

## **JANUARY 17, 2006 REGULAR MEETING**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on January 17, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

Present: Councilors Adil, Cascio, Drake, Kirsche, Kotkin, Walsh, and Chairperson Morin.

Absent: Councilor Forrest and Deputy Mayor Fortunato.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Chairperson Morin announced that there will be an Executive Session following the regular meeting to discuss real estate negotiations.

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Councilor Kirsche.

### **Update on Board of Education Community Conversations**

Chairperson Morin introduced Assistant Superintendent Judy Golden who provided background information on the Discovery Initiative to explore the status of young children in Wethersfield. Dr. Golden introduced Mary Fulton, Discovery Coordinator, who shared a powerpoint presentation on the Discovery Initiative, copies of which are available to the public in the Town Manager's Office. Dr. Golden said that Mrs. Fulton's services are paid for through the grant received in partnership with the Capital Region Education Center.

In the powerpoint presentation, Dr. Golden and Ms. Fulton reviewed the initiative's goals; sponsors; information gathering; process to-date; pre-school programs, classrooms, capacities and locations; challenges identified by Wethersfield parents; community conversations; various statistical data relating to Wethersfield's children; and future Discovery Initiative steps. She said that the three points currently driving the Discovery Initiative forward are accessible, high-quality preschool child care, parent education, and funding for early childhood.

Councilor Drake asked if the Town makes itself available as a resource for preschool centers in terms of curriculum and preparation for kindergarten. Dr. Golden said that the Town participates with respect to special education preschool and preschooler children with severe needs. She said that other than this, the Town has not funded nor provided resources to preschool providers, but it will be discussed what preschools need from the Town and what the Town needs from preschools.

Councilor Cascio asked what other communities are involved in the Discovery Initiative. Dr. Golden said that there are fifty other communities involved including East Hartford and Wallingford. Ms. Fulton said that Wethersfield has come on board a little later than the rest of the communities. Councilor Cascio asked Ms. Fulton if she meets with other community coordinators to share findings, data, and ideas. Ms. Fulton said that, as Wethersfield's coordinator, she has the opportunity to attend informational meetings of the Graustein Foundation which awarded the grant.

Councilor Kotkin asked for an explanation of the frequency of discussions between the Board of Education and preschool directors. Dr. Golden said that the discussions have not been well-planned and rather infrequent in the past; however these conversations are important and the Discovery Initiative provides the opportunity to hold them more frequently. Councilor Kotkin asked if the preschool directors in Town are interested in developing more of a relationship with the Town, and also if they're interested in the accreditation process. Dr. Golden said that as part of the Discovery Initiative process, they will be reaching out to preschool providers to gain knowledge of their interests. She said that the accreditation process is very time-intensive and difficult and there are many other opportunities through the Discovery Initiative to communicate with the daycare providers in terms of addressing each other's needs.

Councilor Walsh asked Dr. Golden if she is comfortable with the standards set by the National Association for the

Education of Young Children and she said that she has not reviewed the standards in a long time, but there is pressure from the public schools and parents for preschools to be more academic than they were in the past. Councilor Walsh asked if other communities are moving faster toward preschool accreditation because of the Discovery Initiative. Dr. Golden said that one of the requirements of preschools funded federally is that they must be accredited. She said that Wethersfield preschools do not receive outside funding; therefore they don't have to follow the Federal requirements regarding accreditation, although parents have commented that they want their children to be academically prepared for kindergarten. She said that regardless of accreditation, Wethersfield has high-quality preschools.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

### HEARING

#### Resolution For Property Tax Increase Limitation for Senior Citizens

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street, said that the proposal needs to be looked at in terms of ways to be creative in government since funding is running dry. She said that the senior citizen population in town is a good investment and it is important for these people to continue to live in their homes if they should so choose. Ms. Ruhe voiced her support of the proposal to direct the Town Manager to review a property tax increase limitation for senior citizens.

No one else wished to speak and the Chairperson declared the Hearing segment closed.

### GENERAL COMMENTS

Harry Lichtenbaum, 16 Town House Lane, distributed a handout to the Council members pertaining to the availability of public comment segments at Town Council meetings of twelve Hartford-area suburban towns with a population over 25,000. The handout indicated that 7/12 held public comment at the beginning only of Council meetings, 2/12 held public comment at the beginning and the end of the meetings, and 3/12 held public comment at the beginning and the end with stipulations. Mr. Lichtenbaum said that after this review, he is satisfied that Wethersfield is in step with the times.

Mary Dobruck, 689 Folly Brook Boulevard, requested that all Councilors speak into their microphones since it is often difficult to hear what they, as well as the public, are saying. Ms. Dobruck requested that the Town Council agenda attachment items appear on the website so as to provide better written background of the items. She also requested that the Council members review the Strategic Plan to insure that the goals of the objectives are clear, and to add an item to the plan to address the inflow and infiltration issue. Ms. Dobruck said that last year she and her husband requested that an Inflow and Infiltration Committee be established and although the Council voted this down, she was told that it would be an issue to be addressed and that quarterly reports and updated information would be provided; however eight months have passed and she's not yet seen the issue discussed at a Town Council meeting. She said that the Town needs to make this issue a priority and attend to it rather than look the other way.

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street, spoke of the importance of democracy and the right of the people to be heard. Ms. Ruhe said that the request to reinstate five minutes of public comment for each individual at the end of the Council meeting is not too much to ask for those who care enough to participate in government, regardless of what other town's policies are.

No one else wished to speak and the Chairperson declared the General Comments segment closed.

### COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Councilor Adil reported on the recent meeting of the EDIC where the request for quotes for the marketing program for the EDIC and the Tourism Commission were discussed, and he announced that there will be a business marketing

seminar held on March 15 at the Wethersfield Country Club. Councilor Adil reported on the recent meeting of the Budget & Finance Committee and the Infrastructure Committee to discuss the Veterans and the Senior Citizen tax abatements. He said that the Town Finance Director and the Town Assessor will be gathering information on the Senior tax abatement which will be forwarded to the Town Attorney for review. Councilor Adil said that the Town Manager has been asked to provide information for the salary and range analysis of non-union staff for Council's review. Lastly Councilor Adil said that it was suggested that the two committees develop a task force to increase the use of clean energy.

Councilor Walsh reported that at a recent meeting of the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, Les Cole was voted in as Chairperson and John Mullen as Vice-Chair. Councilor Walsh thanked the members of the Committee for their work on the detailed list of projects for this year. He said that the next step will be to prioritize the information.

Councilor Cascio announced that the Chamber of Commerce calendars have come out, the Chamber's Business After Hours program will be held on January 24 at Prudential Real Estate on the Silas Deane Highway, and the Chamber will be holding a fundraiser for the scholarship program for Wethersfield High School seniors. Councilor Cascio announced that the Parade Committee will be meeting next week to begin planning the Memorial Day Parade.

Councilor Kotkin reported that the Youth Advisory Board will be holding a Youth Recognition Ceremony on April 6 at the Community Center. He said that there was discussion of the possibility of the youth of Wethersfield serving on other Town Boards and Commissions.

Councilor Drake requested that the Town Manager provide a general schedule and current budget of the upcoming Library renovations and she said that she will do this.

Councilor Cascio said that he heard on the news that the Town of Coventry, who acquired the old Wethersfield prison cells, is not going to use the cells and is looking for a home for them. Councilor Cascio suggested that the Town of Wethersfield may want to get them back from Coventry before they are destroyed.

Chairperson Morin suggested that the Historical Society be contacted regarding these cells. Chairperson Morin announced a number of community events, including the Fireside Chat to be held on January 28. Chairperson Morin thanked Wethersfield Police Officer David Scales for all the hours he has volunteered to tape the Council meetings. Chairperson Morin said that tonight's meeting would have been Officer Scales' last meeting; however, he is not present this evening. Chairperson Morin said that anyone interested in volunteering to perform this task should contact the Town Manager at 721-2801.

## **COUNCIL ACTION**

### Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Councilor Adil moved **"TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENTS:**

#### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE COMMITTEE**

George Bashura, III	Vol. Amb. Assoc.	D 120 Mohawk Lane	1-17-06 to 12-31-07
Ellen Layman	from Vol. Amb. Assoc. to At large	R 426 Ridge Rd.	1-17-06 to 12-31-07

#### **PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD**

##### **Alternate:**

Timothy J. Verre	D	300 Church Street	1-17-06 to 6-30-09
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#### **PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD**

Brian F. Zito	D	P.O. Box 290001	1-17-06 to 6-30-09
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#### **SILAS DEANE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



a call comes into Jim McDonald, Assistant Director of Physical Services, from the Police Department when they begin to feel that the roads are dangerous and he then makes an assessment of the situation. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that there are situations where it is wise financially to sand and salt prior to icy precipitation coming down; however residents don't understand this and become concerned when they see a plow go by and there is nothing on the ground yet.

Chairperson Morin agreed that there are times when it is best to treat the pavement prior to icy precipitation falling to prevent the ice and snow from bonding to the pavement.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that in years past, plowing wasn't initiated until there was two inches of snow on the ground and there were many complaints received.

Chairperson Morin said that Connecticut is one of few States who sand like they do. He said that some States don't use sand anymore, but rather use different chemicals instead. He said that he is not sold on the alternative chemical use; however, he would be interested in looking at this.

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

### Wethersfield High School Swimming Pool

Councilor Adil moved "**TO TRANSFER \$100,000 FROM THE CAPITAL RESERVE ACCOUNT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING POOL HVAC REPLACEMENT PROJECT ACCOUNT 303-5431-14616**", seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that the CIP budget for the current year includes \$140,000 in funding for HVAC replacement at the High School swimming pool since the system has not been working well for a number of years and many complaints have been filed. She said that the consulting engineering firm LMG recommends that the Town replace the air conditioning units with a system that provides dehumidification to the pool areas which will result in energy cost savings in the long run providing a return on investment in approximately four to five years.

Councilor Kotkin asked if there are any rebates that the Town will be eligible for with this expenditure. He asked if there is currently a pool cover at the High School and was told by Board of Education Director of Maintenance Mo McCarthy that there is a cover and it has just recently started to be used although it is greatly deteriorated due to non-use. Mr. McCarthy said that because of this deterioration, he is in the process of purchasing a new cover. Councilor Kotkin asked if even greater savings will be realized with the use of a new pool cover. Mr. McCarthy said that the savings will be realized in the use of natural gas. Councilor Kotkin asked if the HVAC replacement will alleviate the need to open the doors in the pool area when it gets too warm. Mr. McCarthy said that the current system which was installed in 1970 does not provide dehumidification which the new system will as well as to recycle the excess heat into the pool heaters to heat the pool water resulting in cost savings and more comfort for spectators.

Councilor Cascio verified that the HVAC systems have not been replaced since their installation in 1970 and Mr. McCarthy said that the systems are original to the pool addition. Mr. McCarthy said that over a long period of time the humidity can affect the steel within the trusses and the new system will reduce the humidity. Councilor Cascio commented that the pool is utilized by the entire community and he feels that the HVAC replacement is a great investment. He asked if there is a warranty provided for the replacement and Mr. McCarthy told him that there is a warranty.

Councilor Adil thanked the Town Manager for suggesting that a Capital Reserve Account be established for circumstances just like this one.

Councilor Walsh referred to Mr. McCarthy's comment regarding the humidity affecting the steel with the trusses, and asked if there is currently any apparent structural damage. Mr. McCarthy stated that a structural engineer will be investigating this to make a determination of any damage, hopefully within the current budget year if there are available funds.

Councilor Kotkin said that he is in favor of the motion and asked when the replacement will take place and whether it is the responsibility of the High School custodians or the Pool Lifeguards to make sure that the pool cover is on. Mr. McCarthy said that it will be the responsibility of the custodians since the cover does not go on until 11:00 p.m. and comes off as early as 5:30 a.m. He said that the work is scheduled to be done during this summer.

Chairperson Morin asked the Town Manager to make sure that the structural analysis is performed before anything is put on top of the roof. He said that he supports the motion and commented that the Capital Reserve Account was created for items just like this.

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

#### Tax Exemptions - Veterans

Councilor Adil moved "**TO ADD \$2,000 TO THE CURRENT \$5,000 EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS**", seconded by Councilor Kirsche.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that every year the Council can vote to raise the limit for the Veterans exemption for those serving in an active conflict for at least ninety days. She said that the limit was last raised two years ago and it is important that the Council act upon this by February 1. The Town Manager said that the increased exemption will go into effect with the next grand list and she explained that the exemptions are spread across all the taxpayers who are not eligible for the exemption; therefore the Town doesn't lose money.

Councilor Adil verified that this exemption is above and beyond what is already granted by the State and that it is income based.

Councilor Drake asked where the stipulation for at least ninety days in an active conflict comes from and the Town Manager told him that this is from State Statutes.

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

#### Debt Management Plan

Councilor Walsh moved "**TO REFER THE DRAFT DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY TO THE BUDGET AND FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER REVIEW**", seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that as part of the newly adopted Strategic Plan, it was recommended that a number of financial policies be developed. She said that she will be bringing a policy to the Council each month and the first is the one this evening for the Debt Management Policy which has not been reviewed since 1996.

Councilor Drake addressed item three in the Debt Management Policy regarding short-term debt and suggested that this be reviewed very carefully since the School Projects Building Committee had a problem with this.

Councilor Kotkin stated that the Long Term Debt Policy fails to cover some items which are addressed in the Strategic Plan and it will be important to look at the two together.

Chairperson Morin said that Councilor comments and suggestions should be forwarded to the Budget and Finance Subcommittee or the Town Manager.

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

#### Boat Maintenance - Police

Councilor Adil moved **"TO TRANSFER \$3,995 FROM THE CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT T1910900 5250 TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, ACCOUNT T1420 5275 FOR BOAT REPAIRS"**, seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that the boat used by the marine patrol unit suffered a blown engine which was repaired on an emergency basis and was obviously not budgeted for; therefore, the Chief of Police has requested a transfer from Contingency to offset the repairs.

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

## **BIDS**

### Police Cruiser Bid

Councilor Adil moved **"TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT'S LOW BIDDER, WARNOCK AUTOMOTIVE, INC. D/B/A WARNOCK FORD, FOR FOUR POLICE CRUISERS, EQUIPPED AS REQUIRED BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$90,168 AND TO TRANSFER FUNDS FROM THE UNDESIGNATED CNEF RESERVE TO CNEF IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,370"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that there is enough funding in the budget to replace four new police vehicles and due to an error in the State Purchasing Office, the current bid is missing some of the equipment that municipal police departments install in new vehicles. She said that the State is going to re-bid; however the Town Manager recommends that the Town purchase the cruisers now and not wait for the new bid process which would push delivery into the summer.

Councilor Kirsche asked where the resale of the four old vehicles is budgeted and the Town Manager said that these types of figures are figured into the CNEF budget.

Chairperson Morin said that he wants to make sure that the Police Department is very secure and is provided with everything they need in the vehicles. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that this will all be provided.

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

### Gasoline Bid

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO EAST RIVER ENERGY FOR THE PURCHASE OF 75,000 GALLONS OF UNLEADED GASOLINE, AS NEEDED, AT A RATE OF \$2.0921 PER GALLON"**, seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that as a member of CRCOG, the Town participates in the Capital Region Purchasing Council to lock into the price of \$2.0921 per gallon for mid-grade gasoline.

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

## **ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION**

None.

## **MINUTES**

Councilor Adil moved **"TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 19, 2005"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion

passed 7-0-0.

Councilor Walsh moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 3, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Cascio ABSTAINED. The motion passed 6-0-1.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:30 p.m., Councilor Adil moved "**TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**" seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

At 8:40 p.m., Councilor Adil moved "**TO ENTER BACK INTO THE REGULAR MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kirsche. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

At 8:40 p.m., Councilor Cascio moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Walsh. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk