

Unapproved  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**JANUARY 26, 2010**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Library Community Room, Lower Level, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present from the Town Council: Councilors Drake, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann

Absent from the Town Council: Councilor Hurley

Present from the Library Board: Dave Troy, Timothy Tuell, Kimberly Bobin, Susan Grady, Ralph Horowitz, S. Bradley Milvae, Pauline Rodgers Moon (Chairperson of the Library Board), Clare Meade (Chairperson of the Library Board Finance Committee), and Jennifer Miglus

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager; Laurel Goodgion, Library Director; Martha Mayer, President of the Friends of the Library; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk: and Library staff

**DISCUSSION ON ITEMS OF MUTUAL CONCERN REGARDING THE LIBRARY**

Chairperson Hemmann said that she is happy to meet with the Library Board tonight. After an introduction of Councilors and Board members, she said that Council is meeting with some Boards and Commissions early in the budget development process to make them aware of budget constraints. She said that the numbers she is using tonight are the same numbers that were used for the Board of Education and Planning and Zoning Commission. The State still has a \$5,000,000 deficit to fill for the current year and it is expected to go into the billions next year. The Governor has proposed a 3 percent cut for this year's budget and the Town's budget is already set. It is still not certain if this will happen at the State level.

Polly Rodgers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, gave a general overview of the Library Board. The Library Board is politically appointed but is also a policy making Board that hires and evaluates the Director. The Director manages the staff. The Board manages the operating budget and sets policies and operates under a set of bi-laws. The Board also manages two separate funds, an endowment fund and an action fund. The Board has been focusing recently on strategic planning.

Chairperson Hemmann said that she had a revenue memo from December that was used for the meeting with the Board of Education. She will get it to Library Board members. The revenue related to interest income, conveyance tax and building permits lag behind last year. The grand list will not be completed until next week but is expected to show little revaluation increase. There is an expectation that health insurance will continue to increase. State aid to local units continues to be a target for the State. Taxes went up on all properties last year by about 4.16

percent on average. Long term liabilities continue to increase for the Town. The Town's pension fund is no longer 100 percent funded but 92 percent funded and there are several capital improvement projects that are in the pipeline. She said that she wanted the Library Board to know that the financial constraints are very tight. The Budget and Finance Committee has been meeting and is beginning the budget process.

Councilor Drake asked about terms of the employee contract and where things stood for next year.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that there is a projection. The amount of money that was appropriated in this year's budget was set before the contract was settled. This year's budget is not square with the contract. She doesn't have the projections with her.

Regina Aleksandravicius, Librarian, said that the contract was settled after the budget was already set. This is the first year of a three year contract.

Councilor Drake said he would like to see what the increase will be for next year.

Councilor Kotkin said that he thought there was good communication last year between the Finance Committee of the Library Board and the Town Council Budget and Finance Committee. He complimented the Board with coming in with a good budget. He was wondering what would be helpful for the Library Board in planning this year's Library budget.

Claire Meade, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, said that some direction that was received last year was helpful in setting a range of where the Library budget should come in. The Library Board could then come back and talk about it.

Councilor Kotkin said that there is a reopener in the employee contract. He asked what year that would happen. Wages went up in the contract but so did insurance co-pays.

Polly Rogers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, said to follow up on what was said, that she appreciates the words of Councilor Kotkin about working together. One thing that was very difficult about the Library budget was that a position was eliminated. It was a savings that the Library Board stepped up to do.

Councilor Drake said that a significant cost in the budget is book purchases. He asked if that expense has increased.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the book prices have increased. All of the usage figures are up, too. The Library is now operating all three floors and the usage is up. The Library staff is missing that staff person that has been eliminated especially with the increased usage.

Councilor McAlister asked how many townspeople use the Library versus out-of-town patrons.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the great majority of the patrons are Town residents. There are some residents of other Towns that use the Library. The Library receives a small remuneration from the State for that service and it is a two way street. Wethersfield resident can visit other towns' libraries. All of the people coming to the Library from other towns may also visit business in Town and help the economy.

Councilor McAlister said that he is trying to quantify that number.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that she can tell him how many items were checked out to residents of other towns but not how many people have come into the Library.

Councilor Manousos said that the Budget and Finance Committee had a good meeting with Town department heads last week. He said the Town has a good service in the Library and the Council wants to continue it. But in this economic time one of the first questions the Town Council asked was how can the Town operate smarter and more efficiently without sacrificing service. The challenge is to the leaders to figure out how to do that. One of the biggest questions the Council has is that the Library budget has more than doubled in the last few years. He asked the question why. Is there something that can be done differently?

Claire Meade, Chairperson of the Library Budget and Finance Committee, said that it is due to staff increases.

Polly Rogers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, said that the Library has expanded and a lot of expenses have increased due to the expansion. Staffing has increased. Janitorial expenses have increased, too.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that for several years there was money in the budget for the anticipation of the expanded Library opening. That money was returned to the Town for those years because of the delays in the renovations. It has been awhile since the budget adequately reflects things.

Councilor Manousos said that the numbers the Town Council received were the actual expenses. The trend was that the actual expenses went from \$400,000 to over \$1,000,000.

Jennifer Miglus, Library Board member, said that she would like to make a plug for capital expenses. It may be helpful to implement a RFID system now for the future. It was put into the renovation budget but was removed. The Library Board continues to request it. It is self-help and there will be savings down the road. With the Library an RFID system will be a two way street as what goes out will be coming back and it will work with the bar codes.

Sue Grady said that it is also a theft prevention device.

Councilor McAlister asked where the savings would come from.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that book theft savings over 2 ½ years would pay for it. There are about 900 missing items from the collection last year. The cost of the RFID system is about \$150,000. \$75,000 would be allocated for theft prevention in the first year and then self-checkout in the second year.

Jennifer Miglus, Library Board member, said there would not be layoffs but staff time could be allocated differently to better serve the public.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the staff has trouble keeping up with the demand.

Kimberly Bobin, Library Board member, said that there are also staff injuries from repetitive movements that could be avoided by this implementation.

Councilor McAlister asked if any studies have been done across Towns to support this.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that there have been repetitive motion injuries this year that workers compensation claims have been filed. Other towns are implementing this new technology.

Councilor Manousos asked if there are other systems that the Board has looked into.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the Library was automated back in 1981 and there is a computerized card catalogue. The Town is part of a computer consortium that goes out and does the bidding for the Towns so that Libraries can offer inter-town loans. She said the RFID system would work with the bar code system that is already in place. The RFID tag would only have the bar code information on it, not the patrons name or address. When the RFID tag goes out the door it queries whether the items has been checked out and if it hasn't been an alarm would sound like at a department store.

Councilor Montinieri said there is an incredible amount of loyalty in the community for the Library staff and Friend's of the Library which makes it a strong Library. The Library supports the community. But residents also want a low budget to keep their taxes under control. The same group will come out to say not to cut services. He wondered if there is a shift in perspective now and what does it really mean. The Town Council is trying to open up the quantitative process as to how departments use the resources; there are several variations and unique challenges out there. He wonders as to public reaction.

Polly Rogers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, said that the Library Board always grapples with that question. The two biggest items for the Library Board are materials and staffing costs. When the Board comes to a point of making drastic cuts it comes to cutting material or hours. There have been years when that decision has had to be made. That is the type of a problem that the Board will have to look at seriously. Comprehensive studies have been done on where and when money can be saved. Also, one of the strengths of the strategic plan is the connection made with people in Town. These are the two big places to make decisions about cuts. The Town has to make a decision about what kind of Library it wants. The Board has to decide where it can compromise.

Jennifer Miglus, Library Board member, said that the irony is that as the economy gets worse the Library is needed more.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the current budget has a reduction in materials and a staff cut. The challenge is to keep up with demand. The staff is already challenged.

Polly Rogers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, said that last year the Board looked at the budget process. One of the most important goals was to keep the Library open as much as possible. There is a very strong and active usage of the computers. The meeting rooms are getting a lot of use. Especially as unemployment rate increase, more people are using the Library. Keeping the Library open as many hours as possible has been very important.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that some of this information will be coming to the Town Council in the survey. There have been over 300 surveys returned.

Councilor Drake asked how many people are needed to keep the Library open and safe.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said there are two people at checkout, one at adult services, and two in the children's department. That doesn't include people shelving.

Councilor Drake said that five people are needed are needed to open the Library.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that it can't be done without the backroom staff. There won't be books in the collection without the other staff.

Polly Rogers Moon, Chairperson of the Library Board, said it is not a number that can be quantified. It can't be run like an ice cream store.

Councilor Drake asked why isn't ordering done during the day. It seems like there can be a different level of staffing at night.

Claire Meade, Chairperson of the Library Budget and Finance Committee, said that is taken into consideration. She said that it would be good for Councilors to see how the Library works and suggested that they tour the facility.

Councilor McAlister said that from an outside view the Councilors see the budget has doubled, the Library was renovated, and staff has unionized. It would be helpful to have detailed information to understand how the Library is run now versus how it was before. Also, where were salaries before versus now and what services were offered now versus before the renovations. He said that he would like to understand the big picture. He clarified that as patron and taxpayer in 2003 and now what has changed for him in terms of service and how the Library runs. He has asked other departments to provide matrixes to show how money is spent and the return on the expense.

Councilor Drake said that so many more people use the Library and the Town has spent a lot of money on it. He asked if outside groups like the Friends of the Library have donated more money. If so many people love the Library so much, are there more donations to it. He said that the money doesn't go into the operating budget so he would like to see where those funds are going.

Martha Mayer, Member of the Friend's of the Library, said that the Friend's are running book sales that they weren't running two years ago. Town people are bringing in books that the Friend's turn around and sell. The Friend's are basically bringing in \$300 a month to the Library.

Sue Grady, Library Board member, said that when the Library Director first came to Town salaries were much lower for Library employees than in other towns and other Town departments. They were far below the industry guidelines.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that in addition to the labor of the Friend's of the Library, there is a volunteer program in place in the Library headed by Joan Gauthier. There are seven volunteers.

Councilor McAlister asked if volunteers do less than they were able to do previously. An example is after the hurricane a group of sixth graders wanted to pick up sticks at the school but were told they could not because it was something a union employee would do.

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said that the volunteers are not used to replace staff but assist the staff. They are helping to label magazines and open packages among other things.

Claire Meade said that she would like to make sure that everyone is on the same page. When talking about outside groups, the Friends of the Library is a non-profit organization. It is the only group that gives the Library any money.

Unapproved

*January 26, 2010 Notes*

*Page 7*

Councilor Drake asked what does that money typically go to?

Laurel Goodgion, Library Director, said money was used during the renovation for a new service desk in the children's department and much of the furniture. The Friend's of the Library fund the Children's summer reading program and the museum pass program.

Councilor Hemmann thanked the Library Board members for meeting with the Town Council.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:05 p.m., Councilor McAlister moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Manousos. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk