



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT
MAY 2, 2016**

The Special meeting Questions to Directors of the Common Council of the City of Middletown was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Monday, May 2, 2015 at 6 p.m.

Present:

Deputy Mayor Robert P. Santangelo, Councilman Eugene Nocera, Councilman Thomas J. Serra, Councilwoman Mary A. Bartolotta, Councilman Carl R. Chisem, Councilman Robert Blanchard, Councilman Grady L. Faulkner, Jr., Councilman Sebastian N. Giuliano, Councilwoman Deborah A. Kleckowski, and Councilwoman Linda Salafia.

Absent:

Mayor Daniel T. Drew, Corporation Counsel Daniel B. Ryan, Councilman Philip Pessina

Also Present

Public Works Director William Russo, Finance Director Carl Erlacher, Acting Director of IT Eldon Bailey, Water and Sewer Director Guy Russo, Parking Director Geen Thazhampallath, City Attorney Brig Smith, Chief of Police William McKenna, Acting Parks and Recreation Acting Director Deb Stanley, Tax Assessor Damon Braasch, Fire Chief Robert Kronenberger, Director of Communications Wayne Bartolotta, Planning, Conservation and Development Director Michiel Wackers, Deputy Director of Planning, Conservation, and Development Bruce Driska, Director of Human Relations Faith Jackson Arts Coordinator Stephan Allison, City and Town Clerk Linda Bettencourt, Emergency Management Director George Dunn, and six members of the public.

1. Mayor calls meeting to order.

The Acting Chair calls the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and asks Councilman Serra to lead the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Acting Chair declares the call a legal call and the meeting a legal meeting.

2. Questions to Directors Opens

Noted for the Record

Councilman Daley and Councilman Giuliano take their seats at 6:04 p.m.

Councilman Serra asks to address questions to Personnel; Attorney Smith and Kathy Morey come forward. Councilman Serra asks about the requirements of bachelor's degree and reads everything including the Certification. He asks if the Bachelor's degree is in the job description. MS Morey responds yes. Councilman Serra asks if it is the same salary. He states if you are adding Fire officer 4 certification within two years and asks if there should be something relative to this that it might go up a step. MS Morey responds we could do a review at the time. Councilwoman Bartolotta states the salary was upgraded with the nonexempt. She asks if this salary got bumped with the nonbargaining. MS Morey replies yes, it got a percent increase. Councilman Serra states he supports the bachelors and the second part is you are asking for Firefighter 4 and your response is once they get it, it can be reviewed. MS Morey replies it can be reviewed for a salary grade increase, not the bump that it received recently. The Bachelor's degree is still there but it says or combination of education and experience in a career department. It is possible to qualify someone with 11 years in a career service department; that is not a bachelor's, but 4 years more of experience, if it was progressively responsible.

Councilwoman Bartolotta states thank you for explaining that. She has a question for another director. Councilman Giuliano asks about the first time it came around, it was bumped up and it took out the bachelor's degree and put in Fire Officer 4 for the job. A lot of the trouble we had with that was that you took out the bachelor's degree and gave an incentive for not having it and did you ever give it a thought to make it a Firefighter 4 and use the bachelor's as an incentive. MS Morey responds no, it was not looked at that way. Councilman Giuliano states as he understood what the Chief and former Chief Dunn testified to was that the Fire Officer 4 was a more stringent standard and the issue I had was it was a based standard but it wasn't in the Chief's description and it seemed we were elevating the Deputy's requirements higher than the Chief and do you have plans to change that. MS Morey responds that is a good point and we can look at it down the road. He would support that as well.

Councilwoman Bartolotta asks for the Fire Chief. Chief Kronenberger comes forward and she asks if he supports the new job description and the salary. The Chief responds yes he does. She asks about the point made for the Fire Chief job description itself. He responds we actually made a change to that and superseded that with the Executive Fire Officer through the National Fire Academy so I believe that it has been addressed and is elevated above Fire Officer 4. Councilwoman Bartolotta states and we voted on that a couple of months back. Chief Kronenberger responds yes. Councilman Serra asks for the Chief of Police; Chief McKenna comes forward

Noted for the Record

Councilwoman Kleckowski takes her seat in the chamber at 6:16 p.m.

Councilman Serra states we didn't get a chance to talk about this regarding the firing range at the last meeting. He asks how long it has been; five or six years? Chief McKenna states yes. Councilman Serra states one is for \$1.5 million and one is \$1.2 million. Chief McKenna responds they addressed that. If you would like an update, I can do that. Councilman Serra states his neighborhood would like to get it back to where it was and hopes the \$750,000 would muffle the noise. He hopes it gets done quickly so it gets back to where it used to be. Chief McKenna states as of today, the \$750,000 was approved January 14 and the next day we researched companies and narrowed it down to two companies and they are around \$1.2 and \$1.6 million to complete the project to eliminate the noise. As we did research, a bullet trap is needed because of the location near the water. We are trying to get construction in two phases; one to eliminate the noise and the second to put in the bullet trap. We want two phases, structure and environment concerns. On Wednesday, Guy Russo is meeting with water safety individuals and he is going to see if that group has ideas about additional funding. The two companies do this 100% of the time and erect buildings for sound mitigation. TRS lowered the price of the structure to \$1.1 million and the bullet trap that is \$370,000 and that is around \$1.3 million and it is to do it correctly. I was going to ask the Council's opinion and ask the vendors to sharpen their pencils and get them to \$750,000 for the structure and your ideas for a bullet trap. Councilman Serra states I guess we can forget the federal government and my next opinion is to ask bond council if this can be separated into environmental and structure as it is separate issues. It is getting trying to listen to this. Chief McKenna states this project, getting the money for the structure and the trap and gets it to \$1.5 million; a year from today, this will be a dead issue. Chief McKenna doesn't think we should rely on the federal government. The next steps the companies will look for, one flew out for site inspection and if he comes for a workshop he would like to be paid \$3,500. Councilwoman Bartolotta states she sent an email through Marie about having that meeting for the Council; you are looking at more than one company. Chief McKenna states they are looking at two companies. Both companies are heavily recommended and the environmental piece, both companies are recommending the bullet trap and to get the issue behind us, we need all of the \$750,000 for the structure and find money for the bullet trap. You want to do the project once. Councilwoman Bartolotta states the company you brought forward TRS, part of the proposal was a cleanup. Chief McKenna responds that is correct and that would be in the monies for the bullet trap. They could take that out or he actually reuses it when they pour the concrete and that is more of a cost savings and once the trap is placed, we can have companies come in and weigh the lead or we may get paid for a portion of it. We stopped using lead in our bullets at the range some years ago. Captain Lozefski tells the history and what bullet traps are and why they are recommended. Councilwoman Bartolotta about having them doing a presentation, we should have the presentation and review the material where we can have a back and forth to find the dollar amount that we can agree to. If that takes place, one of them wants to be paid for that; Chief McKenna states go to the last attachment and that was sent March 1 and TRS says they can meet after the initial visit and anything after that, they need to get paid and if it goes to bid with two companies, the Council needs to make a decision if they get called in the same night. TRS has a fixed cost of \$3,500 and every additional visit is \$1,500. Do we spend money before the bidding process or wait until after.

Noted for the Record

Councilman Faulkner takes his seat in the chamber at 6:25 p.m.

Councilman Nocera commends the staff and the Chief for providing this data; it appears that you have come up with a better solution than originally thought possible. Chief McKenna states there is nothing to prove our water is contaminated. Captain Lozefski is the one who has taken on this project and he found that we need to have the bullet trap.

Councilman Giuliano would like to address questions to the Parking Director; the director has stepped out of the chamber. Councilman Serra asks for the Finance Director. He states this was on the agenda last month and that is the bond rating and it is necessary that kudos go to Carl, Diana Doyle, and Tayna Oliver Perry as well as former Councils and Mayors, for the triple A rating.

Noted for the record

Councilwoman Salafia takes her seat in the chamber at 6:32 p.m. Councilman Serra states since he has led us to get a triple AAA rating, he reads the criteria from the report and makes it clear that the Finance Director orchestrated this. Our pension is healthy, infrastructure investment is done, education system is solid as well, economic development, mill rate, fund balance, demographics. One of the things we have done is have the ability to pay and he is glad this council is part of this. Congratulations and now we will reap benefits. We will need to keep the triple A. Mr. Erlacher states it was a team effort. The directors are doing more with less every single year.

Councilman Daley asks for Michiel Wackers. He asks him to tell us about what went into the thinking of the CAC in forming the recommendations of the CDBG funding. He is concerned that they did not recommend the Chamber Work Preparation Program that has proven to be an effective program for helping people to become productive members of the workforce and last year we funded to add \$18,000 and for them to recommend no funding. Mr. Wackers states CAC puts a lot of effort into the recommendations to the Council and there are a couple of things that need to be addressed. We got an overwhelming number of applications, more than 30% more. This year they are trying to do 27 awards instead of 18. There is a long standing unofficial rule that this is seed money but not to be relied upon as an ongoing funding stream. We have a consolidated plan that governs five years on how the funding will occur. When I saw the recommendations zeroed out this, he thought there was not enough emphasis on the plan's recommendations and he outlined a way to readjust the money to reflect the policies. Councilman Daley states we will fund the program \$7,000 less than the current year and can we assess what this will do for the program. Mr. Wackers states with \$18,000 they served about 50 people and taking it to \$11,000, it will be ten fewer people having their help. Councilman Daley states the other programs seem very worthy. Mr. Wackers states the only other recommendation is the smaller the grant the greater the burden it is to administer them. It costs about \$2,000 to do that for each grant. We are not being compensated for the smaller grants and they are an inefficient way to fund a program. Councilman Daley states the CDBG grant comes in three sections, one is public service, the second is the construction and economic development, and third is program administration and there is not the ability to take from the Construction and Economic Development to shift to the public service portion. Councilman Daley these totals are inclusive of budget modifications to previous years. Mr. Wackers responds that is correct. Councilman Faulkner wanted to follow up with Councilman Daley's questions; his is focused on the change with youth programs. We went from supplying organizations money and now we supply families. The way they have it Green Street is here for some funds and he thought it should be scholarships. Mr. Wackers states the last five year plan we did have a plan for after school scholarships and it did work, but given the staff resources he has, it is a time labor resource and it takes a lot of doing by the staff and he would like to focus supporting programs for the 30 families and contract with one organization and let them handle that. Councilman Faulkner states unfortunately we can just switch up on everyone without notice. I think something else needs to be done to fund those. Mr. Wackers states the Council can make that change; the calendar for getting plans to HUD is fast approaching and he does not want to put this off another month.

Councilman Giuliano asks Geen Thazhampallath, Director of Parking, about items on the agenda; the first is the ordinance phasing out the parking fund. Are you comfortable for the foreseeable future for coming before the Council to improve the parking infrastructure. Will this work. Mr. Thazhampallath responds in the ideal world he would like to keep the fund but the reality is we are faced with financial difficulties as is the State and it is hard to justify keeping a separate pool of money. If there was a financial crisis, they would pull in all the resources and he feels confident if they need to do bonding or apply for CNR then those resources will be available. Councilman Giuliano asks about the hardware life span. Mr. Thazhampallath replies seven to ten years. Councilman Giuliano asks about the regulation and violations, we are going up on the fine; what part of the Parking Department revenues come from paying for parking as opposed to enforcing violations. Mr. Thazhampallath replies from meters, \$480,000 a year and parking violations roughly \$225,000. Councilman Giuliano states the violation, the ticket is what leaves the bad taste. Mr. Thazhampallath states the only other approach is to impact everyone by changing the rate from \$1 to \$1.50 or \$2; this is a tool to attack a specific person. It impacts those who don't pay for parking.

3. Questions to Directors Closes.

The Acting Chair closes questions to directors and asks for a motion to adjourn.

4. Meeting adjourned.

Councilman Thomas J. Serra reads and moves for approval the meeting. Councilman Carl R. Chisem seconds the motion. The chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous to adjourn with 11 aye votes. The chair states the matter passes unanimously with 11 affirmative votes.

The Acting Chair adjourns the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

ATTEST:

MARIE O. NORWOOD
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK