



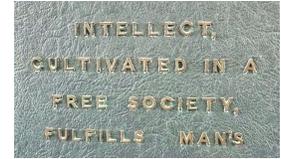
NEW COUNCIL
TAKES OFFICE



REVISED PLAN
FOR SCHOOLS



REGISTRY
HELPS



WHERE AM I
IN MIDDLETOWN?



Giving Back To The Community

Town, Employees Look To Help

At Middletown Town Hall, it's not just about helping out with building permits, tax payments and access to public records.

For staff at the East Main Road government center, it's also about giving back to the community whenever possible.

Recently, Town Clerk Wendy J.W. Marshall and Accounts Payable Clerk Marybeth Sylvia announced they were collecting donations to help a Middletown family in need at the Women's Resource Center in Newport.

The fundraiser has been run by town staff for as long as anyone can remember, just one of the efforts to assist those who are less fortunate in Middletown.

To give to the campaign, drop off or mail a check addressed to "The Town Of Middletown" at the Town Clerk's office, 350

East Main Road, Middletown, RI 02842. Make sure that "Women's Resource Center" is listed in the notes portion of the check.

"We work with people out in the community every day and know there's more of a need than most people realize," Marshall said. "It feels good to know the work we're

doing is going directly back to support a family who lives here."

"I can't tell you how good it feels to know we're helping the people of Middletown," Sylvia added. "This is just one example of what we do to help Middletown, because at the end of the day, that's what we're all about."

Like Sylvia said, the Women's Resource Center fundraiser is just one of the ways that town employees

across the community help.

Rarely a couple weeks go by when the Middletown Senior Center isn't collecting for one important cause or another. Same with the Fire, Police and other departments. And that doesn't include all the work in the Middletown schools.



The town has a number of programs — mainly out of the tax office — to ease the burden on those likely most in need of assistance.

There's a social services page on the town's website — <https://mdl.town/Services> — that outlines some of the various offerings available from the outstanding community providers that serve Middletown.

The town recently hired Lori Turner as the Healthy Services Coordinator to better coordinate such offerings for every population in Middletown, whether that's

children, adults, the elderly, non-English speakers and beyond. To reach Turner, send her email at lturner@middletownri.com.

After Marshall spoke about the Women's Resource Center fundraiser during a recent meeting, council President Paul M. Rodrigues and others were very complimentary of the group's work. The council unanimously voted to contribute \$600 to the campaign.

"I think it's great what you do," Rodrigues said. "Great job to you and your team."

Positive Progress Promised For Middletown

Town Council President Says Teamwork Is Critical

Towards the end of a recent inauguration ceremony, Paul M. Rodrigues acknowledged there was a lot on the plate of the incoming Town Council.

With questions like what to do about the aging school buildings, the continuing education budget deficit and making Middletown more affordable, the council president said there were no shortage of issues to keep the new council busy.

But based on his read, Rodrigues said if everyone gets on board and works together for the best of all of Middletown, the sky was the limit, setting a positive tone for the next two years.

"Teamwork is the key to moving our town forward," Rodrigues said. "We can accomplish all these initiatives if we all work together as one in the same direction. However, we must all pull the rope from the same end."

The festivities drew a far larger crowd than in past years, with most of the chairs set up in the Middletown High cafetorium filled.

With Town Clerk Wendy J.W. Marshall overseeing the inauguration, the Middletown Police and Fire departments Color Guards presented the flags. That was followed by a singing of the National Anthem by the Middletown High Chorus. After the Pledge of Allegiance, Rev. Father Thomas D. O'Neill delivered the invocation. Next, the town's Board of



Canvassers certified the election results, welcoming Rodrigues, Vice President Thomas P. Welch III, Peter D. Connerton Sr., Christopher M. Logan, M. Theresa Santos, Emily M. Tessier and Dennis B. Turano to the 2022-2024 council and Wendy E. Heaney, Gregory M. Huet and Theresa Spengler to the school board.

Drawing loud applause, Gov. Daniel J. McKee read the oaths of office to the school board and council, thanking them for their time and efforts to make Middletown — and Rhode Island — a better place to live.

The council also thanked outgoing members Terri Flynn and Barbara A. VonVillas for their dedication and work to better the community. Departing school board members Douglas W. Arnold and Liana Fenton and State Rep. Deborah Ruggiero were also honored.

In additional business, the council named Frank Holbrook as Municipal Court judge, Robert Silva as assistant Municipal Court judge and Kevin Hagan as second assistant Municipal Court judge.

Michael Miller was selected as Probate Court judge, Barbara Barrow as assistant Probate Court judge, Peter Regan as town solicitor and Anthony Pesare as town prosecutor.

Then, Rodrigues pledged to work with the schools to “develop a strong, cohesive relationship” to help address continuing issues on the educational side.

“The road to addressing the needs of our schools has proven difficult on several fronts, but we remain committed to moving the educational

opportunities for our children, teachers and residents forward,” Rodrigues said. “We will regroup, explore every option and bring forward the best plan of action available for our children and our taxpayers.”

He said the council was equally dedicated to helping make Middletown more affordable.

“We also have several affordable housing initiatives to help our seniors, young families and our workforce residents to get the housing they need and deserve,” Rodrigues said. “The balance of affordability and quality of life will always be a top priority so our residents can enjoy the beauty of our great town and remain in their homes.”

No matter what happens, Rodrigues said he had no doubt the council would work hard for Middletown.

“We are here to serve the people of Middletown to the best of our ability,” Rodrigues said. “We promise you two things. First, that we will work very hard for you and second, that we’ll be extremely passionate about protecting your taxpayer dollars.”



New Combined Middle-High School Mulled

School Building Committee Moves Quickly, Decisively

It looks like Middletown might pursue a new combined middle-high school north of Gaudet Middle School. During a recent meeting in the Oliphant Administration Building, the School Building Committee acted decisively to recommend construction of the new state-of-the-art grade 6-12 facility at the former Starlight Drive-In site now occupied by mixed use fields.

“From the visioning sessions and input from parents I’ve heard, this model fits — (grades) 6-12 and pre(kindergarten)-five,” fellow Co-Chairman Charlie Roberts said.

“It’s what we’ve been talking about for months,” School Building Committee member William Nash added.

“From an educational point of view, the opportunities for six, seven and eighth (graders) to participate in some high school courses with the new high school regulations coming out, it gives that population wonderful options,” Superintendent Rosemarie K. Kraeger said. “When you look at career tech and our career pathways, it gives some of our middle school students great experiences.”

The news comes less than a month after Newport voters left close to \$50 million on the table by rejecting regionalizing school districts with Middletown on Nov. 8.

That move would have cleared the way for not only the new middle-high school on the Gaudet land, but also a combined prekindergarten and elementary school center on the Valley Road site now home to Middletown High. All told, the price tag for the entire project was \$235 million, 80.5 percent of which was going to be covered by the state.

Because limits on how much money the town can borrow, the School Building Committee and others in attendance agreed the elementary school center could not be on the table now.

Rather, they said a separate bond proposal for that project would likely need to be floated in five to seven years.



Before any proposal moves to voters for approval, further details need to be flushed out and given the blessing of the School Committee, Town Council and state General Assembly.

Citing tight state deadlines on reimbursement aid, town officials said they’d like to have a special election for voters to weigh in on any proposal. According to the latest timeline, that could take place as early as April.

“Certainly, Option A meets what we told the taxpayers when we put the bond out there (on Election Day), except now we’re doing it in two steps instead of one...” School Building Committee Co-Chairman Ed Brady said. “We’re on a short timeline...and it allows us to get a lot of bang for our buck.”

In the meantime, the town and School Department would keep the existing elementary schools going — particularly Aquidneck School where there are the most issues — as affordably as possible.

During the discussion, the preliminary cost of the new middle-high school was estimated at about \$115 million by architects HMFH Architects and DBVW Architects, with the combined elementary school coming in at \$71 million.

H M F H Architects Senior Associate Matt Larue said those figures were very rough and would need fine tuning before a formal proposal was put before the School Committee, Town Council and bond counsel.



T o w n Administrator Shawn J. Brown said he would work on trying to determine Middletown’s safe bonding load through discussions with financial and bond advisors.

He noted the community has one of the best bond ratings in Rhode Island — Aa1 — and that might be diminished with a large school project and other work, but it would be for the right reasons in his mind.

Brown said he would update the building board on those issues and more at the group’s next meeting on Dec. 14 at 5 pm from Oliphant.

“The sooner we can come up with what the idea is, we’ll work with it,” Brown said. “It’s not going to happen overnight. We had a solution where we could do it quickly and that didn’t work out, so now we’re back to more of a managed approach.”

For a midweek afternoon, the session from the basement meeting room drew a sizable crowd. Several current and former Town Council members — including Thomas Welch III and Peter Connerton — were on hand along new School Committeeman Gregory Huet, School Committeewoman Tami Holden, multiple residents and Newport School Committee candidate Robert Power.

Two weeks earlier, the school building board met for the first time since Newport voters r e j e c t e d regionalization. At that session, members of the volunteer board and others agreed it was critical for Middletown to prepare to move forward on its own with its school buildings in order to try to capitalize

on available state aid.

A November 2021 report found Middletown’s four schools need extensive upgrades and improvements. DBVW Architects of Providence reported at least \$190 million in work was required, everything from asbestos and mold remediation to upgrades air handling systems, new elevators, windows and other costly work.

Previously, the schools started the process with the state Department of Education (RIDE) for reimbursements of “Band-Aids” to each building. That proposal was nixed by RIDE, which said it wanted more upgrades to the educational environment.

Shifting gears with regionalization, Middletown voters overwhelmingly approved a \$235 million bond to clear the way for construction of a new middle-high school and

combined elementary school, plans from DBVW and HMFH Architects of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In the wake of the election, local leaders said they'd reach out to Newport and Portsmouth officials to see if there was a stomach to pursue regionalization, a move that would net additional state aid for new building construction, potentially 80 cents on the dollar, if not more.

Brown, Welch and the building board Co-Chairmen Brady and Roberts said they hadn't gotten an official update on the status of any talks.

"Right now, we have to move forward at the same time with a plan without

regionalization of any type because no community has come to us and said they want to do regionalization," Roberts said.

"At the same time, there's still interactions between the communities, but we have to do this (Option A)...There's been effort from our town on reaching out to Newport, to Portsmouth, to other communities and they've had nothing to say. We haven't heard back."

"As much as I'm in support of Option A, if Newport comes back to the table or Portsmouth comes to the table, we have to listen," Nash said. "We're more than willing to consider that. I don't want to lose sight of that."

Sign On With Special Needs Emergency Registry

Could Save Time, Lives When Minutes Count

When minutes count, it's critical for police, fire and first responders to have the right information at their fingertips.

Does someone living in the home use oxygen, a respirator or other life support system? Maybe they rely on a wheelchair, scooter or cane to get around? Or have other

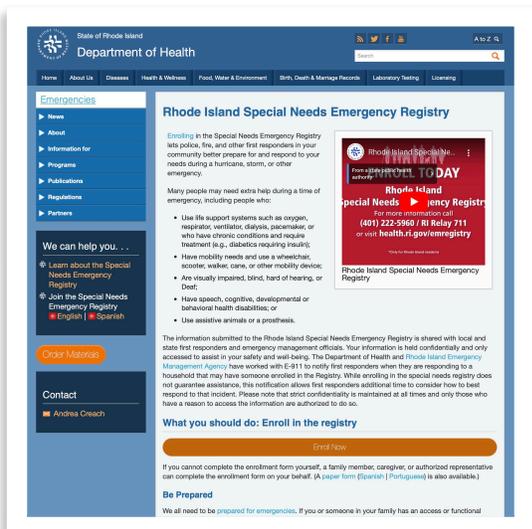
special needs or issues that could impact how their call is handled?

By filling out the "Rhode Island Special Needs Emergency Registry," Middletown Fire, Police and other emergency providers can have all those details readily available before arriving at the scene to lend assistance.

This is especially important as winter begins its march and the weather starts to turn colder outside. For more information about the registry, visit <https://mdl.town/SpecialNeedsRegistry> online or call the non-emergency line of the Middletown Fire Department at 842-6500, ext.1150.

"I know for a fact that we rely on the Special Needs Emergency Registry any time there's a major weather event on the horizon or some other type of emergency," Town Administrator Shawn J. Brown said. "Our dispatchers will go right to that list and make calls, checking to see if everything is okay or anything we need to be aware of."

In today's world where concerns about confidentiality are paramount, the



information from the registry is closely guarded.

Besides local and state first responders and emergency management agency officials, it is not shared with anyone else, considered completely private and secure.

As organizers explained, enrolling in the special needs registry does not guarantee assistance, the notification provides first responders additional time to consider how best to handle each case.

Those unable to complete the form are asked to have a family member, caregiver or authorized representative complete the document. A paper form in Spanish or Portuguese is also available.

The town administrator Brown said the special needs registry form was one of the many ways people can prepare for emergencies. He also encouraged people to pack emergency kits, have important financial documents at the ready and know where all critical credit cards and other information was at a moment's notice.

"It's one of those things people probably are tired of hearing, but it's true," Brown said. "Maybe it's my Army training, but we were always told to be ready for anything and it makes sense in our personal lives too because that 30 minutes or hour you take preparing ahead can result in a lifetime of difference."

Where Am I?

Inspiring Words For Students, Educators Can Be Anywhere

The quote could almost be posted anywhere in Middletown.

"An Enlightened Intellect, Cultivated In A Free Society, Fulfills Man's Noblest Purpose" certainly sounds like something to inspire visitors to the Naval Undersea Warfare Center on Access Highway or the Middletown Public Library on West Main Road.

But neither of those institutions can lay claim as host to this month's "Where Am I?"

That honor actually goes to the plaque commemorating the construction of Middletown High School on Valley Road.

Located by the main office across from the lunchroom, hundreds of students and staff pass the large metal plaque on schooldays, scarcely giving it a second look.

In addition to the encouraging quote, the plaque includes the names of the Middletown School Committee members at the time. Also featured were the names of the school advisory committee along with the building architects and other pertinent information.

After sending its high school students to Newport for years, Middletown opted to build a high school of its own in 1961.



Since then, tens of thousands of students have passed through those doors, learning about everything from complex mathematics to the town itself to better prepare them for life after high school.

Happy Holidays From The Town Of Middletown

REMINDER TOWN HALL CLOSES:

- DEC. 23 AT NOON & REOPENS DEC. 27 AT 8 AM
- JAN. 2 & REOPENS JAN. 3 AT 8 AM



It's Never Too Early For Summer

GET A GIFT CERTIFICATE FOR A 2023 SECOND BEACH PARKING PASS
[HTTPS://MDL.TOWN/BEACHGIFTCERTIFICATE](https://mdl.town/beachgiftcertificate)



MIDDLETOWN MERCHANDISE

EVERY DOLLAR RAISED GOES TO OUR PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS

<https://mdl.town/Merchandise>



MIDDLETOWN



TOWN TRASH & RECYCLING NEWS

Starting The Week Of Dec. 5, Please Take Note Of The Following Permanent Route Switches

- "PAY AS YOU THROW" CUSTOMERS WHOSE REGULAR COLLECTION DAY WAS MONDAY NOW WILL HAVE COLLECTIONS THURSDAYS
- "PAY AS YOU THROW" CUSTOMERS WHOSE REGULAR COLLECTION DAY WAS THURSDAY NOW WILL HAVE COLLECTIONS MONDAYS



