

Approved
REGULAR MEETING
November 16, 2015

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on November 16, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Councilors Bello, Hemmann, Hurley, Latina, Martino, Rell, Spinella, Deputy Mayor Barry and Mayor Montinieri.

Also present: Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks & Recreation; Mike Turner, Town Engineer; Fred Bushey, School Facilities; Jeff Bridges, Town Manager and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Councilor Jodi Latina.

HEARING

Public comments only on the hearing of the ordinance amending Chapter 10 of Article XIV of the Code of the Town of Wethersfield as it pertains to the members of the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities:

Lee Sekas, 117 Wells Road commented that he's been on the Advisory Committee and the main reason this ordinance is coming forward is that they had difficulties having a quorum at meetings. We need more citizens to participate in matters that affect them and their neighbors because we all live together, we all should care about one another.

Declare hearing closed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tom Mazzarella - 600 Wolcott Hill Road stated that he wanted to congratulate the returning Council members and welcome those newly appointed councilors. He's been attending Town Council meetings because of his concerns with the rising costs of living in Wethersfield. He has come to realize that many Wethersfield homeowners were retired and living on fixed incomes and that they are struggling just to meet the basic needs, the food bills, the heat, medical expenses and to keep their homes. He shared an article that appeared in the Hartford Courant concerning Social Security benefits. He felt the article was worth mentioning to everyone. Social Security benefits will have no cost of living increase for 2016. Many seniors will be stuck with an average monthly check of \$1341. Not a lot of money to live in Wethersfield if that's all you have coming in. The article goes on to say that the average cost of living adjustment for the past 4 years has been 4.1%. 2016 marks only the third time that Social Security has not increased benefits. All three flat years have been since 2010. The reason he brought it up is that a 2 or 3% annual tax increase may not seem like much to many but for the residents that maybe not as well off as the council members or those seniors that are on a fixed income and don't have the option of working extra hours or a part time job. Wethersfield is a great place to live and raise a family. As he edges towards retirement and looks at a fixed income, the constantly increasing tax burden is of great concern. Will he be able to afford to live in Wethersfield? So he asked this new council to please spend our tax payer money wisely. Take the time to do the research. Maybe an item needs to be tabled until all the questions have been answered. He asked that they all try to make decisions that they truly believe are in the best interests of the residents. He asked the council to try to have a consensus on issues and not on what has been the typical 5 to 4 votes.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road commented that with all the bad things that we are seeing on the television especially over the last several days, it just keeps getting worse. We've already seen our state in dire financial straits. They borrow money to give away to friends and buddies. We have here town council that gives rights away of tax payer money to organizations to do something. He's been complaining for a long time that we need to restrain our cost in our spending but that he hasn't seen this at all in Town of Wethersfield government., or with the State of Connecticut government either. This year, we got another big bump on our taxes. How much longer do you think people are going to stay? But the fact is we need to do something and that is to reduce our cost of running the Town of Wethersfield. The newspaper had an article about a very grave fiscal state for the State of Connecticut last week. As money dries up, he urged the Mayor to go back and look at the budget and skim back, find spots where he could save money and don't spend it. He recommended that prior to budget season; we should be looking at our expenditures in our budget as a business. We should be extrapolating the months that we've gone into how much has been spent and put a freeze on that what wasn't spent and then working our way through to the end of our fiscal year looking to save money. He commented that if you want to do economic development that is the way you do it. He said you are not going to do it by spending like there's no tomorrow. Businesses don't want to come here. The coffee shops and the low income producing jobs will come here, such as warehousing or serving coffee. We didn't get those people that were going to be making big money. We got the low income ones. That's all they can make and it's sad because we have a lot of young people that have graduated from college who are getting those low wages. He heard on the news that manufacturing is now in a recession. We have never recovered from 2008. The only people that recovered were the wealthy. Living in town as a retiree doesn't work. That's because this government has increased. He feels that towns such as Wethersfield have been an economic injury to the State of Connecticut by having the high school renovated. But the cost is not being paid by the Town of Wethersfield. It is being paid by the taxpayers who are going to be burdened for the next so many years and then when the next school comes along, more burden and more burden and he feels we're never going to get out of the rut. He stated that the Town Council will be talking about budgets in the coming months and he asked to please consider the people who are retiring or should have been retired but are still working. He feels we have big problems and hopes that the Council will look at those problems.

Lee Sekas, 117 Welles Road stated that it's that time of year again. Let it snow, let it snow! He feels people need to be aware of clearing sidewalks and curb cuts. What good are sidewalks and a curb cut if it's covered with snow and you can't use it? He indicated that the best thing about doing a sidewalk is to hit it when it attacks you first. Don't let it pile up and let it get harder and harder to remove. You can shovel early, use ice melt and keep it clean so it's easy throughout the whole winter. Going back two, three years ago in Manchester, a gentleman walking home from a supermarket in the street because the sidewalk wasn't cleared was hit and killed by a car. Do we want that to happen in our town? He's seen people in the streets walking because of sidewalks being bad. He asked if there a reason why we can't fine these people like the law calls for. One warning, not two or three. Don't be afraid to fine them again and again. Because after all, it's public safety and if the town needs money, there's money waiting to be picked, so take care of your citizens, old, young, wheel chaired people, baby carriages, people just walking. And with regards to finances, if the senior citizens can have a zero budget increase in their pension, he thinks the town should try to enter the same thing. But he felt that it's a question of also waste, not just among the town, but among the citizens. The only good thing he could say about the bad economy over the past years is that people have learned to shop wiser, use their money more efficiently because people could manage with less because that's what we have to do if we don't have more.

Dave Caruk, 149 Broad Street commented that since taxes went up, he was not happy about it. He indicated that he paid more on taxes for his property than houses a few blocks away because he lives on the green. He said he hasn't done anything to it in ten years and it's a little bit in disrepair but his taxes continue to go up. He stated that he's a Democrat but he didn't vote for one Democrat. He voted all

Republican except for Councilor Hurley. But he was hoping the Republicans had the majority because whenever Democrats get the majority, it's the taxes that go up every year. If the taxes continue to going up at the rate that they're going up, he won't be able to afford to live in Wethersfield when he retires and he is not happy about it. He commented that the million dollar surplus with the Board of Ed where did that money come from? That's the taxpayer's money. Money not spent, but of course it will be spent eventually so why do we have to raise the taxes so high? That's the one thing why he likes the Republicans because they're not into raising taxes so much and feels it's not a good thing to raise taxes every year.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Martino stated that EDIC meet last week. The Salute to Business will be on December 9th. Guest speaker will be Mike Zaleski from Riverfront Recapture. On the vacant property list, there is someone interested in looking at the former convalescent home on Jordan Lane. The developer of the apartments is going to have another meeting with the residents to review his plans for the application before going to Planning and Zoning. Clearing House Auction will be coming in soon with their plans to renovate the current building and will probably be adding an additional building in the back. The Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities met and they will be hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for the children in town and a Christmas party for the children next month. The number of unified basketball teams is increasing this year from 3 to 2. The Commission had some concerns on handicap wraps on the new intersection on Main and Mark. Mike Turner addressed these concerns and they are being taken care of.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Council Bello attended the Library Board Open House on Thursday night. It was a great opportunity for her as a newcomer to meet the Library Board and to meet some town staff. She publicly thanked Brooke, the Library Board and her staff for a great event.

Councilor Hurley said there was a meeting with the developers of the new proposed apartment on Ridge Road and the neighbors surrounding that area and there were a lot of concerns. He hopes the Town Council will keep an eye on that and keep the neighbors apprised of all the Zoning meetings and everything that they can come to to voice those concerns.

Mayor Montinieri assured the Council that Jeff Bridges will make sure that those are posted publicly for information. He spoke with Chris Taylor at Social Services about the food shelf and that continues to be depleted. There have been some fundraising and a couple of efforts over the weekend. There will be another series of efforts in the next couple of weeks, one of which is organized by D'Esopos. He shared two dates that Dolores, the Town Clerk will get posted on the town website and hopefully the media will pick it up and get the word out to the community as one additional support effort. He is initiating the Coffee with the Mayor December 1st and 3rd from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. in exchange for free coffee and a chance to give any feedback and asked that folks bring a food donation to help fill the food shelf this time of year. On December 1st the location will probably be The Wethersfield Diner because of its convenience and they will set up a donation box in the front of the lobby and then he would pick a second location that is wheelchair accessible for the Thursday, December 3rd one. A list of food share items that are needed can be found on the Social Services Website. Town Councilors are welcome to attend.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges, Town Manager stated that Eversource has approached the council with a pilot project. The street lights are still sodium vapor and there have been discussions about going to LED and they finally

selected a product to try out. They picked 30 communities to do a pilot project where they will replace 50 lamps along a single stretch of road, at their cost, and then see how the LED works in terms of the entire community. We're looking at using Wolcott Hill Road from Prospect north, there's a 52 light run for comparison of the sodium vapor. It also comes with, once these have been changed out, the LED has a lower power cost versus the sodium vapor and it has a longer life. We have talked in the past and other communities have done this, of actually purchasing the street lights because there was a resistance or a slowness of CL&P to turn over to LED. If this works out, we'll still realize the savings of an LED light in terms of power and length of time; but it won't require the town to take them over and manage them. This is a very positive project for us to look at. By the end of the year they are going to change out those 50 lights. Physical Services got a cemetery grant from the State to help with the leaf collection at First Church Cemetery. Leaf pickup is on schedule with the start of the second pass.

COUNCIL ACTION

There are no resignations or appointments for any Boards or Commissions this week.

Deputy Mayor Barry moved **“TO APPROVE THE ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 10, ARTICLE XIV OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD AS IT PERTAINS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES,”** seconded by Councilor Bello.

Jeff Bridges – This is a proposed ordinance to reduce the number of people required as part of that committee. Over time, quorums are difficult to get so we modeled this after another similar ordinance we did for another committee and that got the support of the committee itself, so we recommend adoption.

Councilor Martino commented that after discussions with some people, the suggestion was made to increase it from 8 to 9 regular members so that if there is a deciding vote that if it passes instead of it being 4 and 4 being a tie, He made a motion to amend this ordinance to change the active members, or the main members from 8 to 9, it will still leave the quorum requirement at 5.

Vote: PASS TO APPROVE - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Martino moved to **“TO ACCEPT THE REVISED BOATING FEES FOR THE WETHERSFIELD COVE FOR THE 2016 BOATING SEASON,”** seconded by Councilor Spinella.

Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation, stated that they have been working with the Advisory Parks and Recreation Board and have been looking at the fees over a number of years and the goal has always been to wait till the new docks were in and see how that all worked out, the new moorings that are in also and then look at our boating fees as it related to other area towns. So they did a survey with the other area towns that were on the river also. Looked at our fees and then made some recommendations to propose to the Council. Probably the biggest difference and where they got a lot of feedback from the public was with the canoes and kayak fees. We currently do charge for those fees. Have had a lot of residents have come out and speak to not having a fee when they did the area survey, no one else charges for canoes and kayaks so that's why you see the proposal to also be free for canoes and kayaks for a lot of different reasons.

Councilor Hurley commented that the canoes and kayaks have come up over the last four years. People are coming down and putting their boats in probably on an unsafe side of the cove and just trying to get around the fees, when no one else has a fee for those. So he agrees to not have a fee.

Councilor Rell wanted to give recognition to Jim ~~Woodworth~~ Woodworth who was very instrumental in doing this. He came before us a couple of months ago and I know he has written to all of us and this is a great example where some residents' concerns and the actual use of communication with us to get something done was instrumental in doing this.

Vote: PASS TO ACCEPT - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Bello moved **"TO ACCEPT THE BID FROM NEW SYSTEMS ASSOCIATES OF \$69,350 FOR DOOR AND LOCK REPLACEMENT AT EMMERSON WILLIAMS AND CHARLES WRIGHT SCHOOLS,"** seconded by Councilor Spinella.

Jeff Bridges stated that this is a capital improvement project that the town has budgeted in its annual capital improvement budget. Mr. Fred Bushey prepared the bids and solicited the bids for the doors and locks and he's here to answer any questions but he is recommending.

Fred Bushey informed the Council that this finished up Emmerson Williams but there is still the main door at Charles Wright School. He presented to the Council a chart of what is actually being done.

Councilor Hemmann questioned the four bids that came in and thought there was quite a disparity amongst the bids because it's an out of state bidder. Three bids from Connecticut. The low bid was \$69,350 then \$85,000 and \$99,882 and \$105,000. It's an out of state bidder. Was there something different from an in state and out of state contractors?

Fred Bushey commented not with regard to contracting. He also questioned the big difference between the numbers. He contacted the vendor to make sure they understood the specification was what was there and there were no substitutions and they wrote back that they were going to follow right through with what we said. There was one substitution and that was done through the bid process to substitute a different brand name of door, but still a 16 gauges metal door with styles up on top, bottom and in the middle. That's the strength of the door that holds the door together. He contacted a couple of schools that they have worked at in the State of Massachusetts. And they all gave them positive review with their spec that they put out and they followed it to a T. They have not done any work in Connecticut. They have worked in Wilberham and Lowell, Massachusetts. They met the criteria for warranty through Allegiance Corporation which encompasses door hardware, door frames and the locks and doors themselves. We've used them in the past up in Massachusetts and they couldn't get him any sort of negative reason to discard this.

Councilor Latina asked if all this has gone through the Security Director. If he is good with these doors and locks? Charles Wright has the main door going in and we have done a few of the exterior doors already but there is more to be done and more to be added but this was all we could do with this pot of funding. This will definitely close out Emmerson Williams.

Councilor Rell was troubled that New Systems out of Massachusetts has not done any work in Connecticut. After Newtown, the legislature and the governor signed into law a number of increased security measures for our schools. The Security Director signed off on these and he's on board with it?

Is there a time frame are you looking at doing this over the holiday break or is this more a long range, summertime. This work can start now. He is going to have New Systems work with both himself and Mr. Latarulo and the Fire Marshall Dignoti by closing one entrance off at a time. We have done this in the past as when we did the front doors at Emerson-Williams. The whole front façade during the school day, we had an alternate egress plan for the children to leave the building if they had too. There are a couple of doors there that have to be done on the weekend time because they are in the back because they go directly into classrooms and can't be done during the day.

Councilor Hurley questioned if Emerson-Williams front doors were totally complete. In the package on page 11 it just mentions Emerson-Williams, that's not some confusion why the price is lower; this does include Charles Wright even though it only mentions Emerson-Williams. The actual bid tab states Emerson and Charles Wright. It is only the one door at Charles Wright, we choose the main door.

Councilor Latina asked when we do work like this, we need to pull permits. So the schematics of the schools will then be updated so that the fire, the police, Mr. Even can all have an updated schematic. The outline of the building will not change; it will just be the doors, the upgrade of the actual doors and hardware.

Councilor Martino asked about the \$55,178 left in funding. Would it be used to put out a bid for Charles Wright?

Mr. Bushey stated he is working on a bid for cameras that they have on CIP for camera surveillance in the building which there is a meeting for Thursday to identify at the doors that really need to be done at Charles Wright that could possibly be a security breach.

Vote: MOTION TO PASS - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Barry moved **“TO ACCEPT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE AND APPROVE CHANGE ORDER #507 WITH FERGUSON ELECTRIC FOR ADDITIONAL ELECTRICAL WORK IN THE AUDITORIUM”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

Memo outlines the five components of this Change Order – change has occurred as a result of when the auditorium walls and the electrical service behind the stage were opened and the determination of the switch from incandescent to lead became a spec and once the walls were opened were they able to determine what would be required to actually make that accommodated. The Building Committee has met to review the cost to make that modification. The Building Committee has voted on and approved it. Part of the funding comes out of the FF&E budget, specifically item 4 because of the sound systems, the rest of it comes from contingency. Will not change the time period and there are no issues with overtime costs.

Vote: MOTION TO PASS - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Councilor Bello moved **“TO APPROVE THE BID IN THE AMOUNT OF \$28,750 TO WESPRO, LTD. FOR EMMERSON WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SIDEWALK REPAIRS”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

Jeff Bridges stated that \$25,000 will come from the Capital Fund and \$3,750 from the Operating Budget to finish the project.

Mike Turner explained the areas where and why the work is needed.

Vote: MOTION TO PASS - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

MINUTES

Header changed on the Minutes of October 19, 2015 but not reprinted or handed out again.

Councilor Bello moved **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 19, 2015”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

Vote: MOTION TO PASS - All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-3. Councilors Bello, Latina and Spinella abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Shawn Rugar, 269 Ridge Road wanted to thank the five members of the Council who came down to the Library and took part in the meeting with the development group and heard the neighbors concerns. He thanked Councilor Barry and Councilor Martino came to the last meeting, but would like to see more participation from the other Council members, including the Mayor. They had a brief meeting with the Mayor at the Country Club in the beginning of this whole process and he was disturbed that the other Council members had not briefed on that meeting taking place and did not have their opportunity to stand there with them in the meeting. There are a lot of concerns with the neighbors and some who have showed up at the meeting tonight and look forward to the Planning and Zoning meetings that will follow and would like the Council to go to bat for them. They would like the Council's help.

Jeff Bridges informed and stressed to the residents that they need to attend the Planning and Zoning hearings to get on the record there where those issues get flushed out.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road commented about the scheduled fees at the Cove for boating and said his neighbor has a boat and he has been growling for a long time now about the these increases and is now taking his boat elsewhere because he doesn't want to pay the fees, as well as the taxes that he has to pay on his house. Secondly, the doors and locks at Emmerson and Charles Wright that doesn't surprise him that an out of state guy came in with a lower bid. Connecticut is a very expensive state to do business in. He knows the town is aware that it's expensive too, but the town should be very considerate to the people who live here and retain these people by keeping taxes down. We had an extremely low amount of Grand List increase this year, but we got a 3.7% increase in our taxes and next year is going to be more. He doesn't feel things are getting better. Next, Mike Zaleski, Chairman of the Waterfront Recapture and he's a distinguished individual here in town and was a hot shot member on the Chartered Revision Commission that came in with some word smiting changes to our Charter that needed to be updated to this century. Mr. Zaleski kept us, as well as others, back in the 1600's with a few little word smittings that he did. Budgeting needs to be done like businesses do it. It was mentioned that Eversource is planning on replacing 50 lights at their cost. That cost comes out of the rate payer's pockets - plain and simple! But that's how government is. You twist and turn. We get a grant for picking up leaves. More free money from the State of Connecticut or where ever we are getting it from. Is that money going to be borrowed money or will it be current revenue? Does anybody know, because they have been taking a lot of borrowed money and spreading it around to help this recession that we're supposed to be in. But it

hasn't worked because you cannot buy yourself out of a recession. You need to drop your cost. You need to bring everything down and then you work your way back up. That's why Connecticut has never recovered since 2002 recession and if reports are right with regard to manufacturing is now in a recession, we are just going to roll over.

Tom Mazarella, 600 Wolcott Hill Road commented that he was pleased that the Weight Watchers facility may get torn down and the site redeveloped and there is a \$900,000 State Department of Economic Community Development Grant as part of the deal and another \$200,000 State Grant to tear down the existing building and was wondering if there would be a tax abatement that will be proposed for this site and would the public be advised of this in advance or would it be a last minute thing?

Mayor Montinieri informed Mr. Mazarella that there was no tax abatement proposed or planned at this time on that project.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:19 p.m., Councilor Martino moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Deputy Mayor Barry. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved by Vote of Council
December 7, 2015

Minutes of Nov. 16, 2015 were amended on
Page 5 to change the spelling of Whitworth
to Woodworth.