

Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2023
363 Main Street, Suite 404 Middletown, CT 06457

Attendees:

Jen Alexander (Chair)	Chief Erik Costa (MPD)
Marc Levin (Commissioner)	Sara Mendillo (Chamber)
Patrick Harding (Commissioner)	Maryellen Shuckrow (St. Vins Director)
Katie Hughes-Nelson (Commissioner)	Rani Arbo (Wesleyan)
Marie Kalita (Commissioner)	Kevin Elak (Health Director)
Tom Ford (Commissioner)	Cassandra Day(Middletown Press)
Mike DiPiro (Commissioner)	Ken Ahnell (Beautification Manager)
Diane Gervais (Commissioner)	Cathy Duncan (Chamber)
Sandra Russo-Driska (DBD Coordinator)	Rob Lucheme (Tshudin Chocolates)
	Trevor Davis (363 Main LLC)
	Chris Holden (Public Works)
	Dep. Chief Rich Davis (MPD)
	Emily Ford (Hajjar Dev. Group)

Call to Order- Meeting was called to order by Chair, Jen Alexander at 8:32 a.m.

CITY PARTNERS

Mayor- Not Present

Police-

Chief Costa reported they continue to work with stakeholder to collaborate. As reported in the news, major incident at MHS. Working with BOE to support them in initiating better practices. There was a major Rte 9 crash involving a stolen vehicle from Rocky Hill. Both car occupants sustained injuries.

2022 Stats and response shows 56,000 calls to service with 78 incidents (.02%) No injuries were sustained from use of force showing that training is working. Mental health issues are down as is violent crime, assaults, robberies. However, burglaries, domestics, stolen MVs, are all up. This is an issue statewide.

PD is continuing to work with CIT and River Valley Services for individuals that need crisis intervention and mental health services.

Main Street is very active. Officers are very busy answering calls, however, calls for panhandling are down a bit. They are encouraging calling the special # provided to businesses to the desk at PD.

The North End Group is working on clarity in the ordinance for panhandling and soliciting. Need a better understanding offer everyone to help enforce fair and equitable action by PD.

Officer White- a rookie- saved an occupant from a car fire in Westfield. Outstanding action and just great work to be recognized.

Marc inquired about the 56,000 calls compared to 2021. Chief would investigate it.

Tom asked about any issues at Forbidden Llama. Chief stated nothing reported and Office Nick Purro has it on his radar. No incidents that require intervention from PD.

Discussion followed on allowing backed out windows in the downtown area. Chief agreed he would like that regulation changed. Sandra will investigate with Marek at PCD.

Trevor noted the Bob's Building owner is placing material in rear parking lot and asked the Chief to look into the placement and be sure he has proper permits, etc. and is on his own property.

Public Works-

Chis Holden was absent. Sandra reported that she met with him and the new Deputy Howard Weissberg and Ken Ahnell to discuss graffiti removal, garbage can cleaning program, tree trimming, etc. Ken will continue with follow up on those items.

During the meeting Dep Dir Weissberg stated there was a grant to be used for state roads and the City would be using the \$15,000 to implement a program for back in parking in the North End from Rapallo to O'Rourke's and Grand to Eli's.

Discussion followed.

Health Department-

Kevin reported Covid numbers are down as are cases of flu and RSV. However, we are still at high level risk in Middlesex County. At home tests are available for free at the Health Dept. If you have at home kits that are expiring soon, check the CDC website for how long you can extend that use of the test. January is radon action month. Free kits available to residents.

CT is adopting the federal food code. Kevin feels this is good news and our establishments are ready for it. CT is still using 1999 code. He will be holding information sessions and will work with the DBD and Sandra to get the word out. This will take us from paper based to totally digital. Maryellen from St. Vins offered to assist with training if needed because she has the best practices in place in her facility.

Economic Development/Parking- Not Present

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

St. Vincent's-

Maryellen noted the outstanding relationship between St Vins and the PD. They work together to discuss and solve problems. Officers are right on top of all issues.

She announced that she is revamping the soup kitchen model to now include more recovery services. James will work in the soup kitchen until city includes his outreach position in the budget. She will implement work force incentives and will enforce bad behavior around and in front of the building. It has been quieter with winter and there is a new group of homeless individuals they are working with. River Valley Serv and others are working to get them housed.

Significant increase at Amazing Grace. Up 25% in low-income families. Resources are holding fairly well at this time.

New building is moving along. ARPA funding secure, additional grants with state applied for. Hopes to close in March. Insurance company requires building on the lot to be taken down, so that will be done asap and tenants out of the neighborhood.

Chamber-

Sara reported business after work would be Feb. 1 at Waters Edge. Feb. 10th is the first in Legislative Breakfast Series. Feb. 28th Matt Ritter, Speaker of the House would be the guest at the Inn at Middletown.

Cathy noted CBB will be held Thursday, Feb. 2nd.

Wesleyan:

Rani reported that students are back in classroom tomorrow. She noted that she really enjoyed hearing the ways our downtown is cared for by all the partners in the meeting.

Jen inquired about the Liberty Bank building on Main and Court going back to being a WESU building. Rani was not certain that was happening but would check into it.

Jen thanked all partner for attending and offered to have them stay for the DBD business portion of the meeting. She also noted that this March is commissioner elections, and anyone interested should contact Sandra.

Minutes

- Motion made by Marc to approve January minutes.
- 2nd by Tom
- December minutes approved.

Treasurer's Report

Patrick noted that the surplus remains in good shape at \$100k and the only major expense in January was the winter planters.

- Motion to approve Treasurer Report made by Marie.
- 2nd by Mike
- All in Favor. Treasurer's report accepted.

DBD COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Advertising/Promotion- Sandra reported social media continues to go very well.

Gift Cards- Sandra reported new cards will be in next week and the program will be back on track.

Maintenance & Beautification- Sandra and Ken will continue to work with Public Works on previously mentioned items.

Special Projects-

Jen noted we need to establish a Budget Committee to submit a draft budget for the February DBD meeting.

Jen, Diane, Marc and Patrick agreed to serve on the committee.

925 Report- New Ice cream shop in the other half of Nora's called Al's will be opening soon.

Adjournment:

- Motion to adjourn at 9:39 am by Marc.
- 2nd by Patrick
- All in Favor. Meeting Adjourned.