

**REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 5, 2012**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, March 5, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console and Chairperson Hemmann.

Absent: Councilor Montinieri.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Chandler Rose, Assessor, Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks & Recreation and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Councilor Drake led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Insurance Presentation:

Chris Bazinet, Chair of the Town's Insurance Committee, thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to discuss the work being done by the Insurance Committee, key members of the Town Staff and agents of record on behalf of the Town. He reported that their objective is to create and manage a good, solid insurance program for the Town. He noted that they operate with two key objectives. The first, to understand and manage the risks of the Town, which include risks to property, health and safety of employees, and risk of claims against the Town by third parties, and the second objective is to control costs. He gave a brief overview of the Town's insurance program.

Christopher Monroe, principal with Constitution Advisory Group, which works with the Town's Health and Welfare Plan. He explained that they try to focus on keeping the Town informed of all issues relative to plan design.

Chris Wardrop, from USI reported that their goals are to protect the employees, residents, the infrastructure and to focus on the total cost of municipal risk.

Councilor Manousos noted that during the budget process last year, there was discussion about health and wellness programs to help keep Town employees healthy and to help drive some of the costs down, and asked if someone could explain what was implemented and how it helped.

Chris Monroe explained that the first step was to bring the unions together and review the actual utilization data in place for the Town and to show how the \$10 million was spent and to identify what the issues are and what to do about it. There is a challenge because they are operating in a collective bargaining environment.

Councilor Drake asked if the \$10.5 million includes the premium for the insurance for over

\$100,000.

Chris Monroe responded that this was correct.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the committee did a very good job and added that if one looks at the amount the Town pays for health insurance each year and given the number of employees, it's a lot.

Chris Monroe responded that a benchmark of \$8,000 to \$10,000 is used for each employee each year and it's moving more towards \$12,000 per employee per year.

Councilor Drake commented that he is bothered by the number comparing the number of 15,000 households versus the number of 1,800 employees/retirees.

Chairperson Hemmann thanked Christopher Monroe, Chris Bazinet and Chris Wardrop for their presentation.

REVALUATION – Presented by Chandler Rose, Assessor (See attachment)

Chandler Rose reported that the Town is mandated by the State of Connecticut to perform a revaluation every five years. The difference between the 2013 revaluation and the 2008 revaluation is that in 2008, everyone's property was inspected by the revaluation company who came out to try to gain entry into the house. This revaluation is an interim or updated revaluation which is done every five years. Properties are assessed at 70% of the value. Benefits of the revaluation are to: correct disproportionate taxation, adjust value for market shifts and achieve 70% state mandated assessment ratio. Revaluations will be advertised in the Town's website will be utilized, along with Public Access TV and newspapers.

Councilor Roberts thanked Chandler Rose for his report. She asked about mailers that are going out to non-English speaking families or visually impaired residents.

Chandler Rose responded that if mailers are not returned, there will be different ways to know whether or not the data mailers are returned. If the data mailer is not returned, the property owners will be contacted.

Councilor Roberts asked how reliable the questionnaires would be.

Chandler Rose responded if the data mailers are completed incorrectly, there will be a sampling of the data mailers and someone will be going out to confirm the data.

Councilor Roberts asked if the Town Attorney has been contacted about including a statement about false information reported.

Chandler Rose responded that he is still in the beginning stages of the project.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if he has had any discussions with other assessors regarding what the average household values are.

Chandler Rose responded that there may be a 6% drop but things are looking up.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if he has contacted the realtors in Town to inquire as to what's happening around Town.

Chandler Rose responded that he has spoken with several realtors.

Councilor McAlister asked if there is a similar process for commercial buildings.

Chandler Rose responded that the commercial properties are done differently. They will not receive the data mailers. Per statute, they are given an income and expense report every year that needs to be completed and returned to the Town. If it is not returned, there is a 10% penalty on their assessment. The values on the commercial property are on their income stream.

Councilor McAlister inquired about buildings that do not generate income and haven't for some time.

Chandler Rose responded that the Town does keep in contact with the property owners and they do receive an income and expense report.

Councilor McAlister noted that a registration fee was discussed at one time for vacant buildings and asked if anything has been done with this.

Jeff Bridges responded that nothing has been done to date with this.

Councilor McAlister asked if the Assessor's Office has any feeling as to how many permits are not being pulled for projects.

Chandler Rose responded that he would not have these figures, but the Building Department would, and he noted that if he is out and sees projects that permits have not been pulled, he does report it to the Building Department.

Councilor McAlister suggested perhaps the Assessor's office should look into software that would capture this data for this year. He asked if there was a list of challenges of the taxes or the valuation of homes and adjustment made in the past five years.

Chandler Rose asked if he was interested in looking at the properties which went through the

appeal process.

Councilor McAlister responded that he would be interested in who challenged the assessment and what adjustments were made, if any. He would be interested in this to see if the same households go through this process each time.

Chandler Rose responded that he will look into this information. He also noted that with regards to aerial photography, he has approached the Town Manager's office with software that is available.

Councilor Drake asked how income on the property affects the value of commercial property.

Chandler Rose responded that this is the most common approach.

Councilor Kotkin asked if he knew whether rentals on commercial property are going up or down.

Chandler Rose responded that what he has seen is that rents are staying flat.

Councilor McAlister inquired whether the proximity principle will affect people abutting Wilkus Farm.

Chandler Rose responded that the sales would be reviewed in that neighborhood.

Chairperson Hemmann acknowledged the passing of Tom Lawton and Lawrence Ebner.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chapter 40 of the Code of the Town of Wethersfield, Voting Districts of the Code of the Town of Wethersfield: Action on the ordinance to set the new voting districts.

Resolution for Records Management Grant: Action on the Resolution to accept a records management grant from the State of Connecticut.

NO ONE SPOKE ON THE HEARING ITEMS.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented on an increase in property taxes and encouraged residents to vote no on the high school referendum. He also commented on the stop signs on Hillcrest Avenue and any history of accidents on Hillcrest Avenue.

Judy Keane, 126 Broad Street, reported on what's being happening with the Keane Foundation over the past several years: 9/11 Sports Center with after school programs, no school gym days, Saturday drop in basketball program. She noted the Foundation also funds a media center program at the Middle School to help students after school. Additional programs that are funded: "Lights, Camera Action," boxing, 5K, Annual Golf Event and Cove Carnival. A newsletter is also published twice a year in Wethersfield Life.

Lee Sekas, 117 Wells Road, inquired as to how much interest is going to be paid on the high school renovation bond. He also reported that annual Nature Center Fundraiser dance will be held Friday, April 13 at Nature Center, cost is \$25/per person.

Kim Robinson, 57 Stillman Road, commented on the Board of Education's proposed budget which will include funding an all day kindergarten program and she noted that at the last Board of Education meeting, the Chair commented that this was the number one priority of the Board. She commented that full day kindergarten has no guarantee of success.

Dolores Sassano, read emails received from Laura Synder and Erica Eaton, who both supported all day kindergarten.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Deputy Mayor Console reported for the Public Safety Committee where there was discussion on equipment for the Fire Department.

Councilor Drake reported for the Infrastructure Committee where there was discussion regarding the Wilkus barn property.

Councilor Manousos reported for the Budget & Finance Committee and a presentation was given by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), who has invited Wethersfield to join their membership. Capital improvements were discussed regarding road improvements, revenue side of the budget.

Councilor Roberts reported that she had Mayor Honors and no one showed up.

Councilor Drake asked if different rules are used for investments.

Jeff Bridges reported that every day deposits cannot use the same investment vehicle as is used on a pension trust.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Console thanked Kim Robinson for the information that she has provided. He also thanked the Wethersfield Police Department on their recent arrest on March 1.

Councilor Kotkin commented that there is a Planning & Zoning Commission tomorrow in which there is a proposal regarding property off of Goff Road where there is a seven lot subdivision and noted that this could be a fairly significant impact on the topography on that part of Town and Council members should get materials on the proposal.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges reported that Mike Turner will be at the next meeting to give a report on the three quarter study discussed.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Console moved **"TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF SUSAN GILLANDERS, 66 SHARON LANE, FROM THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION; AND LISA WURZER, 311 HARTFORD AVENUE FROM THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION,"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF DAVID TROY, 95 COLEMAN ROAD, FROM THE WETHERSFIELD LIBRARY BOARD,"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Drake moved **"TO APPROVE THE ORDINANCE, CHAPTER 40, VOTING DISTRICTS, AS PRESENTED,"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

Jeff Bridges reported that this action will repeal the current Voting District configuration of ten districts, replacing it with six reconfigured districts. Town Engineering and Data Services staff assisted the Registrars in compiling the new street lists.

Councilor Drake asked why the Town is now using Incarnation Church rather than staying with Town owned property.

Carol Hurley, Republican Registrar, responded that accessibility is better at Incarnation Church.

Councilor Drake asked if the Town pays Incarnation Church for the use of the Church.

Carol Hurley responded that the Town does pay for both Incarnation Church and the Kenney Center, which is Town property.

Councilor Drake asked why then is the Town using the Church.

Carol Hurley responded that there are not a lot of properties to use for voting. She noted that the previous Registrar made the choice of the voting locations.

Councilor Roberts asked when residents are going to be notified of where they need to vote.

Carol Hurley responded that notifications will be going out in the next week to every voter, in addition to being on the Public Television scroller and the Town website.

Councilor Kotkin asked for the size of the districts.

Carol Hurley responded that District 1 and 4 are larger, with District 4 being the former District 10 and they tried to make each district equitable and working within the Assembly lines.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Hurley ABSTAINED. The motion passed 7-0-1.

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY, PUBLIC RECORDS, HISTORIC DOCUMENTS PRESERVATION PROGRAM,”** seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Dolores Sassano reported that this is a grant that can be applied for from the State Library, and is a targeted grant for \$6,500. In another year or two, the State may go back to offering competitive grants.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Manousos moved **“TO AUTHORIZE A TRANSFER OF \$10,000 FROM THE CAPITAL RESERVE ACCOUNT TO THE WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL RENOVATION PROJECT,”** seconded by Councilor Drake.

Jeff Bridges reported that the Council approved the contract for Quisenberry Arcari Architects at their August 11, 2008 meeting and set a Not to Exceed budget which matched the architects base scope of work, but inadvertently a budget was not included for the reimbursable expenses. The architect provides detailed backup of any reimbursable expense and all have been reviewed and approved by the Building Committee. The architect recommended and the Building Committee approved a recommended budget of \$6,000 for the completion of the pre-referendum work. The costs associated for the explanatory text preparation and mailing are new expenses which were not budgeted this year.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if there is a list of expenses to date.

Jeff Bridges responded that the base contract is \$65,000 and extra testing for PCPs.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AWARD THE BID TO SUPPLY AND INSTALL AIR CONDITIONING OF THE GYM AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER, 911 SPORTS CENTER, TO CREST MECHANICAL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$43,500,”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

Jeff Bridges reported that the bid tabulation supports the recommendation.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that there were issues with Crest Mechanical on the police department’s sprinkler system and asked if this has been looked into.

Kathy Bagley reported that the Project Engineer did speak with Crest Mechanical and the equipment that was specified out has been confirmed. Mike Turner was also consulted and he confirmed that it is a firm that has worked with the Town.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he had concerns because of the issues with the police department’s sprinkler system and would like to have the matter tabled until someone can get a firm answer.

Jeff Bridges asked what questions he had.

Deputy Mayor Console responded that he would like to know whether or not Crest Mechanical up to par on this project.

Councilor McAlister asked if this project is bonded for guarantee of performance.

Jeff Bridges responded that this is correct.

Councilor McAlister noted that the Town is protected in that respect.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he just doesn't want to go through the same experience as what the police department went through.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this matter is approved tonight, will the project be completed before the summer.

Kathy Bagley responded that the timetable is to be completed before June 1.

Councilor Manousos asked if staff has looked into the matter at the police station as to whether or not it was Crest Mechanical that did the job.

Kathy Bagley responded that she does not know who did the work at the police station and it did not come up while looking at the references.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Deputy Mayor Console ABSTAINED. The motion passed 7-0-1.

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ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None.

MINUTES

Deputy Mayor Console moved **"TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 21, 2012"** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, excluding the Chairperson, voted AYE. Chairperson Hemmann abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jim Clynych, 903 Ridge Road, commented on the Assessor's presentation.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented on the Insurance presentation.

Kim Robinson, 57 Stillman Road, commented on the All Day Kindergarten Program.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:00 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS LEGAL MATTERS,”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 9:19 p.m., Councilor Manousos moved **“TO LEAVE EXECUTIVE SESSION”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO ADJOURN THE MEETING”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by Vote of Council
April 2, 2012