

**REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 19, 2012**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, March 19, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

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

Also present: RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Mike Turner, Town Engineer, Nancy Stilwell, Director of Social & Youth Services, Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Town Clerk Sassano led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PROCLAMATIONS

Public Health Week, Lori DiPietro accepted it on behalf of the Central CT Health District
Irish Honoree – Charles “Chuck” Flynn was unable to attend, Councilor Hurley accepted on his behalf

Irish Person of the Year – Mary Burke

Board of Education Chairperson John Cascio stated this was his 24th year submitting a budget in Wethersfield, and then introduced Gina Deangelo, Chairperson of the Budget Preparation Committee of the Board of Education. The presentation of Board of Education Budget was given by Dr. Thomas McDowell, Interim Superintendent of Schools. Various members of the Board of Education and school principals were in attendance. The presentation is available on-line and a handout is included in the addendum to the minutes, attachment 1.

Councilors Comments and Questions for the Board of Education:

Councilor Hurley wanted to see an accounting of the grants the Board of Education receives from sources other than the Town of Wethersfield.

Dr. McDowell responded it is possible to get that information.

Councilor Kotkin stated that the Board of Education budget did not meet the requirements of the Town Charter. While they have figures for last year, proposed figures for this current year and proposed figures for next year there were no actual figures for this year and where they expect to end up this year. Councilor Kotkin requested this information be presented.

Councilor Roberts wanted clarification on reinstated team leaders versus department leaders.

Dr. McDowell responded instructional supervisors were requested by central office rather than team leaders or department leaders.

Councilor Hurley asked Dr. McDowell if he could include all projects, including finished ones.

Dr. McDowell responded affirmatively.

Councilor Kotkin asked if full day kindergarten was a priority over other issues that they have not yet addressed, such as overcrowding. Which grades at which schools are too large? Is the number of teachers, aside from kindergarten, expected to remain the same?

Dr. McDowell responded that classroom sizes depend upon the configuration of the number of kids we actually have at the start of the school year. He referred to the two classrooms at Highcrest with 29 students in the 5th and 6th grades and the availability of 17 teachers to assign throughout Highcrest with the goal of the younger grades having the smaller class sizes. The plan is not to have large classes. The number of elementary teachers is expected to remain the same. However, based upon enrollment, teachers may have to be moved between elementary schools.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the elimination of the teacher positions has had an impact on our students' test scores in comparison to previous years and to the rest of Connecticut.

Dr. McDowell responded CAPT and CMT testing is in process and will provide us with that information. We have done surprisingly well considering the curriculum work we have been lacking in the past 3-4 yrs. They are working to align our curriculum with state standards and have implemented many new curricula in math, science and language arts. He is hoping for dramatic improvement in the next cycle.

Deputy Mayor Console asked why the full day kindergarten initiative was originally submitted at \$900,000 in the budget and now is down to \$656,000.

Dr. McDowell responded the salaries were initially budgeted at the 5th step, thinking they could attract veteran teachers from other district ½ day programs to our full day program. Budget deliberations determined the need to bring that back to a Bachelor's step 1.

Deputy Mayor Console asked about the term 'fadeout' and the Board of Education and/or Dr. McDowell's rebuttal to the information previously presented.

Dr. McDowell responded the information on fadeout is correct. Fadeout will happen if you implement full day kindergarten and change nothing the next year in 1st grade, then 2nd grade, etc. If you only implement full day kindergarten and do not do any curriculum work and professional

development in the following grades you will lose what was gained from full day kindergarten. He stated that is not the Board or his intention.

Deputy Mayor Console asked how rest and fatigue is addressed in full day kindergarten.

Dr. McDowell responded research has shown that 5 yr old kids are more than ready for a full day program. Of the 65 districts in Connecticut that have implemented full day kindergarten, none have returned to ½ day. Our present curriculum cannot be delivered in a ½ day model.

Councilor McAlister asked if Dr. McDowell thought towns have not returned to full day kindergarten because of union contracts.

Dr. McDowell responded union contracts do not require full day kindergarten.

Councilor McAlister asked if there is an exit strategy if we don't meet the criteria.

Dr. McDowell responded he is confident we will see the increase in test scores. The criterion has not yet been determined, but will be once the program has been approved.

Councilor Drake asked why the focus is on implementing full day kindergarten now. Why not add more teachers, have some things backfilled and focus on the WHS referendum?

Dr. McDowell responded the Board of Education set a goal of having a full day Kindergarten pilot program in place for the 2012-2013 school year.

Councilor Manousos verified the full day kindergarten cost of \$830,000 was a typo and should read \$656,000.

Councilor Manousos asked for Dr. McDowell's acknowledgement that the 2011 budget was adjusted from his predecessor's work and not the work of the Town Council. A dialogue ensued between Councilor Manousos and Dr. McDowell regarding the previous 2 years budgets. Dr. McDowell stated although he and Mr. Bridges worked to come up with an acceptable budget with a goal of 0% increase in 2011 and it ended up -.22%, the Board was never happy with it. Councilor Manousos stated his concern the numbers do not reflect an accurate picture and give the public the impression the Council has slashed the budget. Dr. McDowell stated the numbers are an accurate picture.

Councilor Manousos stated he cannot reconcile where the issue is with class size when high school class sizes decreased, middle school stayed the same and elementary increased this year.

Dr. McDowell responded he is more concerned with elementary class sizes. The high school class sizes decreased because the 7 department leaders were removed and made more sections. Fourteen elementary classrooms have been lost in the past 3 years.

Councilor Drake acknowledged we need to be careful with the budget numbers. There were cuts everywhere the last 2 years, but did acknowledge the school budget is \$500,000 behind going into next year from lack of stimulus money. He thinks this is a pretty good budget for next year. He stated he believed the last 3-4 years the Council did a pretty good job getting the schools what they wanted and the numbers don't reflect that.

Dr. McDowell responded the Board of Education has this one shot to show the Councilors what they need to run a high quality school district.

Councilor Manousos acknowledged they are missing the teacher's grant money and contractual increases must be met and to be at status quo probably need \$1 million or \$1.5 million.

Councilor Manousos asked if the full day kindergarten model will be done without any redistricting. Does each school have enough room? What is the capacity for full day kindergarten? What is the number if nobody came from other schools? Please bring available classrooms, how many are needed, room capacity and where they are located in each school. Which schools have portable classrooms currently?

Dr. McDowell responded affirmatively and that each school has enough room. We may see an increase in the number of kindergarten students as some that attend parochial schools may return. He can get the projections for kindergarten. The goal is to have fewer than 20 students per classroom; 15 including the teacher would be great. Charles Wright and Highcrest have portable classrooms and full day kindergarten will still fit.

Chairperson Cascio asked Council to get all questions to them or the Town Manager in advance so the Board of Ed could be prepared for next week's meeting.

Report of Route 3 Corridor Study

Town Engineer Mike Turner presented information regarding the Route 3 Corridor study. The engineering staff is monitoring the study. It was instituted by CROG at the request of the Town of Rocky Hill. The project is funded through the capitol region. This study makes traffic projections for the next 20 years and would be helpful to Rocky Hill since they have a lot of land for potential development. Of particular concern to Wethersfield would be traffic generated north on Route 3 through New Britain Ave. Level of service is the concern, which means the amount of time a person would wait at an intersection. Level A means no wait and level F means traffic at a standstill. The reports are on-line on the CROG website.

Councilors Comments and Questions for the Mr. Turner:

Councilor Manousos verified 80% of the traffic at the intersection of concern to us goes left?

Mr. Turner confirmed the tendency is to go westbound.

Deputy Mayor Console mentioned the potential problem with the northbound lane on Route 3 and 3 lanes merging into a one lane road in Griswoldville.

Mr. Turner confirmed we will see an increase in traffic and this intersection will limit the amount of traffic flow coming into Wethersfield. The DOT is planning to install additional signals at Griswold Rd, Route 3, Waters and Two Stone.

Councilor Drake asked if New Britain Avenue has been looked at in the west bound directions.

Mr. Turner responded this is not part of the current study, but will most likely be a result of this study.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Eva, 66 Van Block Ave, Hartford, Spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Health Care, a local nursing home facility and what is happening there. While the State did rule against the owners, as the few remaining residents leave, the owners are eliminating workers and staff. They cannot throw the residents out, but as they are relocated the owners will still eliminate workers and eventually close regardless of the ruling of the State.

The following residents spoke on behalf of full day kindergarten in Wethersfield:

Stephanie McKenna, 66 Harding Street

Kim Fleury, 433 Coppermill Road (submitted a petition in support of all day kindergarten)

Jennifer March Wackers, 81 Hillcrest Avenue

Gabriela Cosma, 52 Bermuda Road

Lynne Matteson, 26 Morrison Avenue spoke on the needs of her mother, now confined to a wheel chair. Recently completed sidewalk work makes walking with her outside tremendously better. She is still not satisfied with what has been done on the street, be it a handicapped access in a particular area or the location of the parking signs. She thinks the ADA requirements are not being met and may call the state officials to check. She feels the parking regulations are not a priority for the Police to enforce, but it makes it hard for a single car to pass, if people ignore signs.

Mayor Hemmann asked Mike Turner, Town Engineer to address these issues.

Mr. Turner stated that the ADA requirements are being met. He stated that she wants a mid block ramp which is not safe and there is insufficient room to turn the wheelchair around. There is no protection to cross there. The issue of relocating the pole will be addressed as the contractor will be able to finish the slab and re-seed the area. The slope of the sidewalk is due to the steepest portion of Morrison Avenue. Sidewalks have to parallel the grade and with the surveying level all is in compliance, they have done the job.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd commented on the budget as presented tonight. The number of children going to attend this all day program and on page 3 of the Board of Education budget presented tonight, there is mention of another referendum for Hanmer School. If the high school referendum passes and CREC opens a new school in Wethersfield and if the Governor supports magnet and charter schools we may have too few students to utilize the new facility. How is it possible to have enough classroom space, 2 rooms in each school, when two of the schools are still using portable classrooms? There is a 10 year projection that statewide Connecticut will lose 100,000 students.

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street, an advocate for children reminded everyone that Kindergarten is not required by the State. While a young child's brain is like a sponge we should not rush into changing from what we have in place. Our schools are not being used on Saturday. There are already numerous children attending various schools to benefit from learning another language. Perhaps expand the use of our schools for various language classes in half day sessions on Saturdays. School is boring for some really bright kids, do it right.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue spoke on the conditions on Morrison Avenue and that now there are children crossing the street at an angle because of the lack of alignment of the intersection, creating a safety issue.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle spoke of the high cost of oil, the referendum being resolved on April 24 and the numbers presented in the Board of Education budget. He found it overwhelming. There were 8 slides for all day kindergarten in the presentation even though there is evidence to show that it may not be about the kids, but about the schools and the teachers jobs. Mr. Ruhe mentioned that Mr. Cascio thought of it as economic development at a public meeting on February 14. He didn't know that the Board of Education was responsible for economic development. He also spoke of Ethics and asked why WSPC was treated not as a civic organization but as a quasi governmental agency.

David Caruk, 149 Broad St supports the full day kindergarten and the high school referendum. He thinks the younger students could benefit as well as the high school students.

Councilor Reports

Councilor Kotkin reported on the Insurance Committee and that it continues to do well. Our agent went out to get bids besides Anthem and there are others now. They may be asked to select a new agent.

Councilor Manousos reported that the Budget and Finance Committee reviewed the library budget and health insurance budget. The health district is increasing its fee by a small amount for the first time in several years. Also, the Nature Center has budget issues. The committee continues to meet with department heads.

Mayor Hemmann reported on the Shade Tree and they will be planting trees soon from their limited budget. Also, she attended Wethersfield Housing Authority and they were very appreciative with the help they received from our emergency management team during the storm and want to be included in the planning process.

Councilor Comments

Deputy Mayor Console stated found backup for why he spoke and voted against the air conditioning vendor at a previous meeting. He submitted some information to be scanned and sent to each member of the Council. He commented on two recent interactions with the Police in which their actions were greatly appreciated and in one of the incidents, ended in an arrest.

Wethersfield Health Care Center: the owner can do pretty much what they want to do as patients are leaving, employees are terminated, it will shut down albeit gradually.

He inquired as to the reason the Episcopal Church had all of the front lawn covered in small crosses.

Councilor Manousos commented that the Neighbor-to-Neighbor has a sign-up sheet. Wethersfield is number 4 in all communities involved. It is a free service. Mayor Hemmann said it is a worthwhile service but it does cost \$75. Her family has already realized some savings.

Councilor Kotkin said that he, Councilor Drake and Town Manager Bridges attended the previous Planning and Zoning Meeting. It is a big issue with neighbors as a developer wants to subdivide a property into 7 building lots on the 2nd highest point in Wethersfield.

He also commented on the road leading into the shopping center and wanted to know when it was scheduled to be repaved. There has been a lot of heavy traffic with the construction and renovations to area restaurants.

Councilor Roberts asked about the MDC working in the area on Maple Street and Meadowgate and wanted to know if there was a plan to fix it. The newly paved Hangdog Lane now has CNG working on it.

Town Clerk Sassano said she received 18 emails in favor of the Library Budget; 6 emails in support of all day kindergarten and 1 email against all day kindergarten.

Library supporters:

Stephanie Schmidt	Mary Sena	Victoria Barrison
Adrienne Quinn	John Engel	Lorraine Alexson
Judy Keane	Andrea Boyle	Peggy Clarizio
Barbara Drouin	Robert Chance	Bill Greenwood
Ildiko Reno	Sonya McCubrey	Kevon Borgstedt
Sara Hallisey	Suzanne Plante	Marguerite Alpert[arrived after 3]
Pride & Joy Learning Academy		

All day Kindergarten supporters:

Deanne Kelly	Carrie Wilhelm	Kimberly Farrelly
Kathryn Eastwood	Joshua Eastwood	Christine Sousa
Al & Mary Iallonardo	Kristen McGuire	

Against all day Kindergarten

Rachel Sackett

Town Manager's Report

Town Manager Bridges said they are inspecting the Wethersfield Health Care facility while awaiting their appeal. They cannot force people out, but Wethersfield does want the facility to be operating safely and maintaining the facility to code.

Council Action

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPOINT LISA WURZER, 54 OLD MILL ROAD, TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION AS AN ALTERNATE FOR THE TERM 3-19-2012 THROUGH 06-30-2014,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT, IF AWARDED, A GRANT FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE EXPANSION OF DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICES AND TO**

NEGOTIATE AND SIGN A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE TOWNS OF NEWINGTON AND ROCKY HILL TO PROVIDE A TRI-TOWN MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE,” seconded by Councilor Drake.

Jeff Bridges reported transportation will be limited to local area without expanded service to West Hartford, Farmington, Bloomfield, New Britain and East Hartford. This program has worked effectively since 2006 and there is every reason to continue it. This program allows the Town to provide additional services for Wethersfield residents at no cost to the Town. I recommend approval.

Mayor Hemmann stated that Dr. Stilwell is available for questions if Council had any questions, hearing none, Mayor Hemmann called for a vote.

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

BIDS

Councilor Drake moved **“TO AWARD THE BID FOR OLNEY ROAD STORM DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS TO DOUBLE C CONSTRUCTION CO., LLC IN THE AMOUNT OF \$192,872,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges reported storm drainage improvements are the first element in road rehabilitation. Without these improvements, any further improvements will suffer due to insufficient storm drainage. A total of 22 bids were received for this project, with the construction estimate lying at the midpoint of the bids reviewed. The low vendor Double C Construction Co. LLC from Rocky Hill has not previously done work for the town of Wethersfield. As required of the bid specifications, the vendors provided a list of references for similar work within the past 5 years. A check of the most recent municipal references, with similar project scopes, all indicate this vendor is a quality contractor, good with paperwork, fair with change orders, responsive and they would all hire them again. This bid came in significantly lower than the construction estimate and in consideration of the contractor’s positive references, I recommend approval.

With the Bid Tabulation Sheet attached Councilor Roberts questioned why they would change vendors when the previous vendor was only a difference of \$23.

Deputy Mayor Console stated he was going to vote against it.

Councilor Montinieri also questioned why we would change a vendor for such a low difference in cost.

Jeff Bridges stated they followed the rules and checked the references. Town Engineer Mike

Turner stated that they had not used them before but in checking their references every one they contacted said they would hire Double C Construction Co. LLC again.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-1-2, Deputy Mayor Console voted NO and Councilors Roberts and Montinieri abstained.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AWARD THE BID FOR INSTALLATION OF DETECTABLE SIDEWALK PANES TO WESPRO, LTD IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges stated the request award of bid for furnishing and installing Detectable Sidewalk Panels to Wespro Ltd in the amount of \$25,000. This installation of detectable panels is a federal ADA requirement. This project is a retrofit of existing pedestrian ramps to cut out and replace a portion with a cast in place panel that meets ADA requirements. Bids were prepared and seven received with a low bid of \$11,531. The CIP Budget set aside for this work is \$25,000; therefore staff is requesting award to Wespro in an amount not to exceed \$25,000. I concur with Mr. Turner’s request to award the bid up to the budgeted amount, this will allow for the installation of ADA compliant panels at more intersections.

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

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AWARD THE BID TO CRCOG BID #576 FOR DIESEL FUEL AND #2 HEATING OIL TO DIME OIL CO., FOR THE TIME PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013 AND CONTINGENT UPON APPROPRIATION IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2012-2013 ADOPTED BUDGET,”** seconded by Councilor Drake.

Jeff Bridges reported this is a CRCOG bid and required for Town trucks and for heating Town buildings. When this bid was opened by CRCOG, there were questions about East River Energy’s Bid for diesel fuel. Due to the fact that diesel prices have been rising, I asked staff to lock in the pricing the day the bids were open to secure better pricing. Since that time the questions about East River Energy’s bid were satisfied, and although they are slightly lower on diesel fuel, we had already committed to Dime Oil

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None.

MINUTES

The motion “**TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 5, 2012**” was **tabled** until the next meeting. With the new electronic delivery of agendas and minutes, the Councilors were not able to find or review the minutes.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:00 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

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