Minutes of the Meeting
Wednesday, January 28, 2026 – 5 PM | VIRTUAL MEETING

Commission Members Present via WEBEX – David Wolfram, Sari Rosenblatt, Phil Pessina, Sharon Riley, Pamela Steele, Gary Wallace, Richard Pelletier, Robert Santangelo and Councilmember Ava Hart.
Staff Members Present – Kisha M. Michael
Members of the Public Present – None present

1) Call to Order – meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m.

2) Public Session – none present.

3) Approval of Minutes – P. Steele, Chair entertained a motion by S. Rosenblatt to accept the minutes from December 17, 2025, seconded by B. Santangelo; matter passes unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

4) Approval of Agenda – the Chair entertained a motion to accept or amend the current agenda, moved by D. Wolfram and seconded by B. Santangelo; matter passes unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

5) Remarks from – the Chair thanked everyone for their time and commitment to the commission; looking forward to the future.

6) Committee Reports – none

7) Staff Report – K. Michael, Staff opened the report by welcoming new MCA Commissioner and Councilmember Ava Hart (Ad Hoc) to the commission. This will be Councilmember Hart's second term as MCA commissioner; dating from the time when the large sculptures were brought to the riverfront. All commissioners gave general introductions and relation to Middletown.

Staff reported on check #304 for $500 made out to Ujima Alliance for Juneteenth 2025. Staff stated they reached out to the alliance and received a response of no receipt of the check. Discussion ensued about reissuing a check or invite them to apply for MCA grant which yields much greater than the check amount. No action needs to be taken at this time; will further discuss at next meeting with follow up. Discussion ensued around the idea of a grant being more beneficial; if that is what they choose to do. The checking account balance is $6,902; staff gave a brief overview of the accounts origin, to explain that they are donated funds and contributions given to the MCA over the decades. Of question is if the MCA did fundraising efforts, would this account be used for that? To be later discussed.

250th briefing gave direction to the city's website https://middletownct.gov/1478/America-250

P. Pessina gave a suggestion to have a rededicate the bridge honoring the 250th with ribbon cutting ceremony on the bridge conducted by the Mayor and First Selectman. The bridge is the focal point of our community.

8) Unfinished Business – none to report

9) New Business – MCA Grants FY27 and beyond
i) Commission's role, ii) Standardized funding structure, iii) Standardized theme structure - The Chair opened the discussion with confident reflections about how the current grant process is moving in the right direction with the streamlining and tiering of dollar amounts which allows to regulate the funding in order to help more applicants. Also discussed is the MCA's responsibility to be more up front with providing established dollar amounts to applicants.

Discussion ensued on this topic with a dialogue of consensus. D. Wolfram affirmed that organizations do need general operation support and that should still be considered. Pessina suggests that MCA funding should support more programmatic efforts rather than stability. Staff's concern and concerted effort is to ensure there is an equal distribution of public funding; and to be good stewards of public funding. The Chair's final remarks elaborated on the consensus of this formalized structure in light of our different interpretations. To conclude, everyone is on the same page. The Executive committee looks to meet and make recommendations.

10) Announcements – none

11) Adjournment – D. Wolfram made a motion to adjourn; seconded by P. Pessina. Meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Attachments:
Granicus - virtual meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Kisha McWilliams Michael
Arts & Culture Coordinator, Staff