

Unapproved
REGULAR MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on December 5, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Councilors Bello, Hemmann, Hurley, Latina, Martino [7:20], Rell, Spinella, Deputy Mayor Barry and Mayor Montinieri.

Also present: John Bradley, Jr., Town Attorney; 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 Bello.

Mayor Montinieri asked for a moment of silence in observance of the anniversary of Pearl Harbor on Wednesday, December 7, 2016.

VIEW THE COMPLETE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING: Go to www.youtube.com and search Wethersfield Government Access TV

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tom Mazarella of 600 Wolcott Hill Road commented on the MDC reserve proposal. What wasn't discussed at the last council meeting was the 4% increase in water charges and the 61/2% increase in sewer charges. We are never going to get that money back; no chance to recover the increase in the bond costs. He was very disappointed at the MDC meeting, the vote passed unanimously. He counted 32 Commissioners that represent the various towns and not one person voted against the proposal. Wethersfield had one person vote for the proposal. He doesn't know what we can do about keeping the cost down.

Robert Young of 20 Coppermill Road also was disappointed with the MDC issue. It reflects back on the town council because they put people on the MDC board. This vote puts an extra burden on us. Connecticut and Hartford are ready to implode. They did not come and consult with us for our advice. Now they can't pay their bill and they come to us. The State of Connecticut OPM (Office of Policy Management) physical accountability report for 2017 - 2020 came out. The whole report was 74.3 billion dollars of long term obligations.

Gus Colantonio of 16 Morrison Avenue commented that he isn't going away and he still is waiting for some answers. He has been told he has all the answers, but not all the answers to the questions he is asking. He discussed the issues he had with the stop sign and traffic on Morrison Avenue. Why are the no parking signs behind the sidewalk? Why is the stop sign not between the curb and the sidewalk but behind the sidewalk?

George A. Ruhe of 956 Cloverdale Circle commented he appreciated the moment of silence for Pearl Harbor, a defining moment in time. He feels very comfortable with the plan for the pond that has been proposed by the Town Engineer and Town Manager. He feels positive about the pond and that it will be brought to completion. He hopes that as a group, all his elected officials

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will look at all the costs that are associated with running local government. More specifically take a careful look at overtime pay to be brought a bit more under control. Be concerned about spending money that really enhances the community or ways that we can make Wethersfield a better town.

Amalie (Ami) Montstream of 357 Garden Street read from a letter. For years this town has implored the citizens to partake in the beautification of the town. The Garden Clubs of Wethersfield have stepped up with landscaping, maintaining small corners of public gardens including planning, planting, investing time, money, energy and passion to welcome tourist and enhance the general look of the town. If a sidewalk is necessary to cross from Hartford Avenue to Cove Park on State Street, it could have been done without tearing up years of work and loving care. The sidewalk installed was mostly where asphalt was painted for a walkway and minimally reduced the garden. How pleasant it would be to walk through this intersection and enjoy a beautiful garden. The town was very successful in preserving a lovely garden on Main Street and Church Street and Marsh Street intersection. Why not give each garden and the loyal gardeners the same treatment and respect. What a terrible disappointment to Sheila Wells and Betty Standish who years of physical effort, time and money into this project to have it removed practically overnight. I hope this town can do a kinder, more considerate job in the future. The value of the beauty and let not the car be king. Thank you.

Town Manager Bridges stated that they did coordinate that project with Betty Standish. They knew what we were doing and they approved what we were doing and we did it. So that was not a spur of the moment thing. That was designed through the Engineering Department in full collaboration with the Beautification Committee.

Mrs. Montstream stated but it was very sudden, it really was.

Town Manager Bridges indicated he understood that, but they did reach out to the Beautification Committee and they did talk to Betty and they did coordinate what they were going to do and how they were going to do it and what the final outcome would be. It wasn't without communication and it wasn't spur of the moment. Next spring when it is planting season, they will get back in there and clean that up. They had a contractor on site. Sidewalk projects were what they wanted to do this fall. Our new Engineer thought it was a safety issue, so they did it this year.

Amalie Montstream stated that they could probably have saved a lot of that garden.

Town Manager Bridges stated that was all coordinated with Betty.

COUNCIL REPORTS – NONE

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Martino commented that there was an Open House at the Transition Academy on the Silas Deane Highway. The students were dressed up to greet the parents and guests they brought, Support staff, Council members and Board of Education members. The kids are really excited to

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be there. It is great for the town. More Council members were in attendance for the Holiday on Main. He wanted to thank the Chamber for a great event. The Mayor, Councilor Rell and himself attended a seminar on racial profiling at Eversource. The guest speaker was a Dr. Johnson. A lot of reports done in the past have been done using the number of stops and coming up with a benchmark based on the census of the towns. Dr. Johnson emphasized that this is the wrong way to do it. It should be based on things like taking vehicle accident reports and including within those keeping track of race and ethnicity to come up with a benchmark and comparing that against the number of stops. And by doing that he used a couple of good examples. One was a suburb just south of Detroit and he showed a few other major cities and the differences and by doing it off of a comparison of accident reports which are the people that are driving versus the total census which includes everyone, not just drivers. Then the benchmarks and the actual stops were inline racially and it wasn't profiling or bad.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Bridges stated that they did have a bond rating last week in anticipation of 81/2 million dollars for the High School last round of bonds. Our rating was stable and we will be closing on the bonds later this week. At the last meeting there was a question on the Quisenberry Arcari bill as it relates to the track. That portion of the track project was not pursued by the Building Committee so that those funds will not be spent on the architect. He and the Town Engineer met with Goodwin College. They own many of the parcels down in the Meadows and have received a grant from the State of Connecticut to continue to expand and enhance the trail system.

Councilor Rell asked if they will be consulting the Wethersfield Game Club for safety purposes.

Town Manager Bridges stated yes that they work with them all the time and they have a good relationship with both them and the Great Meadows Trust.

Town Manager Bridges stated he was asked to put together a history on Morrison Avenue and where this town has been in its conversation about it. He has worked with the Police Department and the Engineering Department to go over what we have accomplished and what's been done since 1997. He then presented the studies and correspondence which were conducted several times over a number of years by various administrations.

The first study was done in 1997 by Chief John Karangekis and Lieutenant James Mull of the Wethersfield Police Department which was for a request for a stop sign on Morrison Avenue at Orchard and the nature of the request was to slow people down. The conclusion of the study was the number of vehicles using Morrison Avenue is not indicative of a stop sign control issue.

The second study was done on February 1, 2008 when Mr. Alpert of Morrison Avenue asked for a stop sign at Orchard to slow speed down. Four traffic studies were conducted and the data did not indicate a speed problem.

Third study was done on May 21, 2009 which was requested by then Town Manager, Bonnie Therrien to the Police Department to do another study at Tifton or Orchard and the reason was to

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slow the traffic down. The study also repeats the traffic analysis that was taken from the prior study in 2008. The Manual of Uniformed Traffic Control Device warrants “Stop signs should not be used for speed control; stop signs should be installed in a manner that minimizes the number of vehicles having to stop at intersections where a full stop is not necessary at times; consideration should be given to using less restrictive measures such as yield signs.” The conclusion was Morrison Avenue at Orchard and Tifton failed to meet the Manual’s warrants and did not recommend a stop sign.

Fourth study was done in January 2012 where they used the Stealth Stat machine to take the traffic volume numbers by Lieutenant Crabtree. Based upon the results of this study, the warrants were not met for a stop sign. Town Engineer Mike Turner went out and did a intersectional site distance analysis after the construction of the sidewalk and found it to be adequate for the intersection.

The fifth study was done on August 11, 2015 using the traffic monitoring systems we have. This actually showed that the traffic was now slower now than it had been in the past. Under federal guidelines that we have to follow and based upon the Engineering and Police Department analysis, this intersection does not warrant a stop sign.

The complete report and video are online to view.

Councilor Latina asked if they ever quantified how much all this costs to do.

Town Manager Bridges stated no. They routinely do stop sign studies.

Mayor Montinieri thanked Mr. Bridges for his report because Mr. Colantonio has raised questions about this topic pretty steadily over the last several years. So, for the benefit of the public, since it has been said many times that they [Council and Manager(s)] don’t care, they don’t have the information and they haven’t answered his questions. Mayor Montinieri thinks it is important to note that these studies which are available to him or any member of the public, in his opinion, answer every one of those questions and also validates why this Council cannot act on that request any further.

Town Manager Bridges stated that on the parking sign issue, they did put them on the back side of the sidewalk because the snow shelf is narrow. Everybody knew they were narrow going in. And if they put them in the snow shelf when they plow snow, they would be knocking them over onto the sidewalk. So they put them on the back side of sidewalk still within the town right of way but they got them out of the way of the snow plows. Basically that is why they are there.

TOWN CLERK COMMUNICATION

Town Clerk Sassano stated that earlier tonight 23 Justices of the Peace were sworn in for a four year term of January 3, 2017 to January 4, 2021.

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COUNCIL ACTION

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR ACTION

Deputy Mayor Barry motioned to “**ACCEPT THE REMOVAL OF SHIRLEY STEINMETZ OF 375 BRIMFIELD ROAD FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATIONS COMMISSION EFFECTIVE 12-5-16**”, seconded by Councilor Spinella.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – NONE

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Spinella motioned to “**APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION GRANT**”, seconded by Councilor Bello.

Town Manager Bridges stated that when they reaffirmed the pledge to participate in the Clean Energy program, it reopened up a window of grant funding that originally had been proposed to add solar panels to the roof of the Community Center. However, when that project was undertaken and initially evaluated, the power systems at the Community Center weren't compatible with those panels so that was put on hold for some time. Now we have proposed a new project where we will replace the boilers, and if possible, some of the lighting at the Nature Center to have more efficient systems there.

Councilor Rell asked if there was a cost of how much it costs to operate the Nature Center.

Town Manager Bridges indicated that they keep separate accounts and he could get that to him.

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

BIDS – NONE

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ARTICLE 1 OF CHAPTER 10 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD PERTAINING TO THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Section 1. Article 1, Chapter 10 of the Code of the Town of Wethersfield pertaining to the Regional Council of Elected Officials is hereby repealed.

Section 2. Effective Date: This ordinance will become effective per Article 308 and 309 of the Charter of the Town of Wethersfield.

PURPOSE: To repeal a section of the Town Code that is no longer necessary.

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PREPARED BY: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager

INTRODUCED BY: Mayor Paul Montinieri

DATE: December 1, 2016

MINUTES

Councilor Spinella motioned **“TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 21, 2016”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

Town Clerk Sassano indicated that we did make a correction on Page 10 the spelling of Quisenberry.

Councilor Latina asked for a clarification on Page 3 that it should say when they (meaning Hartford) not when you.

Vote: All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-1 (Councilor Bello abstained).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio of 16 Morrison Avenue commented that all of the reasons that were expressed apply equally as well on Hillcrest Avenue and he still disagrees with it and asked why Hillcrest has three stop signs and Morrison Avenue only has two.

Robert Young of 20 Coppermill Road commented about an article on how bankruptcy was bad for Hartford’s image and that not one of our guys voted no. He talked about long term liabilities and taxes. An article in the Hartford Courant by James Smith, Chairman and CEO of Webster Bank says the spending cap definition needs to remain true to three principles of fiscal responsibility – stability, predictability and competitiveness. All of which we do not have.

George A. Ruhe of 956 Cloverdale Circle commented he thinks a little effort should be made to try to improve how the people here as well as the people at home hear what is said. The technology to make the Council’s voices heard is not rocket science. He has become very conscience of the racial profiling issues across the country and it concerns him. On Election Day he visited all the polling sites and his observations was that there was some level of incompetency or indifference involved with the check in process which has always been an area of concern for him. As we look ahead there should be some way to make sure there is uniformity with sign postings.

Jim Clynych of 903 Ridge Road commented that Councilor Spinella and he were pleased to see that the town made the right move and terminated the principal. He thought it was the right move. The Police Department losing its dog is very sad and a tragic thing.

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Mayor Montinieri motioned **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PENDING LITIGATION PURSUANT TO C.G.S. SECTION 1-200(9)(C) AND PERSONNEL MATTERS”** at 8:20 p.m., seconded by Councilor Bello.

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

Councilor Bello motioned **“TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION,”** at 9:28 p.m., seconded by Mayor Montinieri.

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

Councilor Bello motioned **“TO INCREASE THE TOWN CLERK’S SALARY TO \$75,873”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

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

Councilor Bello motioned **“TO INCREASE THE TOWN MANAGER’S SALARY TO \$135,000”**, seconded by Councilor Martino.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:37 p.m., Councilor Martino moved **“TO ADJOURN THE MEETING”** seconded by Councilor Rell. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk