

# MMPA UNION NEWS

MIDDLETOWN MANAGERS & PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION / ESTABLISHED AUGUST 17, 1988

## “THE BUDGET”

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MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457

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When Police, Fire, AFSCME, and MMPA banded together to form the Middletown Coalition of Municipal Employees, it was because we saw an illegality on the Retirement Board which no one wanted to address. As pension members, we believed the Retirement Board or any other City Commission or Board, should follow proper procedure. We did not want anything to jeopardize the future of the pensions we had worked so hard for.

After that, the Coalition took on a life of its own, continuing to meet, and address other concerns of our jobs and community. We were asked in January if we wanted to participate with the Mayor and the Common Council, informally, on how to bring spending under control in our City. More or less; brainstorm with them. We all know how that went; the Democratic Council members refused to attend.

Many members of the Coalition have a large part in preparing fiscal budgets for their respective departments. Between the Mayors office, City Department reductions, and the Coalition, when combined; we had a \$1.3 million dollars budget reduction list.

There was a collaboration of ideas used to put together the budget reductions of \$1.3 million dollars. Many of the proposals had to do with overtime salary expenditures. Reducing it saved significant taxpayer dollars. Various other means of getting the same thing done could even bring in additional revenue. Recycling leaves and charging a nominal fee for there pickup and provided bags; charging for bulky waste pickup; closing Palmer Field down on Sundays, and rescheduling those game to be played during the rest of the week; eliminating the cost of tournaments and special events. If an organization wants to hold them, they would have to pay 100% of the labor cost. We took into account Middletown taxpayer dollars first. Why should our tax dollars pay for events which did not include Middletown players or organizations? They are out of town organizations. Any money made at these tournaments went to the organization, not the City of Middletown. Many out of state teams utilize Cromwell hotels to stay at, not Middletown. If Middletown businesses gain from these tournaments or events, then maybe they should assist the City with the cost to put them on. Everyone loves Middletown, because everything is for free, or nearly for free! These are only a few of the ideas developed during the collaboration.

As Union members, we are not in the mind set to reduce jobs, even part-time jobs. But, the Common Council cannot ask us to freeze Union positions, and then supplant them with part-time workers; that is against everything a Union stands for. If it was one or two positions, that would be a different story, but were talking about many frozen Union positions.

We understand what the Common Council has been saying, that we are in “*tough economic times*”, and to get out of it will “*take tough decision making.*” We have put our heads together with the City and brainstormed to come up what we think is a viable plan for not only today, but for the future. We understand it is hard for people to accept and understand change. As the Marine motto goes; “Adapt and overcome!” That is what we think we have done. It was our initiative to assist the City of Middletown during these tough times. No one held a gun to our head; they just asked.

The four (4) Unions volunteered another \$1 million dollars of concessions, which we didn’t have to do. That is a total of \$2.3 million dollars in savings the Unions and City have come up with, minus the Common Council. We take our role in the City of Middletown very seriously. We hear and read all the negativity some individuals spew, but we know the good Middletown people far outweigh the few nay-Sayers. That’s why we became involved; it’s our civic duty.

If the Common Council believes this is a political ploy by the Unions, they are very mistaken. We are trying to help our City become self sufficient, so we don’t have any more of these financial issues in the future.

We came up with a solution, apparently bruising quite a few egos. Some Council members will defend their way of doing business to save face. They do not have the ability to accept they may have been wrong, or to change their ways of thinking. Their approach will be to stay the course, don’t adapt and overcome. Just raise taxes.

We took a different approach; we took a responsible approach; we took an approach that would least affect the majority of Middletown taxpayers.

Stay Strong, Stay United, And Stay Involved.

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