

**REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 7, 2011**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, February 7, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

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

Absent: Councilors Kotkin and Manousos.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, Anthony Dignoti, Fire Marshal and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Economic Development Report, reported by Peter Gillespie, Town Planner.

**TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD
Planning and Economic Development Department
MONTHLY REPORT
February 2011**

A Monthly Report From The Planning and Economic Development Department

Prepared By Peter D. Gillespie, Town Planner and Economic Development Manager
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I want to take this opportunity to look back and share with you some of the more notable accomplishments from 2010 much of this information was presented at the recent State of the Town breakfast hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

Although the number of applications submitted to the **Planning and Zoning Commission** in 2010 was down there were several notable projects approved:

1. new zoning regulations to improve the regulation of commercial vehicles in Town,
2. revised the zoning regulations upon the request of a local developer for the regulation of multi family developments throughout the community,
3. approved a site plan for a new Panera Bread restaurant in the Wethersfield Shopping Center.
4. In an effort to make the permit review process more user friendly the Town is implementing a new software system for permit processing for both residential and commercial building permits and is initiating a new records management system that will make public information to permit records much easier.

In terms of new business activity we maintained a consistent number of **new businesses** to Town in 2010 when compared to 2009 (25) including:

- On Main Street – the Cove Deli , the Aroma Bistro, River Rock Yoga and the new owners of Comstock Ferre Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co.
- On the Berlin Turnpike - Yuan Asian Bistro and Retro Fitness.

- On the Silas Deane Highway - Red T Clothing, Crown Colony Construction, Best Logic Staffing, Milagros Restaurant, Ginza Japanese Cuisine, Lab Xpress, Town Line Liquors and the new Hartford Medical Center Building.
- Clearwire Communications at Putnam Park.

On the Economic Development front the **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** and **Redevelopment Agency** continue their efforts to support the local business community and encourage redevelopment of our underutilized properties as a top priority:

- Continued to administer the Façade Improvement program by closing loans on 5 projects in 2010.
- With special thanks to our legislative delegation we were able to secure an additional \$250,000 from the State of Connecticut to fund the façade improvement program and an additional \$250,000 to complete the streetscape improvement project in front of Town Hall.
- Initiated the new Wethersfield Shops Local program in an effort to encourage the shop local ideal. To date, we have signed up over 100 Wethersfield businesses to participate in this initiative.
- Continued to support the continued growth of the weekly Farmer's Market on the grounds of the Keeney Center.
- In December in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce produced the 2011 Wethersfield Town Guide and Business Directory.
- In December hosted the 21th Annual Holiday Social and Salute To Business event and recognized the accomplishments of over 50 Wethersfield businesses.
- Entered into an agreement with the owner of 1000 Silas Deane Highway (Weight Watchers) to cooperatively create a redevelopment plan for these properties.
- Continue to meet with interested developers and property owners to consider redevelopment opportunities on strategic properties.
- Connected the media to several businesses to highlight interesting stories.

The **Tourism Commission** continues to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand:

- Promoting the Town through magazine ads and promotional media articles. In 2010 the Town was recognized in What To Do In Connecticut, the Connecticut Getaway Guide and the Boston Globe.
- Received a grant from the State Commission on Culture and Tourism that supported an ad placement in the CT Vacation Guide. This ad has resulted in over 8,000 requests for visitor information during 2010.

Meeting/Event Schedule February

February 3	Chamber of Commerce 8:30 am
February 8	Redevelopment 4pm
February 10	EDIC 12 noon
February 15	PZC 7pm
February 16	Shops Local 8:30 am
February 22	Tourism Commission 5:30 pm

Councilor McAlister asked about the new businesses in 2010, if this was an increase or decrease in businesses. He also inquired as to whether there is a \$250 fee for a license payable to the Secretary of State and whether businesses can be tracked as to what opens and closes year to year.

Peter Gillespie responded that a company can purchase a trade name certificate through the Town

Clerk's Office which registers the business name for the purposes of documenting similar company names. He was unclear as to what documents there would be for a business that closes.

Councilor McAlister asked if there is an avenue in which to track companies that have closed.

Chairperson Hemmann inquired if the permitting software is being used.

Peter Gillespie responded that initially the Building Department was using it and now it is being incorporated for use in permit sign offs and issuance of certificate of occupancies. Another module in the planning stages for the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Commission. Ultimately it has the ability for people to sign in and apply for permits on line.

Chairperson Hemmann asked if it has been received well by the applicants.

Peter Gillespie responded that the Building Department handles most of that, but from his observations, he feels it is looked upon favorably.

HEARING

Building/House Numbering Ordinance – an ordinance governing the size and location of building/house numbers. No one wished to speak.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented that at one of the last Board of Education meetings, there was a statement regarding an MBR, which is a Minimum Budget Requirement, set by the Legislature, regarding the spending limitations for school systems in Connecticut. He noted that there is a state law that prohibits towns and cities from adopting a budget in an amount that is less than it was for the past two fiscal years. In 2008-2009, the school budget was \$48,217,000, which is comprised of two components, \$47 million from local appropriation and \$1,220,000 from federal funds. He explained that the Board of Education says these dollar amounts together meet the MBR. They defend that they cannot spend less than these two amounts. The Board of Education had an opportunity to reduce the cost of the school system by the amount of monies provided by the federal stimulus. He maintains that the Town can reduce the amount the Board is given by the amount of the stimulus money. He commented that the school spending is out of control in Wethersfield. The Board of Education had \$1.3 million left over at end of the last school year and instead of returning it to the Town, they spent it. The following year, the Board of Education had \$750,000 and gave only \$77,000 back to the Town. He commented that the Town allowed the Board of Education to have so much extra money and now, the Board of Education feels no responsibility for returning the money. He also commented that the Town Council should scrutinize and reduce the Board of Education's budget.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Hurley reported for Councilor Manousos on the Budget and Finance Committee, which met with the Library Board to discuss the 2011-2012 budget. The Library Board was asked to come back with a zero percent increase and they came very prepared.

Councilor Drake reported for the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, and reported that they came back with a \$1.2 million budget, which is the same as last year. The highlights this year were the Wayfarer signs at \$50,000 [matching funds], \$500,000 towards pavements for roads, \$80,000 for town parking lots, tennis and basketball court repairs, \$65,000 toward the RFID and approximately \$200,000 for routine maintenance for roofs for a total of \$1.2 million. This is the same budget as last year's.

Councilor McAlister reported that the Public Works Committee has not recently met but will wait until the snow melts before touring the properties that are being looked at for selling.

Councilor Drake reported that the Infrastructure Committee met regarding the possibility of shutting off some of the street lights. CL&P is going to be doing a street light bulb change shortly. A GIS survey will be done to map the lights around town.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the Energy Committee was on board.

Councilor Drake responded that the Energy Committee was on Board.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Roberts reported that the Memorial Day Committee is starting formalizing the plans for the parade and are looking at the possibility of extending the route, a possible theme and speaker. The parade is scheduled for Saturday, May 28. Councilor Roberts also reported that the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee is still looking for a clergy representative.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he thought that Chris Skowronek, the clergy at Centerpoint Church may be interested and he will have him contact the Town Manager. Deputy Mayor Console also commented on the Library Board meeting and was in agreement with Councilor Hurley that the Board came very well prepared and if the other committees could come as well prepared, it would make the budget process run much smoother.

Councilor Drake commented on the Capital Improvement Fund, and felt \$500,000 would be the minimum unless something changes but feels it is not enough. He noted that this is going to be a tough year for the roads come Spring. He suggested a commitment from the CIAC to do five years at \$500,000/year if it can be brought forward to next year somewhere between \$2.5 million to do a big batch of roads. The Town would need to finance that money without doing a bond.

Councilor McAlister noted that he had spoken with Councilor Manousos about this matter and his thoughts were to look at the whole picture and make sure that it doesn't affect the Town's bond rating.

Councilor Roberts commented she would like to see what can be done for the dollar amount and what roads are the worst. She personally felt Hang Dog Lane needed attention.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the Engineering Department had a list compiled.

Jeff Bridges responded that they do.

Councilor Drake commented that the question is not what roads need to be done, but this is a concept—is this something the Town wants to pursue, to borrow internally.

Councilor McAlister asked if there was a cost associated with sending things out to bid.

Jeff Bridges noted that there is some cost involved to determine if some roads need full depth removal which will require work from the Engineering Department.

Councilor Drake asked for any thoughts from the public or from Council if this is worth pursuing to please let him know.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he visited the Cove Deli in Old Wethersfield and he is doing well. He also visited Steve's Wine & Liquors who also is doing well in Town. He commented that there are heated discussions at the State Capitol about group homes in towns and people want to bring some legislation. Deputy Mayor Console also commented on the shooting that took place in the Soundbridge parking lot that involved a Wethersfield police officer. He noted Wethersfield is not exempt from these types of incidents and noted that Wethersfield police are trained to handle these problems.

Chairperson Hemmann thanked the Physical Services for keeping on top of the snow removal in Town.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges reported on the procedures used for the closing of schools in Wethersfield. He noted the Connect Ed notification system, is not used if school is cancelled prior to the start of the day, but is used to notify parents if school is let out early. Jeff Bridges reported that there was a question with regards to the Ethics case if the services of the Police Department were requested during the hearing process and he noted that the services were not requested. There was also a request to see if bills were submitted in the Legislature regarding the liability of turning off streetlights and a call was put into COST and Representative Morin. There was a question about CL&P's LED lights and Bill Majewicz with CL&P responded that options are still being studied.

Councilor Kotkin requested a copy of the Town of Vernon's Shared Services Agreement and this has been provided to Council. He also noted that Councilor Kotkin was with CL&P's Investors' Relations Group receiving an award for the company's investment work.

Councilor Montinieri inquired as to whether a schedule of contracts is known with regards to the Board of Education and Town Custodians.

Jeff Bridges responded that there has been discussions with the school side over custodial services for buildings that are currently contracted so the issue of whether or not it is town bargaining or school bargaining is irrelevant because private contractors are being used on the Town side.

Councilor Montinieri asked if there were any restrictions with the unions.

Jeff Bridges responded that it isn't anticipated as the custodial work is contracted out for the Town Hall, Library, Physical Services and Police Department.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the custodial services that are utilized for the Town Hall is different from what is used at the Stillman Building.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Stillman Building utilizes their own custodial staff.

Councilor Montinieri commented the purpose of Vernon's proposal is to combine the services. He noted that when there were discussions last year about shared services with the Finance Director, the Board had already made a decision to hire someone themselves. Councilor Montinieri asked if there were other easier areas that could be combined.

Jeff Bridges responded that this would be the easiest to combine.

Councilor Drake stated he thought they should work on having the custodians join the town side for cleaning services and not the town joining the Board of Education's custodians in order to save money.

Councilor Montinieri commented that with all the snow, the roads are narrower and the drains are covered. He inquired as to who is responsible for maintaining the widening of the roads as there is concern about the drains and what is going to happen when the snow starts to thaw.

Jeff Bridges responded that Public Works will be responsible for opening up the drains and that there will be some drains that will need to be opened sooner rather than later. The cost to do this is built into the day to day activities.

Deputy Mayor Console inquired as to whether the Department of Corrections that is being used to clear hydrants and sidewalks can be expanded to include some of the drainage.

Jeff Bridges responded that it depends on the length of time the crew can be kept.

Councilor Roberts commented that when the Board of Education subscribed to the Connect-ED system, it was a significant budgetary expenditure. She inquired as to what is paid for any annual service fee and what is it used for now. She noted that if it is only being used to notify parents that school is being let out early, than perhaps a different procedure can be used.

COUNCIL ACTION

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Mayor Hemmann noted there are no resignations or appointments.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO ADOPT CHAPTER 140, BUILDING/HOUSE STREET NUMBERS, ATTACHED, TO THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD EFFECTIVE MAY 1, 2011,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges reported staff has prepared the attached ordinance which requires visible numbering on all houses and buildings for Town Council action. The intent of the ordinance is to insure that emergency services are able to locate the house or building that they are responding to. There are many properties in Town that are not numbered which creates difficulty when Police, Fire or medical units are trying to locate an address and assist citizens. The ordinance was drafted by the GIS working group which includes, the Town Manager’s Office, Engineering, Building Inspection, Planning, Fire and Police. The Public Safety Committee reviewed and voted favorably to forward this to the Town Council. The Town Attorney has reviewed and approved the ordinance. If Town Council adopts the ordinance, staff will publicize the new requirement and issue warnings at first.

Councilor Montinieri asked if a survey has been done of houses that do not have house numbers.

Jeff Bridges responded that a survey was not done.

Councilor Montinieri asked where this originated from.

Jeff Bridges responded that historically this issue has been something that has been talked about but never addressed and it it’s gotten to a point that it needs to be addressed.

Anthony Dignoti, Fire Marshal reported that when the GIS Committee reviewed this matter, it assessed that between 30% and 40% of the buildings in town do not have numbers on them.

He also noted that the majority of the strip malls do not have numbers in the back of the buildings making it difficult for fire and police if there is an emergency. He noted that it is needed and it is something that is in force in other towns.

Councilor Roberts noted that the numbers should be at least three inches in height.

Anthony Dignoti commented that three inches is standard. Houses that have existing numbers that are not three inches will not be penalized. The goal is to get as many buildings as possible numbered.

Councilor Montinieri asked if there were approximately 3,000 homes without house numbers.

Anthony Dignoti responded that this number is a combination of private homes and commercial properties. The ordinance will be published and the Fire Marshal's office, Police Department and Building Inspector will enforce it. He noted that the Town wants to be cooperative with the residents and make sure it gets done.

Deputy Mayor Console asked how the pamphlets are working for the fire hydrants.

Anthony Dignoti responded that it has been very successful and noted that approximately 200 pamphlets have been handed out; he has noticed while driving around town that residents are complying with the ordinance.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Drake moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO UTILIZE UP TO \$88,377 OF FUNDING FROM THE PARKS AND RECREATION ESCROW FUND TO REPLACE THE TANKS AT WILLARD POOL”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Kathy Bagley reported the Willard Pool has a three filter system for sanitizing, treating and chlorinating the pool water. The filters were installed twenty four years ago with life expectancy of fifteen years. At the end of the summer, one of the tanks developed a leak. Staff arranged an ultra sound test of all of the tanks to assess the condition and remaining life cycle. The results of the ultra sound indicate that the leaking tank (Filter #2) has failed and the other two tanks (Filters #1 & 3) have similar wall thicknesses. Replacement of the tanks is in the five year Capital Plan, however, to operate the pool for the coming season, the leaking tank must be replaced and due to the condition of the other two tanks, it is highly recommended that all of the tanks be replaced. Staff hired a qualified architectural firm to complete a review and provide the Town with a recommendation for replacement. The firm is recommending the replacement of the three vertical steel tanks with two horizontal fiberglass tanks. The shelf life of the fiberglass tanks is longer and the cost is less than replacement of the steel tanks.

As this is an unbudgeted item, Parks and Recreation Director Kathleen Bagley searched for other sources of funding to complete this work in time for the summer season. She is recommending that \$88,377 of available funds from the Parks and Recreation Escrow account be used for the tank replacement. The Parks and Recreation Escrow account is the account that program fees are deposited into, and program expenses are paid from along with revenue to the Town. The savings are the result of many years of careful use of the fund. This amount would cover the

estimated cost of the horizontal filters plus any job related expenses incurred in the project completion. The attached memorandum provides detail on the project and includes an escrow analysis with details of the projected expenditures from this account for the balance of the fiscal year.

Town Council must authorize the use of the funds for this project. If approved, staff will solicit sealed bids for the project. There should be just enough time to complete the bid process and the work in time to open the pool this summer.

Chairperson Hemmann asked the age of the tanks.

Kathy Bagley responded that the tanks are twenty-four years old.

Councilor McAlister asked how long it would take to replenish the \$88,000 in funds.

Kathy Bagley responded that it is estimated five years.

Deputy Mayor Console asked how many people service the pools.

Kathy Bagley reported that the seasons daily visits for Willard Pool was 15,356 and swim lessons were 5,183 visits; seasons daily visits for Mill Woods was 15,921 and 4,073 for swim lessons.

Councilor Drake wondered if the pumps were being replaced or are they staying.

Kathy Bagley responded that the pumps are well maintained and will stay.

Councilor Montinieri thanked Kathy Bagley for her research. He inquired about the 356 fund which is the self sustaining fund, and asked if that is a catch all for anything and everything that comes up beyond the budget line items.

Kathy Bagley responded that this was correct.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the 356 reflects 5, 8 or 10 years of accumulations or does it get depleted by the end of the year and rebuilt with program funds.

Kathy Bagley responded that it is an ongoing fund.

Councilor Montinieri noted that the amount of money for this project was derived from several sources, including the Mill Woods Lights components and asked if the Little League Light program funding will be replenished.

Kathy Bagley responded that there hasn't been a need to take it.

Councilor Montinieri asked if she anticipated a short term use.

Kathy Bagley responded that she does not.

Councilor Montinieri asked if something were to happen to the self sustaining program, hopefully the time will be right that it will not be needed.

Kathy Bagley responded that was correct.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRUCTION

ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT BOARD OF APPEALS

Jeff Bridges reported the Town's Assessment Board of Appeals is made up of three members. The Town has had temporary alternates during re-evaluation years to supplement the three member panel. This ordinance provides for the permanent appointment of alternates to the Board. It is critical for the validity of the process to have a full board hear the appeal cases. In the past we have had trouble getting a full panel at each appeal session.

The Town has previously appointed Maureen Horowitz, Brent Owen, George Cote as the alternates. The current board members are Brendan Flynn, Mark St. Pierre, and Samuel Spratlin (Chairman).

MINUTES

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 19, 2011”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor McAlister ABSTAINED. The motion passed 6-0-1.

Deputy Mayor Console **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 28, 2010”** seconded by Councilor McAlister. At the last meeting the vote was 4-0-4, for these minutes. Councilor McAlister is the only member able to cast a 5th yes vote for this meeting and he was absent for the vote at the last meeting. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin and Roberts had not attended and therefore ABSTAINED.

Councilor McAlister voted AYE. Minutes of December 28, 2010, passed 5-0-4

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented the snow plows are doing a great job; although he wondered if it were possible that the snow plows can eliminate their last run down Morrison Avenue as there is no snow shelf and the snow from the street ends up on the sidewalk, requiring homeowners to shovel once again. He also commented on the issue of the catch basins and the need to clean the basins. He also commented on roadway improvements and the need for more money and felt that money was going to the salaries of town employees.

Jim Clynych, 903 Ridge Road, reported that the UNICO Spaghetti Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, February 13 at the Community Center. He also commented on the issue of turning off street lights in Wethersfield. A street light was the only way he knew someone was coming up to his door from his back yard. He was able to call police and he was arrested.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on an article in the Wethersfield Life regarding the issue of empty seats on the school buses. It noted that 56% of the students who are assigned to take the bus are not taking the bus and at a cost of \$367.94/year per student and if those students gave up their seats, there could be a savings of \$322,000/year. Robert Young also commented on the issue that Councilor Drake brought up regarding repaving of roads and the cost associated with that issue. He noted that the Town has spent money on the Wilkus Farm property, money is needed to bond \$650,000 to cover the Board of Education renovations, turf payments and commented that these are exceptional items that aren't needed but the Town is paying for. He agreed that the roads need to be fixed but there are extra expenditures because things have been done for special interests instead of putting money away for items that are necessary. Robert Young also commented that he felt the Connect-ED system is being abused when it is used for political calls. He commented on the non-profit organizations that are not paying taxes and felt that the privately owned non-profit organizations should have to pay taxes.

Chairperson Hemmann noted for Robert Young that the money for the school project was not bonded and has not been paid.

Robert Young responded that he felt that the Board of Education should be responsible for paying that money back and not the Town.

Jeff Bridges commented that there are some group homes in town that do pay taxes and there are others that are owned by private corporations that do pay taxes and he will look more into this matter.

George Ruhe, 362 Cloverdale Circle, commented on the issue of the street lights and its understanding that a valuation needs to be done. He also commented on the roadwork that needs to be done and the need to prioritize these items. George Ruhe also questioned if Councilor Montinieri's remarks about the catch basins were meant for the residents to clear the basins themselves. He suggested also that perhaps notices should be sent to the neighbors who are

around a resident that has a fire hydrant on their property who may be unable to shovel out the hydrant themselves. He also commented on the house number ordinance.

George Wallace, 22 Chesterfield Road, commented on an article in the New Britain Herald regarding the taxes built into the electrical bills. He also commented on the cost of repaving the roads and the use of raw salt which has a savings of \$37/ton and noted that if it works just as well, why not use it. Mr. Wallace also commented on the ranking of Wethersfield in the Connecticut Magazine and that the Board of Education was using a different group to compare.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that the article from the New Britain Herald that Mr. Wallace brought will be copied for the Town Council and made part of the minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Hurley.

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

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by vote of Council
February 22, 2011