

Downtown Business District
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 24, 2014
330 Main Street, Middletown, CT

Attendees

Diane Gervais (Chair)	Jeff Pugliese (Chamber)
Mike Dipiro (Commissioner)	Pamela Steele (Business owner)
Trevor Davis (Commercial Real Estate)	Tom Ford (Commissioner)
Geen Thazhampallath (Parking Dept.)	Marc Levin (Commissioner)
Tom Marano (Economic Development)	Valerie Scribano (Commissioner)
Mike Stone (Commissioner)	Officer DeSena (Police)
Michiel Wackers (Director of Planning)	Alex Gecan (Middletown Press)
Ann Marie Cannata (Buttonwood Tree)	Mike McEwen (McEwen Construction)
Lisa Melaven (DBD Office)	

Minutes

- Motion made by Marc Levin to approve August minutes.
- 2nd.
- Minutes accepted.

Treasurer's Report – Mike DiPiro

The first half installment of \$70,000.00 was transferred on Friday, September 19, 2014 from the Finance Department/City Hall to the DBD checking account. There will be a fairly large commitment coming up with the printing on our Fall/Winter brochure and ordering more gift cards.

- Motion made by Marc Levin to approve Treasurer's Report.
- 2nd
- Treasure Report approved.

Chair Update – Diane Gervais

Gift Card Program:

The gift program is becoming more organized, currently auditing all participating businesses to be sure that they are fully functional. After reviewing the 4 points of sale it was determined that the Chamber and DBD offices are responsible for most sales. The Emporium and ION Market have opted out and Amato's Toy and Hobby will become a new point of purchase for the cards as they offer 7day week availability. We have been setting up many new businesses to accept the gift cards including new marketing packages. To date, this program has kept approx. \$150,000 in our downtown. Diane has spoken with our credit card processor and has secured refunds of various fees, and a reduction in our processing rate. She is also looking into other options for our processing to continue to lower the costs of the program.

Brochures:

We are in the process of finalizing the updates and changes to the next brochure. It should be printed by mid to end of October.

Website Note:

Sandy Aldieri our photographer has very generously volunteered to put together a photo gallery slide show for use on our website. Diane is working with the website people and Sandy to make this addition.

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Office and Guide:

Diane introduced Lisa Melaven, as the new administrative assistant to the DBD. Lisa and Shane have been doing a great job working collectively on brochure and gift card updates. They also have worked out a system to transfer information that needs city attention to the proper people and the results have been positive. Also, Diane is getting the word out that we are looking for more downtown guides. Overall, very pleased at how well everyone is working together.

Maintenance Report – Tom Ford

The sidewalks are looking good. It is unfortunate Capricorn's Floral Design will be closing at the end of September. The renovations at 203 Main Street, Thai Garden's building will be completed by the end of October, to include new clapboard and paint

Beautification

Diane is going to speak to Bobbi from Stone Post in regards to either changing out the sidewalk planters for the fall season or wait until Christmas.

Marketing Report

None

Lead Guide Report - Shane Grant

Shane Grant was not available to attend meeting.

Marc Levin made a request to hire more guides, bringing the total to three. We are coming up to a very busy time of year and could use the extra guides. All are in agreement and board members have agreed to help find new prospects.

Police Report – Officer DeSena (filling in)

Graffiti is on the rise. Officer DeSena requested to report the location to the police department before cleaning it up and re-painting, so they can take a picture along with tracking the money spent doing so. Marc Levin made a recommendation to have a contact person of interest to report to at the police department. Diane Gervais will be contacting Chief McKenna and William Russo to finalize.

Public Works –

None

Parking Report – Geen Thazhampallath

The arcade is under repair. There are areas with large crater type holes in the upper lot which will be attended to in short order. The garage will be shut down on weekends for work to be performed. When weekend work commences (Thursday – Saturday) notification will be made through the Chamber of Commerce. We are looking forward to implementing the new kiosks three step parking (Park, Plate and Pay) and signage and getting rid of the little ticket machines and gates. The surveyor came out to re-survey extensively all the back properties of Bob's building, Amato's Toy and Hobby, Trinity Church. The project will be started in short order by Public Works. The drainage behind the buildings will be their focus. The broader pieces, beautification will be done in the spring of 2015. The bid will be going out sometime in December, which is a good time of year for pricing.

North End – Discussion

There are concerns with patrolling not being up to par, and need to focus on bringing it back to the downtown area.

ION restaurant had a fire recently and hope to re-open this weekend. Ann Marie Cannata also asked anyone interested to donate to an auction, the buttonwood tree is having.

Salvation Army's is getting a new look to the outside of building. This construction should be completed by late fall. Brewbaker's is soon to be opening a second location in the North End.

Planning – Tom Marano

Michiel Wackers and Tom Marano have been showing the downtown study around to developers. He has been working hard in looking to bring more businesses downtown, in filling building spaces (i.e. Trolley Barn) In the New Haven area they have home based offices in building spaces, renting out cubicles spaces which might be an idea for Middletown building owners to promote.

Chamber – Jeff Pugliese

It is a very busy time of year for divisions and councils getting back to meetings, throughout Middlesex County. Anyone who would like to attend is certainly welcomed to join us.

- *Wednesday, October 1st*
Members Breakfast at Crown Plaza with special guest Kevin Ollie, UCONN Head Basketball Coach, followed by Middlesex County Energy Forum – sponsored by GNG, Yankee Gas and NU. They will be updating Connecticut's comprehensive energy strategy.
- *Thursday, October 8th*
The business after work event will be held at the River House in Haddam.

The "Holiday on Main" event planning is well underway. There is a great interest of selling gift cards. The DBD will be selling gift cards the day after Thanksgiving at the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce will sell the gift cards on Saturday of the holiday weekend.

Real Estate - Discussion

- Webster Bank –
Three out of the five office spaces are rented on the fifth floor of the building. The smaller single office spaces are bringing folks downtown.
As a whole, the smaller type office spaces are pretty much filled up in the downtown area.
- Vinci's building undergoing renovations.
- Sabroso's Restaurant will be closing at the end of September and going to a food truck format.
- The Middlesex Fruity is also closing as the owner's are retiring.

Motion to Adjourn, by Mike Stone
2nd by Marc Levin