

# MIDDLETOWN LEADS

## WHAT IS MIDDLETOWN LEADS?

*Middletown Leads* is a weekly newsletter intended to connect the Middletown community by providing information about the civic undertakings of the Town.

## PROPOSED HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

At the March 18, 2019 Town Council meeting, there was discussion of the potential implementation of a Homestead Exemption to benefit long-time Middletown residents. It was proposed that up to a 10% exemption be applied to property occupied as the primary residence of a Middletown taxpayer.

Taxpayers applying for the exemption would have to provide evidence such as drivers licenses, voter registrations, and tax returns to prove that they occupy the property as their primary residences.

The exemption would be applied to a property's tax assessment and would be set yearly by the Town Council.

The proposal stimulated much discussion. Questions were asked relating to the amount of the exemption, the manner of identifying primary ownership, and the impact of the exemption on the tax rate for other properties.

It was agreed that more information needed to be provided, including answers to specific questions, and the item was referred to the next Town Council meeting.

## SENIOR HOUSING

The Town Council's Senior Housing Committee will be meeting with a local non-profit to explore the possibility of a partnership to develop senior affordable housing.

The committee is scheduled to report back to the Town Council with firm recommendations at the first meeting in May.

## PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

In conjunction with the governor's initiative to promote universal pre-school, a presentation was made to the Town Council regarding a proposal by East Bay Community Action to provide pre-kindergarten classes at John F. Kennedy School to be funded by a grant.

The program would be separate from the Middletown School Department although concerns were expressed about a potential mandate when the 2-3 year grant would no longer be available.

Currently 28% of the students entering Middletown public schools have attended a Pre-K program, more than likely having attended one of the seven private programs situated in Middletown. Questions arose about the potential impact on those businesses

The Newport School Department uses approximately 7 classrooms, the cafeteria, and office space. It sub-leases 4 of the classrooms to EBCAP for all-day pre-K. Newport uses 3 of the classrooms for ½ day pre-K (they run 5 classes.) Newport pays approximately \$100K in rent. Its lease will expire in June 2020.

In addition, Newport Adult Education rents the JFK Annex, which they use in total for their programs. They desire to expand, and they also pay approximately \$100K in rent.

Concerns were also expressed about the condition of the building. According to the Facilities Condition Assessment Report completed in July 2018, the cost of addressing the deficiencies in the property are estimated at \$4,039,069.

From another perspective, interest has been expressed by those who want to know when the West Main Road properties will become available for redevelopment.

The Town Council asked for more information prior to responding to the EBCAP request.

## FIBER OPTIC EXPANSION

The Town Council approved the installation of fiber optic cables from the Police Station to the Sachuest Beach pavilion and to the campground office as provided in the Capital Improvement Program.

## BUDGET PROCESS

Administrators and Department Heads have been working on their budgets to review and justify their expenses for the anticipated presentation of the FY 2020 Town Budget to the Town Council. A similar process is taking place at the School Department.

The FY 2020 budget is scheduled to be submitted to and received by the Middletown Town Council on April 1, 2019.

The Town Council will review the proposed budget, including presentations by various departments, with a goal of unified presentations at Public Hearings scheduled on Wednesday, May 22, 2019 and Wednesday, May 29, 2019.

## FOOTNOTE

Weekly essays about Middletown community and municipal affairs will appear on the Middletown Public Library website.

Editorial essays may appear in the following: [MiddletownLeads@blogspot.com](mailto:MiddletownLeads@blogspot.com).