



**COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT**

SPECIAL MEETING: COMMUNITY MEETING

**THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023
6:00 PM**

MINUTES

A Special Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Middletown -- the Community Meeting -- was held on Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 6:00 PM. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with in-person participation in the Chamber and remote participation via WebEx. In addition, the meeting was livestreamed on Facebook and on the City website and was broadcast on local cable access television.

Present:

Councilwoman Jeannette Blackwell	Councilman Michael A. Marino
Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.	Councilman Edward McKeon
Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Sr.	Councilman Eugene Nocera
Councilman Vincent Loffredo	Councilwoman Linda Salafia
Councilman Anthony Mangiafico	

Absent: Councilmembers Meghan Carta, Darnell Ford, and Philip Pessina

Also Present: Hon. Benjamin Florsheim, Mayor
Middletown Police – Detective Remotti -- Sergeants-at-Arms
Linda Reed, Clerk of the Common Council

1. Call to Order

A. Pledge of Allegiance

As Deputy Mayor, Councilman Vincent Loffredo is Chair for this Special Meeting.

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. He welcomes everyone to the Special Meeting of the Common Council. The Chair asks the Common Councilmembers to join in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Council Clerk Reads the *Call of the Meeting* and Chair declares call a legal call and meeting a legal meeting

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 Comment Opens

The Chair opens public hearing at 6:05 PM. Any member of the public wishing to speak may either step to the podium or indicate by raising their hand using the WebEx function. When called on, they are asked to state their name and address for the record. Councilmembers are here to listen, not to engage in dialogue. The Council will not be taking any action. People having a particular issue are welcome to contact individual Council members or the Mayor's Office. Speakers are asked to limit comments to 10 minutes. The Chair also states that, if anyone is calling by phone, they may press *3 to indicate that they wish to speak.

Kathy Dwyer (Middlefield Street): She reads the following letter into the record:

July 13, 2023

I am here representing the residents of Forest Street, Middlefield St., Boston Road, George Street, and Aston Lane. We are here to address the concerns from blight and contamination to both the air and water from the businesses at 455, 465, and 467 Middlefield Street.

Recently the blight on 467 has become overwhelming with piles and piles and piles of junk and bikes right on the edge of the river!
When it rains it is draining not only into the soil but directly into that river as that particular address is literally 1 inch from the river.

Also, We understand there was a cease and desist on the cabinet painting business on the 455 building.

We would like to know if that means they have some opportunity to fix whatever caused the cease and desist? Or because they violated something is it definitely out of there?

We would also like to know if that means they automatically can move that business to the 465 or 467 buildings because that's what's happening with the car painting!?

If the Town at one time allowed 2 DIFFERENT cabinet painting businesses and car painting in the 455 building and "none of them were EVER up to code or living up to the conditions expressed in the special exemption or the supposed approval from the Town" for these businesses (that no one can seem to find in the minutes or on property records), are you allowing them to "automatically go to the 465 & 467 buildings to do the same thing? Or do they have to go in for another POSTED public hearing for 465 & 467 for cabinet painting and car painting! ?

We feel now is the towns chance to stop some of these actions that are causing harm to the air in the water in this area.

Several residents have significant lung / health issues which are possibly connected to the painting down there and some other residents are dead possibly from the contamination in this river!

One resident here tonight myself and another gentleman literally couldn't breathe one day the air was so bad from the painting business although the resident had some issues the paint in the air actually made it worse and an ambulance had to be called..... !!!

There is a massive amount of junk cars on these lots and it has been one year since we were actively complaining and another 19 that we had complained and nothings been done.

July 28, 2023 we were told that the cars have not been moved because the owner told the Town that "he leased the land to somebody and he's evicting them"!!

Do you have that person's name that is LEASING THE LOT?

Do you have a copy of the eviction notice?

Does he have receipts for income coming in from the business he is claiming he leased this land to?

If not - why are you letting this slide?

As nothing seems to be happening there... There is still a plethora of boats cars etc. that have been there for years and years that have been deteriorating and have parts that have high PFAS's

chemicals draining into the soil & River, that we have kindly asked the town to remove. We have wells!!

Also in the back of the 455 there is a camper. we ^{were told} ~~know~~ the person that owns that camper and he is not leasing land from Richard Sweet it's just being parked there because he had nowhere else to park it!!!

We were told that people are living in that as well as the 465 building. You can see the cars there at night and the activity that doesn't leave.

We are asking the town to take an active stance to eliminate the blight and the businesses practices that are adding to the contamination we're concerned about in the Coginchaug River, As well as the illegal Apartments... Richard Sweet is paying taxes on a business instead of ~~of~~ ^a residential tax like all of us pay.

Just the painting of cabinets and cars is harming our health because we can't even breathe outside as well as harming our property value because we can't even stay outside when they are painting it's so bad.

We have some neighbors that have died - and some at a very young age and some neighbors that are very sick from the air they're breathing around here!

We are again, kindly asking the town to do more than they have.

DEEP can do absolutely nothing as the town allowed these businesses to start with!

Recently they've proposed to put in a dog park in Marsalek Park Directly next to the other side of the River! That was last night's meeting and we don't know the outcome of that yet. But

There are wetlands, floodplains streams and the Coginchaug River which again if not properly STUDIED by expert arborist and environmental specialist could potentially harm the Connecticut river and into our wells.

We have talked to the army corps of engineers and the DEEP both of whom do not approve of the businesses that are allowed on the left side of the river nor a dog park on the right side of the river.

So again, we are asking for the town to step in to stop these business practices and stop the dog park! The river and our wells need to be protected

A garden park or a Pickleball court, something more conducive to not harming Wetlands and habit but mostly our Wells Would be a welcome consideration!

Thank you! 🌻

John Sutton (387 South Main Street): He thanks the Common Council for saving Pamechea Pond, including all the wildlife, the fish, birds, and frogs. He invites Councilmembers to come to his house on Saturday. He has a couple of kayaks and would like to give them a tour. It is a lot different from what you see from Route 17. He also offers a thank you letter for the minutes.

Community Council Meeting-July 13, 2023

For the Record; My name is John Sutton at 387 South Main St., Middletown, CT.

Dear Common Council Members and Mayor Florsheim,
Good evening! We welcome this opportunity to speak on behalf of the "Saving Pameacha Pond" movement.

Nine months ago we attended our very first Community Common Council Meeting and were thrust into the heart of advocating for our cause and pursuing our vision for dam repair/rebuild to preserve Pameacha Pond's history, ecosystem and wildlife.

It has been an educational and impactful journey in connecting with the community, local businesses, existing environmental, educational and historical groups within our extraordinary city. Middletown citizens behold great talent, heart and commitment to the city's vitality and ENVIRONMENTAL preservation of its lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and wetlands.

We wanted to publicly acknowledge the Common Council's efforts, openness and ability to listen to our concerns to act on truly "Saving Pameacha Pond".

We are grateful beyond words for the “Public Works and Facilities Commissions” unanimous decision to repair/replace the Pameacha Pond Dam and eagerly await her new dam design and replenishment of her water level. We have the ability, skills and motivation to work collectively with the city on her lake management needs to return Pameacha Pond to her former glory with safe access for the community.

On behalf of the now famous Pameacha Pond Turtles, Blue Herons, Eagles, Hawks, Osprey, Sea Gulls, Songbirds, Fish life, Monarch Butterflies, Dragonflies, Bull Frogs and Pollinator Bees a huge THANK YOU for Pameacha Pond’s BEST is yet to come!!

Please join us this Sat., July 15th for a kayak/canoe tour on Pameacha Pond for an upfront and personal view and bring your fishing pole.

Sincerely,

John and Mary-Ellen Sutton

The Wilson/Pieta Family

“Help Save Pameacha Pond” FB Group

Elizabeth Martinez (24 Overlook Avenue)

Good evening Common Council, thank-you for the opportunity to voice my questions and statements. I would like to first start off that I am not here to judge or complain but speaks words of truth. I know little about politics but have a seen a shift and change in this community that has lead me here today. Politicians whether Democrat or Republican; you hold a level of authority and power which can affect a community in a positive or negative way. I am here representing a God in Heaven and I follow his morals and standards that are bible based and this should be considered in your decisions.

So, today I come to you to discuss last month's events. Last month I was excited to see Middletown hosting a car show; as the event got closer I noticed pride flags throughout the main street area and pride letters on the green. The car show had been re scheduled and Juneteenth was right around the corner. I called the Mayor's office and spoke to the secretary requesting removal of the pride flags and letters prior to the next events. The secretary expressed to me that in the beginning of the June there was a pride festival and the flags had been up to celebrate pride month. The secretary then wrote down my information and had plans to discuss my concerns with the mayor; she also informed me to send an email and how there had been several complaints on this issue. I thought this was interesting that there were already several complaints and wondered why was this not being addressed?, why was the mayor not resolving the issue?? So, I decided to send an email and unfortunately never received a response. This was quite disheartening. I made a second call to the mayor's office , once again spoke to his secretary; I expressed how I did not receive a response to my email or a phone call. She apologized and remembered my name and said she would follow up. She certainly did follow up, unfortunately the response was not adequate enough for me and focused more on my ethnicity to celebrate Hispanic month instead of the question at hand. Third call to the mayor's office; you would of thought by this point he would of liked to speak to me unfortunately that was not the case. I asked for explanation on the email I received from her; with again no adequate response and at this point I wanted to know who I could speak to that could resolve this issue. I was finally referred to Linda Reed who was gracious enough to call me back and we had a wonderful conversation, this is another reason I am standing here today.

There are many celebrations held here in the city of Middletown and they each get there day to shine, not one over shadows the other except LGBTQIA + community. They have turned pride day to pride month to pride year. As a Christian believer the world wants us to be silenced and assume we have hate towards LGBTQIA+ community; people feel by my request I'm cruel or I'm a bigot. This is quite the contrary we come with bible words of love and truth to make a change and everyone has a choice, its not my responsibility to judge. I don't agree with a pride festival it does not represent me, my values and who I am as a person; and there are many people who feel this way.

Today Common Council I have 3 requests. 1. Pride festival is one day in June, once this festival is complete that the following day all flags, letters on the green and representation of the celebration be removed just like the other festivals, parades and celebrations we have. We celebrate that day and all items are taken down and removed so we can move forward to the next celebration, holiday or parade which would be Juneteenth and Car show which are celebrated in the same month. 2. Scaling back pride month to pride day the actual day of the celebration, to once again prevent overshadowing other festival or holiday's. 3. Requesting removal of the pride painted colors on cross walk on Main St. The

pride colors on the crosswalk represent a group of people, not everyone including myself. I would like to see a change making it more kid friendly. It would actually wonderful to allow the elementary school kids decide. What would they like to see painted on the cross walk. I'm sure the kids here in town have endless ideas. I have ideas myself , what about a water splash theme representing The CT. River with water, fish, boats, wave runners, or a park scene like Wadsworth Falls with trees, birds, flowers , waterfalls. How about a fun fact cross walk with information on the first mayor of Middletown, when was Middletown established , the population of Middletown? This is educational and fun to learn for any age and inclusive to all. No celebration should outshine another, when I went to the car show I had a great time. The pride flags and letters will still up and this does not represent what a car show is all about. There was a mix of people there that day, yes people that come together to enjoy and celebrate cars; the history from old to new to restored to electric, to sports cars to muscle cars and all in between, when I think of flags that should have been hung that day, they should have been a Nascar, checkered flags.

Thank-you for your time and please consider my request, before I close I would like read two bible scriptures.

Proverbs 3: 1-4 My son, do not forget my teachings, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3: 13-17 Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding for she is more profitable than silver and yields better return than gold. She is more precious than rubies nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.

Thank you again.

Elizabeth Martinez

EAMartinez1977@yahoo.com

203 427 1426

Councilman Faulkner asks to speak, if he may.

The Chair states that this is a public hearing so there is no discussion. Councilmembers are here to listen to concerns.

3. Public Comment Closes

There being no further public comment, the Chair closes the public hearing at 6:20 PM

4. Meeting adjourned

There being no further business, the chair asks for a motion to adjourn.

Councilman Edward McKeon moves to adjourn. Councilwoman Linda Salafia seconds the motion.

There being no discussion, the Chair calls for the vote. It is approved unanimously with nine (9) aye votes. (AYE: Councilmembers Blackwell, Faulkner, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, Marino, McKeon, Nocera, and Salafia; ABSENT: Councilmembers Carta, Ford, and Pessina.) The matter is approved.

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