

1 TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
2 Downtown Improvement District Commission
3 Town Office Large Conference Room
4 Tuesday, May 1, 2018
5 Meeting Minutes
6

7 Committee Members Present: Amey Ryan, Gary Baker, Steve Dupoise, Becky Dayton and Lindsey
8 Fuentes-George. Adam Franco arrived following the Chair and Vice Chair nominations
9

10 Town Staff: Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay and Bridge & Rail Project Community Liaison Jim Gish.
11 Others Present: Nancy Malcolm and Karen Duguay
12

13 The meeting was called to order by Town Manager Ramsay at 12 noon and she called for nominations
14 for Chair.
15

16 Dupoise nominated Dayton, and Baker seconded it. Dayton declined the nomination. Dupoise
17 nominated Ryan, and Dayton seconded the motion. Ryan was nominated chair 4 in favor, 1 absent.
18

19 Ryan nominated Dayton for Vice-Chair, and Baker seconded the motion. Dayton was elected Vice-chair
20 with 4 in favor, 1 absent.
21

22 (Franco arrives)
23

24 Approval of the Agenda
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26 The agenda is approved as presented upon motion by Dayton, seconded by Fuentes-George.
27

28 Approval of Minutes
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30 The minutes of June 30, 2017 were approved as presented upon motion by Baker, seconded by Fuentes-
31 George.
32

33 Strategic Planning for the DIDC
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35 Ramsay reminded the Commission that at the time the Selectboard held the public hearing on the
36 renewal of the Downtown District, there were some concerns around the configuration of the District,
37 the map of the District and what the goals and objectives are. Ramsay said Ryan and Dayton were both
38 present at the Hearing and had said that would be taken up the next time the Commission met.
39

40 Ryan said when she was soliciting signatures for the petition to renew the District, she had met with
41 some resistance from people who were questioning what they were getting for this extra fee, since they
42 couldn't see anything tangible, and there was confusion about what it did get used for. She suggested a

43 working group to look into the background a little more, and then they could look at ways to make it
44 work better.

45
46 Dupoise asked for the status of the sidewalk construction on Exchange Street. Ramsay said there were
47 grants funds, matched by Capital Improvement funds, to build from Elm Street to Catamount Park, and
48 they hoped to begin construction in 2019. She said there was also some talk of a separate assessment
49 district of Exchange Street property owners to help spur capital investment in the area and to do some
50 of the things the DIDC has done in the downtown. She said so far this has not gone anywhere. Ryan
51 wondered if it made sense to create a separate district or to expand the DIDC boundaries. Dupoise
52 wondered if expanding to that area would change the DIDC acronym if the boundaries expand out there.
53 He said there are a lot of businesses on Exchange Street that could benefit, but would they feel these
54 benefits or would they feel they'd just been tapped into.

55
56 Ramsay said one thing to keep in mind is what is the appropriate role of the DIDC taxes verses the
57 broad-based taxes. Dayton said that the Downtown Improvement District (DID) was created in order to
58 be eligible for historic preservation grant funds, and now there aren't as many of those funds available.
59 Ramsay said there are still some grants out there that this money could be used as leverage for.

60
61 Franco said he understood that the Exchange Street properties were looking at some infrastructure
62 needs, and Ramsay said there was a need for some substantial water system upgrades on Exchange
63 Street. She said there is quite a pushback on using tax dollars for these upgrades, and many felt it should
64 be paid for by water users.

65
66 Dayton asked about the Downtown District tax bills. Ramsay said they did not get billed for FY18 as the
67 renewal wasn't finalized until late into the year, but there would be bills for FY19. Ramsay said they
68 would need to have a budget for FY19 by June 30th, and are required to hold a public meeting for input
69 on the budget, so they would need to have at least one more meeting.

70
71 Marketing Middlebury During Bridge Replacement Project

72
73 Karen Duguay of Better Middlebury Partnership gave a presentation given to the Selectboard earlier.
74 She said the Neighbors, Together community action group, which began with St. Stephen's Church, and
75 has now been joined by Better Middlebury Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce with representatives
76 from the College, the Town and other organizations. She said with the grant money from VTrans of
77 \$75,000 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant for digital marketing, there is roughly
78 \$115,000 to be used for events and marketing the community and the downtown to keep Middlebury
79 vital during this project. She said an RFP was issued for an upgrade of the existing Experience
80 Middlebury website and they've received 9 proposals and they are in the process of reviewing them and
81 will make a recommendation to the Selectboard. Duguay went on to describe the other campaigns they
82 would be doing in both print and digitally, using the USDA funds. Nancy Malcolm said they are also
83 looking into how to eventually be able to provide free Wi-Fi in the downtown area.

84

85 Duguay went on to describe other ideas they had for promotion, such as brochures and a shopping card
86 for Middlebury Money, better signs and beautification of the downtown with more flowers and art. She
87 says they want to make as much impact as possible, not just for the immediate future, but going
88 forward after the bridge project. Events will include the Midsummer Music and Movie Series, the
89 Summer Block party and they are looking to add a second Midnight Stroll in December. Duguay said
90 one thing she's hearing from businesses is these events are not translating to sales for them, so it's a
91 balance to find events to bring people to town, but get them to shop too. Dupoise described two events
92 he had been to, the Chocolate Night in Bristol and one in Florida that had brought a lot of people to the
93 downtown.

94

95 Franco asked if there was anything that the DIDC could provide for this, since they will be preparing their
96 budget. Duguay said that maybe the DIDC could help with the flowers and the signage. Duguay also
97 gave a summary of other BMP events this past year.

98

99 Review Budget Status

100

101 Ramsay went over the budget status that shows a starting balance for FY18 (7/1/17-6/30/18) of
102 \$18,317.89. Because there were no DID taxes in FY18, there will be a zero balance at the end of FY18
103 once all the financial commitments are paid out. Ramsay said looking at FY19 financial commitments,
104 the DID tax rate for FY19 would be 5.5 cents compared to previous tax rate of 7 cents. Ryan asked how
105 the taxes are calculated, and Ramsay said it is the budget divided by the grand list value of the
106 properties in the District. The Commission agreed to hold the budget public hearing at noon on
107 Tuesday, May 22, 2018.

108

109 Ramsay informed the Commission that there would be several public meetings over the summer
110 relating to the Rail Platform Alternatives Analysis, with a final report going to the Board in October.

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112 The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

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114 Respectfully submitted,

115 Beth Dow