

**Downtown Business District  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 23, 2014  
330 Main Street, Middletown, CT**

**Attendees**

Jennifer Alexander (chair)	Michiel Wackers (Planning)
Mary Ann Lentz (Liberty Bank)	Anne Marie (Buttonwood Tree)
Val Scribano (commissioner)	Cathy Duncan (Middlesex Chamber)
Diane Gervais (commissioner)	Bill Russo (Public Works)
Marc Levin (commissioner)	Peter Harding (commissioner)
Mike DeSena (police)	Mike Stone (commissioner)
Steven Kovach (NEAT)	Pamela Roose (Pamela Roose)
Mike DiPiro (commissioner)	Trevor Davis (Commercial Real Estate)
Nicole Castrogiovanni (downtown manager)	
Shane Grant (Downtown Business)	

**Minutes**

- Motion by Marc Levin to approve April minutes.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Peter Harding.

**Treasurer's Report**

A \$70,000 transfer will be made to the DBD account from the city. We are under budget on personnel and beautification. Gift cards are \$5,000 over budget. However, we should be under budget for the year.

- Motion to accept treasurer's report by Peter Harding.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> motion by Marc Levin.

**Downtown Manager's Report**

The new Downtown Business District brochures have been delivered. Summer planting has completed. City has taken

We are now under budget for contract. New planting schedule

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10,000 discover downtown brochures will be printed next week. The new brochures reflect an accurate listing of businesses in the district and includes businesses outside of the district that have joined the DBD marketing program.

Marketing packages have been renewed and sold. Krust, Iguanas Ranas, Forrest City Wine & Spirits have joined. Middletown Roller Rink and Tibetan Kitchen will be included because their properties have been paying the DBD tax. ION Market will be included, as they are a point of sale for gift cards.

The opt-in to pay DBD tax is being retired. 472 Main Street (Tibetan Kitchen) on the east side of the street and 575 Main Street (Phillip Redford building) on the west side, have been paying DBD tax. The original ordinance shows that they are outside of the district. The offices of the tax collector and assessor did not realize that these were not actual DBD members and have been charging the DBD tax, nor did the DBD pick up on the fact that this was happening. The correction has been made with the offices of the tax collector and assessor and businesses at these addresses will receive the marketing package benefits for 1 year.

A letter has been written to the director of finance, requesting the transfer of \$70,000 in the DBD account with city hall. The actual balance is \$76,000. However, they will not allow us to take out the last \$5,000. Peter Harding asked that the DBD would write a letter to the director of finance requesting transfer of the full amount.

We will hire 5 more guides. A guide committee was created: Diane Gervais, Marc Levin, Pamela Roose, Shane Grant and Nicole Castrogiovanni. Reporting forms will be used for guides' daily entries. One application for the position has been received. Guide shifts will be from 11:00am-2:00pm or 4:00pm-7:00pm.

We are looking at a redesign for the DBD website. Nicole Castrogiovanni is currently speaking with 2 designers. Website committee created: Jennifer Alexander and Nicole.

The banner project has been postponed. We have 3 quotes for downtown banners, however the city's Commission on the Arts has put up small Arts to Go banners and we will have to wait to install ours.

Diane Gervais and Nicole will work on planters. Over 50% of our shrubs have died. Plummer and Buds & Blossoms are potential vendors for the planter program.

Mike Stone would like us to look into the gift card system that is used by Northampton. Reality Interactive created kiosks as vending stations for the city's gift card sales. Mike will forward photos of the machines to Nicole and she will look into this system as an option for Middletown.

Mike Stone said that he has used Off the Wall Graffiti Removal with very good results. Emails about graffiti should be sent to Cathy Duncan or Nicole Castrogiovanni.

## Guides

Shane Grant, the DBD lead guide, will attend future monthly meetings and will give a short update about what has been happening on Main Street.

## **Police**

Mike DeSena, day shift commander, said that the police have beat officers on Main Street during first and second shift. There was a minor issue in Spear Park last week. Cathy Duncan said that one of her colleagues was harassed while walking to her car at MiddleOak. Marc Levin said that when John is working, the police are visible. He said that John and Nick are great. However, the others are not visible. Jennifer Alexander said that when our guides and businesses report issues of panhandling or harassment, they often hear officers say that they cannot do anything about the situation - a verbal message that it was not worth their trouble to report the incident. She explained that it is demoralizing for the guides and business owners to hear that there is nothing that can be done. The overall communication when incidents are reported is that these types of issues on Main Street will never change. Jennifer said that sometimes all that is required is for an officer to walk by. Diane Gervais said that she would like to see more beat officers.

## **Public Works**

Bill Russo reported that the walkway process has begun. Public Works will attempt to do as much drainage as possible. The walkway will be effective to allow people to get to downtown. There will be a camera system. Public Works is looking at what to do with Spear Park. The police are on board. The park is part of the Housing Authority and Public Works will partner with them. There is no plan to "do the water" this year. It is a big overtime expense. They are working with the firm Weston & Sampson to see what options are available for the park. This park is included in the master plan being done for all parks in Middletown.

Bill said that Public Works is working to have the trench paved and the water break fixed on Main Street in front of Mallove's. It will be done before the Memorial Day parade. There will be no sidewalk work or tree removal downtown this year. The sweeping program is in place. There has not been much graffiti. Peter Harding mentioned that the paint on the railing on the backside of the plaza behind the police station is peeling. Mike DiPiro asked when paving of the North End would be done. Bill Russo reported that Guy Russo is coordinating that project. Yankee Gas will cut a keyway so that the asphalt matches and then they will pave from the curb right to the center line. The project should go through the summer and include some night work. Guy Russo can give a more precise schedule for the project. The state has given approval for the work since it is a state highway. The water main will go right to the bridge.

Diane asked if trees will be replaced. Bill Russo said that they don't like to touch the trees unless the roots are lifting and breaking the sidewalk. Mulching of tree beds will be done before the Memorial Day parade. Diane asked if Public Works would think about adding flowers to the tree beds. Jennifer

Alexander suggested that it might be a possibility that the DBD could give small grants to businesses to plant in front of their businesses and to go "over the top," as Sammy at Luce does. Jennifer brought up the idea of pressed gravel for flowerbeds, as used in New Haven.

## **NEAT**

This weekend is the annual North End project to clean up the street. It is also the day that the North End gardens will open. The Farmer's Market will begin at the end of June and will go through the end of October.

## **Planning**

The contract for the Metro Square study is being signed and it should be returned shortly. Then the mayor will sign. The DBD will have an opportunity to have one of the first looks at it and to give input. The Come Home to Downtown study that happened last year is going to do a final downtown walkthrough. David Souza, who did the downtown audit, will go through and look at what our strengths and weaknesses are. This will take place in May and Michiel Wackers will send out a notice.

Peter Harding asked if there are any new businesses that have been talking to Planning or if there is anything new going with Remington Rand. Michiel said that they are talking to three businesses, none of which are firm. They each offer unique products and services. One is a distillery and the others are food related. There seems to be demand for commercial kitchen space that is not in a retail storefront.