

The meeting was called to order by Town Manager Morris Deputy with the following members present: S.R. Smith, Kate Rokosz, Milton Delgado, Bob Bolton, Charles Warrick, Nicole Homer and Scott Saunders.

1. Opening Comments (Morris Deputy):

The committee was formed as a result of the January 2019 Council Meeting where Mayor and Council addressed the public's concern and outrage for the 2019 Hummer's Parade. Mayor and Council shared the concerns of the citizen's and committed to the creation of a committee that would draft guidelines for future parades.

The committee was to be created by nomination from each member of Council and the Mayor, and the committee was to meet a couple of times in the fall at a public meeting to draft the guidelines. Mayor and Council committed to review and vote on the guidelines at a public meeting. The plan is to vote on the guidelines at the December Council meeting.

The purpose of the committee was to draft guidelines for all parades within the Town for submission to Mayor and Council. The Town currently has a Parade Permit; the goal is to amend that with some guidelines that will help to solve some of the issues heard from the Hummer's Parade.

The committee is not charged with addressing and debating constitutional issues; the Town lacks the legal authority to regulate speech. Ultimately, the guidelines that are created, will be submitted to the Town attorney for legal review and will be reviewed and approved or amended by Council.

At tonight's meeting, the goal is for the committee to discuss the guidelines and ideas, after which, the meeting will be open to the public for comments. The comments will be limited to two minutes so everyone gets a chance to speak. In the interest of time, if something has already been stated, it doesn't need to be repeated.

Minutes will be prepared and made public.

2. Parade Committee Workshop and Discussion.

Morris Deputy

The Town typically has five parades. Each parade occurs generally the same time each year. The guidelines will be for every parade.

- a. Hummer's Parade
- a. Little League Parade
- c. Memorial Day Parade
- d. Peach Festival Parade
- e. Christmas Parade

Guidelines discussed will be drafted and presented to Council and reviewed by the attorney to determine what is legal to have in the guidelines.

Following are some parade guidelines for consideration with some guidance from the National League of Cities and comments received from the Town's Police Department:

- Address public intoxication.
- Create a timeframe for submission of the permit; the Town should not approve a permit for a parade a year in advance; the standard dates for the current parades should be honored.

- If someone is appointed to check the floats for guideline compliance, it should be a police officer.
- Insurance coverage needs to be considered. Mr. Deputy will discuss any necessary insurance coverage with the Town's broker.
- Middletown Main Street and Historic Society both have guidelines that touch on some of the issues with the Hummer's Parade. Mr. Deputy did not know if their guidelines were reviewed by an attorney.

S.R. Smith

The country today is controversial -- anybody at any time can see or hear something that offends them. He knows how, where and why the Hummer's Parade was started but it has gone way beyond that now. Over the years, some things have not been very tasteful. He said he would like to see it stay as it was originally -- it was put together the "day of" and the revelry carried over from the night before. He would like to see it continue with everybody having a good time.

Kate Rokosz

Hasn't missed a parade since 1995 -- most of them are very fun but some things have been offensive. It's very hard to put regulations on something like that. The whole idea was to not have regulations; however, today's climate is not the same it was forty years ago. She feels that maybe the Hummer's has reached its end. If it continues, she thinks the name should be changed because of what happened in the past. Let it be a New Year's Day Parade.

Milton Delgado

Comes from the perspective of being a gay, Latino, Veteran, business owner that lives near Main Street. He doesn't think there is anything wrong with the name Hummer's Parade, just what's going on with it. He said he looked at guidelines used by a number of other parades and picked those that he felt were appropriate for consideration:

- The entries must avoid content that discriminates against, is offensive or to disparage any person or group on the basis of their race, gender, national origin, disability, political viewpoints, age, religion, sexual orientation or personal characteristics, including content that contains nudity, profanity, loudness, illegal drugs, violence, obscenity, hate, racism or that is vulgar or sexually explicit, insulting or offensive to any ethnic religious, political or identifiable group or individual as determined by parade officials.
- Any symbols that are offensive such as the Confederate flag, a swastika, black face or costumes depicting specific race, nationality or culture.
- The Middletown Hummer's Parade is a family, friendly event for all ages.
- All costumes, outfits, behavior, attitude, language and dance moves must be appropriate for young audience.
- Improper use of the American flag should not be permitted.
- No display or discharge of real or facsimile, fire arms, fireworks or explosive devices.

The history of the parade was about cheering up someone who was ill; we can cheer up people without being offensive. He understands that there are people just waiting to be offended; however, as residents of the Town, we need to take responsibility. We know what's offensive. Unfortunately, it's a necessary evil that it has to be put in writing to stop a small group of people.

Bob Bolton

Agrees with Kate that we can't decide what's moral and what's not moral because everybody has a different opinion. Maybe it's time for the Hummer's Parade to end and it becomes a family-friendly New Year's Day Parade. He doesn't think it's possible to look at a float and say that it will be okay with everybody. If it's looked at with the attitude that it's a kids' event, it might be fine. Regardless, it's going to be hard to regulate.

Charles Warrick

The Hummer's Parade should continue because it has been here for a long time. He questioned how far they could go on freedom of speech – what's acceptable to one person might not be acceptable to another. Today we have to be very careful with what takes place. Not everybody was offended by the parade; we shouldn't stop the parade because of an unfortunate incident. The float that was so offensive in the last parade came from Virginia. He thinks the permits should be reviewed by the committee not the police, and put on the website for the community's input.

Morris Deputy explained the committee is charged with preparing guidelines to cover the concerns of Council and the community. Mayor and Council will approve the guidelines to be used to issue a permit for all future parades. If the committee wants to include who checks the permits as part of the guidelines, it can be added for their consideration. One suggestion was using a police officer to enforce the guidelines on the day of the parade in case there is an altercation because they have the authority to handle it.

Someone from the audience commented that in Philadelphia, anyone entering the parade with a float had to register. She said the Town should regulate who is in the parade, not the police.

Nicole Homer

Works in the legal field and is also a Veteran. The situation that happened last year is happening in all towns and cities in the country because we are growing. We all have to live with and respect each other.

Explained that the purpose of the committee is to set guidelines and regulations to be used for parades in the future. The police will make sure everyone follows the guidelines.

Some guidelines used for the Mummer's Parade:

- Nothing political, controversial, obscene, or anti-religious nature in any form may be permitted in the parade. If you have to question whether or not it's acceptable, it probably isn't.
- The Mummer's Parade general rules say "no pickup trucks will be allowed unless pulling a float and no passengers are allowed in the bed of the pickup truck". Maybe pickup trucks should not be permitted in the parade.
- No stacking of persons and no pyramids are permitted in the Mummer's Parade.
- If the mission of the parade is to get together and have fun, it can be done without being offensive. It should be family oriented.
- She does not feel the name needs to change.

Morris Deputy asked if those guidelines said when and who determines what is permitted and is it done ahead of time.

Nicole said the Mummer's has a deadline. The Hummer's should have a deadline to accept permits in order to give everyone on the committee a chance to review the permits and applications.

Nicole said she doesn't feel the name has to change but we need to be mindful of the content.

Morris Deputy pointed out that some of the other parades, such as politicians in an election year, may ride in a truck.

Scott Saunders

Works for the MPD, serves as the Community Services Officer, is a Veteran, African American, and president of the local NAACP. Scott has worked during the parade in the past and has seen many

offensive displays, including intoxication and drinking on the street. He agrees with Kate that it should be changed from the Hummer's or it should follow Mr. Delgado's suggested regulations. Additional regulations:

- Strict enforcement on drinking/intoxication from people in the parade or the spectators.
- Floats in poor taste can be inflammatory.
- The Town cannot give the appearance they favor one group over another.
- Every parade submission should be given the same consideration and have the same requirements for approval. Regulations have to be equitable and across the board.

Kate Rokosz: Prior to 2019, the people of the Town owned the Hummer's Parade and now, because of issues that happened, the Town of Middletown is taking ownership of the parade. If the Town has ownership, there have to be guidelines.

3. Public Comments:

Edna Cale: The Town should have an Ordinance for decency; regulations for parades should be a Town Ordinance. She stopped coming to the parades because of all the drinking and the comments made to her while attending the parade.

Ernest Hargett: Asked how this meeting was communicated to the public and what is the process going forward; are there going to be more meetings and will the public be involved? Is a process in place for the Hummer's Parade in January? He doesn't think the meeting was broadly publicized.

Michael Harp: Surprised to hear no regulations are in place for parades. Suggested the committee looks at what regulations are in place for different cities. The regulations should be put in the paper and not just on the website.

Milton Delgado: Commented the Hummer's Parade appears to be the only gathering in Town that never had any regulations because it grew from a couple of friends doing something fun to getting out of hand. In defense of the Town, this little party grew and became a big party.

Scott Saunders: Offensive parades didn't just start, it's been going on for a long time. If there were no guidelines, it appears the Town condones it.

Charles Warrick: Doesn't think the Town condoned it. The purpose of the meeting tonight is to resolve those issues. He agrees the regulations should be posted in the Transcript as well as on the website. What's happened in the past shouldn't happen again because the committee will set guidelines.

Scott Saunders: We are meeting for the parade but that is not the only issue. If everyone works together, the issues can be solved. It's about equity and empathy for everybody.

Nicole Homer: Reminded everyone the meeting tonight is to create the guidelines and is open to the public for suggestions for the guidelines – not to point fingers or minimize the situation.

Ernest Hargett: Disagreed that this "meeting" is a process because the committee knew about the meeting in advance; he just heard about it today. More people would have attended if they had known.

Milton Delgado: He is here representing Middletown residents. The purpose of the committee is to report information and feedback from the residents to Mayor and Council.

Morris Deputy clarified that this meeting is the beginning of the process – we meet, we openly discuss the guidelines and take input from the public. Guidelines will be created and given to Mayor and Council for discussion and approval. We, as a committee, will decide as a group consensus, what to send to Mayor and Council. Those guidelines are intended to be used for the 2020 Hummer's Parade and all other parades. There will be a public Council meeting in December where the same input or new input can be presented for Mayor and Council to consider.

The meeting was advertised as all of the Town's public meetings are advertised, seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

Bob Bolton said he the committee didn't have more notice than the general public. He said a lot of good people are on the committee and is confident they will come to an equitable solution.

Milton Delgado: A lot of Latinos are counting on him to be their voice – he is here for his people in Middletown and he is doing it because he cares.

Comment from the audience that the event happened in January and this is the first anything is being done.

Emy Rivera: Oppressed groups should be included in the guidelines and not be a target for satire. The Hummer's Parade is a part of Middletown and shouldn't be taken away. There should be a registration process and regulations against drinking. The situation should not be minimized. She suggested an additional member from the Latino community should be added to the committee. Rules should not be so rigid that the fun of the parade cannot be enjoyed.

Debbie Harrington: Middletown's website says "...the parade is not sponsored by the Town and is haphazardly thrown together on the day of the event by local residents. ...the idea of the parade is to spoof events that happened the previous year." It's on Middletown's page so they acknowledge that the event happens. Middletown should own the parade and set regulations to control it, and who can participate. She suggested the Town own the Parade and set deadlines with time to review the permits.

She suggested the committee uses public rules for the meeting and how the public is notified.

Marcus Bardell: Suggested the Town keep the Hummer's name at least for this year because it's Middletown's history, but have guidelines for the parade. He added it is only two months away – it needs to be well thought out.

Curtis Rodgers: Said Milton Delgado covered most of the important areas. He agrees that the name should be eliminated because of what it represented.

Edna Cale: Has seen a lot. Glad to see a committee was formed, although rather late. Wants to be sure the guidelines will be followed, there are no double-standards, and the public will be kept informed. She agreed it was advertised as all council meetings are. A motto from another organization she was active with was "KISS – Keep it Simple Stupid"; hopes the committee keeps it simple enough for everyone to understand. Wants to be sure any race, culture or anyone who was offended last year will not be offended again. Not sure there is enough time to put the guidelines together before January.

Nicole Homer: Even though the committee has been nominated to represent the residents of the Town and put the guidelines together, the committee does not have the authority to mandate the guidelines. It will be Mayor and Council's responsibility to approve the guidelines. She wanted to

go on record that the committee has the voice but they don't have the power to mandate the guidelines.

Carmen Tuck: Doesn't feel the Police Department should have the responsibility to determine who is in the parade. The police are focused on protecting the citizens of Middletown. She suggested that a committee should monitor who is going to be in the parade.

Keith Thompson: Expressed concern that the guidelines will be too stringent and violate the First Amendment Rights.

Charles Warrick: Commented that the guidelines recommended will go to the Town's attorney for review.

Scott Saunders: After listening to comments, his opinion is that because of the timing, maybe it should be postponed this year to have more time to get things in place for the following year.

A member of the public stated if the guidelines can't be agreed upon, the parade should be cancelled. He requested the proposed guidelines be emailed to those in attendance so they can have them in advance for review.

Edna Cale: What happens at the November meeting?

Morris Deputy: The parade guidelines are not on the November 4th agenda. If anyone wants to attend and make a statement under new business, they may do so.

Discussion on what happens if the guidelines aren't approved

Morris Deputy commented that it will be Council's decision on what to do. The intent is to adopt the guidelines in December to be applied to the parade in January.

Council will receive the minutes and the recommended guidelines. Minutes will be posted on the website and copies will be available for the public at the next meeting. A public meeting will be held for the citizens to voice their comments.

The guidelines can be emailed to anyone here who is interested.

Charles Warrick: In fairness to those who are planning to be in the 2020 parade, he doesn't think the parade should be postponed. The committee is here to come up with guidelines.

Scott Saunders: It's more responsible to the citizens if it's done the right way. Sixty days does not seem like enough time; more time is needed to put something in place. He said he mitigated numerous phone calls from the community about the parade. Listening to the citizens is more responsible. Sixty days is plenty of time to get the word out that the parade is cancelled this year.

A member of the public expressed her opinion that the Latino community should be represented by more than one Latino on the panel because what sparked the whole thing was the way Mexicans and Latinos were portrayed.

Morris Deputy responded that the Mayor and Council each appointed someone to the committee; he feels the group understands the collective issue and is represented well.

Milton Delgado: His intent is to be the voice of the people. The committee has a lot of compassion for the Latino community and what happened. He sat on the Governor's Council for Hispanic

Affairs, the Board of Directors for the Latin American Community Center and the City of Wilmington's Latino board.

Scott Saunders: Thinks there should have been a process to decide who is on the committee and that Mayor and Council have too much control. The people should have been involved.

Nicole Homer: Based on the minutes from the January meeting, the Latino community was not the only community that was offended by certain types of episodes. All the communities feel some type of bias. She thinks the Town is going in the right direction and the committee is very diverse. Everyone has to be patient with the process. The point of coming together is to discuss different points of view so the issues can be taken care of.

A member of the audience asked when the guidelines will be turned in to the Mayor and Council? Morris Deputy said the goal today is to schedule the next meeting if the panel can agree on a date tonight. The guidelines will be given to Mayor and Council before Thanksgiving to have them before the December Council meeting.

The committee agreed to meet again November 13th at 6:00 p.m.

Morris Deputy asked the committee to email any additional comments or ideas for consideration. Minutes will be prepared. The information will be provided to any attendee leaving their email. Guidelines will be drafted and distributed. Copies will be available for the public.

Bob Bolton: Recommended cancelling the Hummer's Parade this year.

Charles Warrick: Recommended the parade doesn't get cancelled.

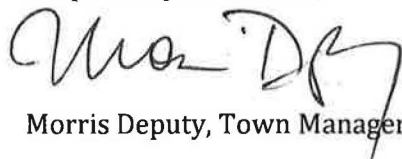
Milton Delgado: Recommended cancelling the Hummer's Parade this year. Based on comments heard, there isn't enough time to put it together and do it right.

Bob Bolton: Suggested a grandfather clause should be included for the previous parades to have precedence for their date and time. Registration of every float should be required. Each display should come with a description. The website needs to be revised because it's not correct now.

Moved by Bob Bolton and seconded by Charles Warrick to adjourn. Motion Carried.

We believe these minutes accurately reflect what transpired; however, we will appreciate comments involving a different understanding of what occurred.

Respectfully Submitted,



Morris Deputy, Town Manager

Ry 11/6/19
Cc: Mayor and Council
Committee Members