



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

**MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021
5:30PM**

MINUTES

The Special Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Middletown was held as a hybrid meeting, participants both in-person in the Council Chamber and remotely, via WebEx. The meeting was also livestreamed on the City of Middletown's Facebook page on Monday, April 12, 2021, at 5:30 PM.

Present:

Councilwoman Jeanette White Blackwell	Councilman Vincent Loffredo
Councilwoman Meghan Carta	Councilman Anthony Mangiafico
Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.	Councilman Edward McKeon
Councilman Darnell Ford	Councilman Eugene Nocera
Councilman Edward Ford, Jr.	Councilman Philip Pessina
Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Sr.	

Absent: Councilwoman Linda Salafia

Also Present: Hon. Benjamin D. Florsheim, Mayor
Daniel Ryan, Esq., Corporation Counsel
Brig Smith, Esq., General Counsel
Linda Reed, Clerk of the Common Council

Members of the Public: WebEx (none) and Facebook livestream (unknown number of viewers)

1. Mayor calls meeting to order

Mayor Benjamin Florsheim calls the meeting to order at 5:46 PM. Start of the meeting was delayed because of technical difficulties. The Chair welcomes everyone to the Special Meeting of the Common Council, the first hybrid meeting. The Chair asks Councilman Philip Pessina to lead the Common Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk of the Common Council reads the Call of the Meeting and the Chair declares the call a legal call and the meeting a legal meeting.

2. Public Hearing -- Opens

The Chair opens the public hearing at 5:49 PM. The Chair invites any member of the public, participating remotely, who is looking to speak, can do so by indicating using the WebEx hand raise function. Each speaker – in the Chamber and participating remotely -- will have a maximum of five (5) minutes to speak. All speakers are asked to state their name and address for the record. Speakers in the remote queue will be unmuted in chronological order. The public hearing is limited to 30 minutes. If, at that time, there are additional speakers, the Council may consider extending the public hearing portion of the meeting.

3. Public Hearing -- Closes

There being no speakers, the Chair closes the public hearing at 5:50 PM.

4. Resolution

A. Approving the City's purchase and acquisition of the four Properties (225 River Road, 27 Eastern Drive, 35 Eastern Drive and 41 Eastern Drive) for future riverfront redevelopment purposes; and authorizing the Mayor to sign all documents and/or agreements necessary to effectuate such purchase, subject to review and approval by the Office of General Counsel as to content and form.

APPROVED

RESOLUTION No. 27-21: K: review/resolution/ PCD land River Rd & Eastern Dr RES 27-21 – 12 April 2021

WHEREAS, the City of Middletown's Plan of Conservation and Development's guiding principles include a "Thriving Community" which specifically mentions the City's need to redevelop and reconnect to the City's waterfront; and

WHEREAS, even dating back to 1974, the City's Plan for Waterfront Recreational Development stated: "The revitalization of the Connecticut River waterfront in Middletown would provide an opportunity for

the City to re-establish its close relationship with the River which has been badly neglected in recent years”: and

WHEREAS, one of the key elements in the drafting of the Middletown’s 21st Century Infrastructure Development Bond was for riverfront redevelopment, including improving public infrastructure and related public amenities, including the acquisition, rehabilitation and redevelopment of parcels; and

WHEREAS, the voters of Middletown overwhelmingly passed the \$55 Million 21st Century Infrastructure Development Bond by referendum on November 3, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the City has identified four key parcels critical for future Riverfront Redevelopment known as 225 River Road (Map 33, Lot 0044, 7.7 acres), 27 Eastern Drive (Map 33, Lot 0045, 0.12 acres), 35 Eastern Drive Map (33, Lot 0046, 0.12 acres) and 41 Eastern Drive (Map 33, Lot 0047, 0.17 acres), collectively referred to as the “Properties”; and

WHEREAS, the City has completed a Phase I Environmental Assessment for the properties and is actively working with the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and State Department of Economic and Community Development to enroll the Properties in a Brownfield Remediation Liability Program; and

WHEREAS, the City and Property owners for the Properties have agreed upon a price of \$2,550,000.00 for the purchase of the four parcels; and

WHEREAS, the City has allocated \$5,000,000.00 out of the 21st Century Infrastructure Development Bond for purchases of this nature; and

WHEREAS, the City wishes to purchase the Properties to ensure that riverfront redevelopment will be in line with the City’s future Comprehensive Master Riverfront Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission gave a favorable C.G.S. § 8-24 report at their February 24, 2021 meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MIDDLETOWN:

Authorizing the City’s purchase and acquisition of the four Properties (225 River Road, 27 Eastern Drive, 35 Eastern Drive and 41 Eastern Drive) for future riverfront redevelopment purposes, and authorizing the Mayor to sign all documents and/or agreements necessary to effectuate such purchase, subject to review and approval by the Office of General Counsel as to content and form.

FINANCIAL IMPACT – \$2,550,000 from the 21st Century Infrastructure Development Bond.

Councilman Eugene Nocera reads the motion and moves to approve. Councilman Philip Pessina seconds the motion.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo asks that Director of Planning, Conservation & Development Joseph Samolis come to the podium for questions.

Councilman Loffredo states that it would be helpful to him and his colleagues for Director Samolis to present to the Council what this resolution intends to do and what due diligence the City has done in putting together this resolution for the proposed sale.

Director Samolis replies that it is an excellent question. As many Councilmembers know, having passed it in August or September (2020) for the November (2020) referendum question for the \$55M development referendum bond. It passed overwhelmingly. As part of that bond, there was \$5M specifically allocated for the riverfront. Within that \$5M, it included proposed acquisition of key properties that the City may be interested in holding for potential redevelopment as well as improvements along River Road, to clean up the area, and things of that nature, improvements and infrastructure. Along with that, once the bond passed, the City started looking at key parcels that we would be interested in purchasing, which you see before tonight in this underlying resolution. We got an appraisal done, or is in the process of being done. We have been told that the appraisal comes in at the price that you are looking at for acquisition. We have also done our due diligence in terms of environmental assessment, where we have done a Phase 1 assessment from Tighe and Bond. That information, along with doing title searches for each of the four (4) properties had to be supplied to the State DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) as well as DECD (Department of Economic Community Development) for the City to be considered to be enrolled in their indemnification programs, or what is known as the (*inaudible*). The City has been able to do that and, in fact, this morning, they received confirmation from DECD that the City has been enrolled into that indemnification program in terms of any contamination from previous uses of that oracle. So, we have gotten everything that we believe is necessary to effectuate the purchase of these four (4) key parcels for riverfront development. As many Councilmembers may recall from the numerous presentations that he did prior to the November referendum, this site or these parcel, specifically, are the only sites outside of the flood plain, immediately adjacent to the river, which make it really ideal for future redevelopment. For these reasons and for all the due diligence on the City side, he asks for the Council’s permission to move forward and purchase these parcels so that, when they do come up with a complete Master Plan for the riverfront, the City has the parcels in place so that they can move forward and realize the conditions that the community has set forth during that planning phase.

Councilman Vincent Loffredo states, as a follow-up, that the property that they are looking at - -these parcels – are being purchased “as is.”

Director Samolis replies, “That is correct.”

Councilman Loffredo notes that, in terms of any remediation or demolition or clearing the property, that is not part of this.

Director Samolis replies, “That is correct,” reiterating that the parcels are being purchased “as is.” Ultimately, what they are looking to do is to get the new developer that the City decides to work with in future years, to actually do that work since the City is doing a large capital outlay for acquisition of the parcels themselves.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman Edward McKeon states that he understands that some homes on Eastern Drive are being purchased as well. He asks Director Samolis to address this element.

Director Samolis states that the property owner for 225, the Jackson Corrugated site, the large industrial site, owns three (3) adjacent residential lots, two (2) of which are renovated and leased. This tenants are already in the process of having a new location identified for them. The third location actually had a residential structure on it that has been razed some time ago., They are looking to acquire those three (3) lots on Eastern Dive as well as the industrial lot on River Road. As part of that property on River Road, there is a slot of property that is riverfront bank, between River Road and the river that is part of that parcel, so the City is getting that as well.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Eugene Nocera appreciates Director Samolis’ explanation, responding to the first two (2) questions. He knows from previous conversations and these comments today has the City has done its due diligence with regard to the purchased and planning around this. This has been a long, long process. We have been very careful. It is the lynchpin to move the City in the direction that we need to go. It is well planned, came within the budget that we wanted for purchase, perhaps a little less than what we thought. We are ready to move, adding that he will support this resolution tonight. Thank you.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Philip Pessina asks, in relation to the railroad, once the preferred developer is selected, he assumes there will be conversations with the railroad, noting that there has been initial discussion about redesigning adjunct to the riverfront development he asks if this is correct.

Director Samolis relies, “That is correct,” adding that the Mayor’s Office has been working with State DOT (Department of Transportation) in making sure that the City is at the table for any discussion about the re-use of the rail line. As they move forward in the planning process, they will be keeping DOT and DEEP involved in whatever the City is envisioning for the riverfront.

Councilman Pessina states that he is fully supportive of this resolution – this property acquisition – noting that they have talked and stated that it is the conduit to a successful riverfront development. Correct?

Director Samolis replies, “That is correct.”

Councilman Pessina thanks Director Samolis for his hard work on this.

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr. states that he may have already gotten an answer to his question. It is basically regarding the price that they are paying, noting it is not a surprise, it is what they expected it be, what it is. He asks Director Samolis if that is correct.

Director Samolis replies, that is correct. Before going to referendum, they asked the landowner what he was looking for as compensation and he gave the City information. Ultimately, the City hired an appraiser to get us a good number, adding that the number that the seller is looking for is in line with what the appraiser has given verbally.

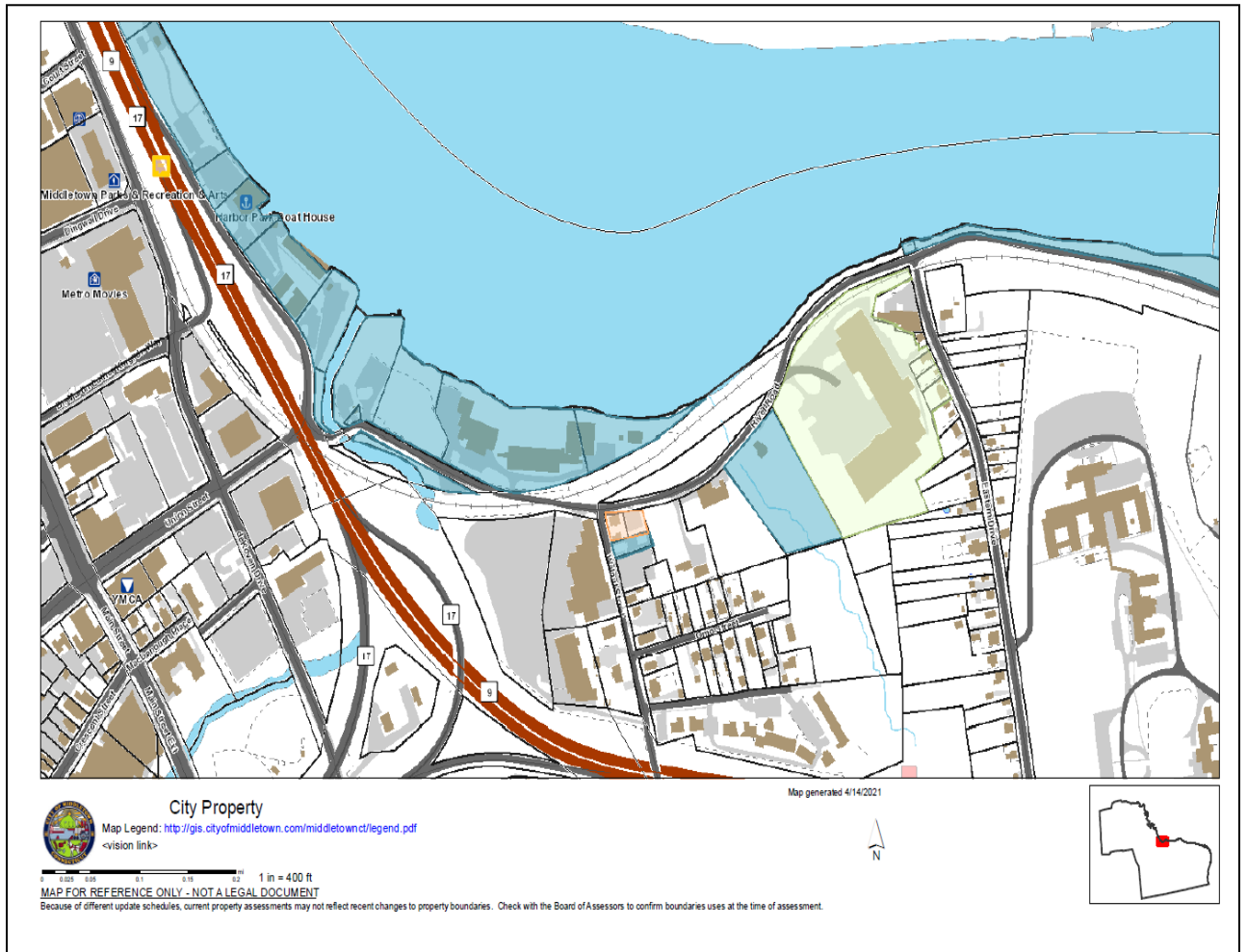
The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo asks a procedural question for the record. He explains that there is a practice, which should have been followed with this matter prior to it ending up on the Council agenda. It would have gone on to at least two (2) or three (3) Councilmanic committees as well as the Mayor’s Office before it came to the Common Council. That did not happen in this particular instance. He is now asking for assurance that, going forward, as they deal with different aspects of this bond issue and the expenditure of monies, that the Common Council – as a body – and its various committees and commissions will play its role in due diligence before it ends up as an agenda item. He asks that Director Samolis confirm this.

Director Samolis replies that he does confirm that.

The Chair states that he, too, endorses that confirmation, as stated by Director Samolis. The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon states that he has another question about the properties. There is a legendary business on the property: Meadow Meat. As Economics Development Director, he asks Director Samolis if he has spoken with them, are they have plans for relocating or are they just (*inaudible*) .



Director Samolis relies that Meadow Meat is not included in these parcels, indicating that he has a map. . It is the one parcel that is not included in that northern portion of Eastern Drive.

Councilman McKeon adds, that being the case, has there been any discussion with Meadow Meat on improving their property so that it fits in with whatever development plan is eventually adopted.

Director Smalls replies that, early on, before the referendum, his office had reached out to the owners of Meadow Meat to talk about potential interest. At that point in time, the owners weren't – he doesn't want to say "not receptive" – but they were not eager to talk about selling the property. Things may change if this resolution is decided tonight. He notes that they will reach out as there are a number of other properties on River Road that (*inaudible*).

Councilman McKeon states, don't misunderstand, adding that he would hate to see them go. It is a growing concern and it serves the population in this City, who are underserved in other places. He believes that it is important to preserve that relationship (*inaudible*).

Director Samolis replies, to speak to that, he was speaking with Councilman Loffredo. He recalls growing up and going to that establishment and still goes to that establishment, he does not think that he would like to see them move, but maybe the City can help them rehab the infrastructure that they have there.

The Chair asks if there are any further questions for Director Samolis or any further question. The chair calls on Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell.

Councilwoman Blackwell asks the he provide a copy of the map that he referenced.

Director Samolis replies that he has one copy, but will send it out electronically to everyone.

There being no further discussion, the Chair calls for a vote. In the interest of efficiency, he will do a roll call from left to right on the motion.

Councilman Anthony Mangiafico aye
 Councilman Edward Ford, Jr. aye

Councilman Philip Pessina	aye
Councilman Edward McKeon	aye
Councilman Vincent Loffredo	aye
Councilwoman Meghan Carta	aye
Councilman Eugene Nocera	aye
Councilwoman Janette Blackwell	aye
Councilman Darnell Ford	aye
Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Sr.	aye
Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.	aye

The motion is approved unanimously with 11 aye votes (AYE: Councilmembers Blackwell, Carta, Faulkner, D. Ford, E. Ford, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, McKeon, Nocera, and Pessina; ABSENT: Councilwoman Salafia.) The matter is approved.

There being no further discussion, the Chair asks for a motion to adjourn.

5. Meeting adjourned

Councilman Vincent Loffredo moves to adjourn. Councilman Philip Pessina seconds the motion.

There being no discussion, the Chair calls for a voice vote. The motion is approved unanimously with 11 aye votes (AYE: Councilmembers Blackwell, Carta, Faulkner, D. Ford, E. Ford, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, McKeon, Nocera, and Pessina; ABSENT: Councilwoman Salafia.) The matter is approved

The meeting is adjourned at 6:05 PM.

ATTEST:
LINDA S.K. REED,
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK

K: review/ minutes/ 2021 April 12 – special meeting – 12 April 2021