

Approved
REGULAR MEETING
October 17, 2016

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on October 17, 2016 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: John Bradley, Town Attorney; Marlene Desjardins, Tax Collector; Jeff Bridges, Town Manager and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio of 16 Morrison Avenue commented about the traffic and lack of stop sign on his street.

Dave DeCarli of 7 Monticello Drive was saddened by the Mayor's most recent comments and read a Facebook post of October 11th. The Mayor represents all of Wethersfield. He thought it was irresponsible and an embarrassment to the town. To write those things is very disappointing and thinks the Mayor should apologize.

Maria Alfonso of 256 Brimfield Road stated she was there in support of the Mayor's free speech. She is exercising her right as an American; she is exercising her right as a naturalized American. Her parents came here as a political refugee and so did she. Of Cuban descent, she has a personal disdain and hatred for anything that smacks of fascism, autocrats, communism---it's all the same to her. She is standing here for everyone who goes to vote. Vote however you will, she will fight for your right to vote for anyone you want to vote and have all the lawn signs you want. She doesn't care but she is terrified listening to a man who is basically trying to demean our democracy and having few people willing to stand up. She hopes enough voices come forward and speak. Vote your conscience. Her parents thought this was the epitome of democracy. That is why they came here, running away from communism and all the dictatorship that comes along with it.

Laila Mandour of 420 Ridge Road thanked Maria for her words. She is a naturalized citizen as well and thinks this is a great country. Freedom of speech is very, very important. It is what this country was founded upon. She would say that if somebody puts a lawn sign on their lawn then they are basically endorsing whoever it is whose name is on that sign. If that is what they chose to do publically then she thinks it is their duty to be able to defend their choice. She respectfully disagrees with you that the Mayor called the Councilor whatever it is you believe he called him. She thinks the Mayor just said that the Councilor supports this man. He put out there - is that what we want? That is what he believes; she thinks he has a right to say it. She doesn't think he should be ashamed of it. She doesn't think there is an apology in order. He is not calling

anybody by any name. He is only saying that this is what this person believes and is that what we want. That is a question. If somebody came to her and said to her you have this lawn sign on your lawn, are you this or are you that, she is prepared to defend herself and are prepared to answer those questions.

Robert Young of 20 Coppermill Road spoke about the passages on Facebook and was disappointed to see those comments. At the last Council meeting, an apartment complex was discussed briefly at the Fun Zone property. He can't understand how the bankrupt State of Connecticut can give somebody five million dollars. Do we need apartment houses? We need businesses instead to bring money into town. If the state is trimming their budget by 10% then we should be trimming our budget too. How much have they borrowed at the state level to keep the towns going because towns refuse to cut back? The artificial turf needs to be replaced. He wants to know where all the revenue from the use of Cottone Field is as well as the expenditures.

George Ruhe of 956 Cloverdale Circle thought this election is the most important thing that this country is facing right now. As far as he can tell, the electoral process in the State of Connecticut does not lend itself easily to fraud. What concerns him more is the entrée into the voting venue and the manual process. His thought is that it is incumbent to you to make sure that process goes smoothly and effectively.

HEARING - NONE

COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Hemmann attended the Shade Tree Commission meeting. They continue to work identifying priorities for the Commission to look at the scope of work that needs to be done. There is a lot of work and not enough resources to do it.

Deputy Mayor Barry attended the Building Committee and it is winding down. The contingency is at \$360-365,000. The end of October is when construction is scheduled to be complete and the areas will be turned over to the school and the Board of Education. The pool is ready for turnover. We are getting down to the home stretch. There was discussion about the roof top screening will come before us at some point.

Councilor Hurley asked if they are in the pool practicing yet.

Town Manager Bridges stated that they finished filling it today. They will spend the next few days heating and balancing the water and then get the Health Department in to sign off on it then they should open it up to swimmers.

Mayor Montinieri indicated that the six Mayors have been meeting. He wanted to clarify that there has not been any discussion among any of the Mayors about any tax revenue from any of the respective municipalities being diverted or used to assist Hartford in any manner with respect to their issues. Mayor Bronin who has been a part of the group has certainly participated in the discussions and has shared the challenges of the Greater Hartford area as well as the financial needs of Hartford. Within the group there is certainly an appreciation of Hartford's challenge

and the financial issues that are plaguing the City. They obviously are facing some difficult decisions which include the discussion about bankruptcy. The five Mayors, representing the other towns, certainly appreciate that each of our respective communities has our own financial challenges. The in reference made to regionalization, the group has talked about: purchasing of equipment together; maximizing possible synergies with respect to larger purchases that we could share; paving of roads that might be synchronized to allow for some savings. For example, Kitts Lane in Newington was paved roughly in the same period of time that Two Rod Highway. In talking with General Paving after that project was done, if we had some communication between the towns, which was not typically common, we probably could have staged that paving job as one job. Saving the cost of double staging which is a significant part of the project. So having discussions like that, which haven't happened in the past very frequently, are very helpful. He wanted to assure this Council as well as our community that those discussions are brainstorming sessions, which have included Town Managers, and we will continue to do that. This group really talks more about a much broader cheerleading role with Hartford but not included in that list is any sharing of our tax revenue or resources of our town which he does not support.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Martino attended the ribbon cutting for Massaro Financial Group on Garden Street. This is the second business this year that has moved from Rocky Hill to Wethersfield. This has been in reverse in the past and he is glad to see that we are attracting business from out of town to come back to Wethersfield.

Councilor Latina asked if the Mayors group was that through a specific entity.

Mayor Montinieri stated no. It came up informally after we took office last year. The seeds of it he thought was from CCM or one of the other groups which had sparked the idea.

Councilor Hemmann stated that she did that. We worked together the same group minus Hartford and they did it prior to her – Midstate.

Mayor Montinieri replied that it came out of that informally and we just reached out to the Mayors through emails and said why don't we talk.

Councilor Latina stated that she knew CCM and CROG is doing something so it almost duplicative.

Mayor Montinieri indicated that they were aware of that, a great observation, which they will address.

Councilor Rell stated that along the lines of regionalization, the email they got regarding the MDC and the shortfall - Hartford's financial situation. He thought that Hartford is the largest municipality in the MDC with 26%. There were a number of bullet points about what the MDC may plan on doing if they do fall under a shortfall revenue from Hartford. Number 4 was work with the state, the city and other member towns on a legislative solution. He just hopes that

legislative solution is not increasing rates for surrounding towns to help Hartford out. He asked that Mr. Bridges who attends on the MDC budget committee meetings keep our rate payers in Wethersfield in mind when they decide to come to a legislative action that might include member towns to help out Hartford.

Councilor Hurley commented that the Keane Foundation biggest fundraiser was held this weekend. It was the biggest success they ever had because of such good weather. He wanted it to be known that he does not condone sexual assault.

Councilor Hemmann has the opportunity to attend and play the Grant's Way Foundation Tournament. They continue to raise funds to put the bridge between Field 1 and Field 2 at Millwood's. It was a great day. She had an opportunity to walk through the Carnival. There were a lot of happy faces and Judy was very positive about the attendance. She also has the same concerns that Councilor Rell addressed about the MDC budget hearings. She read the report from the CEO and she is disappointed and she knows that they consider the reserves and the deficit and the amount of water that they have but as you watch and the fact that we have not had any serious precipitation. You look to see what other water companies have done and we have not seen any of that and she is really concerned. When they were going to put in the bottling plant in, what kind of safeguards will be put into place with regard to the member towns when a situation just like this happens. Because we won't be protected yet a business is going to take water. Is there a contingency plan during that process that if it continues in a deficit that they will not sell water to the bottling plant, she didn't think so but it doesn't protect our member towns. If you look at the figures we are down to eighteen months and that may seem like a long time in the scope of things because a year and a half goes by really quick and if we have this same kind of drought as has been happening for well over a year now, we are going to be in real trouble.

Mayor Montinieri asked eighteen months is the reserve as of right now? He asked Town Manager Bridges if we could get more information, the pending project to Councilor Hemmann's point with regard to water reserve and with potential droughts or some summary of that.

Councilor Hemmann responded water reserves and what is the contingencies related to businesses that are purchasing water for their own profit from the purview of our water authority. Our member towns should be the first priority. We are stewards and we need to look to the future.

Councilor Latina wanted to express her support of Councilor Hurley and she thinks he is an upstanding citizen and gives of his time here and has done so for many years. She thinks it is unfortunate that like we all say it is the silly season but hopes we can elevate the conversation because clearly we have a lot of huge issues here that we are dealing with and everyone is having some good congenial conversation about some important things that affect our town and our residents and she hopes we can continue that through the remainder of the election season.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Bridges reported that he had received a letter from DOT that they are going to be revisiting some traffic signalizations across the region. One of the things they are looking at is the traffic signal at Route 175 and Goff Road to update and fourteen other signals in the region. We still have about \$18,000 with The Connecticut Green Bank from a grant for some energy products we did years ago. The original proposal was to put four solar panels at the Community Center but we couldn't make the electric connection so we are going to look at alternative energy saving projects with that money. We are reviewing town buildings, boilers, lighting systems and so forth. Tonight we are looking at the other energy program and there is \$10,000 there. We have to develop a program for the community. We are getting back into the energy projects now that the high school project is winding down and we have freed up some resources elsewhere.

Councilor Hemmann asked Town Manager Bridges if he could find out what the physiology is for why they are backing up the walkways and stop lines from the intersections.

Town Manager Bridges responded that Federal DOT's standard is that each crossing needs its own crossing signal. So you have to separate the push button signals so that is why they are moving them. They are putting in secondary ones. Everybody needs their own button.

Councilor Latina questioned that there are extra poles at those intersections and will those old poles be taken away?

Town Manager Bridges replied that they will clean all that up but the primary reason for the change in the cross walks is that each direction needs its own push button light to control that crossing.

Deputy Mayor Barry asked if Town Manager Bridges could inquire again with the MDC about the smell in old Wethersfield to get a definitive answer.

Town Manager Bridges responded that we have exposed mud banks that have a lot of decaying matters, organics that are breaking down and they are exposed so it is not a sewage issue. It's an organic issue in those areas and once we get more rain it should help out but it is the low water levels and we are not getting the refresh water particularly in the cove which you would otherwise.

Deputy Mayor Barry stated that makes Councilor Hemmann's question all the more important.

Town Manager Bridges indicated that he has had the Health Department, the MDC and CRA have all looked at it and it is just low water in the river and the cove.

Councilor Rell stated that he had gotten a question about the intersections, specifically the redesigning of the intersections for handicapped accessibility but now with the additional light signal walks, are they being paid by Federal DOT, State DOT or town funds.

Town Manager Bridges responded that no town funds. It is State or Federal depending on how

State DOT is working that program but the town is not participating.

Councilor Hurley questioned why the smell only seems to be contained to where the MDC is. It doesn't smell elsewhere on the river.

Town Manager Bridges reported that we have received a \$4,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for the Food Bank which we get annually.

TOWN CLERK COMMUNICATION

Town Clerk Sassano wanted to remind everyone that in Connecticut November 1st is the last day to register to vote. Absentee ballots always have to be returned by 8:00 p.m. Election Day otherwise they will not be counted. The Town Clerk's Office will be open Saturday, November 5th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to issue absentee ballots. If you miss the November 1st deadline in Connecticut we have Election Day Registration. That means on Election Day from 6 a.m. to 8p.m. people can come to Town Council Chambers and register to vote and then cast their ballot here.

COUNCIL ACTION

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR ACTION

Councilor Rell motioned to **“ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF LESLIE ESOIAN, 94 RANDY LANE FROM THE YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 7, 2016”**, seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

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

Councilor Martino motioned to **“ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF ANGELA G. COLANTONIO, 16 MORRISON AVENUE FROM THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT HEALTH DISTRICT EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 5, 2016”**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Barry.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Bello motioned to **“APPROVE HAVING AN OUTSIDE BEER GARDEN AT THE HOLIDAYS ON MAIN EVENT UPON PROPER INSURANCE, SECURITY AND PERMITS BEING RESOLVED”**, seconded by Councilor Spinella.

Town Manager Bridges stated that it is on private property but wants Council to be aware of it in case there are concerns before we move forward with this.

Diane McAdams, Chairperson of Holidays on Main, of 108 Eastern Drive commented that Holidays on Main attracts around 7,000 people to our town and it is a light hearted event and a lot of fun. This year they made \$525 and that was only because the town was generous and gave them back on the police coverage. They would like to keep the event going and was hoping to earn a little money by adding a Beer Garden. They have the approval from the people that run the Webb Barn. Sammy from Buy Rite Liquors is willing to help us apply for a one day liquor license. We will man the booth and check identification and make sure everybody is legal. She hopes this gets approval.

Councilor Hurley asked is they need to have an extra policeman on duty for this.

Ms. McAdams replied that they were hoping not.

Town Manager Bridges responded that was one of the things they have to work through.

Councilor Rell was wondering whether Webb-Deane-Stevens was okay with this and inquired about what size it would be because the one at the Cove Carnival it was a good size and there was a lot of spill over outside of it.

Ms. McAdams responded that it would be in the courtyard area out of front of Webb-Deane-Stevens. They were patterning it off the Carnival but maybe not as big.

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

Councilor Spinella motioned to “**ACCEPT THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES MUNICIPAL PLEDGE**”, seconded by Councilor Bello.

Town Manager Bridges stated that this is a reiteration of a program we looked at years ago and somewhat participated in but never fully endorsed. Eversource has reworked the program where they will provide a lot of the PR and management of the program from a community level. There is a \$10,000 grant for some kind of community outreach or community energy item once we sign up. We would use the high school as the benchmark between 2010 and now.

Councilor Hurley asked what the 20% clean renewable energy and do we already have some of that being produced.

Town Manager Bridges responded we will work with CROG as we purchase power to make sure they are looking at renewables in their energy package.

Councilor Hurley so it is the power we purchase.

Town Manager Bridges replied that we purchase and then what is available in the community.

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

Councilor Martino motioned to “**APPROVE REJECTING THE STATE’S OFFER TO PURCHASE 170 RIDGE ROAD**”, seconded by Deputy Mayor Barry.

Town Manager Bridges stated the State gave us with a very generous offer for the low, low price of \$250,000 we could own a vintage 1912 building located in Wethersfield. The Public Works Committee reviewed this and is making the recommendation that we don’t accept this. He has discussed this with the Board of Education Superintendent and he is not interested in it so we are recommending that the town express it’s gratitude for the offer but rejecting it just the same.

Councilor Martino reported that the condition and age of the building and the hazardous material would be more than fourfold what the purchase price was and we have no need for the building.

Town Manager Bridges indicated that in the event that we don’t purchase it then they would put it for sale to the public. Under State law they have to offer state owned buildings it to the local municipalities first then offered to the public.

Councilor Latina asked what that was zoned for.

Councilor Bello commented it was zone A1.

Town Manager Bridges stated A1 is agricultural 1 and whoever buys it will have to come in for a new zoning application unless they reuse it for a school.

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

Deputy Mayor Barry motioned to “**APPROVE THE WRITE OFF OF THE 2000 UNCOLLECTIBLE TAXES PER THE REQUEST OF THE WETHERSFIELD TAX COLLECTOR**”, seconded by Councilor Martino.

Marlene Desjardins, Tax Collector was invited up to the podium to explain the motion. She indicated that this is the oldest grand list. Taxes are only collectible fifteen years and this is the 16th year which they have to drop off because they are no longer legally collectible. Just a few vacant lots they have around and the total is about \$4,000 for the list.

Town Manager Bridges stated that a lot of these the Assessor has now put a minimal value on so going forward there won’t be value for a tax bill so as these cycle through the fifteen year period we will see less and less of these. Some of them are actually going through tax sale.

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

Councilor Spinella motioned to “**APPROVE THE MEETING DATES OF THE WETHERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2017 WITH THE DELETED DATES SUGGESTED OF JULY 5TH, AUGUST 7TH AND NOVEMBER 6TH**”, seconded by Councilor Bello.

Town Manager Bridges stated that it has been our practice to cancel the November 6 meeting due to Election Day and usually we cancel a July and August meeting.

Town Clerk Sassano wanted to draw everyone's attention to the July 5th meeting that we are going to be closed Monday and Tuesday for Independence Day because the Unions voted on closing the Monday before so if you have a meeting you will have to go to the middle of the week on Wednesday which would be the first time.

Mayor Montinieri commented that those are the likely ones reflective of what we did this summer and we can take these off now and we can always add a meeting if needed.

Town Clerk Sassano indicated that if you take them off now then Departments can better plan.

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

BIDS - NONE

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION - NONE

MINUTES

Councilor Spinella motioned **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2016,”** seconded by Councilor Bello.

Vote: All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0 (Councilor Hemmann left at 6:15 p.m.).

Councilor Bello motioned **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2016,”** seconded by Councilor Spinella.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tom Mazarella of 600 Wolcott Hill Road commented that he didn't understand the rationale of marketing a huge volume of water to Niagara and lowering the rates to get the business. Now they are having a shortfall of income. Niagara is not on line yet. Will we still have a drought when they are in operation? By the way MDC has been operating, he is sure, if there is a severe drought, we have to curtail our consumption in Wethersfield. They will probably enforce that same restriction on Niagara. They will still use 500,000 gallons of water and sell it for more than what they are paying for it. The Town of Wethersfield as a member of MDC should have voiced their disapproval of that program. Send the MDC a letter and demand they curtail water sales to Niagara in the case of a severe drought.

Robert Young of 20 Coppermill Road commented that he also was concerned over the MDC water issue. He recommended that the Mayor should urge the Mayor of Hartford to file

bankruptcy. Some rest areas are being closed during certain hours of the day to save two million dollars.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Martino motioned **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION,”** at 8:20 p.m., seconded by Councilor Spinella.

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

Councilor Martino motioned **“TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION,”** at 8:50 p.m., seconded by Deputy Mayor Barry.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 p.m., Councilor Martino motioned **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Spinella. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL (8-0-0)
November 21, 2016