to inspire creativity; in the past, this type of grant was aimed at youth in Middletown. Godburn noted that years ago, former Arts Coordinator Stephan Allison gave a workshop on “Would you like \$1000?” to spur creativity, which generated ideas from college students. Pandolfe will draft an inspiration grant proposal which he will forward to the other Planning and Projects Committee members to discuss at a future meeting.

### ii. Public Art

- a. **Kat Owens** – Owens has agreed to sale of digital images of her work to the City, Owens is working out digital format with the Arts Office. Purchase Order has been created.
- b. **City Art Collection** – Some images have been sent to be re-matted. Some large pieces have been relocated to the Military Museum.
- c. **Protocol** for purchase of art has been drafted.
- d. **MCAAAA** – Commissioner McCoid presented the MCAAAA to Keondra Parris and Kathryn Kilian at the High School’s awards ceremony. Ten Eyck and McCoid praised the Art teacher, Kimberly Holliman, who was “moved” at the choice of her students’ works. Parris’s photograph and Kilian’s tea set sculpture are currently on view at Middletown High School and will not be taken at this time. The Arts Office has created paperwork to document and track the acceptance of the new pieces of art.
- e. **Riverfront Mosaic** – Ten Eyck reported that the project is “moving along” with funding not having to go through the City. She has been meeting with artists and scientists who are responding with ideas and enthusiasm. When her semester is over on June 2, she will be able to devote more attention to this project.

### iii. Nominating Committee

- a. **Executive Committee** – Addressed in New Business.
- b. **Commission candidates** – Nominating Committee reviewed more names in the last meeting; Arts Coordinator has been in touch with some candidates and others have reached out to her. Their affiliations are being confirmed. Candidates who are not confirmed for the MCA at



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this time may be nominated to other Commissions in the future, to allow “cross pollination.” Three candidates have given positive responses to being appointed and are being presented to the Common Council for approval: Gary Wallace, Rene Soares, and Sharon Riley, all of whom are Democrats. Besides these 3 candidates, another Middletown resident has sent a written request to be considered for the Commission.

- c. **Procedure** – Chair Godburn recommended to the Nominating Committee that new Commissioners be ushered in and have a procedural welcome. The Nominating Committee has two members, McCoid and Ten Eyck, leaving; Thornton and Russo Driska will be on the Nominating Committee so they will take the lead on stewarding new Commissioners taking the seats that have been vacated. He recommended that at the next Nominating Committee meeting, everything is set for the new members.
- d. **Role of Commission Secretary** – At future Commission and Committee meetings, The Arts Office staff (Administrative Secretary) will record the minutes, which will be reviewed and signed off by the Commission Secretary. Commission Chair Godburn asked whether Commission Bylaws stipulated that a Commission Secretary was required. Michael noted that the Nominating Committee could flesh out the role of the Commission Secretary. McKeon asked whether the minutes could be recorded by a transcription service.

### 7. New Business

- A. **Kids Arts Fees** – discussion whether to raise the fees for the Kids Arts Children’s Circus program. As per 14-221, standard fees are \$300 for residents, with \$180 for a second child and \$120 for additional children, and \$600 per child for non-residents. Reduced fees of \$120 / \$60 additional child is available for families with lower incomes, and families that receive SNAP/TNF have their fees waived. These rates, which are reasonable for 5 weeks of childcare, have not increased in 14 years. The Recreation Department, for instance, has raised their rates 50% over 5 years.

The Arts Coordinator noted that the approximately \$24,000.00 in revenue raised by fees does to the General Fund, and if the fees were raised, the money would not go directly back into the program. Ticket sales go to Oddfellows. Council member McKeon noted that the revenue that the Recreation Department generates goes into the General Fund and then back to the Recreation Department line. Commission Chair Godburn suggested if more money was generated, another Kids Arts program could be started, similar to that run years ago by The Buttonwood Tree; the Arts Coordinator will look into this.

#### B. Nominating Committee

- a. **Executive Committee** – Slate has been determined and will be brought before the Arts Commission in the next Regular meeting.
- b. **Onboarding** – Welcome to new Commissioner Sari Rosenblatt was onboarded last week through a new procedure initiated by Arts Administrative Secretary Faraci.

### 8. Announcements

An editor of the new Middletown Magazine contacted the Arts Office for information on a piece; Faraci connected her to Godburn for assistance. The editor has invited the Arts Office staff to a reception for the



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magazine's launch next week at Sicily. Godburn expressed the need for this magazine; noting the lack of coverage of local arts in other publications.

Further discussion on logistics for the PRIDE parade. Wolfram and Michael will take photos, Faraci will staff the table, Rosenblatt will facilitate haiku writing.

### 9. Adjournment

McCoid moved to adjourn, Wolfram seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Julia Faraci  
Admin. Secretary III,  
Arts & Culture Office