



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

QUESTIONS TO DIRECTORS

**MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020
6:00 PM**

MINUTES

The Special Meeting – Questions to Directors Workshop -- of the Common Council of the City of Middletown was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Monday, January 6, 2020, at 6:00 PM.

Present:

Councilwoman Jeanette White Blackwell
Councilwoman Meghan Carta
Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.,
Councilman Darnell Ford
Councilman Edward Ford, Jr.
Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Sr.

Councilman Vincent Loffredo
Councilman Anthony Mangiafico
Councilman Edward McKeon
Councilman Eugene Nocera
Councilman Philip Pessina
Councilwoman Linda Salafia

Also Present:

Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim -- Chair
Corporation Counsel Daniel Ryan, Esq.,
Clerk of the Common Council, Linda S.K. Reed
Arts Coordinator – Keisha Michael
City & Town Clerk, Ashley Flynn-Natale, CCTC
Communications – Robert Grauer, Dep. Dir.
Diversity & Equal Opp.– Faith Jackson, Dir.
Finance – Carl Erlacher, CPA, Director
Fire Department – Chief Robert Kronenberger
General Counsel – Brig Smith, Esq.

Health – Dr. Joseph Havlicek, M.D., Director
Library – Ramona Burkey, Director
Parking – Geen Thazhampallath, Esq., Director
Planning – Joseph Samolis, Director
Police – Chief William McKenna
Public Works – William Russo, Director
Recreation – Cathy Lechowicz, Director
Tax Assessor – Damon Braasch, CCMA II
Technology Services – Bryan Skowera, Director
Water & Sewer – Joseph Fazzino PE, Director
Youth Services – Justin Carbonella, MPA, Coordinator

Members of the Public: 3

1. Call to Order

Mayor Benjamin Florsheim calls the Question to Directors Workshop to order at 6:01 PM. He leads the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk 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 Opens

The Chair opens the meeting to Councilmembers for questions. The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera asks Director of Diversity and equal Opportunity, Faith Jackson, to the podium (*Inaudible*)

Director Faith Jackson and Human Relations Commission Chair, Justin Carbonella, step to the podium and introduce themselves to the Council.

Director Jackson explains that the Councilmembers have in their packets the preliminary report from the consultant with whom they have been working, the national Conference for Community & Justice. She explains that they have on a journey for the anti-racism initiative in Middletown. There has been training for all City department heads and other community stakeholders, including the Chamber, Liberty Bank, and other outside organizations. They conducted four (4) focus groups, which were affinity groups of people of color to get their input as to what it is like to live in Middletown in regards to equity and equality and a number of other things going on in the City. The consultants have done a wonderful job with these focus groups. The report, if you have reviewed it, gives insights and snippets of some comments received from people of color, who live in Middletown. They address what it is like to live in Middletown: is the City a

friendly, inviting community; if they have job opportunities in the City; and a whole gamut of other things. She indicates that there are some comments in the packet. She explains that the consultants will also be called up to the podium to give further input. The last phase of the project is to conduct a community dialogues with the affinity groups, expanding from 10 people to 30 people per group to get a broader array of people to speak on what it's like to talk about racism and diversity in Middletown. Director Jackson states that she will turn the podium over to the Justin Carbonella, Human Relations Commission Chair, and Brandie Doyle of Russell Library, who is Vice-Chair. When they are finished, the consultants will be called up to give the Council additional information.

Human Relations Commission Chair Justin Carbonella thanks the Council for its support and leadership on this project. It is critical for communities to take the opportunity to be reflective of how the City serves its entire population, particularly the most vulnerable and those who might be potentially the most oppressed. With this project, he is especially proud of work that the group is doing. They are not rushing to action, but to reflection and taking a measured and thoughtful approach to collective information and what to do with this information once collected. Often projects like these can sometimes do more harm than good. They bring people together with promises of action and then fail to deliver. That is what this group is very specifically trying not to do. In this work, they have to be sure that they are bringing people to center and lifting up everyone. He is appreciative of everyone's effort to be thoughtful and not simply rush to complete a report and wash our hands of it as we rush on to the next project. This is going to continue to be an important project for the City for several years to come. He looks forward to the Council's continued support of this work in the community to be sure that Middletown is the best it can be for all people.

Director Jackson returns to the podium and introduces the members of the Human Relations Commission: Ava Hart, Precious Price, Deborah Ruimerman, Howard Thody, and Brandie Doyle, who is also the Vice-Chair. In addition, present are members of the Little Town Racial Coalition, which was invited to come on board and work with the City on this initiative, having started the work long before the City did, and value to this project. The members are: Betsy Morgan and Beverley Lawrence. She invites the consultant from the National Conference for Community & Justice (NCCJ) to the podium, who are experts in this field. She introduces Nyaunu Stevens, who has a great handle on keeping the conversations and discussions on par. She know how to control it. She introduces Cynthia Martin, President of NCCJ.

Nyaunu Stevens asks if the Council would like an overview of what has been happening.

Councilman Eugene Nocera replies that the Council would like an overview of the report and the next steps.

Ms. Stevens states that she is the Director of Programs at NCCJ and Cynthia Martin is the organizations; President and CEO, supporting her work and collaborating with her to be sure that it is fabulous.

She explains that they have working with City for past year on this project. It is fantastic that the City has undertaken this project. Residents with whom they work feel both validated and heard that this project has gotten off the ground. She is confident that it will have a wonderful outcome for Middletown. They have already had two (2) 2-day anti-racism workshops with leadership. Attendees include: the former Mayor, Superintendent of Schools, Police Chief, members of the Human Relations Commission, and Faith Jackson, Human Relations Director. Programs were very well received and covered things such as history of racism, skill building, and understanding how we get socialized. Trainings were very successful. There were subsequently four (4) focus groups. Three (3) focus groups were for adult people of color to find out their experiences, navigating the City as a person of color. She reiterates that three (3) were for adult participants and one (1) had youth participants at the high school. The major themes at the focus groups were that people feel that there is a lack of opportunity for people of color, a lack of inclusion in certain areas in town and school leadership, and that people would like to have places where people of color can do more intentional community building and have more support in place. The need for a community center was voiced by both adults and youth. Other items are overall more support, more understanding, more representation, more communication about opportunities, and more good faith about opportunities that are put out there. These are some of the negatives, but she also wants to highlight the positives. Everyone who participated in the focus groups had wonderful things to say about the City and their overall experiences. The definitely felt that, in Connecticut, this is a good City to be in as a person of color. They are happy to be settled here. To echo what Chair Justin Carbonella said earlier, she adds that this is a yearlong project. It is about culture change in the City whether or not NCCJ is involved. One fear expressed in all focus groups – adult and youth -- is "now what." Often people start a project and then we hear nothing more about it. There is a concern that it will fizzle out and their participation will have been for nothing. She believes that it is important for this work to continue whether or not NCCJ is part of it.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina states that, at a recent meeting for the Martin Luther King Corridors community meeting, we heard that residents of the North End, which is the City's low socioeconomic area, are not clearly heard nor notified. As this work progresses with these focus groups, a great place to start would be with that neighborhood. People with whom he has spoken in the past do not feel that they have a direct voice. He thinks that, having attended the program, that this focus group would be welcomed there and would enhance the study.

Ms. Stevens replies that she agrees, noting it would be a good place to work. She explains that they have completed the focus group phase, apologizing that she was not clear about this. The next phase will be two (2) community conversations, which will have a larger focus with opportunity for people from those neighborhoods to come, adding that task is for the Human relations Commission, which recruits the participants.

Councilman Pessina states that this that needs to happen in that neighborhood even though it is only up the street. He recounts that, from the many conversation that he has had over the years on the Council, is that they do not feel that they are being heard. Perhaps if we can use the Community Health Center (CHC), noting that it is a wonderful place. He remarks that the Mayor was recently there for a training. He reiterates that something at that location would be very helpful and would give that neighborhood confidence as we are going to the rather than them having to come to us. He believes that the consultant will learn a lot.

Director Jackson thanks Councilman Pessina for his comments. She explains that the Commissioners help put together a list of individuals, whom we should invite to the focus groups, noting that it was a diverse group. There were some participants from the North End, noting that some participants commented to her that the Committee was very persistent in asking people to attend and participate in this process. Relative to the community dialog, the Committee is looking at setting up those sessions and the sites and will definitely entertain the idea of holding one at CHC is the place is available for the timeframes that the consultants have already provided.

Councilman Pessina remarks (*inaudible*)

Director Jackson replies that they are in the process of looking at that and can try to coordinate the CHC site for one of the community dialogues. She notes that it will be a bigger group and they will invite more people: individuals, who have already participated in the focus groups and which was supposed to be a total of 40 with 38 actually attending, and additional people so that they will have 30 people for each session to expand getting additional information, feedback, and input.

Unidentified speaker (*inaudible*)

Councilman Pessina tanks the Committee, adding that the training was outstanding.

NCCJ President & CEO Cynthia Martin thanks Councilman Pessina for sharing his concerns and ensure that they will make this part of the community conversation. She notes that the issue is that, if someone is not hearing his/her voice, or not feeling that his/her voice is being heard, what can be done to change that. That will absolutely be part of the conversation.

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner states that he appreciates that this discussion took place, He congratulates the Commission for its efforts and apologizes that he was not able to participate, nothing that, time wise, it did not work out for him. He asks if the people who went thru these groups employees or from the general population.

Director Jackson replies that the participants were from the general population, citizens of Middletown.

Councilman Faulkner describes this as great," adding that he tried to connect with this organization several times over the years but the timing has always been off. He missed his golden opportunity this time. He asks if all the groups were the majority colored or if other groups participated.

Director Jackson replies that participants were African-American, Asian, and Latino. She defers to Ms. Stevens, the consultant.

Multiple speakers (*inaudible*)

Ms. Steven replies that there are two (2) things that have been done so far. First, there were two (2) 2-day anti-racism sessions, which were mixed race groups, both white people and people of color. There were also the 2-day trainings, which focused on town leadership.

Councilman Faulkner replies that is the one he knows about.

Ms. Stevens continues adding that Councilman Faulkner may not have missed a golden opportunity, explaining that they do these workshops out of their Windsor offices every three (3) months. These sessions were white people and people of color, The focus groups were an opportunity for the consultants to do a deep dive into a few people's experiences navigating the City, noting that they were all people of color' a mix of Latino people, black people, and African-Americans as well as more recent immigrants, some Asian-American and Middle eastern people. It was well attended and very diverse

Councilman Faulkner states that is very good, adding that this what has been missed. There have been a lot of initiatives in the City and, after you attend, everything goes back to normal. He hopes that this is the opportunity to check this.

Director Jackson states that she wants to speak to this now that Councilman Faulkner has opened the door, adding that it is funding. This contract will expire after having been extended to March 31, 2020 to allow time to complete the two (2) community dialogue session with those who attended the focus group and to invite additional people, who were invited earlier, but who were unable to attend. They are hoping to get input from about 60 people at these working sessions. It will at a more in-depth level than previously. If this project is going to continue, then funding is needed. She explain that this is generally what happens: it starts and then there is no funding to continue the process and so it dies. If there is no funding and someone who runs the program, especially if it is something that will continue to escalate – elevate as it continues to

progress – it requires someone to manage the process and the program on a regular basis. It is not something to shove into another department and say “manage it,” because it will throw off that department’s regular workflow. She reiterates: there has to be staffing and funding for the program to continue to move forward appropriately. It also allows the City to bring in NCCJ to do more training as she is not an expert in this arena. She notes that she could not have conducted the training as presented by the consultants to the City, to department heads, to leadership, and to other community leadership. She adds that she does not believe that she could have conducted this training for leadership and community stakeholders. She offers to talk a bit about what the community dialogue will involve and how it will progress, especially so people know that it not the same as the focus groups. Each phase they will do something different, adding a different dimension to get broader information and get valid, more sustainable information to build on.

President & CEO Martin explains that NCCJ applied for a grant with Community Foundation in Middletown. It has been awarded to them, so they will be working in partnership with the high school again this year. She remarks that this is what makes it so beautiful: they are able to come at the issue from every single angle. It is not the place of children to make changes in the community nor is it only the responsibility of adults to make changes; rather, everyone needs to be engaged in the conversation. She explains that the grant award was just made on December 31st. They will continue to stay with the partnership with the high school, working with the young people and teachers. They are working and trying to stay in partnership with the entire town.

Ms. Stevens agrees with Director Jackson. NCCJ is here doing the work as experts. They are happy to partner with the City as long as the City would like. Going forward, there are two (2) community conversations coming up. The focus groups were large., explaining that a focus group is essentially a group interview, giving the intimacy and the depth of an interview, but with the economy of a survey because you work with larger group at the same time, producing a rich pool of data to look at and to describe experiences. The community conversations will be different as there will be an opportunity to hear people’s grievances and to look forward and do some breakout groups, some small group work to start looking ahead for what the City can be doing to be more inclusive for people of color.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera has two (2) comments. Nocera, in closing and recognizing that other people may have comments, as an ad hoc member of the committee and not a voting member, he commend the deliberative and sometime painful process to get where we are today. He is proud to be a part of this and recognizes Faith Jackson and Justin Carbonella and the full committee for making this happen, but also recognizing that this is only at the beginning as Councilman Faulkner has already indicated. The cost for the consultant was \$25K, a meager amount. He is hoping that request a similar request is in the budget to continue this project in FY 2020-2021 so Phase II may continue and we can move from where we are to a call for action on priority items

Director Jackson thanks Councilman Nocera and acknowledges him for being on board with this project from the get-go. She thanks him for his commitment to this work. She recognizes that the Council is committed; the Mayor is committed, also acknowledging his cabinet which reflects a good start. It is important work and is on the cutting edge, the leading edge. She believes that Middletown is on the cutting edge of being a model city of what it is to address issues like this and to take steps to try to improve the City for citizens and job opportunities. Thank you.

The Chair calls on Councilman Antony Gennaro.

Councilman Gennaro states that he has read the materials provided, including the comments, especially the students that the high school. If the City continues funding, he asks if this help get information to students and address their concerns. Some of their concerns include that they may not be aware of certain ways of doing things. This may help them as they work to try to achieve what they are working to do in the future and believe that they can work and can overcome certain obstacles. He asks if this process may help them get to where they want to be.

Director Jackson replies that she does hope so, adding that they are not only looking to address the issues of equity and equality, but also changing systems. Systems are part of the root cause as to why we are going through these scenarios and exercises and trying to change systems. She believes that once they do the community conversations, they will get more great data to lay the foundation where they need to work with the Board of Education, areas to work with the City of Middletown and City Hall. She notes that “City Hall” is quoted all over the place: that we need to change City Hall. We are off to a good start with these issues and continuing this community work with stakeholders

Councilman Gennaro asks Director Jackson if she can estimate the time frame for this work in the future. Director Jackson replies that we will see what the outcome is after the community conversations because, after working with the affinity groups, we need to bring in stakeholders to help move work forward. We cannot do this alone, but have to have additional conversations and training for mixed groups, which will include white people this time.

Councilman Gennaro thanks Director Jackson.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell.

Councilwoman Blackwell states that we all know that implicit bias – structural and institutional racism – exists. As former member of the Human Relations Commission, she is excited that the consultant has been able to work with the City of Middletown, adding that they have done a fabulous job. Having read the comments by both youths and adults, she believes that the issue of funding is a valid issue to raise. If this community is going to be raised into the 21st century as a community that looks at structural and institutional racism, we have to think about how to change policy, the system, and practices. She reiterates that she is so proud of them and their work.

Director Jackson thanks Councilwoman Blackwell for having been part of the Commission and now as a Councilmember.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward Ford, Jr.

Councilman Ford echoes the sentiments of Councilman Nocera and Councilwoman Blackwell. As a member of this committee, recounting the work of the past couple of years by Justin Carbonella and others. It has been a phenomenal ride and he looks forward to working with this group. The training that was done was powerful and moving and allowed him, as a person of color, to express his concerns that he has every day and for which he does not always have the platform to express. He believes that there is now a platform to express, which we have not always had. It allows him to talk to more people, who don't always hear these things. How do we do this in a more comprehensive manner, changing systems and policies? He believes that a big part of it is funding, adding that what we value should be backed with money. He hopes to find in this year's budget something to help with this. He recognizes his fellow committee members for their work, noting that they are the most dedicated group, all willing to speak their minds, respectful of one another during this very critical discussion. It makes people uncomfortable, which is a good start.

Director Jackson thanks Councilman Ford, adding that he is still on the commission as well as serving on the Common Council. She thanks him for being part of the team.

The Chair echoes the commendations, adding that he is excited for the work yet to come. The Chair asks if any other Councilmembers have questions for directors. The Chair calls on Councilwoman Meghan Carta.

Councilwoman Carta states that she has a question for Attorney Brig Smith, the City's General Counsel. Attorney Smith steps to the podium. She asks that he provide the background on the tax stabilization agreement with Charles Hajjar and the reason for the requested amendment.

Attorney Smith states that several members of The Hajjar Group are in attendance this evening: Tom Ford, Managing Director in Connecticut Joel Obrus, Esq., Of Counsel; and Annemarie Carrero, General Counsel. He adds that they have travelled some distance to attend. This agreement involves the 6-story mixed use project on College Street, adding that many may know that it encountered a fair number of problems by no fault of the developer. They overcame those problems and are still committed to it. It is fully leased on the retail side and almost fully leased for residential use. To do this project, like most projects, a construction loan is obtained to go from the ground up. The Hajjar group identified the opportunity to go from a construction loan with Citizens bank to a permanent loan with Wells Fargo Bank at a lower interest rate. Wells Fargo reviewed the existing tax stabilization agreement. The City had included a fairly robust anti-assignment provision, saying "You shall not assign in any way, shape, or form your interest in this project," adding the reason for this is simple: we want to know with whom we are doing business. The Hajjar Group said that we are doing business with them and they don't want to assign it. Wells Fargo says that is fine, but asks what happens if the project "goes south." Wells Fargo identified a problem with ether assignment language, which says "You shall not," but, by operation of law, if it happens, it still shall not be assigned. Attorney Smith asks, "What does that mean?" Attorney Smith replies that it means, by operation of law, if the project "goes south," the assignment of the tax stabilization agreement cannot be assigned. Attorney Smith continues, asking, "Who cares," replying "We care and they care." He explains that the tax stabilization benefits allows the costs – the threshold for the entire project – to be lower. If the project "goes south" and it is on the market and someone goes to acquire it and it doesn't have the benefit of the lower tax burden over the seven (7) year vista from start to the end of the stabilization period, then the project is less valuable and less likely to be acquired on the market. If the bank is less likely to acquire it, it is more likely to be vacant or underutilized occupancy. It is a problem. Neither The Hajjar Group nor the City wants this to happen. Resolutions have been worked out with The Hajjar Group for many years, noting that they have the Citizens Bank Building, Middlesex Plaza, and this project, noting that they first acquired property in Middletown in the 1990s and that they still own it. They do not divest; they have no foreclosures; and they are never late on any payments. They are a good partner and will be here, having invested about \$50M in the City. This proposal has no financial impact on the City; rather, it is just changing that provision to allow them in the event of a foreclosure, to pass along the tax stabilization so it can be reinvested with some other group. Although it would not be this group, hopefully, the City can keep the project going. Attorney Smith notes that is it in a nutshell.

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner asks if this agreement would be setting any precedent for the City or is it a one-time situation.

Attorney Smith replies that he does not think that it will set a precedent, adding that, to the extent that it does, it is "no skin off our nose." He notes that this is the same non-assignment clause that the City uses in all of its tax stabilization agreements, adding that, as Wells Fargo pointed out, it is "robust." He does not

think that the City has deviated from it unless, to the extent if another developer comes along and says, "What about a foreclosure," noting that, at that point, it can be addressed. If it does set a precedent, Attorney Smith states that he does not think that it is a bad one, reiterating that he does not think that it sets a precedent.

The Chair call on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon states that he want to be sure that he understands. He states that he initially understood that the tax advantage would go to the bank, adding that he did not realize that it would be passed to the next purchaser as well.

Attorney Smith replies that it has to be because the bank does not want to be a property manager. If the bank has to acquire – foreclose and take the property back as collateral -- they will want to get it back on the market and making money by its sale. The delta between the property with whatever value for tax stabilization versus no tax stabilization makes it less desirable for another end user to take it and run it.

Councilman McKeon replies, we then have no say in who that other entity could or would be.

Attorney Smith replies, "Correct."

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner asks that, for example, in the transfer, would the schedule change in terms of the (*inaudible*).

Attorney Smith replies, "No," adding that is a good question. He explains that the City would not be able to prevent the agreement from Wells Fargo from refinancing it and shipping it along. He asserts that we experience this all the time with our own mortgages: you buy a house and go thru Wells Fargo. Citizens Bank acquires it and then Liberty Bank and you go through five (5) banks by the time you finish paying off the mortgage, if you are ever done paying off the mortgage. This is the same type of situation, just commercial real estate versus residential. He adds that, if someone else acquires it, they would do so through foreclosure and Wells Fargo would send it along to someone else, but that agreement but agreement, that mortgage, would still apply. So just because Liberty bank acquires it from Wells Fargo doesn't mean your mortgage changes; it just means who has the mortgage changes. The terms of the mortgage would still apply.

Unidentified speaker (*inaudible*)

Attorney Smith replies, "Correct, correct."

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon asks Planning, Conservation & Development Director Joseph Samolis to the podium. Councilman McKeon states that to be sure that he does not have a misunderstanding. He recounts that he spoke with Director Samolis the other day about money being proposed for the boathouse. He recounts that Director Samolis had mentioned that there was a master plan. Councilman McKeon states that he knows that partnership for Public Places provided a plan, but that he does not know . . . he has looked and cannot find that there was any body that adopted that as the master plan. Councilman McKeon states that he wants to make sure about that.

Director Samolis replies that he believes that the plan was given to the Council as part of a master plan.

Councilman McKeon asks is the Council voted to adopt it as a master plan for the boathouse.

Director Samolis replies that he will have to double-check, noting that he doesn't know.

Councilman McKeon states that he could not find it so he just wanted to be sure.

Director Samolis replies that he will check.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo notes that Director Samolis provided some information on overall development of this if the money is expended. In a follow-up -- noting that he is not sure that it was sent out, but he did not see it – several millions in State funding has been provided.

Director Samolis replies, "Correct: \$2.6M to be exact."

Councilman Loffredo asks, at this point, what has been expended.

Director Samolis replies that \$1.4M has been expended.

Councilman Loffredo states that he was asking for the Council to receive the detail of that expenditure. He asks Director Samolis if he has been able to provide that yet.

Director Samolis replies that, for the most part, that information is listed in the report that the Council received from the Chair of the Building Committee that goes through the breakdown as to how the money has been spent to date. The bulk of it has to do with engineering and architectural design as well as assessment for that site. He states that, as he mentioned at the Finance & Government meeting, the site specifically is a brownfield. This money is meant to remediate that site, but, to determine the remediation plan, this concept plan had to be developed. The bulk of that money went to architectural design, engineering costs, assessments, economic studies to determine the feasibility of a boathouse facility as well as a rental space on top of it. All of that was encompassed in the \$1.4M

Councilman Loffredo asks how much of that money actually went to remediation.

Director Samolis replies that the rest of it has to go to remediation.

Councilman Loffredo states, "The balance."

Director Samolis replies that the balance has to go to remediation.

Councilman Loffredo states that, of the money that has been expended, no remediation has been done.

Director Samolis states that the assessment of the parcels was part of that \$1.4M.

Councilman Loffredo states that the issue that comes up is that we are dealing with coming up with some more architectural plans. He asks if that is correct.

Director Samolis replies, "Yes that is correct."

Councilman Loffredo asks if they can take the \$18,000 out of the State grant.

Director Samolis replies, "No, we cannot," adding that they are at threshold.

Councilman Loffredo asks of the other plans that have been developed, what value they provide to the City.

Director Samolis replies that they are still of significant value because a lot of that information was derived from numerous public meetings, meetings with the various rowing entities, as well as the architect hired out of Boston. They brought forth a tremendous amount of expertise along with Tighe and Bond as to what would be needed in order to build in a flood plain. That data is still available and is going to be utilized by DeBaptisto, who is slated to do additional concept work.

Councilman Loffredo continues, saying, if he understands correctly, the minimal cost for this project to go forward – for just the boathouse -- is tens of millions of dollars. He asks if that is correct.

Director Samolis replies that they estimate around \$10M, but that they really won't know until they do these concepts, noting it could be slightly less; it could be slightly more, depending on the concept that the Council decides to move forward with.

Councilman Loffredo replies that this will require . . . Director Samolis interjects, saying "a public referendum." Councilman Loffredo continues, noting it would be a public referendum for a new bond issue.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon states that he has one more question for Director Samolis. He asks if the money that remains, which is supposed to go for remediation, requires a plan for a boathouse on that site in order to access the money for remediation.

Director Samolis replies, "No," adding that the City has to go forward with the remediation at the end of the day. He notes that these concept plans are really for the Council for consideration for riverfront redevelopment as it moves forward. It is the Boathouse Building Committee, which has been working diligently over the last two (2) years to come up with a concept that the Council can consider for potential public referendum. But the remediation . . .

Councilman McKeon interjects, saying (*inaudible*)

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner states that this project was totally off his radar for a long time. He asks if the plan is to get back into regattas and things like that on the riverfront.

Director Samolis replies, "That would be the hope," noting that Middletown used to host the head of the Connecticut Regatta, which was one of the top regattas in the United States. Unfortunately, because of the decline of the administration of the regatta over the years, a number of the teams went to other races that started up: Head of the Fish, Head of the Schuylkill, and Head of the Riverfront. He states that, at one point in time, Middletown hosted one of the largest rowing events, but rowing events have grown in popularity, which is why the project for Public Spaces recommends moving forward with enhancing what the City already has at the riverfront. Ultimately, we would like to do more rowing events or programming at the river, whether

it is going to be the same type of head race that was once done as Head of the Connecticut – noting that he is not sure – but it may be something slightly different.

Councilman Faulkner replies that it will be interesting to hear what kind of niche Middletown can fit into.

Director Samolis replies, "Something different," noting that there are races that actually happen at night, which he thinks are a little hairy.

Councilman Faulkner states that he would be interested in hearing what they come up with.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina asks, relative to the remediation part, does the collapse of the brownstone, which he believes that the Army Corps of Engineers is looking to get repaired, is that all encompassing as part of the remediation.

Director Samolis replies that the limits of the remediation are from Sumner Creek to, basically, the canoe Club. He reiterates that these are the parcel that they are looking at. He adds that what Councilman Pessina mentioned is emblematic of what they are looking at in Columbus Point. He explains that at Columbus Point, that seawall has some significant failure, so this remediation will hopefully address and stabilize that bank as well.

Councilman Pessina asks if RiverCOG money, is there any possibility of getting some funding towards this Project for Public Places and what you want to do there. He asks if they have any grant funding that could come to the City.

Director Samolis replies that there are Federal grants that go through RiverCOG that the City can apply for in the future, specifically for multi-use trails. Typically COG likes to see those types of projects that go through multiple communities. This is still along Middletown's riverfront, but still vital to Middletown's history and Middlesex County. It is something that we can definitely look at applying for in the future.

The chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera states that he wants to be sure that he understands the remediation moneys can be used for anything that doesn't include the river. He asks if that is correct.

Director Samolis replies that the remediation funds can be used remediating the site as he mentioned before: from Sumner Creek to the Canoe Club.

Councilman Nocera asks how much.

Director Samolis replies \$1.2M, he explains that what they did with the original \$1.4M was to find the hotspots. As he mentioned at Finance & Government, there is a hump at Columbus Park, right before the statute, which actually goes down about 12 feet, explaining that is contaminated soil, which needs to be remediated. He adds that there is also levels of lead and other hot spots that need to be addressed: in front of the boathouse as well as north of the boathouse. He explains that those areas are going to be addressed. At the same time, they will be looking to modify the landscape to make sure that it is a clean slate for whatever the Council decides for as the plan of action for that park.

Councilman Nocera asks if the concept drawings can include work on the launch for the crew clubs, a potential boat launch around Columbus Park.

Director Samolis replies that the concept that they have planned do have modified docking area for rowing programs so that is included in the original concept drawing, so, "Yes," adding that the \$2.4M has to go for remediation.

The Chair calls on Councilman Anthony Gennaro.

Councilman Gennaro asks if there is \$2.4M for remediation.

Director Samolis replies that the amount is \$1.2M

Councilman Gennaro asks how soon the City needs to start on that so that we end of spending more than that for more damage that may occur.

Director Samolis replies that they are currently working with State DEEP and DECD to get all necessary permits. They are slated to go out to bid for the remediation within the next week or two, working with Donna Imme in Purchasing to do that. They are working to go forward with that work as quickly as possible.

3. Questions to Directors Closes

The Chair notes that it is 6:52 PM. There being no further questions, the Chair closes the Questions to Directors Workshop.

4. Meeting adjourned

Councilman Edward McKeon moves to adjourn. Councilman Anthony Gennaro seconds the motion. There being no discussion, the Chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous, with 12 aye votes to adjourn the meeting. The meeting is adjourned at 6:53 PM.

ATTEST:

LINDA S.K. REED,
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK

K: review/minutes/20 January 06 – minutes questions to directors – 06 January 2020