

# 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.

## TOWN COUNCIL MEETING – MAY 20, 2019

### **Homestead Exemption:**

At the Monday, May 20, 2019 Town Council meeting, authorization was requested to send the proposal for a Homestead Exemption to the General Assembly for its approval. (This exemption had been proposed more than a year ago; it was withdrawn at that time and was re-introduced in April 2019.)

The Homestead Exemption was intended to provide tax relief for residents whose primary residence is in Middletown as evidenced by such documentation as federal and state tax returns, car licenses and registrations, and voting records.

As the Town population ratio has continued to shift from permanent residents to renters, it seemed that those whose primary residence was in Middletown should benefit more than those whose rental of property generated additional income.

The motion on the floor was simply a request for enabling legislation. If approved by the General Assembly, the measure would have been returned to the Town, which would then have developed an ordinance with specific detail to be approved by the Town Council after public hearings.

Councilors were reminded that the tax proposal brought to the Town Council last year was sent to the General Assembly under similar circumstances; the Town Council did not vote to recommend implementation but rather to secure legislation enabling implementation if the Town Council so desired. Discussion of that measure is awaiting a feasibility report from RIPEC.

In the spirit of fairness, a similar action was requested of the Town Council - that the measure be sent to the General Assembly to allow the Town Council to develop and propose an ordinance that would provide immediate relief to eligible taxpayers. Without enabling legislation, the Town Council cannot act.

Nevertheless, the proposal to send the request to the General Assembly was defeated: Councilors Lombardi, Sylvia, and VonVillas voted in favor; Councilors Flynn, Rodrigues, Santos, and Turano opposed.

### **Short Term Rentals**

The Town Council discussed the first reading of the revised proposed ordinance related to the management of short-term rentals, which increased the annual fee for each bedroom to \$55.00. There was further discussion regarding issues related to owner responsibility for renters, i.e., noise, parking, etc.

## **Purgatory Road**

A second reading of an ordinance related to the designation of Crescent Road as One Way from Purgatory Road hit a dead end. The Town Council again heard multiple concerns about the traffic issues that have already developed.

As a result, the ordinance was not approved.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS – FY 2020 BUDGET**

Two Public Hearings are required before the FY2020 Budget can be enacted.

The first Public Hearing was conducted on May 22, 2019. A second Public Hearing will be conducted on Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 6:00 PM in the Middletown Town Hall.

## **SCHOOL BUDGET**

Discussion between the Town Council and the School Committee continued to be contentious. Additional information had been requested by Town Council members regarding the funds allocated to the administrators and non-union personnel.

At a previous meeting, the School Committee had stated that performance bonuses were given in lieu of raises; however, a correction was made that, in some situations, the bonuses were awarded in addition to salary increases.

There was no explanation regarding the justification for the performance bonuses, other than they were in lieu of salary increases.

There were questions about one-time stipends, which seemed to be granted in place of performance bonuses.

Notice was also taken of buy-backs for vacation days that were not used – in some cases over \$6,000 - as well as travel allowances of \$2,500, which seemed to be given automatically in total rather than based on documentation of travel expenses.

The School Committee is proposing the maximum increase to its appropriation (capped at 4% by the state) from \$26,510,694 to \$27,571,122 – an increase of \$1,060,428.

## **FOOTNOTE**

Editorial essays appear occasionally at the following website: <https://middletownleads.blogspot.com/>