Dec 11, 2019 “Middletown for Clean Energy” Minutes – draft 0.3
Middletown Township Mayor Tony Perry

Attendees: Mayor Perry (starting about 5:20, prior to his regular hours 5:30 to 7PM); Bob Erickson, Pat Miller, Steve Miller from Middletown for Clean Energy

We created a 5 minute agenda for an end-of-year “check-in”. Mayor Perry chose to discuss additional topics, as documented below.

TOPICS:

Thank you, Mayor Perry and Middletown for achieving SILVER CERTIFICATION!

1. CELEBRATE Silver Certification! Mayor Perry indicated a celebration is good idea and suggests “Gold Energy Star” will be the 2020 goal, since Middletown already has a head start on points toward gold. He stated that Middletown was one of only 3 cities with new silver certifications in 2019.
2. We reviewed the 4/15/2019 letter to the Middletown Committee. Letters had been signed by almost 300 residents. Discussion focused on two “ACTIONS” from the letter. First, we discussed the residents' request for an updated Middletown Energy Master Plan. Steve stated that a revised " Energy Plan" has been on Amy's Green Team priority list for nearly 3 years.  We stated a BPU grant would be an EXCELLENT way to get started on Middletown's Energy Plan. On Sept 18, Amy Sarrinikolaou had proposed applying for the BPU Clean Energy "Community Energy Plan Grant" of up to $25K[[1]](#footnote-1). As we have not heard anything, we asked when we can expect authorization to go forward on this application.

Mayor Perry stated that next week he will review 2020 goals with Division Heads (Amy Sarrinikolaou is Division Head, “Recycling & Clean Communities”). The Division Heads are empowered to prioritize. Steve suggested that the priorities be publicized. However, the Mayor stated that while he believes in open communication with residents, Middletown will speak with one voice, in order to avoid confusion.
3. Middletown Renewable Government Energy Aggregation (RGEA)
 Sustainable Jersey plans a regional community meeting: (this [summary](http://climate.smiller.org/letter/2019-12/2019-12-10-Mayor-Perry.doc) was not distributed, but was separately mailed to Tony Perry and Tony Mercantante).
Mayor Perry indicated that Amy plans to represent Middletown at the Dec 19, 10AM meeting, in Council Chambers, 47 Broad Street, Eatontown, NJ (Pat and Steve plan to attend)
Mayor Perry stated he has been exploring the energy aggregation experience of other cities.
Steve said he has satisfactorily answered known outstanding questions that rights were being taken away, as voiced by one person who complained, 8 years ago at an energy consultant’s presentation in the Middletown Board Room. The Mayor said he was looking for ability to modify the NJ legal provision that residents were automatically included in the aggregation, unless they “opt-out”, pointing out that some Middletown Committee members had expressed concern about this provision, preferring that residents must “opt-in”. Pat stated that in general, local energy aggregation programs do not work if switched to “opt-in” only, which is why they are specifically designed for automatic “opt-in” with optional “opt-out”. Steve amplified this point indicating that his 3 year experience with offering voluntary “opt-in” from a wide variety of vendors is that only a steady trickle of people take the time to enroll in 3rd party, cheaper, renewable electricity. Steve also indicated the aggregate purchasing power of the entire town [or most of it] can make a further huge difference in rates and the extent of renewables. In prior meetings, it was noted that experience shows that in some towns up to $100 per year per household can be saved, while also increasing use of renewable energy, thus helping Middletown meet renewable energy goals.
4. Mayor also discussed:
* Polystyrene recycling. A vacuum compressor “machine” will arrive in 1 week (the 1st municipal polystyrene recycling in NJ). The machine will immediately be used to recycle polystyrene from a large region. Potential contributing cities include members of Bayshore Conference of Mayors, and members of Two Rivers Conference of Mayors.
* Train station solar canopy. Mayor Perry is in negotiations with NJ Transit which is presently leasing to Middletown (at least part of) the train station parking lot. The Mayor commented that he recently negotiated a major reduction in Middletown’s cost to lease. Regardless, the plan is to make the parking lot a large community solar project. A portion would be used for electricity to the Middletown Arts Center (to lower the present very large electric bills). The remainder would be solar electricity offered to Middletown’s 700+ units of low income housing. The mayor expects to receive the consultant's report regarding this by year end or early next year.
* Renewable electricity for Middletown’s municipal buildings: Currently Middletown purchases 27% renewable content. At a mid-October meeting, the Mayor asked for bids on a 5 year contract for 50%, 75%, and 100% renewable content, and expects proposals early next year from Middletown’s present New England -based energy consulting company recommended by the “Joint Insurance Fund”. The consultant serves Middletown, many other cities, and the Jackson Memorial school district (among others including Texas and Oklahoma).

FURTHER ACTION:

Close with Amy Sarrinikolaou on “Middletown for Clean Energy” priorities so she has these in mind to help establish her 2020 goals, including:

* Response to the 4/15/19 letter signed by ~300 Middletown residents requesting energy actions
* Publish an updated Middletown Energy Plan in early 2020
* BPU community energy grant application to assist Middletown and the Middletown Energy Plan
* Get Middletown's Renewable Energy Aggregation program for RESIDENTS underway in 2020
* Thereby help achieve Mayor Perry’s 2020 goal of achieving Gold Star in Energy
* While not discussed at today's meeting, codify other energy actions: support other solar initiatives throughout Middletown; energy cost savings initiatives; support electric vehicles; and others.

These notes were drafted by Steve Miller & reviewed by MCE participants

1. BPU Clean Energy grant, “Community Energy Plan” [summary](http://climate.smiller.org/letter/2019-8-10-energy-grant.pdf), authored by Steve Miller, and published in “The Jersey Sierran”, Oct-Dec, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)