



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

**QUESTIONS TO DIRECTORS**

**MONDAY, MARCH 2, 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

Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim – Chair  
Corporation Counsel Daniel Ryan, Esq.  
Clerk of the Common Council, Linda S.K. Reed  
Sergeant –at-Arms – Officer Kurt Scrivo, Middletown Police Department

Also present: Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management.– Faith Jackson, Director  
Finance – Tanya Oliver-Perry, Deputy Director  
Health – Dr. Joseph Havlicek, M.D., Director  
Health – Kevin Elak, RS, Public Health Manager  
Legal – Brig Smith, Esq., General Counsel  
Public Works – William Russo, Director  
Recreation – Cathy Lechowicz, Director  
Tax Collector – Lee Muscatello, CCMC  
Water & Sewer – Joseph Fazzino P.E., Director  
Mayor's Administrative Assistant -- Barbara Knoll Peterson

Members of the Public: 4

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Benjamin Florsheim calls the Question to Directors Workshop to order at 6:04 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 at 6:06 PM. The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon calls Health Director Dr. Joseph Havlicek, M.D. to the podium. Dr. Havlicek is accompanied by Public Health Manager Kevin Elak. Councilman McKeon states that this current health issue is on everyone's mind. A week ago, there were no COVID 19 cases in the country; however, now, there are over 80 cases and six (6) deaths. While there are no cases in Connecticut now, next month there may be several. He asks Dr. Havlicek to provide background and information on what he and his department are thinking.

Dr. Havlicek states that he will talk about the virus and Public Health Manager Kevin Elak will explain what they are doing.

Dr. Havlicek states that he wants to put this in perspective, noting that the media coverage has changed that perspective and is overdoing it from what he sees. In 2018-2019, 42.9M people got seasonal influenza. We are now talking comparatively about 83,000 cases. In this country, 35,000 died and almost 700,000 were hospitalized. COVID 19 virus has not impacted us much, but the media has not yet impacted much but media sensationalizes it describing people in bed with blankets, tubes, and inhalers. In fact, most people don't do that; most people are not sick. Most have a mild illness so they don't even know that they are carrying it. That is a different perspective than the media is giving.

Relative to transmission Dr. Havlicek explains that the virus is transmitted by droplet infection. Droplets can be from a cough or sneeze, when someone does not cover their mouth. It could be small amounts that landed on a hard surface ring to face small number comparatively in countries so many spreads tremendously fast very contagious ore and you bring you hand form that to your face, adding that is probably a small number, comparatively. In these countries that have it now, and there are so many that do have it, it spreads fast. It is very contagious, perhaps more so than the seasonal influenza. It is important to do something here.

We know that we do not have a vaccine and that it will be, as Dr, Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergies and Infection Disease (NIAID) has advised, at least 1.5 years to develop. It has to be tested, which takes time. There is no anti-viral drug to treat coronavirus, noting that it is not the same as the flu virus. The virus is similar to SARS and MERS, which are strongly affect respiratory tracts. People come in to the doctor, they not only have a fever and feel sick, but they cannot breathe. This is not something that we ordinarily see with influenza until they pneumonia somewhere down the road, but it is not a start-off. It is a very serious disease, adding that SARS and MERS did the same thing, but not as contagious as what we are seeing with this.

We do not know how long this will be around, noting that SARS is still around in the animal community while MERS is gone. This all started in the animal community and spread from animal to animal and then to man. Now it spreads from man to man, which is difficult. In addition, people, who are asymptomatic, can be spreading it, which makes it more difficult because you may be talking to someone, who is carrying the virus, but not sick. It is difficult, adding how dangerous this is for health care workers. It is scary. As far as right now, he does not believe we are sick right now. We need to talk about this again as time goes on and we see what happens.

Dr. Havlicek explains that they have also been talking to the schools about their trips. There have been a couple of people to investigate and follow locally, which worked out okay. If we had a lot of people to follow, we would not be able to do that. People will be responsible to themselves and to the community and tell us what they have,

In terms of prevention, we are trying to slow it down. We talk about handwashing. He note that some people don't wash their hands at all, just pushing them under the water, grab a paper towel, and they are gone. We need to wash our hands for about 20 seconds and don't forget your thumbs. As for coughing and sneezing, they go into their hands and now it in their hands. Then they touch something and someone else touches it. Cough or sneeze into your elbow. If you are sick, stay home; don't bring it into the community because it is so contagious, comparatively.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera asks, since there is no antiviral drug, and since it varies from case to case, what is the protocol for treatment.

Dr. Havlicek replies that it is supportive treatment, noting that if someone is that sick, they need to go to the hospital and probably have a tracheotomy because you cannot breathe. There may be treatment, but not this time around, adding that this may disappear by summertime. We just don't know. He believes that the most dangerous thing is asymptomatic people could be carrying it and give it to others. Dr. Havlicek states that people come up and ask him if they should travel, adding that they are concerned for their children. It depends where they are going, adding that, if they are going to Disney World, he tells them "no, don't even think about it," because people from all over the world and you don't know what you are dealing with. It's an individual thing, but he is trying to be helpful without being too emotional, adding that he does get emotional about it.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina notes that Wesleyan had student from the Orient suspected of having the coronavirus. He asks if the City's Health Department was notified so that there was good communication between the parties.

Dr. Havlicek replies that it was wonderful, adding that the Health Department was notified by the State of Connecticut and received all the paperwork. He also spoke with the doctor. They were in contact the whole time and, as it turned out, the student did not have the virus, which was good.

Dr. Havlicek adds that there since been ne other reported situation, involving someone who came to the City from China. It was a part owner of a local factory. They questioned whether he had a problem because he had a slight fever. They monitored him until he left the State from Bradley International Airport. His point is, if there were 100 people, he is not sure that we could do this. People will need to take responsibility of caring for themselves, isolating themselves for two (2) weeks until they are certain that they do not have it.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell.

Councilwoman Blackwell states that she has a follow-up question regarding collaboration. In terms of the school system, she asks what protocols there are to be proactive.

Dr. Havlicek replies that we have been proactive, noting that because of the flu – noting that he has been the Medical Advisory for the schools for 50 years – the schools report to him every week on whatever they have. He explains that, a couple of years ago, he closed a school for several days prior to the scheduled spring vacation because of there was so much flu in the school. That did it and there was no problem after that. He is basically doing the same thing: he hears from the nurses every week; he hears from the supervisor even more than that. We are on top of it.

Dr. Havlicek turns the podium over to Kevin Elak, R.S. the City's Public Health Manager.

Public Health Manager Elak states that since Dr Havlicek has discussed the virus, he will discuss what the City is doing moving forward. As Dr. Havlicek mentioned, and as is well known, there is no known coronavirus in Connecticut right now; however, the situation is very fluid, so it can change at any time. Part of their job is preparedness, so we are on guard to be sure that we are ready for the worst rather than being caught off guard. In terms of precautions, he listened to the press conference of the U.S. Surgeon General was in Connecticut today and he mentioned don't shake hands anymore until this is over. It's a hard tradition to get over, so we want to consider the "elbow bump," which seems to be the new trend moving forward. In terms of what we are doing now, we are actively monitoring travelers coming to Connecticut, specifically Middletown. The protocol of the CDC for travelers coming from mainland China is that they are being funneled to one of 11 airports in the U.S., the closest being Kennedy Airport. When they land, they are questioned and given a card, advising that they will be contacted by the State or local health department. Once the State has notification that the traveler's final destination is Middletown, our local health Department is notified. As Dr. Havlicek mentioned, we had someone in Middletown, who did not live here, but was on a business trip, visiting a local factory. Although asymptomatic, the Health Department interviewed him and, because he had come from mainland China, which put him in the medium risk category, they are required to follow him for 14 days. By the time he arrived in Middletown, it was day 10 and he was only here for the day. Nevertheless, our department followed this individual. By day 14, he was heading to the Philippines. He notes that this is the only person that they have encountered so far. They suspect that his protocol will change soon now that there are cases in Italy, South Korea, and Iran. We have to wait to see what will happen with that. Planning ahead, there have been questions about collaboration. The City is collaborating with many community partners: Wesleyan University, Middlesex Hospital, Community Health Center, Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH), adding that they talk regularly, ramping up conversations to be sure we are on the same page and what everyone is doing. If and when this does come, we will all be prepared. That is what is being done now. As news comes from the CDC and State Health Department, as different protocols are handed down the Health Department will be ready to handle them.

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina asks if the Health Department was in contact with the factory so they were aware of the situation.

Mr. Elak replies that within about 30 minutes of talking with this individual, the factory owner contacted the Health Department and was said that the individual had come to the factory and was asked to leave the factory. They reviewed the precautions and they were satisfied.

Councilman Pessina notes that Middletown has a large Italian population. Prior to the CDC, there is enough (illness) out there. Because of the travel, has the Health Department thought of any way to communicate through St Sebastian Church to the City's Italian community, to be aware, to plan. He asks if the Health Department has any plan to do so.

Mr. Elak states that they have not given any thought, adding that it is a good point, to contact some of the communities in town to let them know. There is a Level 3 advisory in effect now for travel to Italy. Getting the word out, with the media doing a pretty good job of alerting people, but it is a good idea to reach out. Otherwise, it is hard to track who is going in and out of those communities.

Councilman Pessina states that St. Sebastian Church, Italian Civic Order, Italian Society, it's just a phone call so the word gets out. No panic, just so they understand. He asks, thinking ahead, as to the City's Emergency Operations Plan, are we on top of that so that if something starts to develop, we are not suddenly trying to convene, but part of our plan. He asks if health has started that. .

Mr. Elak replies, "Absolutely," adding that he cannot speak for Fire Chief Kronenberger, but a plan is in place, an Emergency Operations Plan. If an when the time comes, if it is still persistent, when a vaccine becomes available, the department will be ready to set up dispensing points for a large amount of people.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon

Councilman McKeon states that he has two (2) specific questions. First, how much (*inaudible*) does the Health Department have to act? In other words, there is a big concert; there is coronavirus in town; do you have the ability to shut it down.

Dr. Havlicek returns to the podium. He states that he received a communication from the CDC today. It states that, if the schools want to dismiss children or have large event, they have to go through the Health Department.

Councilman McKeon replies that this means that you have the authority.

Dr. Havlicek state that he has no problem with that.

Councilman McKeon reiterates that the Health Department has the power, it is vested in you to do that.

Dr. Havlicek replies that he has closed schools for several days. He adds that you do what you think is right.

Councilman McKeon replies that is what he is interested in knowing: that one person, in conjunction with others, has that authority.

Dr. Havlicek replies that one thing that he forgot to say is that it does not seem to attack young people. Most of the people, who die, have other illnesses and that what is at issue, not just this illness.

Councilman McKeon states that, as an associated question, it seems that, considering how virulent this is, how it can be spread by people, who are asymptomatic, is that communication also happening with the schools, hospitals. One can imagine can, noting we don't have to imagine too much, a major infection where there are not enough hospital beds to care for a nursing home filled with people, who are infected by this.

Dr. Havlicek replies that we need to move along and do more. It's a work in progress. It's like the State: sometimes they are slow, but sometimes it simply takes a while.

Councilman McKeon replies that perhaps his question is not something that Dr. Havlicek cannot answer, so he addresses it to his colleagues and the Mayor and Finance: In the event there is a situation where the City has to spend money, noting that the Federal government is asking for billions and we don't know if we get a piece of that or not, but if the City has to spend money in a short amount of time, how do we effectuate that. He notes that he is asking as a new Councilmember.

Councilman Pessina interjects, saying that he can help with that. Once a command center is set up, Dr. Havlicek is there representing it along with the Mayor. They have the authority to do that, adding that the Finance Director Carl Erlacher would also be there. He addresses the Mayor, noting that the mayor would have direct communications with Finance to authorize the expenditure automatically, adding it would then come back to the Council later, which is built in, noting that he knows that for a fact.

Councilman McKeon states that there is a lot of hype and media and it has been politicized. We do have active shooter drills, adding that perhaps we need to think about it in terms of those sort of pln. He asks what would happen next month if there are 100 or 200 cases in town, noting that it reportedly has a 2% or 3% death rate.

Dr. Havlicek replies that it becomes the responsibility of the person, noting that the city does not have the manpower. People have to take the responsibility and do the right thing. If they are educated to do the things that he has mentioned – washing their hands, etc. – it will slow it down.

Councilman McKeon clarifies, stating that he is not asking about slowing it down, but, rather about people who need to be intubated in a hospital something that they cannot do for themselves. He states that he understands that, for the most part, it does not affect young people, adding that there seems to be a high school student in Washington State. He is not trying to panic anyone. He is asking for us to look one or two months down the road.

Dr. Havlicek replies that the CDC is thinking about it and talking about it.

Councilman McKeon interjects, noting that CDC does not have people available to come to this City and help us. We are going to be responsible.

Dr. Havlicek agrees that we are responsible.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera states that earlier this day he was at the telecommunications meeting in Portland. First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield was also there. During the meeting, the question came up: What is your town doing to prepare first responders. While it is not a telecommunications issue, all of the players were there for the first responder and dispatch communications was beng discussed.

Dr. Havlicek interjects, saying that we are going to be doing that shortly.

Councilman Nocera state that his question is has there been any regional planning. He indicated that Portland First Selectwoman replied, "No."

Dr. Havlicek replies that we will do that, adding that they have met with Cromwell, adding that he can envision more than Cromwell. Next week they plan to get together with more players.

Health Manager Elak notes that there is a larger region, which includes towns all the way to Enfield where regional planning is now going on for a situation like this. There is an opportunity for resource sharing and a plan for the entire region.

Councilman Nocera states that he understand that there isn't even a cases reported in Connecticut yet, but that there are two (2) cases in Rhode Island, one individual having travelled to Italy. He believes that regional planning would be great next move.

Mr. Elak states that, while there are no cases right now, we know and we have to plan as if it is coming. It likely will come and there will be person-to-person spread and we are thinking how to deal with that. He notes that Dr. Havlicek has said, if people star testing positive for COVID 19, a lot will have to be self-quarantine so we will get the word out about staying at home, while it won't necessarily be a mandatory quarantine, it will be more of self-monitoring. We will check in until our resources run out and where there a lot more cases where we cannot contact everyone. It will be more of monitoring and getting the word out: do they have food at home or someone to deliver; can they get medicine; can they get to the doctor.

The Chair thanks Dr. Havlicek and Public Health Manager Elak for their presentation. He notes that there is a proposed amendment on the agenda regarding a job description change in the department of Recreation & Community Services. He indicated that the Department Director Cathy Lechowicz is ere to answer any questions.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Meghan Carta.

Councilwoman Carta calls Recreation & Community Services Director Cathy Lechowicz to the podium. She announces that she received signs from the Health Department today to post at the Senior Center regarding hand washing and the virus, indicating that there is education going into the community-at-large.

Councilwoman Carta states that this reclassification came up in GCC (General Counsel Commission). She asks Director Lechowicz to give some background on the reclassification.

Director Lechowicz states that, currently, there are two (2) in the Department: lead recreation supervisor and recreation supervisor. She is looking to add aquatics to the Lead Supervisor position, modifying it to be Lead Supervisor & Aquatics Program Supervisor. They do not currently have a full time staff member overseeing aquatics. They rely solely on a seasonal individual for input on aquatics policies. That person is fabulous, really good; however, moving forward, recognizing that the annex of Woodrow Wilson will likely come under the Department's domain for supervising a pool year round and recognizing that aquatics in an important safety element that we need to be mindful of. It is challenging at times having some who has to wait to get responses from because they are not a full time staff member. She feels that it is important department-wise to have this incorporated into one of their jobs. This is an opportunity to do that as there is a vacancy so that she could modify it before it is posted.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo asks if such a position exists in other communities.

Director Lechowicz replies, "Yes," adding that they used descriptions from five (5) other Connecticut communities to inform themselves about certifications as well as some of the more specific responsibilities.

Councilman Loffredo asks if this will be an open position advertised or be handled internally.

Director Lechowicz replies that they will follow the union contract. Per 466, it will first post internally for two (2) weeks. If there are no qualified candidates, then it will post externally.

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner states that he was looking at the (inaudible). You said that there are two (2) open positions. He asks if both are going to be recreation supervisors.

Director Lechowicz replies that what is proposed is that one will be Recreation Supervisor. What is proposed is the Recreation & Aquatics Program Supervisor.

Councilman Faulkner replies that the new position will replace the Lead Supervisor.

Director Lechowicz replies, "Correct," adding that they modified this because it would be on the same Grade. It would not be changing the Grade level.

Councilman Faulkner replies that was his original question, noting that from Lead Supervisor, he does not see a Grade change.

Director Lechowicz replies that, due to the certifications, there is no Grade change. The Grade level stays the same.

Councilman Faulkner asks if this person will be qualified in aquatics. He rephrases, asking if this person will be certified in aquatics.

Director Lechowicz replies, "Correct," adding that under minimum training and experience required, it talks about that aquatics experience that is necessary as well as some of the certifications. Currently, the

seasonal person provides CPR training for lifeguards, which would be incorporated into the unionized job as opposed to a seasonal person.

Councilman Faulkner states that they just received this job description.

Director Lechowicz replies that it is just under the minimum training and experience.

Councilman Faulkner states that he has always been concerned about swimming especially for kids in our community and we cannot lose that.

Director Lechowicz notes that water is an amazing asset in this community and is important in terms of safety.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Linda Salafia.

Councilwoman Salafia replies that she does not have a question for this Director.

The Chair asks if any Councilmember has additional questions for Director Lechowicz.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Linda Salafia.

Councilwoman Salafia asks Attorney Brig Smith, General Counsel, to the podium. She asks Attorney Smith about the appointments to the Compete Count Committee. She indicates that it is her understanding that not all of the proposed appointees are Middletown residents, Middletown electors. It is her understanding that commission members, unless specifically noted when set up, have to be Middletown electors.

Attorney Smith replies, "Not the case." He spoke with Corporation Counsel about this, as well, and, in 2017, when this issue arose. He notes that there is no statute or Charter provision that says that a member of a board or commission has to be a Middletown resident. He notes that they have boards and commissions with members, who are not Middletown residents. There is an explicit Charter provision that says if someone is going to be an officer of the City, then that person has to be a Middletown resident. That makes perfect sense. There is no such requirement for boards or commissions.

Councilwoman Salafia asks, "For none of them?"

Attorney Smith replies, "Correct," adding that an ordinance could specify that there has to be a Middletown resident as part of the Commission, but, if the ordinance doesn't specify that, nothing else does either.

Councilwoman Salafia asks, "And they don't specify Middletown elector, electors?"

Attorney Smith replies, "Correct," adding that there is nothing in the statute or Charter that says that. He adds that, if you want to make that a requirement, it can be done by ordinance but you have to do that by ordinance to make it a requirement.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo states that he believes that we have the Compete Count Committee, which he believes was set up by resolution. Attorney Smith replies that he believes it was set up by ordinance. Councilman Loffredo asks if it was set up by ordinance. Attorney Smith replies, "Yes." Councilman Loffredo states that he stands corrected.

The Chair asks if there are any other questions for Attorney Smith.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera asks Public Works Director William Russo to give an update on Item 12F regarding the sound system at Oddfellows, including background on the Public Works & Facilities Commission.

Director Russo states that the Oddfellows Building is under Public Works about two (2) years ago. About a month and a half ago, Mr. Wheeler called and we learned that the sound system is done and needs to be replaced. They brought in SJ Milardo, whom they have used in Middletown, to evaluate the system. They confirmed that the system is done. Oddfellows is currently renting a sound system. They got the price – just under \$28,000 – which qualifies for LoCIP (Local Capital Improvement Plan) money. The Public Work & Facilities Commission unanimously endorsed, which is why it is now in front of the Council.

Councilman Nocera asks, if Oddfellows moves to a different location, the sound system belongs to the City.

Director Russo replies that the system can go with them, if that's the case.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Linda Salafia.

Councilwoman Salafia asks Director Russo to give a very quick, short description of LoCIP, how much money it involves, and how that money can be used.

Director Russo replies that the funding is under the Finance Director, adding that he heard the Finance Director say that he has not gotten the new LoCIP money allotment; however, there is enough money for the cost of this project.

Councilwoman Salafia reiterates that it is just Capital.

Director Russo replies, "Yes," adding that the State has to agree to who the City wants to use the money. The City has to write as to how they propose to use the money and the State has to say that the proposed use qualifies.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon ask if, for an expenditure this size as quoted by the company, how do we handle this: does it go to bid, how is it handled.

Director Russo explains that the City uses State bid pricing for parts and labor. It goes through the Purchasing Department.

The Chair calls on Councilman Vincent Loffredo.

Councilman Loffredo asks, for clarification on state bidding: if there are half a dozen qualified State bidders for this system, how do you determine which one should receive the position, the job.

Director Russo explains that the contract allows them to get contracts at the State rate. They cannot say that someone is going to work for \$100. Hour when the State bid price is \$80/hour. The people going to work for the City have to agree to this pricing. They give a price for labor and an installer on different jobs. The markup on part sis 20% net across the board, which is also State pricing.

Councilman Loffredo want to clarify, noting that he did not make himself clear. Assume there are, at times, more than one company that provides, say, sound equipment that Oddfellows needs. He asks how the City takes advantage of the say, 3 or 4 people who are certified. He asks if the City has the opportunity to go out to bid and let them compete so the City might get an even better price.

Director Russo explains that he believes that the purchasing rules allow Directors to hire. These individuals have done work for the City in the past, including the sound system in this Chamber. Their qualifications are excellent for what we need them to do. They are familiar with City buildings and everything else they get into. We do not have to put this out to bid because they have to agree with the State rates for pricing. They may not like it and say it is too low.

Councilman Loffredo states that he will ask one more time: even though we have within the State bidding opportunity, in terms of qualified bidders based on the kind of work that the City -- many cities in the State -- would utilize, if we find more than one, several, we don't try to say, "Listen, you are all qualified, but who can give us" . . . do you have them complete among themselves or do you draw a number out of a hat. He asks how they make that decision.

Director Russo replies the City's purchasing rules allow for what we are doing. If it was not, then they would not do it. He reiterates that no one can come in and name their price; rather, if there are 100 guys out there, we tell them it is \$85/hour, the State price. There is no differential in the labor price.

Councilman Loffredo replies, "I will leave it at that. Thank you."

The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Pessina states that, in this particular job and other jobs that come across your table where you have the authority to select the contractor, he believes that we look in Middletown first.

Director Russo replies, "Definitely."

Councilman Pessina continue, noting that they do the job here, noting that it gives them opportunities, opportunities to where others may do the job. He suggests that this is where Councilman Loffredo was going. In this case, Councilman Pessina asks if Director Russo had more than one company that would do the installation. He asks if Director Russo put the bid out to companies that do this type work -- Middletown companies first - so they get the opportunity -- or is it unilaterally Director Russo and his comfort level with a particular company based on what you said: their knowledge. He states that, personally, he does not like to see the same company all the time as there are other who may want to get involved and do projects. Director Russo replies, "Definitely," all these things you said, "Yes." We do look to Middletown businesses. He explains that they have also had contractors refuse work, saying that they will not work for the State rate as it is too low when they do reach out., They also have contractors , who reach out to the City with a resume. When they go to work, they understand the job. It may be the Engineering Department, the Building Department, noting that a lot of them are involved in these decisions to tell him that these are the people whom you want to use, who you don't want to use. The purchasing rules allow them to do what they are doing. He reiterates that the purchasing rules allow then to do this and to use Middletown contractors.

The Chair asks if there are any more questions for Director Russo. The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon (*inaudible*) minority participation requirements (*inaudible*).

Director Russo replies that he will check on that, noting that it is more of a purchasing question.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward Ford, Jr.

Councilman Edward Ford asks Youth Services Coordinator Justin Carbonella to the podium. His first question is about the Youth Services ordinance and representation on that board. The language "representative of the school system" mean student or staff.

Mr. Carbonella replies that, in this case, it refers to staff of the school system.

Councilman Edward Ford asks where in the ordinance is the student representation.

Mr. Carbonella replies that youth partition on City boards and commissions is in a separate ordinance, which was created about 10 years, the Youth in Government ordinance. It places people on boards and commissions throughout the City.

Councilman Edward Ford asks if this ordinance should reflect similar language for youth representation.

Mr. Carbonella defers to the Legal Department for that question, adding that he thinks that both ordinance can live in conjunction with one another. He notes that the other component of this is that, when we talk about item 5: "one member who is under, depending on the change we make – (must be at least 18 year old.). This language makes sure that any young adult on this board s over the age of 18, which is why – noting that he is not a legal scholar – both can exist concurrently.

Councilman Edward Ford notes that they had spoken about this item at Youth Services as well. The ages was upped because there were individuals, who could have served, and served well, but they basically got too old. We are looking to strengthen the language of having youth representation by adding it to this tonight and not conflicting with the other ordinance. He states that it would be okay to amend this tonight to strengthen that language. He asks Mr. Carbonella if he would recommend this.

Mr., Carbonella replies that it is no secret that he is proponent of getting young people involved in any process. They are creating a vision for where the City should go and making decisions that impact people at every level of the community, including young people. He favors explicit language detailing that young people be involved. He would accept that as a friendly amendment.

Councilman Edward Ford notes that there is another small portion, which might be a legal question again, two (2) year terms of the Councilmembers, noting that he believes that should be changed to four (4) years in accordance with the 2014 ordinance, which extended Council terms to four (4) year terms. This should be tweaked before it is passed.

Mr. Carbonella replies that it supersedes the Charter revision.

The Chair calls on Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell.

Councilwoman Blackwell asks that Public Works Director William Russo be recalled to the podium. Councilwoman Blackwell states that she wants to go back to Councilman McKeon's point regarding of minority representation. She wants to be sure that she is clear: when it comes to purchasing, Director Russo, you and your division have the authority to make unilateral decisions regarding what contractor you select.

Director Russo replies that he believes so for small jobs, like this, the purchasing rules allow this.

Councilwoman Blackwell states that it sounds like the team felt that, in the past, you have had individuals, who had performed the job quite well and you have established a relationship with certain individuals. She states that what she would like to know, which speaks to Councilman McKeon's point, is, going forward, how we establish opportunities for others to create or level the playing field, to create fairness as it related to who is awarded a contract.

Director Russo replies that he believes what goes on is that Purchasing keeps a list of contractors. He will check with them to see if it has been updated or if anyone has been added to or taken of that list. He explains that when people call, they are referred to Purchasing to get on the list. He adds that most of the City jobs are bid through the purchasing process. This project is relatively small. He cannot recall off the top of his head when he last used this vendor. He recounts that, years ago, they rewired the Chamber and they did the audio at Palmer Field. He would have to go back and review the files to see what job they were last hired to do.

Councilwoman Blackwell thanks Director Russo, adding that she is trying to understand the process.

### **3. Questions to Directors Closes**

There being no further questions, the Chair closes the Questions to Directors Workshop at 6:55 PM



**4. Meeting adjourned**

Councilman Vincent Loffredo moves to adjourn. Councilman Philip Pessina seconds the motion. There being no discussion, the Chair calls for the vote. It is unanimous, with 12 aye votes (Councilmembers Blackwell, Carta, Faulkner, D. Ford, E. Ford, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, McKeon, Nocera, Pessina, and Salafia) to adjourn the meeting. The meeting is adjourned at 6:56 PM.

ATTEST:

LINDA S.K. REED,  
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK

*K: review/ minutes/ 20 March 02 -- minutes questions to directors -- 02 March 2020*