

At a Special Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Middletown, RI held at the Middletown Town Hall, 350 East Main Road, Middletown, RI on Wednesday, May 23, 2018 at 6:00 P.M.

Council President Robert J. Sylvia, Presiding

Vice President Paul M. Rodrigues

Councillor Henry F. Lombardi, Jr.

Councillor M. Theresa Santos

Councillor Dennis B. Turano

Councillor Antone C. Viveiros

Councillor Barbara A. VonVillas, Members Present

POSTED – May 16, 2018

Wendy J.W. Marshall, Town Clerk

Town of Middletown

Town Hall – 350 East Main Road

Middletown, Rhode Island 02842

Dear Ms. Marshall:

Pursuant to the provisions of Article II, Section 203 of the Town Charter and in accordance with Sections 42-46-2., 42-46-3., 42-46-4., 42-46-5 and 42-46-6., RIGL, I hereby call a Special Meeting of the Town Council to formally consider, discuss and vote upon the following items of business:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

1. Public Hearing (Advertised)

An Ordinance of the Town of Middletown (First Reading)

An Ordinance in amendment to the ordinances of the Town of Middletown General Fund, Parks and Recreation Fund and Sewer Fund, Refuse and Recycling Fund, Appropriating revenues for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Said meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 23, 2018, at 6:00 P.M. at the Middletown Town Hall, 350 East Main Road, Middletown, Rhode Island 02842.

Robert J. Sylvia, President

Middletown Town Council

cc: Town Council School Department Town Administrator Senior Center Town Solicitor Police Dept.

Finance Director Fire Dept. Public Library Public Works Tax Assessor Building Inspector

Town Planner IT Director Town Engineer Human Resource Director School Department

Recycling Coordinator Prevention Coalition Coordinator

This meeting location is accessible to the handicapped. Individuals requiring interpreter services for the hearing-impaired should notify the Town Clerk's Office at 847-0009 not less than 48 hours before the meeting.

1. Public Hearing (Advertised)

An Ordinance of the Town of Middletown (First Reading)

An Ordinance in amendment to the ordinances of the Town of Middletown General Fund, Parks and Recreation Fund and Sewer Fund, Refuse and Recycling Fund, Appropriating revenues for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Public hearing was declared open.

Town Administrator Shawn Brown thanked the Town Council for having the public hearing. Mr. Brown reviewed the General Fund, Sewer Fund, Parks and Recreation Fund and Refuse and Recycling Fund. The Town is requesting a 2.5% increase, the Schools are requesting a 4% increase, which equates to a 2.9% increase in taxes.

Discussion centered around the sewer I&I charge is down by .21, PAY-Throw program fund balance is \$446,000, a pink bag may be introduced for clothing which will divert waste from the landfill, the increase in income from the Campground fees, the Wave Avenue Pump Station and trying to divert some wastewater to the Coddington

Pump Station and the need for more participants in the PAY-Throw program.

Gail Ponte, 191 Valley Road, Principal MHS, addressed the Council requesting support for the 4% increase for the schools. Mrs. Ponte explained without the 4% the students will suffer, there will not be enough resources to assist students.

Discussion centered around the computers the school purchased a few years ago, if the upgraded computers will be leased verses bought and the School Department has check to see if other communities purchase or lease computers.

Kellie DiPalma Simeone, 18 Pocahontas Drive, Middletown School Committee Chair, explained that the budget is a hard process. The School Committee has a responsibility to students and the administration does more with less. Mrs. Simeone reviewed differences between the Middletown School Department, Portsmouth School Department and Newport School Department. There is defined student to teacher ratio which must be followed, there are two less teachers due to enrollment, custodial staff has been reduced, and the schools are lacking in support services. There have been reductions made throughout the budget.

Discussion centered around the State Funding Formula determining what each school district receives, at one time the state said

Middletown was overfunded, emails should be sent to the Governor, State Senator and State Representatives regarding the decrease to Middletown for school state aid, there are 25 Middletown students going to Newport Career Tech, the school facilities budget includes staff and maintenance to the buildings, the special education budget is five million dollars and Middletown pays about 52% of the Special Education budget.

Council President Sylvia noted that the Town Council allocates funding to the school, but the Town Council does not have a say regarding what cuts the School Department makes.

Tom Kowalczyk, 9 Beechland Place, addressed the Council suggesting the School Department join the Advanced Course network and become a provider for the network. If the Town joins and becomes a provider, the state will pay for the courses. Mr. Kowalczyk also suggested parent contracts, which is a strategy used by other schools districts.

Discussion centered around that students do take classes at CCRI, Middletown is a member of the Advanced Course network, Project Lead the Way allowed the School District to have two pathways Engineering and Computer Science which a MHS teacher has been trained to teach, the teacher training is through grants, Schools in Massachusetts being funded by the state not the cities or towns and regional and local costs of Special Education.

Janine Brown, 107 Niagra Street, addressed the Council noting support for the School budget explaining the need for extracurricular activities for the students because there are no community centers and idle hands are not good. Ms. Brown noted the exceptional teachers in the Middletown School system.

Paul Mankofsky, 20 Pequot Lane, addressed the Council noting that at the April 28, 2018 meeting the School Department was unprepared for Council questions. Mr. Mankofsky noted that the school department budget is 85% salaries and the school department has failed to justify the 4% budget request.

Marin Holden, 75 Trout Drive, addressed the Council noting the need for athletics in the schools. The GPA to allow participation on the teams is 2.0, which helps students stay on track. Ms. Holden explained that the student will do anything to help to keep the athletics in the schools.

JP Massaro, 673 East Main Road, Tennis Coach MHS and Rogers Boys Soccer Coach, addressed the Council requesting them to do their job and fund the 4% to the schools, noting athletics makes people who they are.

Mary Allen, 9 Baldwin Road, parent, former Kindergarten teacher noted concern that the school is hiring teachers with less experience

because of budget cuts, also concerned with no full time Curriculum Director. Ms. Allen requests the Council to fully fund the budget.

Alison Ansley, 128C Niagra Street, addressed the Council noting she is a part of the music program at MHS. Ms. Ansley explained the music program has given her opportunities and the Boosters contribute to the funding of the program.

Paula Hawes, 208 Weschler Road, addressed the Council in support of fully funding the school budget. Ms. Haas was concerned that the budget has been cut in prior years leaving the schools without staff, including a Dean and Librarian at Gaudet Middle School.

Payson Fugitt, 1 Kent Road, addressed the Council noting he is in favor of each student having a laptop. Mr. Fugitt noted support for level playing fields for all students.

Molly Dickinson, 192 Peckham Avenue, addressed the Council noting that she is tired of the Town Council not fully funding the Town and Schools and not supporting the School Resource Officers. Ms. Dickinson explained that not funding the budget erodes the quality of life making Middletown less desirable to live here.

Council President Sylvia noted that he supports the School Resource Officers and was the one who made the motion to institute the program in all schools.

Councillor Lombardi noted he has spent time in the schools as a volunteer and a coach. Mr. Lombardi explained that he wants what is best for the schools.

Vice President Rodrigues noted he has lived in Middletown his entire life, played football, has always been a fan of funding sports, has met with the facilities directors, attended a Unified Basketball game and has a child in the school system. Mr. Rodrigues explained that he will make his budget decision based on the facts.

Councillor Viveiros noted that the Council preserves the quality of life in the town and wants Middletown to be number one.

Councillor VonVillas noted that she teaches at Roger Williams University, was a teacher at Middletown High School, was an Administrator, her grandchild is at Middletown High School and has a tremendous amount of respect for teachers. Ms. VonVillas noted concern with how we stretched our minds with technology; explaining that books should not be taken away, text books are important.

Councillor Santos noted that she is proud of all the kids tonight for being at the meeting and speaking.

Toni Cawley, 153 Oak Forest Drive, Forest Avenue School Teacher,

addressed the Council in support of the School budget, explaining that every year there are cuts, the students need to be taught as a whole. There is a need for nurses and guidance counselors.

Discussion centered around thinking outside of the box, all students need the chance to play a sport, the Council admires educators, it takes a special person to teach and students not being able to read cursive writing.

Kyla Benisch, 263 Rogers Lane, addressed the Council on behalf of students explaining the students rely on sports, music and extracurricular activities to give them something to do. Ms. Benisch noted that these activities help students get through the day and motives them to do better in school.

Theresa Spengler, 1111 Wapping Road, Vice Chair School Committee, addressed the Council explaining that the School Committee and Administration have done their due diligence in preparing the School Budget and requests the Council to fully fund. Ms. Spengler noted the importance of high quality educators, academics and activities. The School Department has restructured and reorganized staff over the years, cutting thirty-four positions. The budget is based on enrollment and the School Department cannot be sustained without full funding.

Discussion centered around the funding formula, replacement of the

student information system not being supported anymore by the vendor, reductions in the technology budget, teacher laptops are the first to be replaced, the grant that provided wireless network to each classroom and the technology cost per pupil.

Hannah Bedard, 24 Dudley Avenue North, addressed the Council in support of fully funding the School Budget. Ms. Bedard noted she moved to Middletown from West Warwick for education and explained the importance of being involved with school activities.

Bailey Stearns, 10 Maple Avenue, addressed the Council in support of fully funding the School budget. Ms. Stearns explained the importance of the chores, music, other activities and technology being critical.

Amy Rodrigues, 644 East Main Road, addressed the Council noting she is a business owner, resident, has three children, involved in the schools, explaining the need for fully supporting the school budget. Ms. Rodrigues noted you cannot rely on 4%; explaining funding should be more, all items in the proposed budget are important.

There being no other persons present desiring to be heard, public hearing remains open.

Vice President Rodrigues announced that the Second Public Hearing for the budget will be held on May 30, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

On motion of Vice President Rodrigues, duly seconded, it was voted unanimously to adjourn said meeting at 9:30 p.m.

**Wendy J.W. Marshall, CMC
Council Clerk**

**Supporting documentation is available at
<http://clerkshq.com/default.ashx?clientsite=Middletown-ri>**