



Minutes of the Meeting

Wednesday, July 26, 2023, 7:00 PM

Room 208, Municipal Bldg.

245 deKoven Drive, Middletown, CT

Hybrid – Held Both In-Person and By WebEx

In attendance

Lee Godburn, Chair
Pam Steele, Vice Chair
Anthony Pandolfe
Sari Rosenblatt
Sandra Russo-Driska
Renee Soares (arr 7:35 pm)
Gary Wallace
David Wolfram

In attendance via Webex:

Domenique Thornton, Secy.
Sharon Riley

Absent

Ed McKeon, Common Council
Mike Marino, Common Council

Also in attendance

Staff:
Kisha Michael, Arts Coordinator
Julia Faraci, Admin. Secy

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by the Chair at 7:06 PM.
2. **Public Session:** no members of the public present
3. **Approval of Minutes:** June 28, 2023 Meeting
 - Motion to approve Minutes by Pandolfe, seconded by Steele, passed unanimously with no discussion.
4. **Approval of Agenda:**
 - Motion to approve Agenda by Steele, seconded by Rosenblatt, passed unanimously with no discussion.
5. **Remarks from the Chair –**

Godburn noted that after over 20 years, this is his last year with the Commission. For the benefit of the newer Commissioners, he gave a brief history of the MCA, from its beginnings in 1972 to the present.

The Chair emphasized the important points: 1, that the Commissioner has only one voice, is not autonomous, cannot make promises, or cannot speak for the Commission; the Commission acts as a whole, and 2, that the Arts Coordinator is the leader of the Commission. He reminded the Commissioners that they have been given the responsibility to represent the City, and he charged the Commissioners to represent the City of Middletown responsibly.

After Commissioner and staff introductions, the Chair discussed the MCA's visibility in the City, and urged Commissioners to talk about the MCA, and to attend events. He encouraged the Commission to be sure Commissioners attend and possibly even make announcements from the stage at MCA-sponsored events so that residents know how their taxes are supporting the arts.

6. Old Business –

A. Staff Report

I. MCA Housekeeping, Business and Old Business

- a. **Amendment to minutes of June 28 meeting** - A letter from resigning Commissioner Kate Ten Eyck was read and photos of mosaics from the Tunnel project were passed around at the June 28 meeting. Russo Driska made a motion that Kate Ten Eyck's letter and photos be added to the minutes, Pandolfe seconded, passed unanimously with no discussion.



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- b. **Letters of gratitude to resigning Commissioners** – Arts Office staff has drafted letters to the Commissioners who left the MCA in June and will be signed and shared as an attachment to the minutes.
- c. **Freedom of Information Act** – Christopher Forte will present a FOIA workshop one hour prior to the September 27th Regular Meeting. Due to a scheduling conflict with Room 208, Arts Coordinator will follow up to see if Senior Center is available.
- d. **Committee Worksheet: Agenda attachment** – Arts Coordinator reviewed the Committee worksheet, intended to be a snapshot of the assignments of the MCA Committees. Most of the information about the general working tasks are created from the MCA bylaws.

Commissioners were asked to review to consider their preferred Committee assignments. All three Committees – Planning and Projects, Public Art, and Nominating – need members. Nominating also needs a chair. Planning and Projects Committee does not have a Committee description, because there was none in the bylaws; Pandolfe add to the agenda of the next meeting.

- e. **Executive Committee** – The outgoing Officers met on July 24 to follow up on unfinished business and reflected in meeting minutes distributed July 25. Commissioners were asked to review minutes for a smooth transition of leadership and membership. Topics were review of this agenda, MCA grants policies, MCA bylaws revisions, and Connecticut Ballet (to be discussed under Grants, # 2, below)
- f. **MCA Checking Account and City Arts Operating budget (FY24 appropriation): Agenda attachment** – Arts Coordinator reviewed the distinctions between the City Arts Office's Operating budget and the MCA's checking account. Snapshot includes six lines that the Arts office manages out of the City budget. MCA acts as advisory to the **Grants** line of \$74,000.00, administered by the Arts Office as appropriated by City Council.

Transactions Register (Attachment 2) is the record that the Arts Coordinator keeps that is expended from each line over the fiscal year, which shows appropriations, line transfers, and general charges. It includes some MCA expenses for events and giveaways. The Arts Coordinator explained each line and how the funds are spent. The **Public Art line** is used for the maintenance of the City Art Collection, **Kids Arts** for Children's Circus, the **Arts Support Grants** line which is split between General Operating and Project Support Grants, **Music Licensing** for the music that the Arts Office used, which is based on population.

The **Special Programs line** includes expenditures for Fireworks music and tech, Farmers Markets artist fees, and other music events. Most of the City Arts lines stay the same; Special programs did fluctuate. Under this line, the Arts office requested \$10,000.00 for Amistad for tentative plan for its return in FY2024, and received \$5,000.00. An amount of \$15,000.00 for a literary fair, was added to this line; the Arts Coordinator will need more information, noting that Council Member Ed McKeon would be better able to report on that.

- g. **MCA Checking Account - "Middletown Commission on the Arts Program and Activity Fund"**, created by City Ordinance 47-33; the MCA has a checking account with Citizens Bank with these funds. The MCA Checking account expended \$282.97 reimbursing Godburn for expenses for PRIDE bling. Balance is now \$14,703.04. The MCA checking account is separate from the Arts Office Operating Budget: refer to Bylaws for information. The new Chair and Vice Chair will need to report



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to Finance to become the new MCA check signers; at this time the signers are the Godburn and Steele.

- h. Donation fund accounts:** The Finance Dept has advised the Arts Coordinator of two Donation Funds Accounts (circa 2000) that reside in the City's Operating Budget, and sit, gaining interest and remaining unexpended, "for the purpose of promotion of the Arts and Culture Activities in the City of Middletown", to be used at the discretion of the MCA.

Schenker Fund Donation 2250: Cash on hand \$15,228; Council has accepted \$10,000. Arts Coordinator must go to Common Council for the difference of \$5,228 in order to utilize the full \$15,228, which will be expended by the Arts Office subject to prior approval by the Commission.

Community Arts Foundation Fund 2090: Cash on hand \$19,084, Council has accepted \$11,574. Arts Coordinator must go to Common Council for the difference of \$7,510 in order to utilize the full \$19,084. These funds will be expended from the Arts Office "as designated by the Mayor and/or the Middletown Arts and Culture Commission."

- i. Canvas Project Grant:** Finance Dept has informed Arts Coordinator of a Canvas Project Grant (circa 2012) that is unexpended.

DECD City Canvases Project Fund 3091: Cash on hand \$5,000. Council has accepted the full amount, and it is available to spend now for "preparation for project application ... as administered by the Mayor's Office / Arts. "

- j. Review of the purpose of MCA:** The purpose of the MCA and its activities is to promote the arts and culture of our City. The Arts Coordinator stated her recommendation to use funds for enhancement of beautification efforts and promotions of MCA and Arts in Middletown through banners, billboards, bus billboards, signs, sculptures, public art, and MCA promotional material. Arts Coordinator noted that above items eat away at the Arts Office Operating Budget.

- k. Reminder to connect with the Arts Office:** Commissioners are requested to "like" and "follow" the Office on social media, sign up on the City's website to connect with emails sent by the Arts Office, as well as the Mayor's Office, HR, Public Works, and more.

- l.** The Arts Coordinator noted the parallel work of the Arts Office and the Middletown Commission on the Arts and reiterated the different roles of the Arts Office and the MCA. The Arts Office manages the information of the MCA, and the Arts Coordinator delegate and manage its activities; however the MCA is privy to all activities. The Arts Office operates out of the Office of the Mayor. The MCA serves as an advisory body, with 50 years of established bylaws, activities and accolades, that moving forward, need attention.

II. MCA Grants

- a. Connecticut Ballet** – Because they missed the deadline to apply for a grant for their Ballet Under the Stars, the Connecticut Ballet was given an emergency grant of \$1,200.00 to present their program at Wadsworth Mansion. After their cancellation due to inclement weather, the Director emailed the Arts Coordinator saying that they were unable to reschedule and asking to keep the grant award. By the mandates of both the Bylaws and the grant contract, the grantee is required to return any unexpended funds. With the consensus of the Commission, the Arts Coordinator will ask the Director



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of Connecticut Ballet to submit a final report which accounts for expenditures and to return unexpended funds.

- b. **Grants Q&A** – Commissioners were requested to provide input by email for a Grants FAQ sheet which the Arts Office will produce for applicants, and which will be live virtually in August. The Arts Coordinator aims to answer questions so that applicants submit paperwork with more assurance and less anxiety, making the process easier for first-time applicants.
- c. **MCA Grant Guidelines FY23/24 (Agenda attachment)** – The Arts Coordinator noted the Office made stylistic changes to the Guidelines for the purpose of clarification; she emphasized no policy changes will be made till review by the Commission. Staff changes to the Guidelines: grammar and punctuation, clarification of policy needed for overlapping of funding for grantees in one year. All grants must reflect a policy that prevents “double dipping”. Supporting documents to be added to required paperwork for businesses “Upon Request”. Commissioners approved proposed changes.
- d. **Ordinance 44-11 reviewed with Executive Committee** – Executive Committee recommended that amount for no match requirement for an individual applicant be lowered to \$2,000. This revision will require a change to Ordinance 44-11. Russo Driska moved that the MCA ask the City to amend Ordinance 44-11 to exclude the matching provision for grants that are \$2000 or less for an individual. Motion seconded by Pandolfe, passed unanimously with no discussion. Ordinance revision will be brought to City Attorney.

III. Arts Office Activities, Events/Programs/Updates

- a. **Labor Day Concert at Military Museum** will be on September 2 with Symphonic Band.
- b. **2024 Concerts** will be scheduled on cultural and federal holidays, directing events toward “captured audiences” expected to result in larger audiences than trying to attract people.
- c. **Children’s Circus performance** is at 5p, on Friday, August 4th, rainedate Saturday August 5th.
- d. **Upcoming activities, including Art Excursion and Professional Development;** planning with Recreation Department, Library, ARPA grants

IV. General Public Inquiries and Requests

- a. The Arts Coordinator noted that as an advisory group, the MCA Commissioners are presented with public inquiries and requests to take action, and will be called upon as an advisory group to provide artistic guidance and resources.

The Arts Coordinator receives many public requests that she tracks and triages, and she works with other City directors (Public Works, Economic Development, Police, etc) on requests outside her “wheelhouse”, including permits, personal initiatives, requests for collaborations, and so on.

V. News in the Arts and Upcoming Events

- a. **National Night Out Tuesday, August 1:** Face painter will be hired.
- b. **Middletown Arts Fest Friday August 4th** will have their own live music.
- c. **Friday Farmers Market** has a busker hired by the Arts Office. Arts Coordinator said that musicians can contact the Market Master if they want to participate.
- d. **Wadsworth Mansion** continues its live concert series on Wednesdays.
- e. **Downtown Business District** continues its Summer on Main events



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- f. **Freddie Moses of House of Moses has passed away**, the Arts Coordinator noted with sadness; tribute events at La Boca on Thursday and Klekolo on Friday.
- g. **Open Studio** is a 60-minute radio show that airs on WESU at 5:30 pm every 2nd and 4th Sunday. Hosted by Maria Johnson, the program delves into artists' motivations and creative discoveries. They recently interviewed Commissioners Russo Driska and Godburn, mentioning the MCA.
- h. **The Arts Office brochure** is being revised.
- i. **Middletown Magazine summer issue** has been released this week.
- j. **Allbritton Center** at Wesleyan is hiring an engagement fellow.

B. Committee reports –

I. Planning and Projects – Pandolfe reported on Committee's meeting (July 18).

- a. **PRIDE** was reviewed and report will be submitted.
- b. **Poet Laureate** position will continue as such; no change to Artist Laureate at this time.
- c. **Open Air Market (August 27)** – Pandolfe will email signup sheet for Commissioners to take on 2-hour timeslots from 8am setup to 4pm breakdown.
- d. **Arts Advocacy Award** – event is being planned for September 28th. Proclamations are being drafted by Faraci.
- e. **Next meeting is on August 15 at 5:00 pm**. Dates of future meetings will be linked to agenda.

II. Public Art – Steele reported on Committee's meeting (July 25).

- a. **City Art Collection:** Before new artwork is acquired, the current Art Collection must be reviewed; the MCA must assess what is in the Collection. A walkthrough of the Municipal Building and other city buildings is needed, with attention to offices that the public frequents.
- b. **Flags** honoring Juneteenth, Black History Month, and other cultural holidays will be displayed in City Hall
- c. **MCAAAA:** Honorees will be awarded gift cards to an art store instead of checks.

iii. Nominating Committee – no report

iv. Grants Review Subcommittee – no report

7. New Business

A. New Slate of Officers

I. Executive Committee – Representing the Nominating Committee, Thornton presented the following slate of officers.

Chair:	Sandra Russo-Driska
Vice Chair:	Anthony Pandolfe
Secretary:	David Wolfram

Present Chair Godburn asked for a voice vote on the slate. Current Secretary Thornton made a motion in favor of the nomination. Passed unanimously, with no discussion and no abstentions.

II. Transfer of duties: Outgoing Chair Godburn charged Incoming Chair Russo Driska with the following tasks:

- 1) Replenish checking account
- 2) PRIDE photos



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- 3) Student representative
- 4) Grants panels allowing participation by entire Commission
- 5) Assign Commissioners to attend events and report
- 6) Plan MCA tasks so the Arts Coordinator isn't overloaded with projects
- 7) Ordinance revision
- 8) Committee assignments – Arts Office staff will remind Commissioners before the next meeting.

III. August meeting - Motion to cancel August meeting by Russo Driska, seconded by Steele, passed unanimously with no discussion.

8. Announcements - none

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Russo Driska, seconded by Wolfram. Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.

Next Regular Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 27**, at 7:00 PM.

Attachments: [MCA Letters to Lee Godburn, Charlotte McCoid, Kate TenEyck](#)

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

CC: Mayor's office