

Middletown Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)
Wednesday, June 23, 2021
363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair)	
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Sandra Russo-Driska (Coordinator)
Katie Huges (Commissioner)	Jeff Pugliese (Chamber)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Trevor Davis (363 Main LLC)
Matt Lefebvre (Commissioner)	Kevin Elak (Health Dept)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner)	AnnMarie Cannata (Buttonwood)
Patrick Harding (Commissioner)	Cassandra Day (Press)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner)	Steve (Chamber)
	Chris Holden (Public Works)
	Scott Aresco (MPD)

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

DBD PARTNER UPDATES:

Mayor – N/A

Health Department –

Kevin Elak reported COVIC is calming down. They are running Wednesday clinics at community venues. Lull in cases with only 5 in one week. Delta variant is in NE, very few in CT. Keeping close eye on it with summer and outdoor activities and taking off of masks.

Jen thanked him on behalf of the commission for doing amazing work.

Police Report –

Officer Scott Aresco reported for Officer Mike DeSena. Noted the department is keeping the same guys downtown so everyone can be familiar with them. Jay Bodell has Bear, the Community Dog and people love seeing them around downtown. Marc noted he likes seeing more beat officers around and it has been better. Scott noted bicycle officers will be starting to head out over the summer as well.

Public Works –

Chris Holden reported that they have completed Spring work along Main Street including tree plantings and mulching. Sweeping is occurring on a regular basis.

Chamber of Commerce – Jeff Pugliese

- Funding and relief programs are going well and profiting businesses in the county.
- Working on evolving growth strategies with businesses and not just using the cash.
- Lots of interest in grants and microgrants.
- Lots of developers interesting in investing in the downtown. Lots of activity lately.
- Chamber is very involved in Riverfront process and the conversations related to that.
- Middletown Pride kick off went very well and the hybrid approach throughout the City went well.
- Noted that Kevin from Health and Chris from Public Works have been a great help.
- Legislative Session wrapped up with no broad base tax increase. Fed \$ played a big role in that.
- Middlesex County Small Business Awards is coming up and Amato's is a recipient.
- Travelers Tournament week is happening-virtual breakfast meeting with Cameron Smith, golf pro, went great. Looking for a great turnout with caps at 10,000 spectators. Full capacity next year.

Jen commented that she felt a letter to the Mayor and Council for a Streetscape Project and Matching Facade/Building Improvement Grant using the stimulus funding given to the City was needed at this time.

Marc asked about the amount of the dollars coming in. Jen noted it was not a finite amount and different monies were coming in from different pots.

Jeff noted over 20 million was coming directly to the City and County for allocation. Jen stated that asking City Hall to set priorities for this money was important.

Diane commented that we need a comprehensive plan to look at Main Street to get it to a level that is great, and not just as good as it gets right now. She stated that business owners would participate in a plan of this nature and that the amount we would need is small in comparison to other projects with not as much impact.

Chris Holden noted the City was setting up a committee to determine a master plan for the money and how it will be given out. Also, that a significant amount has been set aside for water/sewer and infrastructure projects already. He suggested submitted a list to the committee and they decide allocation. He mentioned also needing improvements to the Rte 9 corridor coming into the City because this is our gateway.

- Motion to send a letter to set our priorities to the Mayor and Council made by Marc
- 2nd made by Diane
- All in favor
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St. Vincent's-

Sandra reported that the committee had its first meeting with Matt, Patrick, Maryellen and Mike DeSena and James has begun his outreach for a few weeks now. It is going very well, and reports are being done monthly to give the commission. It was noted that James is overqualified to be doing this work and we are very luck to have him in the position.

Wesleyan- N/A

Planning, Conservation, Dev – N/A

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Motion made by Marc to approve June 2021
- 2nd by Diane
- Minutes accepted.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Advertising- Marc noted nothing to report at this time. Sandra is doing a great job with all the social media, and we should keep going with that for now.

Promotion-

- Jen noted Wayfinding signs are done and going up and brochure is next.
- Social Media and Website: Now have calendar function up and running again. It would be great to get a WESU student to work with us a few hours per week to assist with this and utilize them in the Fall to connect with students.

Beautification-

Planters looking great. Maybe consider more money for larger starter plants next year to look more robust to start.

Sandra noted that the clean up crew from St. Vin's has been essential in helping keep the planters clear and Main Street cleaned up. Maryellen noted in the meeting with the committee that she has not funding for more than one day per week.

- Motion made by Marc to give \$1,000 to St. Vincent's for gift card purchases to add 2nd day to cleanup crew.
- 2nd by Mike
- All in favor.

Gift Cards-

Diane reported gift cards are selling really well. Been informed the EML has changes going on and are transitioning their business model. Noting that we get shifted to one company for issuing and one for banking. Fees are an issue. No fees have been paid for 11 years. She is trying to negotiate 12-18 month of no fees for the new contract and they will pay us for current gift cards.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

Matching Grant Program-

Jen noted it is going well and Sandra is on top of getting all receipts or extensions.

Event Grant Program-

Jen noted the program was extremely successful and full of fantastic ideas. Our goal was to focus on a variety of events happening over the summer.

Marie asked if we were to fund all projects how much more money would be needed. Jen noted 26,000 was requested and we funded 10,000 so 16,000 however, another 10,000 would go a long way in assisting or providing funding for the remaining applicants.

- Motion made by Marc to add another \$10,000 to Event Grants
- 2nd by Diane
- All in favor.

Store Front Grant Project-

Jen noted 100,000 was granted to this project and we are in the process of figuring it all out

OTHER: Light bulbs have been ordered and Chamber will handle installation.

NEW BUSINESS:

Trevor noted the 1st Summer Sounds went great. About 150 people attending. Tomorrow night is 2nd concert. Also having a Dominican food truck.

Annmarie noted July 25th event on the stage 3-5pm. Also noted she hoped the City would be enforcing the no smoking policy on sidewalks now that marijuana is legal.

925 Report- Nothing to report.

Adjournment:

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