Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 27, 2022
330 Main Street, Middletown, CT. 06457

Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair) Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner) Rich Davis (Dep. Chief PD)
Marc Levin (Commissioner) Kevin Elak (Health Director)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner) Mike DeSena (Capt. PD)
Tom Ford (Commissioner) Bobby Peterson (Act. Ec. Dev. Dir)

Mayor- Not Present

Police Report – Capt. Desena noted an uptick in panhandling and homeless individuals. The outdoor patio at Sicily was vandalized and the individual was arrested. Bike patrols are out and increased downtown. Panhandlers need to be reported by businesses if it is repetitive. Shoplifting has increased lately.

Dep. Chief Davis noted that it seems that the homeless are getting shuffled from place to place.

The lights at Spear Park were discussed. Sandra will investigate who is responsible for replacement.

Public Works – Not Present

Economic Development/Parking- Bobbye addressed ARPA and stated they are working through the remaining applications. Working with businesses on tax abatement program. Partnering with PD on panhandling and palm card hand outs and flyers to give responsibly.

Marc asked about the Bob’s building tax abatement. Bobbye stated that it is in discussions with the developer but that the project had the led abatement done already. The project was declined for ARPA funding.

Parking surface lot is being prepped on Rapallo Avenue. Continuing with parking study revision. RFQ for arcade site had 5 developer response’s. Committee is meeting to choose developer.

Marc asked about the Parking Commission not meeting in 2 ½ years. Bobbye said once Economic Dev Office is stabilized it will get back on track.
Parking has hired 1 person for weekends and have 1 more vacant position. Having a hard time hiring. The new attendant will start around Aug. 1 doing ticketing, repairing meters, collections etc. and will work 3-7 pm. Part time.

Jen stated that 3 current commissioners, Marie, Marc and herself are member of the Parking Commission and that it is important that the business community be part of the conversation with regard to the arcade site.

Jen asked if the city is planning to give a tax abatement on the Bob’s building. Bobbye stated the City has not committed to a tax abatement and are reviewing the project to see if it lines up with the city offers.

Jen asked about the ARPA funding DBD received and how it will be accessed. Bobby noted a consultant is being hired to assist in the distribution of funding and they will be in touch with the process soon.

**Health Department**

Kevin Elak reported that while June numbers for Covid were down, we cannot rely on those because the BA4 and BA5 variants have taken hold. Each variant of the virus is more transmissible than the last.

Discussion followed on the rules based on new subvariants.

He does not have a good feeling about the Fall based on the southern hemisphere. He noted there are 20 cases of Monkeypox in CT and over 1,000 nationwide. Nothing new, we have seen this before. There is a vaccine regimen of 2 doses available for only those individuals at high risk.

Kevin thank the Police Department for the medication disposal box they allowed in the lobby. He noted this is one tool to help address unwanted medications in households because most don’t know how to dispose of properly.

The at home Covid test kits sent by the government can extend expiration dates by 6 months.

Jen thanked Kevin for keeping our community safe!

**Chamber of Commerce**

Cathy reported the Rocky Hill Chamber is merging with Middlesex. There is a member breakfast meeting coming up. The Chamber closes early on Fridays at 12:30 thru the summer. DBB meeting is next Thursday. Chamber is participating in the Go Pink Project and wooden ducks. Lots of new members being added to the Chamber.

Jen gave our sincere thanks for always working together!

**Minutes**

- Motion made by Marc Levin to approve minutes.
- 2nd motion by Marie
- June 2022 Minutes accepted.


**Treasurer’s Report**

- Motion to approve made by Marc
- 2nd motion by Marie
- All in Favor. Report accepted.

Jen noted next month will have new reports with our upgrade to Quick Books online.

**DBD COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Advertising-**

Marc introduced Vincent Demartino to give a brief presentation on billboard advertising.

After presentation, it was discussed that Marc and Diane would meet and review and discuss the proposal and make recommendations to the commission at the next meeting.

**Promotion-**

Social media is going very well. Jen noted Wayfinding maps are being updated.

**Beautification & Maintenance-**

Jen said we need a real push to make Main Street cleaner and thought about what it would take to invent in cleaning it up, and how. And she thought of hiring Ken Ahnell to oversee the issues and address them since he has experience and contacts that would be required to handle the project. He would work with Sandra and suggested we allocate funding to have a “Pilot Beautification Program”.

Discussion followed on the project.

- Motion made by Marc to allocate up to $25,000 for the pilot cleaning project.
- 2nd by Diane.
- All in favor.

**Gift Cards-**

Sales are steady and program is going well

**Special Projects-**

Jen reported that we received $300,000 in ARPA funding for our Fascade Gran Project. We wanted $500,000.

We are discussing how to proceed but need the City to come up with their guidelines. We would like to back date the program because projects were started during the process. Diane noted that while 75/25 is great, 50/50 should be considered. Discussion followed.

**Adjournment:**

- Motion to adjourn at 9:29 am by Marc
- 2nd by Tom
- Meeting Adjourned