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**CITY OF MIDDLETOWN  
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**MINUTES**

*10 - March - 2004*

**Present**

L. WALLACE , CHAIR  
S. ENGLEHARDT, VICE-CHAIR  
J. ROBINSON  
V. AMATO  
E. ROBERTS  
A. MARINO  
D. MITKOSKI  
R. BANTUM  
E. BOGDAN  
H. HENRY  
A. KELLY  
B. PLUM

**Absent**

M. DIMON  
L. CADITZ-PECK  
E. BOGDAN  
H. HENRY

**Also Present**

M. WACKERS  
M. APURINA  
(NAMES OF  
PRESENTERS  
ARE IN THE  
MINUTES)

L. Wallace called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

Linda Wallace called for the Committee to approve the minutes from the last meeting.  
Earl Roberts motioned to approve the minutes as is. Donna Mitkoski seconded the motion.  
The Committee approved the minutes unanimously.

L. Wallace called the first group to present.

The first project was the Middletown Worker Preparation Program presented by Kevin Marotta and Dean Wilborn of the Middlesex County Chamber Commerce. The Middlesex Chamber of Commerce intends to continue the program of providing support and helping the unemployed, underemployed and low-income residents of Middletown to locate jobs and meaningful employment. This year they would like to extend their program by providing the participants of the program with bus passes to get to and from their prospective jobs as they transition to full time employment. Questions brought up by the board were:

V. Amato: Is this program required by the Planning Department?

Answer: No, but we have received CDBG funds from the City of Middletown for several years.

L. Wallace: Which skills do you teach people looking for employment?

Answer: We teach different skills, but primarily computer skills. Some people who come to us know next-to-nothing about computers.

A. Watson: Is the instructing procedure individualized or class-based?

Answer: We provide both class instruction (10-15 people per class) and individual counseling.

S. Englehardt: Do you use any other funds for this program?

Answer: We request funding from different foundations, but CDBG funds are the main source for the program.

A. Watson: Do you provide training for career-oriented jobs?

Answer: We have a 2-3 month monitoring follow-up so that we can see how people are being transitioned from one employment position to another.

L. Wallace: How many people do you plan to serve with this program?

Answer: We usually plan to address the needs of 30 people, but we end up having about 50 participants.

L. Wallace: Are they all served with CDBG funds?

Answer: Yes.

E. Roberts: So you do increase the number of participants?

Answer: Yes.

The second project was the Roof Replacement at Gilead II Group Home presented by Barry M. Simon and Kim Earles of the Gilead Community Services. Gilead II Group Home is a residence for eight individuals with severe psychiatric disabilities, and it has been maintained by Gilead for twenty years. Gilead Community Services is requesting CDBG funds in order to replace the roof of this residence since a leakage has been noticed in it. The income of the disabled residents is used to support the cost of housing and cannot be used for management services. Questions brought up by the board were:

E. Roberts: What are the sources/funds used to maintain the property?

Answer: Some maintenance has been accomplished due to the slight increase in the income of the disabled residents, but this is not enough. We have been lobbying for higher increase in their income.

L. Wallace: I just want to clarify the dates in your application. Is this a typo or you applied for the funds earlier?

Answer: Yes, we applied for funding earlier, but we had to hold it from October.

V. Amato: Are all the people in this residence from Middletown?

Answer: They are either from Middletown or from Middlesex County.

V. Amato: Are you trying to get funding from other cities in the Middlesex County, say from Meriden?

Answer: Yes.

The third project was the Fire Detection/Notification System at the Gilead Apartment Program presented by Barry M. Simon and Kim Earles of the Gilead Community Services. They are requesting funding to install a hard-wired fire detection and notification system at the Gilead Apartment Program, a facility that serves as a home for five individuals and a central site for services to an additional eleven clients living in nearby apartments. All people living in this facility located at 170-172 Liberty Street in Middletown are disabled, and their income can be used only to support the cost of housing. Questions brought up by the board were:

E. Roberts: Does this building require the fire detection/notification system?

Answer: No, but we are convinced that it is better to have this system for enhanced security of the residents.

L. Wallace: Is this facility used only as a residence for disabled or as a site for offices as well?

Answer: There is only one office in the building that is used for on-site supervision.

L. Wallace: How will the funds be managed?

Answer: We are doing our best to get the plans done, but sometimes we make rearrangements due to unpredicted obstacles, such as severe weather conditions.

A. Watson: can this system be used as a device for monitoring smoking residents? Is smoking prohibited in the facility?

Answer: Yes. It is a safety issue for everyone in the house as smoking is prohibited in the building. We have seen some cases of "sneaking in" the cigarettes, and we are also aware of some sad experience, which resulted from careless smoking in one other building managed by the Gilead Community Services.

The fourth project was the Senior Empowerment presented by Lewis A. Slotnick of John J. Driscoll United Labor Agency, Inc. The goal of this project is to assist low-income seniors to explore employment options. Mr. Slotnick stressed that the unemployment rate in Middletown has grown dramatically, and seniors are the ones who are most vulnerable to this change since they lack skills and information in order to readjust to the requirements of the new employment. The Senior Empowerment project seeks to assist seniors in becoming re-employed by providing them with necessary training. Questions brought up by the board were:

L. Wallace: Do you have information on the percentage of seniors affected by the increase in unemployment rate?

Answer: No, we don't, but we assume that layoffs are affecting especially those aged 55 and over due to the well-known bias. Seniors often need to upgrade their skills.

E. Roberts: What programs have been accomplished by your agency in the last FY?

Answer: We have been running some other programs, worked with the United Way Program, rehabilitation. About 2000 individuals got our support through Community Services in the course of last year.

E. Roberts: How do you plan to reach out to individuals?

Answer: We are going to publicize it through the Housing Coalition since we are its member. We are planning to use the support of Eddy Shelter, Red Cross Shelter and City Housing Authority as well. As far as we know, people are looking forward to contacting us.

S. Englehardt: Have you applied for CDBG funding before?

Answer: We haven't applied for CDBG funds from Middletown.

V. Amato: How will you make sure that all the seniors served by the program are Middletown residents?

Answer: We will run the survey in order to determine their residence. We will not turn away people from other places, but we will try to help them through other programs.

L. Wallace: How will you make sure that money spent on seminars serves directly Middletown residents?

Answer: We admit that we will need to clarify the in-take. One of our options is to create an application for monitoring purposes.

The fifth project was the Amazing Grace Food Distribution Initiative presented by Peter A. Harding of St. Vincent DePaul Place. This organization has been serving the low/moderate-income Middletown residents for more than 20 years by distributing donated food, running a soup kitchen, collaborating with other supportive organizations with similar goals (United Way, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army) and finding volunteers to operate the day-to-day stocking and distribution of food. The request of CDBG funds is for the salary and fringe benefits of the coordinator position for this program for a twelve-month period. Questions brought up by the board were:

E. Roberts: Have you noticed some decline in the donations that you receive?

Answer: Yes, but we are working hard on this. We are trying to get as many people as possible to take some interest in the donation.

E. Roberts: Are you working with the Middlesex County?

Answer: Yes, we get support from other cities of the County.

L. Wallace: What can you say about funding for next year?

Answer: We are expecting an increase in prices for food next year, so the funding of the program will increase as well.

D. Mitkoski: Do you get donation/support from restaurants?

Answer: Yes.

L. Wallace: Do you have a coordinator now?

Answer: Yes.

The sixth project was the Renovations to the New Horizons Battered Women's Shelter presented by Michele Waldner and Elizabeth Farkas of Community Health Center, Inc. Community Health Center is seeking CDBG funds to accomplish several renovations to the New Horizons Battered Women's Shelter, such as improvements to the front porch structure, addition of a third floor fire exit and addition of a dormer. These renovations will allow to increase the safety, utility and quality of life at the shelter, which is a 24/7 haven to women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Questions brought up by the board were:

V. Amato: How will you make sure that only Middletown residents are served?

Answer: We request for funds not only from Middletown, but also from other cities of Middlesex County.

S. Englehardt: Is it true that the nature of your service doesn't show how many people from Middletown are served?

Answer: This is true, but we provide support and social service to all people who come to us and call us. Sometimes we redirect them to other services.

E. Roberts: Do you use any other funds for your program?

Answer: Yes. Citizens' Bank program, and some other.

E. Roberts: Home Depot?

Answer: Yes, they are also on our list.

S. Englehardt: When you received the CDBG funds for acquiring the property for the shelter, you said that you would be responsible for carrying out all the renovations. Why are you requesting the funds now?

Answer: We have tried our best to accomplish minor renovations and insignificant maintenance, but we are short of funds for major renovations.

The seventh project was the Wadsworth Grove Window Replacement presented by Paul H. Rasch and Bill Arrigon of Wadsworth Grove Cooperative, Inc. The goal of this project is to maintain and continue to provide affordable housing in Middletown. Wadsworth Grove Cooperative, Inc. proposes to remove existing windows and replace three windows in each of ten two-bedroom apartment units and 5 windows in each of 35 three-bedroom apartment units with thermal pane, energy efficient window units. The presenters stressed that windows replacement is crucial for providing good, safe, healthy and affordable housing for Middletown residents. Questions brought up by the board:

D. Mitkoski: Do you have handicapped accessibility to these units?

Answer: Yes.

E. Roberts: Are all the residents of these units from Middletown?

Answer: Yes. The Board decides who is eligible to receive housing in these units.

L. Wallace: What is going to be the measure of your success?

Answer: The installation of new windows and insulation will result in better energy conservation. We will measure success by the amount of the energy conserved.

The eighth project was the Senior Outreach presented by Phyllis Pollock and Todd Fracini from the Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT) CRT currently serves the elderly population in Middletown through its Meals on Wheels, congregate meals, and energy assistance programs. Recently, CRT has seen an increase in elderly people coming to their office in Middletown to request assistance with elderly issues. CRT requests CDBG funds in order to hire a half-time senior outreach caseworker (an elderly person) that will go out into the community and assist the elderly with accessing services provided by other nonprofits and by the state governments (various benefits). Questions brought up by the board were:

R. Bantum: Are you requesting funds exclusively for the salary of the person in this part-time position?

Answer: The request is for the salary of the part-time worker (an elderly person), including the fringe benefits.

S. Englehardt: Which programs for the seniors are you running right now?

Answer: One of the places we are reaching out to is the Senior Center in Middletown. It's not just a "shopping center", it's actual assistance. We still feel that the services we provide are minimum.

A. Watson: Could you involve people engaged in other programs (such as Meals on Wheels) in carrying out this project?

Answer: We can ask them to advertise the project, but we cannot make them take the whole load of carrying out the project. We are aware of the fact they are already occupied with their programs, and we cannot just take them away from what they are doing. However, we can ask them to refer people they are working with to this project. We can also address the doctors who work with seniors and ask them to refer their clients to this project. Still, the advantage of having a caseworker is tremendous.

L. Wallace: How many people do you serve with your Meals on Wheels program each year?

Answer: About 50, 000 people are served annually.

The ninth project was the Russel Library Handicapped Accessibility presented by Linda Rusizek of the Russel Library. The Russel Library is requesting CDBG funds in order to complete the project from the previous years. This year they would like to move some shelves that create an obstacle for library visitors in wheelchairs, and to set up a wheelchair-height service desk at the entrance to the Children's Room. Both improvements will result in enhanced opportunities for persons with mobility limitations. Questions brought up by the board were:

A. Kelly: How many handicapped people were served last year?

Answer: We estimate that 1% of all the people who entered the Library last year were persons with disabilities, i.e. 3,200 people.

A. Watson: How do you determine the low/moderate-income residents' participation ratio?

Answer: We have a questionnaire for everyone who enters the Russel Library. Some estimates can be obtained on the basis of the city areas they come from.

L. Wallace noting that it was time for the scheduled dinner break, recessed for 30 minutes until 7:00pm.

L. Wallace reconvened the Public Hearing at 6:30pm and resumed the presentations.

The tenth project was the Neighborhood Playgrounds presented by Elizabeth Nocera and Maureen Partyka of the Middletown Public Schools. The proposed project will provide affordable quality early learning experiences to Middletown families by organizing weekly playgroup experiences on-site at neighborhood housing developments. The target of the project is to enhance literacy skills among parents and caregivers as well as to develop early language skills in children age birth to five. Questions brought up by the board were:

L. Wallace: How many children are you planning to have in each playgroup?

Answer: About 12 children, accompanied by adults, i.e. their parents or other members of the family.

S. Englehardt: How many sessions do you want to hold at each site?

Answer: Our plan is to schedule 6 sessions for each site, but we look forward to organizing more than 6 sessions.

V. Amato: Does this project overlap with the Homegroup program?

Answer: We are aware of the fact that the Homegroup program is similar to the one that we propose, but we would like to stress that the needs addressed by our project are specific and thus different those addressed by similar programs.

L. Wallace: What are the sub services that are mentioned in your application? Do they require additional spending?

Answer: These services are baby massage, hiring the literacy van, etc. Some of these services are paid.

The eleventh project was the Middletown Mobile Work Crew presented by Joan Shea of the Kuhn Employment Opportunities, Inc. The project is designed to provide three disabled and economically disadvantaged Middletown residents with training and employment opportunities while providing the City of Middletown, Parks and Recreation Department, with maintenance and beautification of the city's parks. Questions brought up by the board were:

A. Marino: Are you planning to provide employment to only 3 persons?

Answer: There are more people who come to us with similar needs and conditions, but for this project we are committed to providing only 3 persons from Middletown with job positions. We are also covering all the additional costs for the project, such as the expense of running a van and supervision by the job coach.

L. Wallace: So, your request is only for the salary of these 3 persons?

Answer: Yes. They will be full-time employees.

L. Wallace: Will these people be transitioned to constant full employment?

Answer: We cannot guarantee this, but we have a follow-up on each individual that receives employment through our organization. We try to determine their growths and help them get in touch with other employment organizations.

The twelfth project was the Community Based Mentoring at Connecticut Juvenile Training School presented by Susan McGann, David Norman, and Carrie Dickinson of the Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters (NBBBS). NBBBS is requesting CDBG funding in order to implement a public service project benefiting children from low-income families. Boys who are incarcerated in Middletown at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) will be matched with volunteer mentors who offer attention, guidance and friendship as well as good role models that these children need so desperately. Questions brought up by the board were:

A. Kelly: Do you work inside the facility?

Answer: Yes, sir.

S. Englehardt: How many mentors and mentees do you have up to date?

Answer: We currently have forty mentors and 12 mentees. 8-10 of our mentors live in Middletown.

S. Englehardt: I wonder if this project is eligible?

M. Wackers: We have sent a request to HUD for clarification, and they responded that this project is eligible for Middletown.

V. Amato: How are you planning to close this "gap" between the CJTS and Middletown?

Answer: We are still working on this.

S. Englehardt: How is the program carried out?

Answer: Boys stay at the CJTS for a certain period of time till the program is completed. Afterwards, the mentors supervise them.

S. Englehardt also advised that NBBBS should apply for funding from the whole state of Connecticut because of the nature of their program.

The thirteenth project was the Section 108 Loan Repayment presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. This project is an obligation since the City of Middletown is required to repay the Section 108 Loan from the Federal Government with CDBG funds. There were no questions brought up by the board.

The fourteenth project was the Main Street Streetlights presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. This project includes new decorative street lighting poles and luminaries to replace existing street lighting poles on Main Street, from the south edges of Hartford and Kings Avenues to the north edges of Pleasant and Crescent Streets. The benefits of this project will be increased visibility and safety, enhanced aesthetic environment on Main Street; lighting will be very pedestrian friendly, poles will match existing traffic light poles, and better lighting on the sidewalks will result in more effective police patrols. This request is to cover the shortfall, since the lowest bidder on the project was still over the amount allocated. Questions brought up by the board were:

L. Wallace: Will the amount that you request (\$75,000) be sufficient for completing the project?

Answer: Yes. Public Works has confirmed this.

L. Wallace: Is this request only for the installation of the streetlights?

Answer: Yes, mainly.

The fifteenth project was the Middletown Bus Station Rehabilitation presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. The Middletown Transit Authority currently has \$250, 000 to renovate the Downtown Bus Station, that is located off the Main Street. Due to the City needs for the site, it is in the interest of the City to renovate the site to meet future City initiatives and prevent the increase in the costs for the Middletown residents. There is a possibility of giving the current site of the Bus Station to the Goodspeed Operahouse, which can be brought to Middletown. Between the options of shrinking the size of the Bus Station to accommodate the Operahouse or relocating the Bus Station, the latter appears to be more reasonable. Questions brought up by the board were:

S. Englehardt: Is there any contribution from Peter Pan and Trailways bus lines?

Answer: I am afraid I have no exact information on this.

S. Englehardt: Is this a predetermined project?

Answer: There has been no commitment so far, but the department feels that it should address the problem. The expenses for the project will be split between the Middletown Transit Authority and the City of Middletown.

A. Kelly: Is the current site occupied by the Bus Station sufficient for the Goodspeed? Is there enough parking space?

Answer: Yes.

L. Wallace: Is \$400, 000 enough for the implementation of the project?

Answer: I have been told that this sum is sufficient.

The sixteenth project was the North End Housing presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. The North End Housing Project will provide safe quality affordable housing in the North End. Currently, the Redevelopment Agency is reviewing progress made in the North End and considering possible selecting a new developer. Once the decision is made, the funds will help the project get underway. The North Plan proposes that affordable housing be created through the rehabilitation of existing units and the construction of new units. This project will focus on the Ferry Green block. No questions have been brought up by the board.

L. Wallace noting that representatives from the North End Action Team and the Middletown Police Department had arrived, requested these presenters to the floor.

The seventeenth project was the North End NEAT HQ and City of Middletown Police Substation presented by Lydia Brewster (NEAT) and Phil Pessina (MPD). NEAT and MPD would like to set up an office trailer on Ferry Street to serve as both an office and as gathering spot for NEAT and its members, but it will also be used as a Police Substation. This project will result in enhanced public safety (currently the site is frequently used for drug dealing and other unwanted activities) and public services provided by NEAT. Questions brought up by the board were:

S. Englehardt: Is the amount of money you are asking for \$4, 000?

Answer: Yes. We need to put up a trailer.

M. Wackers: The trailer has to be connected to electricity and other facilities. This project can be considered as the one for future improvement.

S. Englehardt: Has there been a Police Substation on this site before?

Answer: No. We had one on Main Street, but then we had to move it. After that, we had a station in the basement, but it was obviously not conducive to providing public safety.

L. Wallace: What is the crime rate on this street?

Answer: We don't have an estimated crime rate for this part of the city, but there have been many cases of drug selling, prostitution, etc. We had quite a number of arrests in the past and recently.

L. Wallace noting that representatives from the Neighborhood Link had arrived, requested these presenters to the floor.

The eighteenth project was the Neighborhood Link presented by Verle Robinson, Edmond Clark, Larry Pelletier and Gwen Eaddy of the Neighborhood Link. This project seeks to address the problem of juvenile delinquency by providing an effective mentoring boxing program and collaborating with the Educational system to encourage the participants to stay in school. The Neighborhood Link looks forward to providing case management services for each participant as well. Questions brought up by the board were:

S. Englehardt: Where is the office of the Neighborhood Link located now?

Answer: We are still in the fledgling stages of our formation, but we have already established the Board of Directors.

S. Englehardt: Have you already established any connections with the community?

Answer: We have addressed the Board of Education.

S. Englehardt: Have you contacted any schools in the Middletown area?

Answer: Yes. We have contacted Keigwin, and the Middletown High School. Mr. Sander at Middletown High School appears to be very interested in the project. We are trying to reach out to other schools.

V. Amato: Will you make sure that you get funds from the whole county? It appears that your project extends to the whole county, not just Middletown residents.

Answer: We will be trying to acquire additional funds through fundraising. We also plan to ask other organizations that provide similar services for guidance on tapping into other available grants.

L. Wallace remarked that the Neighborhood Link should provide the contact information for all the members of their Board of Directors.

The nineteenth project was the Five Year Consolidated Plan presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. A new Five Year Consolidated Plan will need to be prepared for the period September 1, 2005 through August 31, 2010. The Consolidated Plan, as submitted to HUD, serves as the planning document that will govern the City's initiatives to serve at-risk residents and low- and moderate-income residents. A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be published for consultant interest to prepare the City's Plan of Development. Included in the RFP will be a request for the preparation of the Five Year Consolidated Plan. A consultant will be chosen to prepare and deliver a plan for submission to HUD by July 2005. The Five Year Consolidated Plan is a requirement of HUD's Regulations 24 CFR Part 91. Questions brought up by the board were:

V. Amato: Wouldn't it be better to hire a person from the Middletown Community?

Answer: We will work on this.

S. Englehardt: I have concerns of the same nature. It appears that the person from the Middletown community would have fewer difficulties in getting in touch with Middletown residents while preparing the Consolidated Plan.

Answer: We are aware of this, and I will be personally involved in the selection process.

The twentieth project was the Project Administration presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. The Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development wants funding to provide Middletown with the ability to carry out Middletown's CDBG program, including all HUD reporting, bill paying and subgrantee monitoring. No questions were brought up by the board.

The twenty-first project was the Revolving Loan Programs (DPA/CC, Res Rehab, and JOBS Loan) presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. The loan programs included in this project are designed in order to provide affordable housing for Middletown low- and moderate-income residents and create opportunities for small businesses that would like to set up their offices in Middletown. The repayment of these loans funds new loans. This request is to access these revolving funds. No questions were brought up by the board.

The twenty-second project was the Liberty Bank Down Payment Assistance Fees presented by Michiel Wackers of the Middletown Planning, Conservation, and Development. This project is designed to process fees for Down Payment Assistance Loans. No questions were brought up by the board.

L. Wallace reminded the board to get the scorecard to M. Wackers tonight if they are ready, but they must be handed in a week from today.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned, upon a motion by.

Respectfully submitted,

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Michiel Wackers  
Community Development Specialist