

Middletown Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)
Wednesday, May 26, 2021
363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair)	
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Sandra Russo-Driska (Coordinator)
Tom Ford (Commissioner)	Jeff Pugliese (Chamber)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Trevor Davis
Matt Lefeverbe (Commissioner)	Tom Marano (Economic Dev)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner)	
Patrick Harding (Commissioner)	
Marie Kalita (Commissioner)	

Meeting called to order by Jen at 8:31 a.m.

(Sandra noted low attendance expected due to the Memorial Day weekend ahead)

Mayor – N/A

Police Report –

Mike DeSena reported PD has been buys. None of it downtown. He met with Maryellen bringing James Thomas in for the panhandling management program. Mike stated he had been doing this type of work over 20 years and hopefully it will help out here and help with the panhandling issue. PD is short-handed but they are working lots of OT to get the job done.

St. Vincent -

Sandra commented that commissioners Patrick and Matt and Officer DeSena, will be on the St. Vin's Comm to work with Maryellen to discuss the program, discuss issues, concerns, etc. Setting up first meeting in a few weeks to give James times to work the program.

Chamber of Commerce – Jeff Pugliese

- Businesses having very hard time getting employees, not just Middletown but county wide.
- Hoping state Back to Work CT Program will help with this issue.
- Middlesex Revitalization Committee at Chamber is working at the local level to try to help the mechanics of national money spread to businesses best.
- Returning to in person events, Chamber golf tournament tomorrow, Travelers coming back in June, Cruise night on the 13th
- Small Business Awards in June-Amato's is recipient.
- Downtown looking great with American Flags

Wesleyan-

Sandra updated that she and Rani's main focus is working on communication system, possible student to assist us in using their WESU social media to get messages to students in Fall regarding downtown.

Jen asked Sandra to make a note to discuss a part-time student in office to assist moving forward with items at next staff meeting.

Public Works – N/A

Planning, Conservation, Dev – Tom Murano noted there were still CDBG grants available for businesses.

Health Department – N/A

Jen thanked all our city and community partners and invited them to remain for the rest of the meeting.

Minutes –

- Motion made by Marc Levin to approve April 2021 with minor name corrections
- 2nd by Marie
- Minutes accepted.

Treasurer's report –

Patrick reported all reports look good, we have been paying out grant money for the matching grant program and paid for the St. Vincent project in full.

- Motion to approve made by Mike
- 2nd made by Marc.
- Treasurer's Report approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Advertising- Marc noted nothing to report at this time.

Promotion- Jen noted we are working on the updated maps for the Wayfinding signs. We will begin work on the brochure soon and over the next month.

Sandra noted we reached our 1,000 number for Instagram followers. Noted many businesses are tagging us and posted great items.

Gift Cards- Diane noted we sold 925 gift cards for their nurses. Sandra mentioned the City of Middletown has been purchasing gift cards for people assisting with the clinics and for the employee health initiative.

Beautification-

Sandra reported new planters have been picked up by Buds N Blossoms and all will be changed by Memorial Day.

Jen reported banners were being tabled until Spring due to timing issues.

She brought up idea of spending the \$20,000 on other items:

Possibly split in ½ and spend on larger planter for bump out.

Last time it was discussed that we form an events committee with Jen, Sandra, Matt, Trevor and Annemarie. Since then there has been lots of discussion surrounding events and city put a group together and Jen, Sandra, Trevor have been to meetings to try to put all kinds of events on downtown.

We created a Downtown Presenters FB group to assist with this and Jen and Sandra spent a lot of time reinventing the calendar to work the way we wanted to so that we can load events and it look really good.

Jen proposed creating a small event grant program and consider proposals for downtown events and there are already some in the works. Proposing up to \$2,000 so we could do \$10,000 and fund up to 5.

Matt, Sandra, and Jen would be committee to decide and award grants.

Anyone could apply, but the event must be held downtown.

Cinder + Salt has First Friday Art Fest program and they can use some funding.

These would be smaller events and not close the streets.

Trevor spoke to Summer Sounds Concerts, Thursdays at Spear Park. New show mobile being brought in starting June 10th and every other Thursday. Larger bands and local warm up acts. Hoping to tie in other events on Thursdays. Commission on the Arts funds this event.

Jen is proposing our grant for new events, and the city's grant program is a 6 month in advance time frame so this would be immediate.

Trevor mentioned the new stage at Trinity Church where events can be held.

Discussion followed on both planters and event grant.

- Motion by Marie to redistribute the \$20,000 from banners: \$10,000 to Beautification and \$10,000 to Entertainment
- 2nd by Diane
- All in favor.

Jen thanked everyone for thinking out of the box with us and trying new things to help our businesses.

Jen will create criteria and have Sandra send out to all businesses immediately.

Matching Grant Program-

Sandra updated committee and noted that the businesses are really happy with the program. Diane noted that the program had big impact in many places on Main St. Umbrellas at Esca, pots in ally at Cinder + Salt, etc.

Tree Walk-

Jen noted that Diane, Jane Harris, Sandra and Chris Holden went on a tree walk and it's been a really long time since we have done a comprehensive Main Street scape design. We my want to think about asking the City to consider a reinvestment into our sidewalks, trees, etc.

Trevor noted his agreement with this plan.

Diane noted that there is not a cohesive plan for the trees, and there is really no one overseeing the projects to be sure things are done correctly. From planting to trimming of trees. She stated it would be nice to get us more involved.

Jen noted the DBD is extremely busy at this time, but sometime in the next month or two we can bring this to discussion as a community wide project. Jen then asked to add to next month agenda.

Snowflake Discussion-

Jen reminded everyone that the snowflakes were purchased by the Chamber, DBD and City putting up 1/3 of the funding.

Proposals have been put forward to purchase new snowflakes, etc.

Jen proposed the DBD purchasing the new bulbs and letting the city figure out replacement.

Discussion followed.

- Motion made by Diane to pay for the bulbs for the snowflakes and have city do labor
- 2nd by Marc
- All in favor.

925 Report-

Patrick reported La Boca should be renewing their lease and also the building next door has a new interested buyer that is looking good.

Trevor noted he has a new service in his building. The board room now has a TV screen and you can have hybrid Zoom meetings. DBD could have meetings there.

Discussion on port-o-potties and locations for public bathroom was held.

Sandra reported Mind Brakes is leaving Main Street Market and going to 650 Main Street

The new business on College Street will be a CBD business.

Jen reported that The Board Room after 6 years has closed.

Kid City is planning to open to members only in June and hopefully the public in July with time management system. Fortunately, all staff wanted to come back.

Adjournment:

- Motion made by Marc to adjourn at 9:23 am
- 2nd by Mike
- Meeting adjourned