

Middletown Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)
Wednesday, July 28, 2021
363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair)	Mayor Ben Florsheim
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Maryellen Shuckrow
Katie Huges (Commissioner)	Jeff Pugliese (Chamber)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Trevor Davis (363 Main LLC)
Matt Lefebvre (Commissioner)	Cathy Duncan (Chamber)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner)	AnnMarie Cannata (Buttonwood)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner)	Cassandra Day (Press)
Sandra Russo-Driska (Coordinator)	JR Hargreaves
	Chris Holden (Public Works)

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

Chair opened the meeting and stated while waiting for Mayor, we would move to other business:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Motion made by Marc to accept June 2021 minutes
- 2nd made by Diane
- All in favor

TREASURER'S REPORT:

- Motion made by Marc to accept
- 2nd made by Diane
- All in favor

DBD PARTNER UPDATES:

Public Works-

- Chris Holden reported construction on the bridge continues and within 2 weeks the Spring Street 2 way will be a one way off the bridge.
- Still waiting on Eversource to address poles on Washington Street to complete sidewalks.
- Harbor Park sidewalk railing and boardwalk are being worked on and almost complete.
- Main Street construction is almost complete as well.

Police Report – N/A

Planning, Conservation, Dev-

- Joe Samolis reported that the Dept. of Economic and Development no oversees Parking and all land use is located in its own department. Parking is now located in B-19 and Land Use is located in the old Parking Dept. Economic Development will remain in current location.
- Parking: Keeping status quo for now. Looking to hold a Special Meeting of Parking Advisory Committee on 8/10. Planning to give update of past year and info on the consultant that has been doing work on the Parking Study on a GIS map. Conceptual ideas for additional parking in North End.
- Focus for Parking: Operations in line with industry standards. Noted our polices and procedures need updating. New staff needs to be hired to align with those standards. Enforcement not a major concern currently. Businesses need parking during this recovery period.
- 10-minute parking spots have been reinstated,
- There are still 12 grants remaining for businesses if they are interested.

Mayor-

- Discussed Spring St. One Way Project, in response to longstanding concerns from the McDonough School community. It is currently used as a cut through to avoid Main Street and often at unsafe speeds.
- Riverfront Project Master Plan is moving forward.

The Mayor asked what concerns the DBD had at this time.

Chair, Jen raised the following:

1. Parking-Noting happy to see it is restarting
2. St. Vincent's Outreach: A) Assigning Health Dept. rep B) Matching funding to continue program
3. Riverfront- DBD Seat at the table
4. Stimulus Funding- A) Street Scape Implementation Plan B) Matching Building/Facade Program
5. Events- Noted a meeting that took place with many departments with no result. The DBD voted to put \$20,000 into an events grant for downtown. Some have happened, others will be happening. Hoping for more help from the City.
6. Community Challenge Grant Funding- New opportunity. We would like Middletown to think aggressively on how to get this funding. Noted that we will be contacting the CT Main Street Program for possible additional funding sources.

Mayor-Continued

- The Mayor noted he was not familiar with the Community Challenge Funding.
- Joe Samolis noted Tom Marano attending the meeting looking to see what the criteria was and what opportunities were out there, and he is putting together ideas for vacant buildings and will keep us in the loop.
- The Mayor stated that he in process of forming a committee to decide how to distribute the stimulus funding. 1st meeting early next week. Will have city staff, 2 Council members, one representative from a non-profit, and one representative from the business community.

Noted 4 Main Priorities:

1. Infrastructure (Water and Sewer)
 2. Economic Development/Recovery
 3. Mental Health Services
 - Partnering with local mental health agencies
 4. Revenue Replacement (Already supplemented 21-22 budget)
- He noted he would like to pick up and continue with the St. Vin's Outreach Manager Program and would like to attend the next meeting to gain more perspective and specifics.
 - He stated he felt the Street Scape Project was a great idea. Further, they are taking a comprehensive approach to the funding. Most challenging is building an ongoing plan, determining how many projects can be done from inception to completion.
 - He stated Cynthia Kleg would be representing the non-profit group and Pam Steele would be the business rep.
 - Riverfront: Absolutely agreed that a rep from the DBD should be on the commission. Also, dovetailing Main Street and the Riverfront Project was a process he is very interested and including the DBD when prioritizing the plan. The contract is before the Council for approval and would be an 18-month process. It will be advantageous to have all stakeholders and businesses heard.
 - He is happy to provide information to whomever the DBD names as its representative.
 - He concluded with stating that the overall strategy on the funding is to create viable options for everyone. The committee will meet and begin to discuss planning and funding and he offered to revisit with us to formalize the items as progress is made.

Annemarie commented that she has spoken to officers, and they are spending lots of time with mental health issues and getting mobile crisis to assist is difficult at times. Glad to hear about wanting to continue the St. Vincent's Outreach by continuing funding and the parking plan.

Mayor responded that they used to have a partnership with River Valley Services and police for response to mental health issues. Why are we sending police to social service calls? Agrees this needs to be looked back into. The challenge is finding resources because the right people/organizations/partners have been under resourced for so long.

St. Vincent's- Maryellen

- Working with Celeste at River Valley Services. Received funding for a full-time social worker to be based part of the week at St. Vincent's.
- Embedding 2 additional social workers at St. Vincent's to assist with families.
- Street Outreach Manger is doing very well. Working Thursday-Sunday afternoon and evenings.
 - Hitting small drug dealers and areas behind buildings they tend to hide
 - Making business connections and event helping individuals find jobs on Main St.
 - St. Vincent's is opened on Sat. nights to get people off the street.
 - James is getting know my all, foot patrol, businesses, street clients and is respected by all
 - Maryellen meets with him before each shift and directs from there and they close the loop after each shift.
- Cleaning crew is back working Tuesdays and Fridays thanks to the DBD donation of gift cards. They cover central Main Street on both sides.

Marc stated that the staff and Maryellen are doing a great job!

Chamber of Commerce – Jeff Pugliese

- Holding seminars for mask guidance for businesses and mandating of vaccines in the workplace
- Work from home is an ongoing situation so Chamber assists with resources etc.
- How to hold events is an ongoing issue: in person, hybrid, and Chamber keeps assisting when they can
- Next CBB meeting will be next Thursday.
- Chamber meeting with Congressman Joe Courtney coming up on stimulus funding and infrastructure bill
- Arrigoni Bridge meeting next week. All is going well. Should have 2 lanes back by Fall. Completion of project by Feb. 2022.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

NONE THIS MEETING

Jen reported that we have successfully retrieved all information to continue the Main Street, LLC non-profit status. This is an important status to apply for any grant funding down the road.

Sandra needs to file all back reports since 2001. Total cost is \$850.

- Motion made by Diane to spend the necessary amount to complete filings
- 2nd by Marc
- All in favor

925 Report-

Trevor noted the Summer Sounds is going well. Police should stop by during events, and we should ask them to put on their schedule.

Mayor noted he would follow up with that and usually they would.

Jen welcomed JR Hargreaves to the meeting and welcomed him in the future.

Adjournment:

- Motion made by Marc to adjourn at 9:29 am
- 2nd by Marie
- Meeting adjourned