

Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 18, 2020
330 Main Street, Suite 404, Middletown, CT. 06457

Attendees: VIA ZOOM MEETING

Marie Kalita (Chair)	Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Kevin Elak (Health Department)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Capt. Rich Davis (MPD)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner)	
Jen Alexander (Commissioner)	Trevor Davis
Mary Ann Perrotti (Commissioner)	
Tom Ford (Commissioner)	

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order by Chairwoman Kalita at 8:32 AM.

Marie took a moment to note condolences to Diane on passing of her mom. Diane thanked everyone for the basket. Marie also noted sadly Kevin Elak's dad also passed away and extended condolences from the DBD Commission.

There was no October meeting and so we are covering 2 months of information.

Police Report –

Capt. Davis reported panhandling is improving. Colder weather has calmed issues down. Report any issues and they will address as soon as possible. Trevor noted a woman camping out in front of First Church. Capt. David will look into. Reported that Masonic Building on Old Church will be warming shelter, which will not open for another few weeks. Sandra reported RJ Julia blocked outlet for individuals and that helped the issue. Sandra also reported that Capt. Davis, and Community Service Officer Jason Bodell will be walking Main Street together to do some community service visits.

Planning & Economic Dev- Tom Murano not present.

Sandra reported Tom Murano is focused on Small Business Saturday and distributing loan money and grants. She also reported there is a new \$5,000 grant. Thanked Jen for always getting information to her. Sandra discussed Kevin working with Chamber on Holiday on Main and they are all working together to try to have a socially distant event. Jen asked if anyone applied for the \$5,000 grant and hasn't heard anything and was wondering if anyone heard. No one else applied.

Parking Report - NONE Marc noted that ticketing was getting very bad. A customer received a ticket at 10:03 AM. Marie noted she would send a letter to the Mayor and Roger in parking to try to address the issue.

Public Works- NONE

Health Department -

Kevin Elak reported that COVID cases are increasing at a very rapid rate, doubling each week. Seeing 20 or so new cases each day. Very concerning. Knew 2nd wave was coming just didn't maybe expect it as quickly. Contact tracing is very aggressive and identifying close contact persons and see if there is a cluster, etc. Mostly seeing clusters in small gatherings. College students can be an issue traveling home especially with holiday gatherings. Think twice about getting together with family members outside households. Think about loved ones more susceptible to illness. There will be tough decisions going forward.

Warming center is still not 100% on site yet. Will either be Masonic Lodge on Pleasant Street. Or, State Dept. of Housing is working out a deal with Wesley Inn on corner of Camp and Washington St for winter season. Hopeful this will work out as this typically is used for other items and works out well. This was offered back in April for COVID at Red Roof and many homeless took them up on the offer so hoping it works out again. This would house them through April 1st. Working with partners in town; Columbus House, Soup Kitchen, etc.

Mike inquired about schools and plans to go remote vs. in person. Kevin noted Mercy is virtual now and every school is having debates on whether to close to in person vs. all remote. Health Dept. is discouraging ending in person. Staying on top of school and quarantining, as necessary. No schools have had to close due to cases. Most cases seem to be in staff. Time will tell if Middletown Schools have to close.

Kevin noted Sandra and he met and got a refresher message out to restaurants on new COVID rules, especially distance between tables. Have not received many complaints especially in the downtown area. They provide education when complaints come in and try not to fine and only want to do that as last resort. Mayor said Middletown is trying to hold the course where we are not roll back to keep our businesses open.

Marc noted that he is doing a great job.

Sandra noted to discuss Holiday on Main while Kevin was there.

Jen reported Kid City is working on a socially distanced Santa sleigh. Santa will be on a red vespa pulling a sleigh and the sleigh is where the family will be with a plexiglass windshield and picture is taken from the side.

There will be a chocolate cookie dispenser. Jen will sent Kevin spec and pics to be sure it meets guidelines.

This will be on the front lawn of Holy Trinity. Kevin noted he mentioned this a while back and that the idea is a great concept.

Sandra discussed the craft fair and discussed volunteers. Marie and Mike asked to get information so they could get volunteers to help.

Marie noted great social media on it. Sandra noted Shop and Dine Local campaign. Then discussed Tuesday's campaign with SBA and federal delegation to launch Small Business Saturday and is kicking off in Main Street Market. I reached out to state officials but only heard back from Brandon Chaffee. Plan is to walk Main Street and side streets and really push the event.

Virtual tree lighting is planned, taping date is set. It will be released the Friday after Thanksgiving for the public.

Minutes

Marie noted to change March to spelling of her name under committee reports.

- Motion by Marc to approve minutes as amended.
- 2nd to motion by Mary Ann
- Minutes accepted.

Treasurer's Report

Brief discussion regarding check to Buds N Blossoms that had to be re-issued because it was lost by client.

Mike noted we have \$143,000 in cash. We are in very good shape and have plenty of money. She reported she had sent a formal letter to the City and the DBD would be receiving a check for \$62,000 for the 1st installment.

- Motion made by Marc to approve report.
- 2nd to motion made by Mary Ann
- Treasurer's report accepted.

Commissioners Reports

Chairperson:

Marie noted that Sandra had included an itemized list of moving expenses for the DBD and was very frugal and had items come in below anticipated cost. Noted recycling items ended up costing 0 from \$500.

Marie discussed Nick at Endecom setting up private security firewall up for DBD. However, Nick noted age of program for Access Database with the City. Marie has two proposals from Endecom. First is to clean up database and noted it is at least 15 years old. Est. \$500-\$1,000 and believes he can keep it to the \$500 end. Proposal two was a deal worked for an annual subscription for DBD taking care of all computer related problem solving and issues, he can remotely log in and assist remotely. Opened for discussion.

Marc is good with #2, Mary Ann agreed. Diane questioned age of Access and wanted to inquire with Joel about the system. Agrees we probably need more services however thought we had a new Access program and would like to ask him and get back to us. Sandra noted Dale commenting how old the system is. Diane will discuss with both and see where we are

Marie then discussed the idea of a Steering Committee that would consist of the Chair, and 2 commissioners that would meet with Sandra regularly to coordinate and set any needed priorities. Asked commission to begin thinking about who would want to serve on this committee and also other committees.

Marie mentioned looking into Hoot Suite for social media if it would be helpful for Sandra to coordinate posts. Sandra will look into.

She noted that Holiday on Main requested additional gift cards as part of promotions running. Commissioners discussed that of the large amount we donate to the Chamber, \$2,500 is targeting for Holiday on Main so they did not feel that it was necessary to add to that amount.

She asked all commissioners to think about 2021 and the Annual Meeting and if they would want to run again, or if there were ideas for new commissioners to let her know.

Marie reminded everyone about the New Year, commissioners, who is interested in running and to think about that in the upcoming weeks. Mike announced he will be looking to retire.

Jen-

On website, reported that Sandra and she worked with designer to clean up a lot and would like everyone to take a look and give feedback. Also added Holiday on Main button. Decision to leave businesses on the site if closed temporarily or have limited hours, however, will remove closed businesses when reported.

Discussed social media and request spending up to \$1,000 on boosting Face Book and social media ads through Dec. 31st since much of the money normally spend on advertising has not been allocated due to the year we have had.

Motion made by Jen to allow up to \$1,000 for boosting social media through Dec. 31.

2nd by Marc

All in favor. Motion passed.

New Business

Sandra reported that she will push DBD cards on the website. Noted that only Juicy Cajun and Diamond nail are not participating and want to wait until next brochure.

Marc asked about doing a DBD promotion for cards. Diane noted she did not feel that was necessary. Mike and Jen noted that we have donated to the Chamber and that money is what we use to participate in events, etc.

Discussion ensued about volunteers needed for Holiday on Main and high school kids not being able to do volunteer hours due to COVID. Sandra will look into and pass along to Marie to distribute.

Mary Ann noted effective Monday, Liberty Bank will be closing lobby's due to COVID lobby's. One to one ratio for lobby business.

Discussion on the new crosswalk colors followed.

Marc announced Domenic D'Martino purchased the old Woolworth's Building.

Marie announced the backside of 330 Main had been painted and will be a construction company.

Mike announced that Phil Redford's building next to firehouse also sold.

Diane inquired about Cooking Company and if they would reopen. Sandra noted they moved items out and are focused on other location. Marc stated he spoke to Mike Stone and doubts they will reopen.

Adjournment

➤ Motion to adjourn by Marc

➤ 2nd by Mary Ann

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 AM