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REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2015

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Hemmann, Hurley, Kotkin, Martino, Rell, Deputy Mayor Barry, and Chairperson Montinieri. Absent: Councilors: Manousos, Roberts.

Also present: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, Police Chief James Cetran, Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk.

Deputy Mayor Barry led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave. commented on the lack of a stop sign on Morrison Avenue and asked how long is it going to take to rectify the problem.

Sheila Wells, 336 Hartford Ave., commented that she is here as a Wethersfield Representative of the Metropolitan District Commission Citizen Advisory Committee to advise the council and the citizens of Wethersfield that there is a public hearing scheduled next Tuesday, February 24th at 6:00 p.m. at the Silas Deane Middle School. The purpose of the hearing is to address the changes that the MDC is making in the long-term control plan which is part of the Clean Water Project. She explained that the purpose of the long-term control plan is to reduce combined sewage overflows or CSO's into area waters, in particularly, in the Wethersfield Cove. She stated that there have been a number of improvements in the last 8 years or so. The proposed change is to curtail some of the separation of the sanitary sewers in the south end of Hartford and instead their plan is to build a much bigger tunnel, an 18 diameter tunnel in the bedrock from Hartford going out toward West Hartford which also will hold much of the confined sewage overflows during the storms and then pump it out to the plant and they are proposing to increase the capacity of the plant as well. The good news as far as Wethersfield is that they are going to be more protective of the cove. Instead of protecting it from an 18 to 30 year storm, they are going to be eliminating any CS off flows at all in the Cove. This will not happen until 2023 but it is scheduled to take place. Ms. Wells stated that recreation has been wonderful this winter with ice fishing and skaters and skiers. She urged the public to attend and to pay attention to make sure that the MDC is good stewards of our funds as well as stewards of our environment. She stated that the Long-term Control Plan is posted on the MDC website. She stated that there will be an opportunity for a public comment at the public hearing.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd., commented that he has read articles stating that everything in Wethersfield is going along very good but he doesn't believe that. He stated that if you think an \$84,000,000 reconstruction of Wethersfield High School is good for the community, he doesn't

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believe that for a minute. He stated they had some repairs but decided to do a whole reconstruction that cost \$84,000,000 and thinks the taxpayers in town are the only ones concerned about money. We are going to see the tax bills cranking up because of the school renovation. He stated it's time, long overdue to start reducing taxes. He commented that State aid is costly to us and we should think about it. He thinks we should stop asking for borrowed money because the younger ones are going to have to pay for it. He hopes during the budget process the Council comes up with some ways of reducing otherwise we are going to just be in bigger and bigger trouble.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Cir. commented that his pond has made some real progress and the reaction from his neighbors has been very positive. It looks a lot better and looks beautiful. He commented that it is his fond hope that after many years of doing just nothing, we have seen a step forward to get that project done. Mr. Ruhe briefly spoke about the history of the Taxpayers Association which he is a member of and stated that many of the members have passed on. The Taxpayers Association talked about taking some of their treasury and making a contribution so something. He and Bob Young talked about it and decided to donate to the Wounded Warrior Project in memory of Ballau Tooker. Mr. Ruhe then read a letter from the Wounded Warrior Project. Mr. Ruhe mentioned an article about soldiers coming back wounded and traumatic stress and all of the problems that combat soldiers face. With the Memorial Day Parade approaching, the town should try to bring it back to where it's real meaning lies in honoring all those young men who never made it back.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Martino reported that the Capital Improvement Committee has been meeting and they have finished the ~~review of all the Department of Board of Education requests~~ *review of all Town Departments and Board of Education requests* and have developed a list of projects to be considered for the Fiscal year 2015/2016 budget. Town Staff is now preparing a list for submission to Planning and Zoning for the 8-24 Referral which will come to Council later. EDIC Committee has met and reviewed their budget for submittal for 2015/1016. Peter Gillespie reviewed it and updated the vacant property. Stores are being filled and the marketing subcommittee continues to work on the "Why Wethersfield" webpage

Councilor Martino reported that the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee met and continue to plan their spring fair on May 21st at the Community Center. Also, the Wethersfield Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities had a meeting and they had a quorum. There are currently vacancies on the committee; members requested the Commission be cut back from 15 to 10 members to have a quorum at their meetings. A request was made to the Town Clerk to consider submitting a resolution to Council to reduce the group. There is currently a vacancy for a Board of Education liaison. He talked to the superintendent and he is going to assign somebody. At their last meeting the group wanted to discuss the Challenger Program but there was no board member there to provide input. Mr. Emmett told us he will be providing somebody to us and get the name to Dolores.

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Councilor Hemmann reported that she attended the Conservation Commission meeting last week but didn't have a quorum. There was pretty good discussion and some questions that were asked of her which she submitted to the Town Manager. Councilor Hemmann reported that on January 29th she attended the meeting in regards to the Church and Main intersection and stated that it was a pretty good turnout from the community and it was nice to see that many people. The presentation was good. People asked good questions and I think were satisfied with the responses that they got. It was a good meeting.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Kotkin wanted to thank our public works employees for all the hours that they are spending keeping our roads cleared. It certainly has not been an easy winter and knows that they have been working long hours and are exhausted and we really appreciate it.

Mayor Montinieri agreed with that. He thinks most of our residents are aware, really throughout New England, we have experienced in the last three and a half weeks a tremendous amount of storm activity. The need for quite a bit of snow removal, road clearing, and I think most of our residents would agree that our town staff along with the contractors have done a terrific job keeping the roads open under very adverse conditions. I think we have led the way in terms of the quality of the road clearing, road treatment. I think we really have done a terrific job and probably better than many towns in the area. I will say that many of our guys have had to put in overtime. We had to take a break last week for a day because of state regulations regarding the number of hours guys can work without a break. We put them right back in, we have a lot of volunteers that serve in other roles in town, so I want to express thanks to them. No surprise many of our residents have spent a lot of time keeping their driveways and sidewalks clear. Making access at intersections and that has been difficult for sure. Many of our seniors who may not have some of the resources or outside contractors are trying to do that. I've driven around town and have seen some people struggle with it and have asked for some volunteers from the various sports organizations. We have an assembled list of a few folks that need some help. I ask you to consider reaching out to us and the town manager and we can give you some locations that might need some assistance. Mayor Montinieri also commented that we have had calls from residents, some disabled veterans and individuals who have difficulty getting around town because of disabilities who have expressed frustration which we get every year, of course, but I would ask our residents who are particularly in the high traffic walking areas, I've seen a lot of residents having to walk on streets because they'll get themselves land locked going down a sidewalk and finding themselves in an area that hasn't been cleared and have to turn around and go back. I realize that we have asked a lot of our residents in this storm period, but urge you to all keep in mind that if you are in that situation to please go the extra distance for people who are reliant on public transportation and need your help. So just driving around town, there are some hot spots. The town has done an awful lot. Jeff has led all of our staff in responding to problem areas, but we really need your help on that so realize that five weeks from now, hopefully, we'll be looking at grass but right now we obviously need your help.

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TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Bridges had nothing to report and asked Peter Gillespie to come up to the podium to give his economic report.

Mr. Gillespie briefly reviewed the Economic Report attached below.



TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

Planning and Economic Development Department Report

February 2015

Peter D. Gillespie,
Phone (860) 721-2838

Town Planner and Economic Development Manager
e-mail: peter.gillespie@wethersfieldct.com

NEW BUSINESS ACTIVITY 2014

In spite of the challenging economy new business starts were a bit higher when compared to the past few years.

During 2014 we welcomed 30 businesses to Town:

Buffalo Wild Wings, Gordon Bonetti Florist, Supa Fitness, Gillette Furniture Consignment, New Life Fellowship Church, Aspen Kitchen Bath, Ben Tablione State Farm Insurance, Chip's, Old Wethersfield Country Store, Edo Ichi, Planet Fitness, Pretty Pups and Mutts, Scott Kneeland Karate, Ensafe, Romp N Roll, Aon Consulting, Senior Link, Utsav Restaurant, CBS, Iefall and Lefall, CT Police Chief's Association, Omar's Barber Shop, Annie's Nails, VHB, 61 Arrow Automotive, Jones Insurance, Fabi Firearms, Red Onion Restaurant.

By comparison, during 2013, we welcomed 21 businesses to Wethersfield.

BUSINESS RETENTION/EXPANSIONS 2014

In 2014 we were able to retain 16 businesses that either relocated to new space in Town or required additional space to expand.

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Relocations (6) - Berkshire Hathaway, Wooden Toy, River Rock Yoga, Steve's Liquor, Pizza Time, Red T.

Expansions (10) – CT Multispecialty, Hartford Healthcare, Double A Veterinary, Griffith Academy, Dance 10, Salon Paris, Good Year Tire, Price Rite, Live-Right Wellness.

By comparison in 2013 only 5 businesses relocated to new space in Town or expanded.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITY 2014

In terms of commercial building permit activity the values were almost identical to last year. \$7,800,000 in 2014 vs. \$7,400,000 in 2013.

Some of the highlights this year:

- 1260 Silas Deane Highway expansion for CT Multispecialty and Hartford Hospital.
- Goff Brook Shoppes – Chip's Restaurant, Planet Fitness, Romp N Roll, Buffalo Wild Wings.
- 100 Great Meadow Road – Putnam Park – VHB, AON Consulting, Senior Link, CBS.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

We noted an increase in new single family home construction this year (12) when compared to last year (7).

VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTY

The Town remains focused on efforts to redevelop long standing vacant and underutilized properties progress being made:

- State grant of \$200,000 to assist in the demolition of 1000 Silas Deane Highway. Development agreement being negotiated.
- Plans approved to renovate and rehabilitate former Masonic Hall building on Main Street.
- Construction well underway for redevelopment of 176 Cumberland Avenue (former CLP) CREC Magnet School.

EDIC

The Economic Development and Improvement Commission continued its efforts to support the local business community in 2014:

- Successfully applied for and received an additional \$250,000 in STEAP funding for the façade improvement program.

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Produced the 2015 Wethersfield Town Guide and Business Directory.

- In December hosted the 25th Annual Holiday Social and Salute To Business Event.
- Unveiled the new, on-line, searchable Town Business Directory Woogle. As of today 390 businesses have joined, please visit business link on Town website to add your business.

FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- Made significant revisions to façade improvement program to make a bit more business friendly.
- Continued to utilize the Façade Improvement Program to assist 4 projects in 2014:
 - 121 Main Street - new siding and painting - \$11,500
 - 4 Hartford Avenue, painting and window replacement, \$30,000
 - 326 Silas Deane Highway, Annie's Salon \$20,022
 - 20-30 Beaver Road - \$32,425

To date, the Town has approved a total of 28 façade loans and has provided financial assistance of nearly \$700,000 towards these projects. This public investment has resulted in private investment that totals over \$7 million dollars.

TOURISM COMMISSION

The Tourism Commission continues to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand to residents and visitors visit the website www.historicwethersfield.org

- Completed new seasonal brochure/rack cards for distribution.
- Conducted the 4th Annual community photo contests in 2014 and utilized photo submissions for web site and community calendar.
- Continues to coordinate and distribute a monthly event calendar of things to do in Wethersfield.
- Continues to take the lead with the implementation of the recommendations from the Old Wethersfield Master Plan.
- Group Tour Package. We are working our State Tourism District staff to create a package of offerings that might be attractive to group tour providers.
- Continued to utilize magazine ads, media articles and literature distribution throughout the State and Region to encourage visitors.
 - Northeast Group Tour Magazine

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- 24 Small New England Towns You Absolutely Need To Visit

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2015

Looking ahead to the balance of 2015 we remain optimistic that as the economy continues to improve we will experience additional development activity. There are already several other positive activities to report:

- Preliminary redesign and construction of the intersection of Main and Church Streets in Old Wethersfield.
- Staff are working with CT Transit and CROCOG for a series of new bus shelters throughout the community.
- Grant funds have been approved for the creation of the Wethersfield Heritage Walk to enhance the visitor experience to the Historic District. Out to bid now.
- Applied for \$500,000 in funds from the STEAP program for renovations to the Solomon Welles House.
- Completion of Wayfinding signage program.
- EDIC working on its Why Wethersfield initiative to help promote the Town to prospective residents, business, visitors etc.

Councilor Kotkin commented that it is sort of a tough sight at the corner of the Berlin Turnpike and Nott in that we've got a couple of vacant businesses and asked if there has been any interest or any activity. Mr. Gillespie responded that there has been some activity. There is an owner that is attempting to assemble those similar to the redevelopment plan that we have in mind. He is not experiencing the success that he would like but ultimately he is remaining hopeful that he can assemble and potentially demolish some of those buildings there and assemble a larger site. So we have been in somewhat constant contact with his trying to help him promote that. He has been to some of the trade shows to try and promote it so he is being much more aggressive than previous owners.

Mayor Montinieri commented that he knows that Peter has individually spent a lot of time helping commercial businesses who were looking at relocation needs and I think needs to be publicly applauded for that because I think the rise in that number is not accidental but I think it's reflecting your commitment to help nurture people staying in and several of those that we have been at openings have mentioned that to me, that you have helped them personally to find locations. So it really bears appreciation because those would be locations that would remain empty and we just about shifted all of them in town so thank you for that. Mr. Gillespie commented that it's becoming harder and harder as now we are running out of space. Mr. Gillespie thanked Mayor Montinieri.

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Deputy Mayor Barry asked if the bus shelters are definitely going to be a spring time project? Mr. Gillespie commented that there was a rush to have some of them installed in the fall and we specifically asked that they hold off. We had a couple of locations where we were still negotiating with some of the property owners to try and minimize the impact of the location. So I think we are past that and I just received an email a week or so ago, they are now looking for our money so I think that is indicative that spring sounds very realistic. At least the easier ones. There are a total of 9. There are 2 that were a little more challenging than the other so I would say the majority of them should be installed once the weather breaks.

TOWN CLERK COMMUNICATIONS

Dolores Sassano reported that all the department heads are working on their budgets and had refresher courses on how to enter it into Munis.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Barry moved **“TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION, LISA WURZER, 311 HARTFORD AVE. FOR THE TERM 3-19-12 TO 6-30-15”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Barry moved **“TO APPOINT TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, HENRY HORNAT, 39 COLLIER RD. EFFECTIVE 2-17-15 TO 6-30-17”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Martino moved **“TO ACCEPT THE BID FROM SAI SYSTEMS FOR AN UNINTERRUPTABLE POWER SUPPLY FOR THE WETHERSFIELD DISPATCH / 911 CENTER FOR \$29,413”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Mr. Bridges explained that this was part of the CNEF Budget and the Chief is here if there are any specific questions. He explained that the current battery backup system takes over in between when there's street power to generator power and if the generator fails, our existing battery backup systems are limited. So this will give us double the time to either get the generator back on-line, wait for street power to come back on-line or what you'll see in the next month or so is a mobile generator that will be possible to connect to the system to keep it up and

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running so we recommend the purchase.

Councilor Kotkin asked if we have any guesses as to why there is only one bid for it. Mr. Bridges responded that it went out on the street in our normal bid practices. It's just what we got. Councilor Kotkin asked if the number was in line with what we were expecting. Mr. Bridges responded between this item and the transfer switch for the mobile generator we're a little bit over in terms of total but it's consistent with what we anticipated.

Deputy Mayor Barry asked what's the shelf life for these and how long do they last. Mr. Bridges responded a couple of years. They come in banks. You can take out banks of them and replace them so it's kind of a system and there's a meter that will read and tell you how many minutes it will power the system and so forth depending on load.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Martino moved **“TO ACCEPT A BID #2015-16 FOR THE FABRICATION OF HERITAGE WALK INTERPRETIVE SIGNS TO W.S. SIGN DESIGN CORP. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$39,320 TO BE PAID \$35,000 FROM THE CONNECTICUT HUMANITIES GRANT AND \$4,320 FROM THE PRESERVE AMERICAN WAYFINDING SIGNS PROJECT ACCOUNT”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Mr. Bridges explained that as Peter Gillespie mentioned this is something that he is prepared to talk about and invited Mr. Gillespie to the podium to explain the item.

Mr. Gillespie explained that the primary funding for this project is coming from a grant from Connecticut Humanities. There is a little extra money that we are going to use from our Wayfinding signage program. We received three bids and we are recommending that the low bidder W.S. Sign Design from Springfield be awarded the bid. They are I believe \$7,000 or thereabouts less than the second and the third was another 10 or 15 above that so we did check the references and they are very qualified firm. They have done similar work elsewhere so we are very happy with the references that they provided and they have, in fact, checked out. The one caveat to make is if you look at the bid number and then you look at the number I'm asking you to award, we added one sign to the package from the point in time when we prepared the bid package, the committee felt we needed one additional sign along the way so we decided to do that. So we've asked you to award an additional \$1,115.00 to the base bid. Mr. Gillespie asked if there were any other questions.

Councilor Rell gave his compliments to Peter and the Committee and stated that he did sit on a couple of these public hearings and meetings and Peter and his group got input from a number of concerned residents to say the least who were concerned of what these Wayfinding signs would look like in town and I think you guys did a great job presenting the information to the public and

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letting them voice their concerns. You took their concerns and mocked up some good designs for these companies to present themselves with so well done.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Resolution authorizing the Town Manager to submit a grant application with the Department of Housing on behalf of the Wethersfield Housing Authority for \$800,000 for improvements to the James Devlin Senior Housing Apartments.

Resolution adopting a Fair Housing Plan.

Resolution for the Use of Small Cities Community Development Block Funds Program Income.

Resolution adopting an amendment to the Small Cities Community Development Block Funds Program Income use Plan.

MINUTES

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 20, 2014”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave. commented that the public works trucks go by many times and the sidewalks are already clean, he has to go out and clean them again. They have to be going fast to push the snow on the snowbanks back onto the sidewalks. He commented that on the Main St. and Church intersection and stated that the intersection should be a 4-way stop and it is confusing as it is. All the crosswalks should be redesigned and reconfigured and the stop signs should be located before the cross walks and not in the middle and not before. The southwest corner of Church and Main should be revised. Existing parking in front of the pizza place presently, it intrudes into the lane. He proposes that the curb line is moved far to the east about 30 feet. Mr. Colantonio offered some suggestions regarding the size of the traffic lanes and the removal of the proposed traffic island and the angled parking that exists at Lucky Lou's. He asked what the limits of the construction of the intersection are. He stated that the preliminary design needs to be revised based on all the comments received from the public on that night. Mr. Colantonio commented that he is very disappointed that the town subs out a simple project like this and an engineer could do it within a week.

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Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd., commented on an article regarding a town taking a vote to buy a fire truck and stated that we don't do any of that in our town. He has been attending off and on the Charter Revision Commission meetings. If you want people to move to Wethersfield you have to have a good town with good rules and regulations. We operate in the 1600's in Wethersfield. We allow a certain group of people to vote on issues, the rest of the people are left out of the whole issue when we buy stuff and budgets. He doesn't see any transparency coming out of the Charter Commission; on the nepotism; where can a citizen go when they have a problem. We just get a few words changed; a couple little cosmetics and that's about all we are going to get out of that Charter Commission. He stated that there is nobody to talk to in this town with issues and we are forced to go to the feds instead of talking to our ombudsman to resolve an issue.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Cir. commented that the snow removal trucks going down the streets should slow down for the safety of the citizens who are out trying to clean their driveways. He stated that citizens need a place to go and there should be office hours available to provide an opportunity to sit down and chat about problems and it might be something that you want to reconsider again.

Jim Clync, 903 Ridge Rd., commented that he takes offense to what Bob Young just said and stated that he was a member of the Charter Revision Committee 10 years ago and they worked hard and diligent and it was open to the public and they could offer their comments and there was nothing going on behind the scenes. He stated that he really takes offense to it because it was a hard working committee and they spent many, many hours working on the charter revision.

At 8:05 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION"**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

At 8:42 p.m., Councilor Martino moved **"TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION"**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

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ADJOURNMENT

At 8:42 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved “**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**”, seconded by Councilor Martino. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved by Vote of Council
March 2, 2015

Minutes were amended as follows:

Page 2, replace review of all the Department of Board of Education requests to *review of all Town Departments and Board of Education requests*