

**REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2010**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, November 15, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts (arrived at 7:05 p.m.), Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, Michael Turner, Director of Physical Services, Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks & Recreation, Christoph Geiss, Chair of the Conservation Commission and several members of the Conservation Commission and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Councilor McAlister led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Christoph Beiss presented a report for the Conservation Commission and spoke about the benefits for the community of open space.

Michael Turner, Director of Public Works, reported for the Middletown Avenue project and commented that the final course of pavement has been installed and what remains is the curbing, driveway aprons and restoration of the snow shelf. He also noted that his office has received calls regarding the steepness of the driveway aprons, and he advised the Council that he has met with the contractor and they have both reviewed every location to assure that the grades will be satisfactory when the project is completed.

Councilor Drake inquired as to why the elevation spots were lowered to begin with and not put back to how it originally was.

Michael Turner responded that originally there was no storm drainage in the street, so high spots and low spots were artificially created and the final grade never changed more than four inches.

Councilor Drake asked if the elevation change was made to move the water.

Michael Turner responded that this was correct.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that some driveways were taped off preventing the homeowner from parking in their driveway and asked if there was alternative parking for these individuals.

Michael Turner responded that on an individual basis, the residents have been able to get in and out of their driveway. He noted that this week was critical because the paving crew had to do the final course of paving. The paving company went door to door and sent letters to the residents notifying them that the cars would need to be moved before paving started.

Deputy Mayor Console also noted that some of the driveway aprons are as high as 18 to 24 inches which still seems high.

Michael Turner responded that he didn't recall any driveways being 18 inches. The driveways in the north end, east side are the steepest and the curb line will be brought out several feet from where each pavement is.

Deputy Mayor Console asked when was the project expected to be completed.

Michael Turner responded that the curbing will be done on Tuesday, November 16.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about what is being done on Desmond Drive.

Michael Turner responded that MDC has two contracts out. One is to repair a water main and another is to install sanitary sewer lines. MDC now videotapes the condition of the sewers before the roads are repaved. Pennwood is replacing a new water main and Desmond is getting a sanitary sewer and water upgrade.

Councilor Kotkin asked what the timetable on completing these projects was.

Michael Turner responded that there were delays with MDC getting their bids out but the work will be done until the weather prevents them from working and the repaving will be done in the spring by the Town.

Councilor Kotkin asked if Desmond Drive will be in better shape this winter than Goff Road was.

Michael Turner responded that MDC will put down a permanent patch and MDC will be responsible for the road during the winter.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue asked who was responsible for paying for the street lights. He also commented on the need for a stop sign on Morrison Avenue. He was told by the police department that Morrison Avenue does not have enough traffic and Gus Colantonio noted that Hillcrest Road has two stop signs and it has less traffic than Morrison Avenue.

Mary Hobart, 259 Prospect Street, reported that for the third straight year, Wethersfield has been chosen as the premiere drop off location south of Hartford for Foodshare's collection for Thanksgiving donations. Collections will be taken on November 20 and November 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance building.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on the Middletown Avenue project. Mr. Young also handed out a summary of Connecticut's State Revenue. Robert Young noted that for the past ten years, CMT scores have plateaued and have remained the same and suggested that a new system is needed for the education system.

### COUNCIL REPORTS

Chairperson Hemmann noted that she attended the Conservation Commission meeting last week as the liaison. She reported that they are looking at the dam at Wintergreen Woods and what may need to be done. Kathy Bagley will assist them in regards to that particular area. They are also looking at the Goff Brook project in the future.

Councilor Drake commented on a Hartford Courant article regarding the lights at Cottone Field which was unsigned by the sender that was in Council packets and suggested that unsigned correspondence should not be circulated to Council.

Councilor McAlister agreed that anonymous correspondence should not be put in Council packets.

Councilor Manousos also agreed with the remark about anonymous communication. He noted that Mr. Colontonio had brought up an issue regarding who is responsible for paying for street lights and asked if anyone knew the answer to that question.

Michael Turner responded that the street lights are in the Town's operating budget under the Public Works and are paid per fixture, based on the wattage of each light. The Town is charged a specific unit price for each of the lights. The Town owns the ornamental lights on Main Street and therefore is not charged a rental fee; the Town pays only the actual electricity used.

Councilor Manousos asked if this answered Mr. Colontonio's question.

Mr. Colontonio responded that this explanation is what he had expected, but he noted that Morrison Avenue has been missing a light for about a year and asked if the Town is being charged for this light even though it is not working.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town has received a credit for the period of time the light was not working.

Councilor Manousos asked about the stop sign issue that was brought up by Mr. Colontonio earlier.

Jeff Bridges responded that based on the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Morrison Avenue does not warrant a stop sign.

Councilor Manousos asked whether or not stop signs can be installed on the Town's request or does the Town need to follow the State guidelines.

Jeff Bridges responded the Town needs to follow the Federal Guidelines.

Councilor Manousos asked Mr. Colantonio if that answered his question.

Councilor Roberts commented that Lt. Powers of the Wethersfield Police Department has spent time working with the State Traffic Commission. Based on the current guidelines, Morrison Avenue does not warrant a stop sign because it does not meet the criteria. She explained that the theory of a stop sign is not to slow down traffic.

Councilor Manousos asked if there is a report that can be put into the record concerning this matter.

Michael Turner responded a full a report was put onto the record about 2 ½ years ago.

Councilor Manousos asked Mr. Colantonio if that answered his question.

Gus Colantonio responded that he has been given this information. He noted that a stop sign is not just used based on traffic, but is also based on existing conditions. He added that if another stop sign cannot be added to Morrison Avenue, then perhaps there should not be any stop sign on Hillcrest Avenue.

Councilor Roberts commented that this was an option that had been presented at one time. The stop sign that already exists probably would not be allowed today and perhaps it should be looked at now as to whether it needs to be there now.

Jeff Bridges reported that he and several other staff members attended a training session last week hosted by the State Traffic Authority and noted that we are not unique. Traffic stop signs have historically been used to slow down traffic even though that is not what the state statute says. The statute prohibits using a stop sign to affect speed. There is probably more than one stop sign in town that does not meet the required warrants.

Councilor Kotkin noted that if a street light is out on someone's street, the resident can report the outage to CL&P online and they will replace the light. Councilor Kotkin asked Jeff Bridges on the status of leaf pickup to date.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town is on schedule with leaf pick up.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he received a report from Cox Cable that as of this past summer, if a resident does not have a converter box, they will be unable to get channels 14, 15

and 16. Deputy Mayor Console thanked all the veterans in Wethersfield, Connecticut and all over the United States for their service. Deputy Mayor Console commented that he was off on the deficit number that he reported last time of \$12 trillion and the correct number is \$14 trillion. He noted that this is affecting everyone from the town level to the government level. He referenced a Hartford Courant article that noted that Connecticut is number two behind Michigan, for having the worst job creation list. He referenced another article in the Hartford Courant which reported that Councilman Ritter was proposing that full pensions should not be collected until age 62 instead of between 55 and 61. Deputy Mayor Console reported that he visited Cross Automotive, which has been around since 1928 and was purchased for \$10 by John Grady of the Standard Oil Company. In 1950, the station was selling 240,000 gallons of gasoline and this past year, they sold 2,750,000 gallons of gasoline. Deputy Mayor Console also noted that Tim Horton's abruptly closed this past week and hoped that a new tenant could be found soon. He also reported that he and Councilor Drake have been doing some research on economic development which Councilor Drake will speak about later. He also reported that there was an editorial in the Wethersfield Life written by a Morrison Avenue resident, who was upset of the \$500 charge and wanted to point out that he and Councilor McAlister had voted against charging the residents \$500. Deputy Mayor Console also commented on the Board of Education's calculation and the complex monetary multiplier formula that is used for the expenditure requirements needed to run the school system. He felt for the current year, the State did not use this formula, and if this is the case, they are then over \$1,787,215. He will continue to do more research and report back to Council. If his numbers prove to be correct, then the Board of Education has made a serious miscalculation with their numbers.

Councilor Montinieri reported on a program that is in the planning stages right now, that would start the day after Thanksgiving and continue until the day after New Year's. A decorated trolley from Dattco will be running from Wethersfield to Bushnell Park in Hartford on Fridays and Saturdays from 3:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. from restaurants in Wethersfield and Hartford. The idea is to get residents down to Bushnell Park for the Festival of Lights, the carousel and there will also be skating park.

Chairperson Hemmann reported that she attended the Desktop Disaster Drill put on by the State and held at Council Chambers last week. It gave the staff an opportunity to see how to handle a simulated drill. The drill pertained to all of the town departments instead of just the emergency operations staff.

Councilor Drake reported that he met with some of the owners on the northeast side of the Berlin Turnpike and noted that he and Deputy Mayor Console had some good conversations with some of the owners and will report back.

## TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges noted that he had nothing to report.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that she had a question in the Town Manager's report regarding the final numbers from the State regarding the grant funding and repayment and asked how that is going to be done and asked if he could give an overview for the public and if he had any foresight.

Jeff Bridges responded that they will need to evaluate a cash payment, short term, 3 to 5 year payment schedule or a 20 year payment schedule. Given the upcoming budget situation, there is not a lot of extra money for additional debt service. He explained that the options will be reviewed this week.

Chairperson Hemmann commented that the filing that needs to go to the State of Connecticut for specific school projects, had some inconsistencies in the reporting so the Town needs to pay money back to the State with regards to some of the funding.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the audit she is referring to is the reimbursement eligible funding that was provided by the Board as the source of the audit concern.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town was reimbursed for things that it should not have been reimbursed for.

Councilor Montinieri asked if eligibility was the question. He asked how often these audits come up.

Jeff Bridges responded that the projects were not closed in a timely fashion so over the past year there has been a series of conversations and meetings in order to avoid sanctions and finalize actual expenses.

Chairperson Hemmann added that town staff reviewed each of the items that were submitted to the State, and each of the items that the State ruled upon was less than what was the initial audit amount and a mutual decision was made as to what was left that should not have been considered eligible.

Councilor Drake commented that if this was done in a timely manner on the Board's side two or three years ago, he felt they would not be seeing that number right now.

Councilor Manousos asked what the original dollar amount was.

Councilor Drake responded that if done two or three years ago, the State may have relieved some of these items versus today.

Councilor Manousos asked that when discussions begin with regards to either rebuilding or renovating the high school, will this matter affect the 40% reimbursement rate.

Councilor Drake responded that different items get reimbursed at a different percentage so they cannot be compared with each other.

### OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Manousos moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO COMPLETE NEGOTIATIONS AND SIGN THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS AT&T AN EASEMENT TO INSTALL COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT ON TOWN PROPERTY AT THE NORTH PROPERTY LINE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL NEXT TO THE TENNIS COURTS AT THE PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE FROM WINTERGREEN LANE,”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Jeff Bridges reported on August 16, 2010, Town Council referred a request from AT&T for an easement to locate a communications equipment cabinet on Town property near the Wolcott Hill Road entrance to Wethersfield High School to the Planning and Zoning Commission for an § 8-24 Review in accordance with Connecticut State Statutes. After hearing concerns from the Town Council about the placement of the VRAD boxes, AT&T reviewed alternative locations and is now proposing placing the box at the north property line of the High School next to the tennis courts at the pedestrian entrance from Wintergreen Lane. In lieu of a payment to the Town, AT&T has proposed installation of power lines to Cottone Field. The attached memorandum from Public Works Director Michael Turner provides more detail, including a map of the location. The Planning and Zoning Commission returned a favorable referral.

Councilor Drake asked why the decision was made to place the box on a pole instead of putting it on the ground.

AT&T Representative Robert Pasek, commented that the cabinet will be fed underground and AT&T will only be replacing one existing pole and going all the way back to the main street, approximately 250 feet and bringing power to the easement side. The Town will take over from that area for approximately 27 feet to an existing structure.

Councilor Montinieri questioned how the \$19,000 charge which AT&T is not charging the Town in lieu of the \$10,000 payment, interfaces with the pocket cost of the lights as money has been set aside for the power.

Jeff Bridges responded that the onsite conduit for the three phase power is the 27 foot portion. What was needed next was to pay CL&P to have three phase power run from Westway Street to the conduit that was installed on the field.

Councilor Montinieri asked if that piece was \$19,000.

Jeff Bridges responded that was correct.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the \$19,000 was either appropriated in the projected funds people have raised publicly or was it in the grant money that was provided by the State.

Jeff Bridges responded that part was what was privately being raised.

Councilor Montinieri asked if the \$19,000 can theoretically help offset some of the fundraising gap that is required.

Jeff Bridges responded that it could.

Councilor Kotkin noted that there was a \$95,000 gap between of what was needed to complete the lights and what has been raised/spent and asked if the \$95,000 will be reduced by \$19,000.

Jeff Bridges responded that is correct. The amount needed to finish the project is \$100,000, which includes the \$19,000 plus the three phase power, but with the three phase power being provided by others, it will be deducted from the project budget.

Councilor Kotkin noted that a meeting had been held earlier and asked if there was an update on what the gap was and the status of the pledges.

Jeff Bridges responded that they have not informed the committee to count on this money until tonight, it is still on the books that it is owed.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Council votes in favor of it, what the gap would be.

Councilor Manousos noted that he chose to not report on it until they come back with their recommendation to the Council, and added that this would offset the of the project.

Councilor Kotkin noted that the numbers sent out to the committee did not include the \$19,000.

Councilor Manousos responded that it is not in those numbers.

Councilor Drake asked where the meter will be located for the lights.

Michael Turner responded that it will be located inside the fence by the main entrance on the right hand side and there will be a new service panel.

Councilor Drake asked if the \$19,000 can be counted as a contribution from the Town.

Jeff Bridges commented that it is a policy issue.

Councilor Roberts thanked AT&T for the change in the location. She asked for a clarification on item 6 of the 8-24 report.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town is in the process of reviewing the VRAD boxes and their locations.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the VRAD box being installed at the high school is going to look like the screened in VRAD box next to the tennis courts at the Webb School.

AT&T representative Mr. Pasek responded that it would be the same screen.

Deputy Mayor Console inquired about the AT&T boxes that are hanging off the telephone poles and asked if those wires can be trusted.

AT&T representative Mr. Pasek responded that there is already a working relationship in place with the Town for the boxes presently installed.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if each box will be addressed separately.

AT&T representative Mr. Pasek responded yes.

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

### MINUTES

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 3, 2010 AS CORRECTED”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilors Kotkin and McAlister abstained. The motion passed 7-0-2.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 2010 AS CORRECTED”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

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

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2010 AS CORRECTED”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilors Kotkin, McAlister and Roberts abstained. The motion passed 6-0-3.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented on Morrison Avenue and the issue of trying to get a stop sign. He also questioned who was responsible for paying for the sidewalks on Middletown Avenue and the sidewalks on the north side of Nott Street running to the Berlin Turnpike.

David Caruk, 149 Broad Street, questioned why more residents from Morrison Avenue are not speaking up about the sidewalks besides Gus Colantonio. David Caruk also commented on the issue of the lights and felt the Town should help pay for the lights.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, asked what enforcement was there for drivers on the phone or texting while driving. He also commented that he was surprised to hear about the reimbursement issue with the State of Connecticut and asked what the amount was.

Chairperson Hemmann responded that the amount of reimbursement was \$672,465.

Robert Young commented that this was a lot of money and stated that the Board of Education has encumbered, after closing their books on June 30, \$1.38 million and gave the Town back \$46.00 and was unable to spend the \$672,465 from the State in a timely manner. For the year 2009-2010, the Board of Education encumbered \$678,948 and returned \$77,516. He noted that in the last budget process the Board of Education noted that it was a bare bones budget. He also questioned where the money was going to come from to repay the State of Connecticut. Robert Young asked if Jeff Bridges could report back as to the percentage of the gross of the dollars.

Jeff Bridges responded that the final grant amount was \$7 million and the Town has to return \$579,000.

George Wallace, 22 Chesterfield Road, thanked Deputy Mayor Console for mentioning Veteran's Day as it frequently goes unnoticed. He also spoke about an article concerning running in Sports Illustrated and it explained where the marathon originated from.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:45 p.m., Councilor McAlister moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Manousos. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk  
*Approved by vote of Council  
December 6, 2010*