

EMERGENCY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 27, 2009

The Wethersfield Town Council held an emergency Town Council meeting on Saturday, June 27, 2009 at 12:30 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway.

Members Present: Councilor Console, Forrest, Hemmann, Kotkin, Roberts, and Chairperson Adil

Members Absent: Councilor Casio and Walsh, and Deputy Mayor Montinier.

Also Present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, State Sen. John Fonfara; State Rep. Russ Morin; Speaker of the House Christopher Donovan; Tony Martino; Mike Turner; Peter Gillespie; Fred Bushey; Brenda Gillis (CIRMA); Greg Bedula; Paul Dudley; Kathy Bagley; Marty Sitler

Chairperson Adil called the meeting to order at 12:25 p.m.

Chairperson Adil advised that this is an emergency meeting to bring all Town Councilors up-to-date on where the Town is in the emergency.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, advised that Rocky Hill, Newington and MDC have been providing the Town assistance. The Police Department brought in their full staff last night. They are now back to regular schedule. CL&P has been in Town since the start and is working around the clock. Old Wethersfield has become the Tourist Capitol with people from out-of-state coming in to see the damage. The Town had the Police close Wolcott Hill Road because traffic was impeding Town crews and CL&P from removing debris from the street. The Fire Department was helping Physical Services clear roads.

MDC had their Hazardous Waste Collection Day today and had an incident. A seventy year old West Hartford resident was dropping off old chemicals and had an acid, that when liquid, is not a problem, but when crystallized becomes volatile. The acid had crystallized and was equivalent to 4 sticks of TNT. The bomb squad was called in to dispose of the acid. They followed the gentleman back to his house as he had more at home.

Physical Services has been doing a great job clearing the streets and working with CL&P to get the roads opened. Staff will be back tomorrow as well to continue cleanup. Physical Services rented a crane to help move trees. The Volunteer Ambulance Association had had no injuries to take care of due to the storm. The Building Inspector advised there are between 70 to 80 structures that have been damaged. So far they have inspected 15 structures and deemed 2 of them unsafe for occupancy. CL&P was here at 11:00 a.m. to give the Town an updated briefing. 85% of their Wethersfield customers were without power last night and are now down to 45 to 50% without power. They had to get the feeds from Newington and Rocky Hill up first to be able to take care of the Town. They hope to get power to everyone by Monday. Governor Rell called last night

advising more utility crews were coming in from Massachusetts to help. The Fire Marshal is taking pictures to submit to FEMA. The Shelter was opened last night at 7:30 p.m. One person stayed overnight. Others came in to use the facilities.

Fred Bushey said that six out of seven schools were without power. Highcrest Elementary School is the only school that didn't lose power. The Board of Education had some minor damage at the schools. The Silas Deane Middle School had a condenser blow over. The roof can be fixed. He is taking pictures for CIRMA. There was flooding in the auditorium at the High School. He has custodians ripping the carpeting out of the auditorium to avoid mold issues. Food at the High School is under deep freeze. He will get a refrigerator truck tomorrow, if needed. He would like to look at putting a generator in the High School to handle the full building. The current generator only takes care of emergency lighting, and backup to phone service and servers. The Webb Elementary School got power back a half hour ago.

The Health District had issues on restaurants trying to open on generators. Humphries first Friday night opening was last night.

Brenda Gillis (CIRMA) and Agent Greg Bedula were in Town to join the Town Councilors on a tour of the damages to assess the damages to the Town. Residents should be advised to first submit a claim to their own insurance company. If a town tree was involved they could also file a claim with the Town Clerk. Their private carriers should be notified first. Residence would need to prove negligence on the part of the town. Most damages were caused by tree damage.

Mike Turner, Director of Public Works, advised that there is a lot of tree debris damage. The first priority is to clear streets. As residents clear their property they should put their debris by the street on the snow shelf or bring the debris to the Silas Deane Middle School upper parking lot. They can bring logs and branches, no wood chips. The Town Staff will then bring debris to the Jordan Lane compost site. Paine's will be bringing their grinder to Jordan Lane on Monday to start grinding the debris. Landscapers can pile items at the residents curb or bring them to the Middle School upper lot as well. Once again no wood chips will be accepted.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, will be going out today to visit business to see what the Town can do to help in an effort to show the Town is business friendly. Connecticut Outfitter had their windows blown out and kayaks sucked out the window.

Paul Dudley is putting information up on the website for families that have power and can access the website. Lieutenant Andy Power is preparing a press release for newspapers and TV stations.

Speaker Chris Donovan said that Representative Morin called and updated him on the situation. Speaker Donovan has a meeting with Gov. Rell tomorrow and Wethersfield will be a topic of discussion.

Councilor Hemmann advised there were tree limbs down at Garden Street and Hubbard Road. A Good Samaritan came by and removed the limbs from the street to make it passable. He knows town and fire crews were busy helping other areas of town. Councilor Hemmann thanked him, but he didn't want to give his name. The Town should thank the Good Samaritan in a press release.

Councilor Roberts advised that the Council thank everyone for their help. She asked when the Town might get reimbursed from the Federal Government.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said it could take up to six months. The National Weather Service report will help with the submittal.

Council Kotkin asked if State crews were out. He was advised that they were out clearing State roads in Town. He has a neighbor whose High School aged child can help with the cleanup.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that Nancy Stillwold, Director of Social and youth Services, has a list of volunteers that will be reaching out to help the elderly.

Councilor Console asked if the Town called for help from the National Guard.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that Jim McDonald, Assistant Director of Physical Services, told her right now he has enough help and backup towns are willing to come in and help as needed.

Councilor Forrest asked if everyone has been instructed in cleanup.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said a plan is being prepared for release to the Public telling them about the clean up procedure. The Town is using the TV and radio stations as well as the Board of Education ConnectEd System. The Town does not have a reversed 911 system. In the ConnectEd broadcast, which only goes to school parents, the Town is asking neighbor to pass information on to neighbors.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, advised that Jeff Bridges the new Town Manager is in Wethersfield house hunting. He is staying at the Silas Robbins House in Town. He has been helping the resident in Old Wethersfield and stopped in last night at 11:00 p.m. to the Emergency Operations Center for an update.

Town Councilors went on a bus tour of the Town to evaluate the damage.

After the Town Councilors returned from the tour of Town, at 1:50 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved "TO ADJOURN THE MEETING" seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

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

Minutes taken by Tony Martino, Analyst