

Kozikowski, Marek

From: Samolis, Joseph
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 2:00 PM
To: Kozikowski, Marek
Subject: RE: Opposed to permitting a methadone clinic on Washington Street

Please see and the forward email for the record.

Joe Samolis

From: jamolis@aol.com <jamolis@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 1:56 PM
To: Samolis, Joseph <Joseph.Samolis@MiddletownCT.Gov>
Subject: Fwd: Opposed to permitting a methadone clinic on Washington Street

This email was sent by someone outside of the City of Middletown.

-----Original Message-----

From: Joyce Rossitter <joyrossitter@aol.com>
To: Stephen H. Devoto <devoto4planning@gmail.com>; Joseph Samolis
Sent: Mon, Sep 7, 2020 12:45 am
Subject: Opposed to permitting a methadone clinic on Washington Street

Middletown methadone clinic proposal draws mixed reaction
[https://www.middletownpress.com/middletown/article/Middletown-methadone-clinic-proposal-draws-mixed-15544109.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20\(Desktop\)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email](https://www.middletownpress.com/middletown/article/Middletown-methadone-clinic-proposal-draws-mixed-15544109.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20(Desktop)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email)

This message was sent via middletownpress.com.

I am opposed to changing the zoning thus permitting a methadone clinic along one of our main commercial streets. It doesn't belong next to businesses that are already struggling enough.

Why does our small city need another methadone clinic if there is one on Saybrook Road? Does Middletown really have that many drug addicts? If so, do we have to advertise that fact on one of the city's entrance roads?

We all know the problems of having St. Vincent de Paul facility on Main Street.

To whom it may concern,

9/7/20

My name is Kayla Bernacki. I am both a resident of Butternut St in Middletown and a landlord. While I do not deny that there may be a need for a methadone clinic somewhere in Middletown I strongly oppose the proposal to develop a methadone clinic at 392 Washington Street.

As someone who moved here from the Waterbury area I am very familiar with what comes along with a methadone clinic. Increased crime and loitering. I have seen how a neighborhood is affected and how the good respectable tenants looking for a safe place to live avoid the areas surrounding Methadone clinics at all cost. I moved away from the Waterbury area for a reason. I can assure you that if Middletown is the type of town that is ok with a methadone clinic in a busy residential and commercial area, an area where three doors down there are college buildings where parents pay \$70,000 a year to ensure that their child gets a good education and is kept safe, then it is not a town that I will continue to invest in. No amount of money spent on my end to create an upscale apartment can make up for the environment that you would be allowing. And I can promise you that it will not be an area where I will raise my family.

As both a resident and investor in Middletown I can assure you that both will change if this proposal goes through. My husband and I wanted to buy in Middletown as we saw it as a trendy up and coming area where young hardworking ones like ourselves could live a safe and social life. We bought a duplex on Butternut Street right across from the proposed methadone clinic site. We fixed up what was a run down multifamily with tenants that were unreliable with rent, had run ins with the law, and did not take care of the property either inside or outside. We completely remodeled the house turning it into a beautiful and modern house that still kept the old charm that it had. When we were choosing a tenant we did our best to choose wisely and found a tenant that is exactly the type of tenant that we would like and our neighbors would like living next to them. She is clean, hardworking, and law abiding. It is exactly this type of high quality tenant that does not want to live across the street from a methadone clinic. She has already informed me that she started looking at other rentals. As an experienced landlord I can assure you that if she leaves the only type of tenant I can replace her with are ones that are comfortable living across the street from a methadone clinic and the type of people that it brings around. It will surely change the neighborhood, and I for my part will not waste any more resources or put my family in jeopardy. This development will be damaging to the business', the safety of the residents, the safety of the students, and property values.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kayla Bernacki". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kayla L Bernacki



SE2020-5

St. Vincent de Paul Middletown

MEETING NEEDS, OFFERING HOPE

DEPT. PLANNING & ZONING
20 AUG 24 PM 3:56

August 18, 2020

Mr. Marek Kozikowski
City Planner
City of Middletown
245 DeKoven Drive
Middletown, CT 06457

Zoning application of Root Center for Advanced Recovery for 392 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Dear Mr. Kozikowski,

We understand that the Root Center for Advanced Recovery has filed a zoning application for the development of a methadone clinic at the existing building at 392 Washington Street. I am writing in support of that application. The building will seek to be a Center for addiction treatment for many residents of Middletown with Methadone treatment for individuals recovering from drug addiction.

All of our guests and clients of St Vincent de Paul Middletown who seek to overcome drug addiction and are prescribed Methadone treatment by the healthcare/addiction specialist provider, have to go daily to Hartford, the nearest Methadone treatment provider. This is a daily treatment method, so our population has to get to Hartford daily to receive this vital treatment to remain in recovery from serious drug addiction.

The Root Center for Advanced Recovery, is a solid, best practice recovery treatment provider with current operations in Middletown, at the Saybrook Road Heath complex and they have operations in several other Connecticut communities operating vital recovery treatment centers.

Opioid addiction is very imbedded in every community in our State and a major health crisis in our Country. In the last year, our staff have saved a minimum of 50 people by administering Narcan to our guests, clients and the general public who overdose on our Main Street facility, and on the sidewalks in the North End. We constantly battle with removing the drug dealers who have used the North End of our City as their place of business and they unfortunately prey on our guests and clients and get them hooked on opioids laced with Fentanyl.

In supporting The Root Center for Recovery in their desire to operate a Methadone treatment facility on Washington Street, will provide many of our residents the ability to seek treatment and remain in treatment leading to recovery in our own City.

The Root Center for Recovery has a strong business model, is efficient, effective in treatment delivery and keeps their properties well maintained and discreet to the public so as not to create a stigma for those coming for treatment.

Please formally accept this letter of support of their desire to seek approval for their new building in your Zoning vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maryellen M. Shuckerow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, looping initial "M".

Maryellen M. Shuckerow, MHSA

Executive Director

St. Vincent de Paul Middletown

Dear members of the Middletown Planning & Zoning Board,

9/8/20

I write this letter to share my thoughts with you on the rezoning for the project proposed at 392 Washington Street. I implore you, PLEASE DO NOT grant special zoning permission to build a Methadone Clinic at that location. I will state my reasons for this request, both briefly and then again in more detail later in this letter.

Let me preface by introducing myself. My name is Jared Coggins. I am a Middletown resident, I live at 25 Butternut Street, on the corner right across Washington Street from the intended location of this project. I own and operate two small businesses, and additionally am a real estate investor and a landlord. My graduate studies and primary employment is in the field of integrative medicine, and I work with individuals everyday who struggle with substance abuse issues. Most importantly and most pertinent to this discussion is that I am a recovering opiate addict, and I am grateful and blessed to be in recovery since 2014. I have first-hand experience with these types of clinics and the treatment they have to offer. I hope that by sharing my input and experience with you, you may be able to make a more informed decision.

In brief, I feel that this project should be denied from this location for the 10 following reasons:

- 1) *Poor location relative to its proximity to the expanding Washington street commercial district, and what may in a few years be a busy and bustling commercial hub extending continuously down Washington Street to Main Street. This clinic in this location would result in a markedly negative effect on existing and future businesses in that area.***
- 2) *Poor location relative to its proximity to residential neighborhoods currently in the process of being revitalized by private investors such as myself.***
- 3) *Poor location relative to its proximity to Wesleyan University with school facilities being located roughly 400ft from the proposed site of the clinic, and a student population that would be put at greater risk of being the target of various crimes.***
- 4) *Poor location relative to the amount of traffic and congestion already present on Washington Street and the substantially increased traffic that the clinic would draw near two already problematic and hazardous intersections, with an additional hundreds of clients who will be needing to commute to that location daily for treatment.***
- 5) *Poor location relative to the Graveyard across the street. Graveyards are historically a choice setting for criminal activity.***
- 6) *The increase in criminal activity and loitering that WILL result from hundreds of substance addicted individuals flocking from all over central Connecticut for treatment, both daily and taking up permanent residence in Middletown.***

- 7) *The strain that this influx of substance addicted individuals will put on the police force.*
- 8) *The fact that methadone maintenance treatment is one of the least effective methods for actually resolving an individual's addiction issues, and actively undermines the potential for addicts to achieve sustained long term substance free recovery from drugs and alcohol. Methadone maintenance treatment is by definition, at best, trading one addiction for another; and at worst supplementing and exacerbating the pre-existing addiction.*
- 9) *The effects of large amounts of the dispensed medications such as methadone and suboxone being re-sold illicitly on our streets by patients of the clinic who will use the money to buy the drugs that they would prefer to use.*
- 10) *There are safer and more effective means to truly help the suffering substance addicted individuals of our community and the surrounding communities, using other means of treatment, including but not limited to non-narcotic drugs that in fact promote real and lasting recovery, but which methadone clinics choose not to offer.*

Above is a summary of my arguments explaining why this clinic would be bad for the neighborhood, bad for our city and its residents, but especially bad at the location where it is currently proposed. If you wish to read a more detailed discussion of each of these points I've included that below.

1. **Proximity to Commercial District.** Putting a Methadone clinic in such close proximity to the heart of Middletown's commercial district is asking for problems. More so than occurs now, opiate addicts from all over central Connecticut will flock to this location. Nearby businesses will be affected by individuals suffering from the effects of active addiction and very little coping mechanisms to exist peacefully and symbiotically within mainstream society. Local businesses will have an increase in unpleasant confrontations with patients of this clinic, as well as the net effect of the drugs and the lifestyle that they bring with them. The net result will be more drugs on Middletown streets rather than fewer drugs (please see points 6, 8 & 9 below for further explanation of why this will occur) and as a result we will see more overdoses in business bathrooms, more thefts, burglaries and vandalism, as well as the very high likelihood of an increase in prostitution.
2. **Proximity to Residential Area.** Let me reiterate, a methadone clinic IS A DRUG DISPENSARY, and as such it brings with it an influx of drug addicts in active addiction and the lifestyle that comes along with that. That lifestyle and those behaviors will inevitably spill over into the neighboring areas.

Putting a methadone clinic at this location will drive law abiding, tax paying residents from the neighboring residential areas; areas that are currently undergoing revitalization. The people that are currently living there will probably move due to feeling unsafe. Tenant quality will decrease and as a result of these changes, property values will also decrease. You will be driving away the type of people that pay taxes and want a quiet life close to an up and coming downtown area and replacing them with the type of people that want to live next to a methadone clinic. Is that the direction you want the city of Middletown to go?

3. **Proximity to Wesleyan.** As discussed above, methadone clinics bring with it individuals who are suffering in active addiction and as a result, are more pre-disposed to committing crime. As someone who has suffered from opiate addiction and has since recovered, I assure you that wealthy young students are ideal targets to become the victims of various sorts of crime. I can't imagine that parents spending \$70,000 a year want their children a short walk from a clinic bringing in opiate addicts from all over the state and the criminal activity that will be sure to follow. This is not to mention the increased access and exposure that students will have to illicit drugs as a result.
4. **Traffic and Congestion.** Nearby this proposed location is already two very busy intersections, one of which is already quite hazardous. The first is the Washington St/Newfield St intersection which already has a tremendous amount of traffic, and the second being the Washington St/Butternut St. intersection which in addition to having high traffic, it is poorly designed so that it is very very hazardous especially with too many people trying to take left hand turns, from a bad angle, out onto Washington street.

Putting the clinic in this location will result in an increase of traffic by many hundreds of cars a day when addicts from all over central Connecticut start coming for treatment daily. Due to the nature of Methadone treatment, patients need to come to get their medication administered daily for their first few months of treatment. This means that hundreds of patients will have to return to the clinic EVERY DAY FOR TREATMENT. Due to the high turnover of methadone patients this translate into a consistent increase of many hundreds of cars in an already hazardous and congested stretch of road, not to mention the increase in pedestrian traffic.

5. **Graveyard Across the Street.** As exhaustively discussed above, there will be more drugs and crime. Graveyards are fertile for the proliferation of drug use and criminal activity. A quiet neighborhood park-like setting where local residents and students like to go and walk their dogs, and jog will soon be replaced by a seedy grave-yard inhabited by people looking for a secluded place to engage in deviant activity. When used syringes and condoms start littering the walkways local residents will no longer be going there to enjoy the peaceful seclusion that it currently offers.
6. **Influx of Drugs & Criminal Activity.** The issues with methadone clinics is that they do not treat the underlying problem of addiction, they only attempt to palliate the condition by replacing street drugs with legally dispensed drugs that have the same effect on the neuro-pathways. Addicts on methadone are still addicts, they are just addicted to methadone instead of or in addition to other opiates. That said because they are still neurologically in active addiction, they engage in addictive thinking and behaviors.

Methadone does not prevent an individual from getting high later, it only prevents them from feeling sick as a result of withdrawal symptoms. This means that people using methadone are very rarely in fact trying to live a life free from substance use/abuse, they are simply trying to palliate withdrawal symptoms for that moment or for that day, and most of the time will use illicit drugs and alcohol IN ADDITION to taking the methadone. This reality translates into more people seeking and using drugs on the streets of Middletown after they leave the clinic. For many if not most,

Methadone is not the fix or the solution for them, it is simply their first free fix for that day, before they can go on to seek their next fix later on that day. Please understand that I speak from experience, having lived that lifestyle for many years before getting clean and becoming a productive member of society. This is the reality of a methadone clinic that is untold to you by those providing these services. Whether it be rose colored glasses or the millions of federally subsidized dollars available to providers of this type of treatment, this reality of what a methadone clinic is, is never fully conveyed to the community prior to it opening. (Please see points 8 & 9 for further explanation)

7. **Strain on Police Force.** This point doesn't need much elaboration. Once we understand that the clinic will bring with it more drugs and crime (see sections 6, 8 & 9), obviously it will translate into more work for the police force and making their job harder.
8. **Exacerbates Addiction & Undermines Recovery.** As mentioned in point 6. Methadone maintenance treatment DOES NOT result in recovery from addiction. The underlying causes of addiction are still present and un-treated. The addict has not learned to change their behavior, nor have they acquired any new coping skills as a result of being on Methadone. All that has changed is that they can now go and get a pill so they don't feel sick and therefore don't have to feel the consequences of their actions and behaviors. This further feeds the addiction and reinforces the belief to the addict that nothing in their life needs to change, or at the very least they there is no hope for them to live a life truly free from substance dependency.

I have had many friends that went on methadone maintenance programs. Every single one that I knew is either dead or in jail. Methadone never healed their addiction, it just kicked the can down the road. I've been to rehab multiple times, and each time I was in rehab with other individuals in rehab for the sole purpose of trying to get off of methadone. They all said that getting off of methadone was harder and more miserable than getting off of heroin. The reason? Due to the length of methadone's half-life (the amount of time it stays in your system) detoxing from methadone can lead to an acute withdrawal period of 3-6 weeks and post-acute withdrawal period of 12-18months, while heroine by comparison has an acute withdrawal period of 5 days and a post-acute withdrawal period of 1-6 months. By most accounts, methadone is a harder drug to get off of than heroine.

9. **Resale of Prescribed Methadone and Suboxone on the streets.** Because methadone and suboxone are narcotics and they are able to stop withdrawal symptoms, they have intrinsic retail value on the streets. Many addicts after months of treatment graduate to a less consistently monitored level of care, this means that they can get prescriptions of methadone or suboxone for the week or even the month. In my experience, what we used to do when we were using, and most other addicts I knew did the same thing, would be to get a month's worth of methadone and/or suboxone from the clinic, sell the vast majority of the prescription for money to go buy heroine, and keep a few doses for the end of the month. We would do what we had to do to get high for most of the month with a couple emergency doses on hand if we ran out of money or couldn't get the drugs we wanted. Then at the end of the month we would start taking our prescribed medication a few days before going back to see the doctor at the clinic, clean from everything except our prescribed medication, pass a

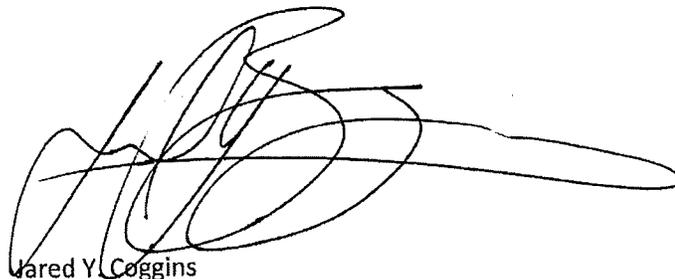
urine test, get our next prescription and go do the same thing all over again. This is a very common cycle for addicts in methadone maintenance or suboxone maintenance programs. Obviously this is not the intended effect of treatment, but it is the reality of what happens.

10. **Finally there are other alternatives that are more effective.** Suboxone (buprenorphine and naloxone drug) is a better and safer alternative to methadone as it at least carries in it's composition and opiate agonist which blocks the opiate receptors from other substances. This means while it is still an opiate, it stabilizes mood without allowing the individual to get "high" "euphoric" or "Drunk" regardless of whether they consume additional substances. It essentially renders all drugs and alcohol taken afterwards a waste of money. Unfortunately methadone clinics are only allowed to have a limited number of people on this drug and the vast majority are kept on methadone, a drug that allows them to still get high after taking it.

Another even better alternative than both is the drug Naltrexone or the long active version Vivitrol. These are probably the best option out there. They must be administered after the acute withdrawal period has passed, and it simply blocks the opiate receptors so that the individual cannot get high or drunk regardless of substance consumption. This is a great deterrent for drug use and drinking because it renders using drugs and drinking largely a waste of money. Also because it is NOT an opiate, it is not habit forming in anyway. It doesn't alter the state of mind of the individual taking it, it just makes them unable to get high. Since it is not a narcotic it is not tightly controlled. Most unfortunately it is NOT USED IN ANY CAPACITY BY METHADONE CLINICS. It's easily prescribed by any doctor, but due to it largely being left to the patient to take on their own, has a low success rate because nobody is enforcing its consumption like is done with methadone or suboxone. If Naltrexone were administered the same way that methadone was, this would in fact lead to safer, cleaner, drug free, addiction free result that we want for the suffering addicts. Unfortunately methadone clinics are for profit institutions, and Naltrexone simply doesn't seem to be profitable enough for them to use it. With naltrexone, a funny thing happens, addicts get better, and they get off the drugs. They get clean! They get sober! This however is by definition something that is guaranteed to never happen for as long as an individual is on methadone or suboxone. Methadone maintenance treatment is not recovery from addiction, it's simply a form of institutionalized drug dealing.

If you have read this far I sincerely thank you for your generosity of time and consideration and I deeply hope that you make a wise choice for the benefit of our city and our citizens.

Sincerely,



Jared Y. Coggins

My name is Lori Davis. I just moved from Portland to Middletown 2 mo ago and am renting a house a half a block from where the proposed methadone dispensary is to be located. I am 66 yrs old and live alone.

First let me say that I realize that the epidemic of opioid addiction in this country is an issue that needs serious attention. Two of my closest friends lost their 29 yr old son to a heroin overdose 4 yrs ago, so I have seen firsthand the pain & devastation of this disease. And I support efforts to combat this disease.

However, the request for a special exception to open a methadone clinic at 392 Washington St. is not an appropriate location.

First, I'd like to address the aspect of increased crime in an area around a dispensary. I did some research and one particular study conducted in Baltimore concluded that although crime may be somewhat less around drug treatment centers (as compared to package stores, gas stations, and convenient stores), there is *still* a level of increased crime associated with drug treatment centers. There is a culture of loitering and congregating outside of these facilities, as clients come and go for treatment. In the interest of time, I won't go into the ripple effects of an influx of addicted individuals in this scenario.

Statistics show that there is, indeed, an increase in crime. Amy DiMauro, VP of Operations for Root Center, stated that ***“crime rates surrounding opioid treatment programs are no higher than any other part of the city”***. So just because an increase in crime (where there was little to none before), is less than in other parts of the city, is supposed to make it acceptable? This is not a valid argument.

Ms. DiMauro also stated that she feels opposition to this clinic is a case of “*pure & simple discrimination*”. Of course she’s going to make statements like these. She has a vested financial interest.

This proposed location is directly across the street from the pristine, historic 170 yr old Indian Hill Cemetery. I walk in this cemetery daily and I see a lot of people walking at dusk and after dark. I can see the possibility of it becoming a hangout for clients of this dispensary. I don’t think people will feel safe if this happens. And then there is the proximity to the Wesleyan campus. How tempting will it be to burglarize dorm rooms or cars while students are in class? How do you think this will effect enrollment if students don’t feel safe?

This location is also only 7 blocks up from Main St. In the past few years, Downtown Middletown, has undergone a revitalizing rebirth and is widely viewed as a very desirable town to live and work in. How do you think the reality of an influx of 500-600 methadone clients to the area will affect the image and continued upward progress of Middletown?

I’m not trying to sound like a “NIMBY alarmist. I’m a realist. But a methadone dispensary does not belong in the middle of this area. A methadone dispensary is a medically-related function and should be located on or near a medical campus of some sort. Root Center for Advanced Recovery has a facility at 520 Saybrook Rd. I suggest they look into expanding that site. It's an isolated complex of medical buildings with plenty of parking and accessible via public transportation. A much more appropriate location.

I researched **employee reviews** for The Root Center for Advanced Recovery on the website *Indeed*. There were 104 employee reviews that rated this company at an average of only 2 out of 5 stars as a good place to work. Some of the comments:

Aug., 2020: “staff is over worked & underpaid. Caseloads well above 95 per counselor”

- *“high case loads with unrealistic demands”*
- *“Management puts themselves first”*
- *“seems to be all about the money”*
- *“high turnover rate/large number quitting”*

The Hartford Dispensary (DBA as The Root Center), has 10 locations in CT. I called the Manchester, New Britain and Norwich locations to ask how many clients they served.

- New Britain: 500
- Norwich: approx. 500
- Manchester: about 700

How many clients do you anticipate serving in this location?

The traffic impact will be considerable. That kind of volume on the already over-used roadway in that section of Washington St. is not feasible or sustainable. The photos that I saw online of the 3 aforementioned locations looked to have decent sized parking lots. Where are all these clients going to park?

These 3 facilities are also not located in a mixed business/residential/major university area, as this one would be.

I also researched **client reviews**. The average rating was 2.3 – 2.4 stars. A sample of some of the most consistent comments:

- Frequent client policy changes (difficulty in getting methadone)
- Rude and uncaring staff (this was #1 complaint)
- High staff turnover
- Increased cost of treatment after Root Center took over
-

My research certainly doesn't jive with Ms. DiMauro's statement in the Middletown Press – and I quote: “Our **nonprofit** mission is to create **compassionate, comprehensive care for sustained recovery**”. This clearly looks like a for-profit mission and it doesn't sound very compassionate.

In conclusion, I do landscape & garden design work. And there is a saying in my industry: “Right plant in the right place.” That is, put the appropriate plant where it best fits the growing conditions.

This methadone dispensary is not the “right plant” for the neighborhood conditions. Unfortunately, the reality is that it will devalue surrounding properties, most likely bring crime to the area and make all of us in the neighborhood feel less safe. Everyone deserves treatment for their disease. But is this really what Middletown wants ***in this particular location?***

I vigorously implore the members of P & Z to come to the only logical conclusion and deny this application.

Thank you very much for your time.

Lori Davis