

Middletown Downtown Business District

Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

363 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT

Attendees

Jen Alexander (Chair)	Chris Holden (Public Works)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Rob (Tschudin)
Katie Hughes (Commissioner)	Jeff Pugliese (Chamber)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Mike DeSena (PD)
Patrick Harding (Commissioner)	Trevor Davis (363 Main LLC)
Tom Ford (Commissioner)	Tom Marano (Economic Dev)
	Mike Sokolowski (Guilmartin DiPiro Sokolowski)
Sandra Russo-Driska (Coordinator)	Cathy Duncan (Chamber)
	AnnMarie Cannata (Buttonwood)
	Cassandra Day (Press)
	JR Hargreaves (Via phone)

Meeting called to order by Jen at 8:34 a.m.

CITY PARTNER UPDATES:

Mayor-Absent

Police-

Mike DeSena reported 6 new officers started. 4 are in field and 2 at the academy. Beat officers have seen an uptick at Spear Park and are addressing as needed. Panhandling seems like it's better with James making rounds. Bike patrol officers have been added to downtown. Fire behand Amato's and Esca had video surveillance and is being investigated.

Diane stated that they are not seeing beat officers as much as they used to, and Mike said he would be sure to address stopping into businesses with them.

Public Works-

The department is very busy all-around Middletown. Working hard to complete road projects before winter. He noted Kim is expanding the food recycling program downtown with over 30 restaurants and businesses now participating. They are working on 2-3 poles not working downtown.

Katie inquired about Eversource rep claiming that seating in front of Perk on Main was an issue over the grate. Christ said he would investigate and get back to her.

Rob (Tshudin) inquired about progress of the boardwalk on the riverfront and Chris noted it was moving along now and was delayed but will be completed very soon.

Marc inquired about the sidewalk table deadline. Chris said they would let them stay out until late October and into November and work with the restaurants to keep them out as long as they can.

Economic Development/Parking-

Tom noted there was a film crew in the old Forbidden City space filming during the day and some overnights. We may see equipment around. Will be blocking Court Street overnight for several hours at some point.

The Riverfront is moving along rapidly with the planning stage. Robust outreach effort utilizing social media and personal interviewers will be happening. There will be a space opening in Main Street Market for the public to give comments and review plans. Trying to reach every community in the City.

Jen asked about the \$12k for St. Vin's and he did not have any information and would look into it.

Health-

Sandra read brief update on Covid and testing sites from Kevin.

COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES:

St. Vincent's-

Sandra reported update on last meeting noting that the focus was on obtaining the \$12K to continue the Outreach Program into the Spring.

Patrick suggested emailing the Mayor. Jen asked Sandra to reach out to council leaders and inquire. Sandra would follow up.

Chamber of Commerce –

Jeff reported that the Chamber hoped we would be beyond Covid at this point, and they are still working with businesses on mandates, etc.

Bridge project is going well and is back to 4 lanes. Should be complete by February bringing relief to downtown.

They are working with businesses as labor shortages continue to be a major issue. Employee retention is not good and so they are having the Career Fair on October 13th at the Courtyard in Cromwell.

Chamber Cont'd:

They have been advertising the utilizing the Return-to-Work Program offering \$1k in bonus to go back to work.

Middlesex Revitalization Committee. (Loan Fund thru Chamber) Loans and grants in rapid succession. If the Chamber can help, they do what they can to keep businesses going.

Lots of interest in MEWS. 8 ideas in the incubator session and working on taking that and making it a business.

Wesleyan- N/A

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Motion made Marc to accept September 2021 minutes
- 2nd made by Diane
- All in favor with change.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

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

Marc inquired about our tax installment from the City. Sandra reported they City asked us to request the check in October, and Sandra will follow up,

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Advertising- Jen reported we are working with 4 photographers for fresh content moving forward with whatever is decided. The photos will be used in all areas of advertising and publishing.

Promotion- Jen reported she is meeting with Caroline and Sandra regarding Social Media Influencers. This is something we feel could be beneficial and looking into ideas such as running a contest on what our customers love about downtown. Jen asked for \$2500 to begin the process. Marc noted he tried this at Malloves and it did nothing for them. Diane said she felt the same but she was in support of mixing of advertising with businesses and new cutting edge things to try.

- Motion made by Marc to approve up to \$2500 for Social Media Influencer Project
- 2nd by Diane
- All in favor

Beautification- Sandra noted the pots were being switched for Fall.

Gift Cards – Diane noted nothing new to report, still waiting on company to get back to her.

Special Projects- Jen noted they have started the Storefront Project with 420 Main and the Schlein’s Building. She also stated the state would reimburse the DBD the initial \$5k that was put up for the artist.

DBD Coordinator Report-

Nothing to be added at this time

925 Report-

Rob (Tshudin) inquired about garbage cans getting filled too quickly and not emptied quick enough.

Discussion followed and commission instructed Sandra to follow up on Saturday pickups and any information that she could gather on garbage pick up.

Jen noted Iguanas Ranas building look great with the face lift being done.

Patrick noted the Bob’s Building is under contract and looks good, but we have been here before and so are hoping it will be done by years end.

Sandra noted Lan Chi is reopened, however she has had a very hard time getting help.

Sandra update commission on St. Vin’s plan to get a Porto-Potty on their property to address the urinating issue on properties in the downtown.

Katie inquired about adding morning hours to the Outreach Program in the next round. Rob (Tshudin) noted that he had seem an improvement with James and he was great to talk to. He also mentioned the idea of vending machines for his shop because he is so limited with how many customers can be in his space.

Adjournment:

- Motion made by Marv to adjourn at 9:30 am
- 2nd by Diane
- Meeting adjourned