



**COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

**SPECIAL MEETING
QUESTIONS TO DIRECTORS**

**MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2023
6:30PM**

MINUTES

A Special Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Middletown, Questions to Directors Workshop, was held on Monday, June 5, 2023, beginning at 6:30 PM. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with in-person participation in the Common Council Chamber and remote access via WebEx. The meeting was also simultaneously livestreamed on local cable access television, on the City's webpage, and on the City's Facebook page.

Present:

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

Hon. Benjamin Florsheim, Mayor
Linda Reed, Clerk of the Common Council
Sgt. Gaffney, Middletown Police - Sergeant-at-Arms

Absent: Daniel Ryan, Esq. – Corporation Counsel

Also Present:

Arts & Culture – Kisha Michael, Coordinator
Central Communications – Wayne Bartolotta, Directors
Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management – Faith Jackson, Director
Fire Department – John Woron, Fire Chief
General Counsel – Brig Smith, Esq.
Health – Kevin Elak, Director
Library – Ramona Burkey, Director
Police Department – Eric Costa, Police Chief & Sgt. Gaffney, Sargent-at-Arms
Police Union – Lt. Nick Puorro, President – AFSCMA Local 1361
Public Works – Christopher Holden, PE, Director
Recreation – Cathy Lechowicz, Director
Technology Services – Brianna Skowera, Director
Water & Sewer – Joseph Fazzino, Director
Youth Services – Justin Carbonella, MPA, Director
Board of Education – Eduardo Miranda, Finance; Natalie Forbes, Grants

Beman Middle School "Mayor for a Day" Program: Teacher/ Moderator: John Geary; Students: Blake Anderson, Isabella Behrend, Olivia Bysiewicz, Dina Hunter Anthony Gennaro, Aiden Goldenberg, and Emily Juliano

Public: in-person: 3 WebEx: 10 Facebook: unknown

1. Call to Order

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 6:32 PM. He welcomes everyone to the Common Council's Special Meeting, the Questions to Directors Workshop. He notes that the Council is joined by students from Beman Middle School, noting that, during the Regular Meeting, there will a more interactive process with these students.

The Chair states that Brianna Skowera, the Technology Director is attending remotely, but is also hosting another City event. He asks that, if anyone has questions for IT, they will be taken at the beginning of the meeting. He adds that Paul Jorgensen of Silver Petrucelli & Associates is present on WebEx to answer question for the Board of Education along with Eddie Miranda and Natalie Forbes.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair asks Councilman Philip Pessina to lead the public in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance Councilman Pessina asks Beman student Aiden Goldenberg to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Council Clerk Reads the Call of the Meeting and Mayor 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. Questions to Directors Workshop Opens

The Chair opens the Questions to Directors session at 6:36 PM and calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo. Since Technology Services Director Brianna Skowera is the first staff member, the Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera asks for General Counsel Brig Smith. He asks Attorney Smith to explain the collaborative piece of Resolution 10C, which involves the American Rescue Plan Task Force recommendation to move the \$300K allocation for façade improvement on Main Street.

Attorney Smith states that the Downtown Business District was previously awarded \$300K in ARAP funding. The thought was that they would take that money and do a grant program with downtown businesses. As they got further along, they realized the administrative difficulty of doing that. They said, "Hey, why not repurpose the money, sending it back to the City, back to Public Works." Public Works is already doing that stuff downtown. They will work with Public Works to try to carry out a bigger, broader version. It is simply taking the \$300K and shifting it to Public Works and broaden the mission.

Councilman Nocera states that, as they just went through with the purchasing workshop, purchasing will be handled through Public Works, budding and so forth.

Attorney Smith replies, "Yes," noting it will be through Donna (Formato, Purchasing Supervisor) and the City.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon

Councilman McKeon offers congratulations to Attorney Smith on his assignment, teaching a law class, adding that this assumes that it is approved by the Council later this evening. He states that he has a question. He asks Attorney Smith to explain why the Council needs to approve a resolution to allow the City Attorney to teach a class.

Attorney Smith replies that there is a City ordinance – Section 74-5 -- that states if someone is going to work during normal City business hours, they have to have the approval of the Mayor and the Common Council. He states that the Mayor is fine with it and believes that everyone on the Council is as well. Nevertheless, they have to pass a resolution as a body saying that they will allow him to do so. He will teach this class on his own time, using his flextime and vacation time, and personal time. It will not be on City time. It is for two (2) hours per week for 14 weeks. During that term. He will be teaching a local government class, which is passion He states that he used to teach complex civil litigation when he was in Lansing, Michigan. He reiterates that he loves it and that it is a joy as is local government.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo states that he and the City Attorney have had some discussions and have exchanged some emails about his future employment in that capacity at Quinnipiac. He ask Attorney Smith if Quinnipiac reached out to him or did he reach out to them.

Attorney Smith replies that he reached out to them, actually to UConn Law and Quinnipiac, reiterating that teaching is a passion for him. He noted to both that neither has a local government class and he asked if they would like one. UConn did not have the capacity for it at this time, as they are not doing adjuncts. Quinnipiac said, "Eh, we'd like to do one. Send n a proposal and let's see what you've got." They told him that they like what he has and come on board.

Councilman Loffredo asks if they have contracted Attorney Smith.

Attorney Smith replies that he still has to go through the HR and all of that to be on boarded, provided that they don't find anything deeply concerning, adding that he does not think that they will.

Councilman Loffredo states that the resolution states that here will be two (2) hours of classes. He notes that Quinnipiac is in Hamden so Attorney Smith will have to travel. He adds that he does not know what time the class will be held. . He asks if it is just two hours or, to fulfill the responsibility, it will actually be four (4) hours – back and forth – so that you will come back when class is over to the General Counsel office.

Attorney Smith replies that the class is two (2) hours. It is Wednesdays from 2PM to 4PM, adding that everyone is welcome to audit it, if they want and ask him any difficult questions. He will leave from City Hall on his own time, teach on his on time, and from 4 Pm to 4: 30PM be on his own time as well.

Councilman Loffredo thanks Attorney Smith and offers congratulations.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina states that the General Counsel has always been very good providing opinions when needed. He is now going to play the "what if" game. He knows professors from having worked at Southern (Connecticut State University) of 10 years. God forbid, if a situation happen and the mayor needs his consult, because he has a great staff and they should all be very comfortable with the staff in his absence. He asks if Attorney Smith will be available, if they need him.

Attorney Smith replies, "Of course."

Councilman Pessina replies, "That's the answer." He offer congratulations, noting that Attorney Smith will do very well.

The Chair calls on Councilman Nocera.

Councilman Nocera states that he will share an experience a couple of semesters ago. He did as Attorney Smith to help him with the public school law course that he was teaching in New Haven. Attorney Smith agreed to come down and participate. He quips that all semester long, the students asked when he was going to bring "that guy" back. He was a hit. Thank you.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo followed by Councilwoman Blackwell.

Councilman Loffredo notes that, on the regular meeting agenda, there are two items related to Snow School and the building committee: one on the roof and one on the photovoltaic panels. There are requests for the City to provide its fair share of the funding. On the call is the consultant, who is helping to put together the estimates for the school. On the phone is Paul Jorgensen of Silver Petruceli. He asks him to provide an overview of the costs and to explain how those costs were determined for the roof and photovoltaic cells.

Paul Jorgensen thanks the Council for the opportunity to appear remotely. He wanted to be here to answer questions. They have prepared estimated for both the Farm Hill and Snow School projects. They recently completed the Farm Hill project, noting that the estimate was right on. They had an estimate and four (4) bidders. They had one low, one just below the estimate and two just above. The range in that estimate was exactly where they wanted it, adding that they had good bid representation. Sometimes estimat8ing can be tricky in this market with inflation and other things. They have prepared estimates for the PV for Snow School and for the roof. They revisited the number earlier this year so they know that they are currently numbers. If anyone has questions about the projects or estimates, he is glad to answer specific questions.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Linda Salafia.

Councilwoman Salafia notes that the estimate on the roof, she was told that it was a materials take-off estimate and not an estimate to build. She asks if this is correct.

Mr. Jorgensen replies, Correct," adding that the estimates . . . they are not contractors. The contractors control the manpower that staff the jobs. The estimate are always a combination of take-offs, which they do for all materials. It is based on square footage: how long it would take to install, which translates into labor costs. They do not have hourly costs, as that is not their purview, but they do have materials costs, take offs and overall square footage. To their credit, their estimates have been very accurate lately, right in the ballpark.

Councilwoman Salafia asks that, when estimated, they did not take into account the labor – the standard wage labor laws – that they have to meet.

Mr. Jorgensen replies that they do.

Councilwoman Salafia replies that she will not be shocked if this number is low. She asks if this is a good number of what it will cost to put the new roof on that building.

Mr. Jorgensen replies that the short answer is yes. They stand behind the number. Estimating is a tricky task and is one of the harder things that they have to do because market conditions can change quickly. These estimates were done earlier this year; however, they see bids come into their office and the roof prices are accurate to this estimate lately.

Councilwoman Salafia states that she has one other question, noting that the building committee may already now the answer. When the photocells are placed on the roof, what are they attached to?

Mr. Jorgenson replies that it depends. There are several different ways of installing a panel. On Snow School they have a hybrid approach when they have flat roofs or what the call "low slope" roofs, they are ballasted, which means a miniature sled is used and weighted down on the of. They have already done a structural analysis so the roof can take the extra weight of the ballast.

Councilwoman Salafia asks him to define "ballast."

Mr. Jorgensen replies that his is to weight the panels down, usually with concrete blocks or any heavy material, which, literally the panels are made to be weighed down. There is a second method for the sloped roofs of the school: the bracket system, which is connected to the structure. It is usually made of aluminum or some other lightweight metal. These are physical brackets, which connect to the roof. There is a combination of methods at Snow School.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell followed by Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilwoman Blackwell calls on Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management Director Faith Jackson. Councilwoman Blackwell asks about Item 7J the quarterly report for the 3rd Quarter of January 2023 to march 2023. As it related s to the two columns related to new hires and promotions She asks, relative to the 12 candidates for the new hires, were they “goal candidates” positions or not and the same for promotions, She wants to know if the person, who got the position was a “goal candidate” ;for that position or not. That is her question for those 17 positions.

Director Jackson replies that this question is not a small order, but she believes that she can reply. First, she brings to their attention, on the report; it states that Affirmative Action Activity report for 3rd Quarter. Below that, there are the hiring goals for each EEO category. The hiring goals are set by EEO job category. For each job category, there are varieties of City positions, which is how the City sets it hiring for each category. It gives us greater orotundity to hire a diverse workforce. Hiring goals are set for each position. A requisition from the Department Head is submitted to fill a vacancy, a job opportunity with the City. When the hiring director submits a requisition, the same goals that you see here appear on that hiring requisition. Say it is a Police Officer. If so, then the goal for EEO4, which are specified here, also appear on that employment requisition. She does not care if there are 15. They all receive the same hiring goal. That gives us greater opportunity to try to achieve the hiring goal. She notes that sometimes that does not happen, but sometimes we are lucky to achieve that. Once the hiring goals are set, that requisition goes back to the HR Department so they are now also aware of the hiring goals. They can then begin the hiring process. For the 12 positions that Councilwoman Blackwell asked about, she does have that information, The City does not do a lot of hiring. We had a minimum of about 50 new employees. We might have 88 to 100 job opportunities. The other 50% is actually filled by internal candidates through promotions, mobility and we call it musical chairs. If a Lieutenant leaves, it becomes a domino effect. The Lieutenant position becomes vacant. The Sergeant may move up and police office position becomes available, In this case, you will see that we had five of the 12 new hires were police officers. The same hiring goal was set for each of these employment requisitions submitted by the Police Chief. They will all be the same. For a police officer – a certified police officer – there were 12 certified applicants, they went through the process and testing with the written and oral panel to determine who was qualified. We get to the bottom where six males, including one disabled vet, and three females. That is a total of were qualified for the position. They were all qualified. Of the hiring goals for that position, the goal was black male, Hispanic male, three females, one black female and one other female. There were no black males, there were no Hispanic males, and there were no two or more males. There were no black females and there were no other females. There were three qualified white females and one white female was a hiring goal so they achieved a hiring goal. In addition to their hiring goal, we also hired white females. They hired two white female officers in addition to the three males. The is the scenario, She asks if that answer the questions

Councilwoman Blackwell asks, going forward, would Director Jackson provide a summation in addition to the report, or, alternatively, she will ask Director Jackson during Questions to Directors. She is curious to know, going forward, the details of goal candidates. She also wants to say that at this report has been added to the General Counsel Commission agenda. They are focusing on re recruitment and need to focus on retention. She will also explore with GCC on Thursday, as she is curious about recruitment and retaining the people, whom they hire. She thanks Director Jackson, noting she may get the additional information.

Director Jackson notes that there were other positions with hiring goals that were achieved.

Councilwoman Blackwell asks for that.

Director Jackson notes that they will take the Tax Collector, the Tax Clerk position in the Finance department. She commends the Finance Department as they do very well diversifying their workforce on all levels. This is where they achieved another hiring goal.

Councilwoman Blackwell gives a shootout that he City did hire two female police officers.

Director Jackson states that there is another positions with a lot of goals for diversity and no goals were achieved for that position. In the Tax Collector office, the Tax Clerk, there were many applicants. It filtered to 18 qualified applicants. The hiring goals for that position were one Black male, one other males, 2 males, 1 Black female, 2 Hispanic females and 1 other female. Out of that pool, there were two Hispanic females and one was hired for the Tax Collection Department. The other one that she would like to address, which shows that their job is to be an equal opportunity employer, noting that the key word is “opportunity.” Opportunity on our side and for some applying for a position at City Hall. When they get to where all things are equal, it is imperative that we be more conscious of how we hire and achieving the City’s set hiring goals to increase workforce diversity.

Councilwoman Blackwell thanks Director Jackson, adding that this should help Director Jackson know knows the level of detail that will be requested.

Director Jackson states that she will come up with a way of summarizing this information without disclosing all of the employee information because of HIPPA and privacy law.

The Chair states that it is 7:03 PM so we will consider a motion to adjourn.

Councilman Loffredo states that he has not had an opportunity to ask a question.

The Chair asks if this is for an agenda item.

Councilman Loffredo states the it is for this director.

Without objection, the Chair calls on Councilman Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo states that it is what is going on with the Supreme Court and perhaps the Director has some knowledge. We anticipate that the U.S. Supreme Court will be acting on an affirmative action case. He asks if that decision may have any impact on the City's affirmative action hiring processes.

Director Jackson asks if this is in higher education.

Councilman Loffredo replies, "Yes," asking if it might trickle down to the municipal level.

Director Jackson replies, "Np," unless the court indicates that it also applies to government and municipalities.

Councilman Loffredo notes that we will see that decision shortly, Thank you.

3. Questions to Directors Workshop Closes

There being no further question, the Chair closes the Questions to Directors Workshop at 7:04PM.

4. Meeting adjourned

Councilman Eugene Nocera moves to adjourn. Councilman Vincent Loffredo seconds the motion.

There being no discussion, the Chair calls for a voice vote. The motion to adjourn is unanimously approved with 12 aye votes (AYE: Councilmembers Blackwell, Carta, Faulkner, Ford, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, Marino, McKeon, Nocera, Pessina, and Salafia). The matter is unanimously approved. The meeting is adjourned at 7:05 PM.

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