

**SANITATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2013
TIME: 4:00 P.M.
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
ROOM 210
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

REGULAR MEETING

Members Present: John Uccello
Bobbye Knoll Peterson
Tom Goglia

Staff Present: William Russo, Public Works Director
Lee Matterazzo, Tax Collector

Absent: Seb Santacroce

In Chair Santacroce's absence, John Uccello opened the Sanitation Commission Meeting at 4:10 p.m. He requested a motion to begin the meeting. Motion was seconded and approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Director Russo requested that Lee Matterazzo, Tax Collector come to the meeting to explain where the commission is with the delinquencies as well as what the program is and how aggressive the tax collector's office has been. There is an outside council that does all the work with the liens and other procedural work involved with the tax office. He stated that once a year this information is brought to the commission so everyone is up to date.

- a. Delinquencies – Lee Matterazzo explained the process and stated that Liz Cyranowicz- Sanitation Clerk, Tina Gomes- Chief Management Analyst and William Russo- Public Works Director meet together a couple times a year to go over the sanitation billing and to generate a delinquency list to give to her. Typically the list consists of about 10-30 bills and are distributed 5-10 at a time to attorneys Cohen, Burns, Hard and Paul out of West Hartford, Connecticut. Within 6 weeks to 6 months the sanitation bills are generally paid in full. Lee sends out notices to the attorneys based on the timeliness, the dollar amount and age of the account. From there the attorney will send correspondence to the home owners or anyone else that has liens, until each account is taken care of. This procedure doesn't cost the city any money, because the cost is forwarded on to the tax payer. A few of them are frequent flyers and know the procedure so their payments are paid almost immediately.

Bobbye Knoll Peterson asked tentatively if there is a system for a tax payer that knows they are behind to call and set it up so that their information will not be sent to an attorney. Lee clarified that she does not have the authority to set a system up for payment plans. Generally, Lee gives advice

towards tax payers that proactively approach her to prevent anything having to be sent to the attorneys. In other words, a formal payment plan will not be issued, but payments on their account may be made depending on their diligence. After Bill decides what kind of threshold there is, Lee is given the top ten of the top twenty past due tax bills. From there, she will feed them off to the attorneys after reviewing all of the corresponding files and ensuring that there are no other monies due to the city from that particular person or company.

Lee stated that a \$24.00 lien is charged per cycle when a tax bill remains unpaid based on the state statutes. Sometimes this may vary by a month or two depending on the staff in the tax office. If there is a bankruptcy or a sale, the deed cannot be transferred without the tax bill being paid in full, so the city cannot lose any money on that particular property.

Lee's goal is to keep the City of Middletown a friendly place to live. She conducts her department in the tax payer's favor and does her best to work with them while still remaining diligent. It is not a priority or a goal to jump towards collecting all of the taxes due so that it leaves homeowners homeless.

The year of 2009 is almost cleared up; there are a couple more that need to be sent out to the attorneys. After the correspondence is completed, 2010 tax bills come next. Lee will then ask for the first 10-20 overdue tax bills in accordance to highest dollar or numerical amounts and send those out to the attorneys as well.

Director Russo stated that about a month after the tax bill goes out, a generic letter will be sent out. This will help relieve the tax office of further delinquencies. Most of the small offenders will make their payments to relieve the amount of interest they will have to pay to the city, which is 18%.

Director Russo added that as a rule, city employees are not allowed to be tax delinquent.

Currently the city is owed \$215,000.00 in total for tax bills, which covers the past 5 years.

Director Russo stated that a lot of landlords are not cooperative with payments or attempts to make payments for bulk waste pick-ups. A lot of the time bulk is left in front of their tenant's houses and no payments are made to the city. Letters go out to the landlords, followed by bills charged for the \$75.00 pick up, and majority of the time no responses are received. If taxes are due on a property that is not paying for their pick up, the bulk waste will still be picked up. The city cannot leave garbage out on the street.

Bobbie Knoll Peterson asked if there are funds such as the *Jones Fund* that will help to pay or that will pay light fees such as the bulk waste pick ups. Lee was unsure of this answer, but it is a possibility. 22.23

- b. Trash Can Removal Ordinance – Director Russo stated that trash containers are continuously being left out by the street after trash pick-up. Letters have been sent out in hopes to put the issue to an end but nothing has since changed. As a commission, as well as working with the recycling coordinator, Kim O'Rourke, a decision needs to be made with whether or not the sanitation ordinance will include trash removal. Once a decision is made, it will be forwarded to the deputy city attorney, Kori Wisneski for ordinance study. From there, she will submit it to ordinance study and it will then have to be adopted by the common council. Director Russo will then have the power to

enforce the ordinance, which means certified letters will have to be sent out to all of the landlords that leave their garbage remaining on the street. Fines will have to be highlighted in the letters to broaden the awareness of the issue, so it will not be taken as lightly as it has been.

Director Russo asked Bobbye Knoll Peterson if Grand Street and Prospect Street are involved in the NEAT organization. Bobbye confirmed that it is a part of the organization and that most of the houses in that area have nowhere to put their trash containers. Email chains and newsletters have also gone out to gently remind people but there have been no results from this action. Director Russo asked Bobbye if she can remind them that the commission is putting together an ordinance so they can start getting in the habit of removing the container from the curb to be more considerate to the neighborhood.

Director Russo asked the commission to go over the ordinance to see if there is any language changes that are needed or if there is anything that needs to be gone over. The deputy city attorney will be invited to the next meeting so that she can explain the powers that the ordinance will give the commission. She will also be able to adopt the language change so that it can be applied to the ordinance.

Acting Chair Uccello made a motion to table the ordinance for next month. Motion was seconded and approved.

- c. Appropriation for Big Belly Trash Containers – Acting Chair Uccello asked what a big belly trash container was. Director Russo stated that it is a contained solar barrel. There were a total of 12 containers purchased for Main Street. These barrels help to make Main Street look more inviting and reduce the amount of seepage in front of restaurants and popular places. In the past, there were 48 broad iron barrels on Main Street with a plastic container inside. The sanitation department would have to poke holes in them to reduce the amount of rain water so that they can lift them into the trucks. Over time, seepage would come out of these holes and end up on the sidewalks of Main Street. The long term goal is to replace all 48 barrels on Main Street, starting with the 12 that were purchased last year. The black broad iron barrels from Main Street are going to be transferred to the parks since they see more paper garbage rather than food.

There was a discussion regarding the maintenance on the big belly containers. Director Russo stated that there are only a few movable parts in the containers. The garbage side has a solar press, which presses the garbage into a cube, which gets dumped into the garbage truck. When the sanitation department goes to empty the garbage, there will be lights on the side of the container that resemble a stop light. When the light is red, it means that the container needs to be emptied, which is done with a key. If it is on the yellow light, it means that the garbage is getting to be more than half full. The green light means that the container does not yet have to be emptied. These containers are checked every morning and sanitation stays on top of emptying them. The company tried to sell the city some software that tells the department when a container at a certain location needs to be emptied. Director Russo felt that it wasn't necessary at this time, since Middletown only has 48 containers on Main Street and the costs to be included in the software would be too high. Simple Green is used to clean the shoots and all around the containers about every 2 months. The big belly containers will also prevent garbage from locations that are not supposed to be throwing their trash away in other containers. The fund balance as far as the finance department goes, is supportive of this method of cleanliness with the big belly containers.

Acting Chair Uccello made a motion for the appropriation to allow us to get the \$55,530.00 from the Sanitation Commission's fund balance and for the Sanitation Commission to allow the progression of the current invoice for the next set of 12 big belly containers to be ordered and paid. Bobbye Knoll Peterson seconded this motion, and the motion was approved. 42.21

OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Tonnage Report – Director Russo stated that he would like the commission to see the tonnage report so that it can be watched carefully. The tonnage report goes from 2008 to present and it shows a decrease, which is a positive. None of the accounts in the district, as well as the residential accounts are being cut down. This means that people are learning a lot more about recycling which costs the city a lot less.

OTHER:

As there was no other business, the Sanitation Commission meeting was adjourned at 5:01 P.M.