

MAY 24, 2004 SPECIAL MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Monday, May 24, 2004 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room at the Wethersfield Police Station at 250 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Adil (6:05 p.m.), Cascio (5:55 p.m.), Forrest (5:50 p.m.), Hemmann, Deputy Mayor Karangekis and Chairperson Morin.

Also present: Town Manager Bonnie Therrien, Building Committee Chairman Joe Coombs, Building Architect Peter Wells, Library Director Laurel Goodgion, and Town Clerk Dolores Sassano.

Chairperson Morin stated the reason for the meeting was to discuss a referendum to gain the use of grant monies (Small Cities and State Library) for the Town Hall/Library renovations. He said that Mr. Coombs is present to discuss alternate plans for work on the Town Hall building. Chairperson Morin asked the Town Manager for the time frame with which the Council needs to be working. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said there is a 30 day period before a referendum could be held. Mr. Wells said that the Town cannot sign a contract with a contractor until the Town has signed for the grant and the Town Manager said that she cannot sign for the grant until she has a dollar amount. She said that the Council needs to set the question and the date at a public hearing on June 7. One of the questions could be if the Town should bond \$3.75 million for renovations; however, the Council can just put out for half of the renovations now and do the second half in November.

Mr. Coombs said that the bonding for the demolition on the lower level of the Town Hall and commencement of the new work prepares for the other points to be done. Opening up the downstairs to work on wiring may result in it being left open in order to address issues pertaining to the next phase. He said that the first phase is mandatory.

Chairperson Morin asked what will happen if the referendum fails. Mr. Wells said that to take \$800,000 out of the current bid package would be almost impossible and would send the project back to square one.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien asked Mr. Turner where it was anticipated that this money would come from before anyone knew about the grant funding. Mr. Turner said that the original bond for the Police Facility and renovations to the Town Hall ground floor was just for basic renovation work to the Town Hall. The Small Cities Grant pays for the elevator, which was originally going to come out of the bond money. Any additional work is above and beyond the original plan. The Library Grant accelerated work on the Library renovation.

Councilor Hemmann asked if the original bond money was based on the amount of square footage to be renovated. Mr. Turner said that it was related only to the Library and lower level which will still be done if the referendum fails.

Deputy Mayor Karangekis verified that the total of the project including what is currently out to bid is \$8.3 million. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that brand new monies would be \$5.2 million.

Mr. Wells said that the budget is right up to the limit especially with the way that materials prices have recently increased. He said that it would be difficult to cut certain aspects of the project as this would affect all other components of the project.

Deputy Mayor Karangekis said that the referendum question would be to consider all of the project or part of it.

Chairperson Morin said that one definite question would be asking to get the grant money and there could be one or two other questions also. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien suggested that the grant question go out in July and then in November another referendum could be held for the second phase. This would be less confusing for residents.

Councilor Hemmann commented that some residents are already questioning why there is no work being done yet to renovate the Town Hall.

Mr. Coombs said that the original bond was only to renovate the Library and the lower level of the Town Hall. The public needs to know that the additional funds will be for the remainder of the Town Hall.

Ms. Goodgion said that the two questions are: first to make the buildings more functional and secondly to make sure they don't leak so that the first question isn't destroyed.

Councilor Hemmann suggested that the question for the grants needs to go out in July and then put any additional renovations on a November referendum.

Mr. Wells cautioned that the roofing and window replacement will be done at the worst time of year if these issues are held until the November referendum. He said it may be best to word the question in such a way that the work on these two items will not be done until the Spring of 2005.

Mr. Coombs asked Mr. Wells if the referendum passes and all the monies are required, would all the ADA requirements of the building be satisfied. Mr. Wells could not think of any off hand that would not be; therefore he said that they all would be satisfied. Mr. Wells said what would not be taken care of completely would be the HazMat work. Mr. Coombs said that for the remainder of the HazMat work, if it is not disturbed, there is no problem.

Councilor Cascio said that the public needs to be clear on the funding of the project. They need to know that the original bond covers the renovations to the Library and lower level of the Town Hall and make it clear what any additional funding and additional phases will include.

Councilor Hemmann referred to a previous itemized list provided by Mr. Wells and asked for clarification as to whether this list still left electrical work to be done. Mr. Wells said that all the electrical requirements will be taken care of.

Councilor Forrest asked for clarification of the \$790,000. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the bonding ordinance is written in such a way that the Town has to have the public's approval to accept the grants. The \$790,000 would be added to the appropriation that the voters already approved. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the question on the referendum will be to approve increasing the bond amount to include the grant money. She said that it has to be clearly explained that this is grant money that will be added to the bond amount.

Councilor Cascio asked if having a second question in November is a better strategy than including it now. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she is uncomfortable with putting the question of more money to renovate the Town Hall on the same referendum as the grant question.

Chairperson Morin said that the Council needs the opinions of Mr. Turner, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Coombs as to whether the work could be effectively done if the referendum for additional funds waits until November.

Councilor Cascio suggested that the Town Manager look into the utilization of any surplus funds for the Physical Services renovation through the communications effort for wiring and its tie in with the Town Hall. The Town Manager said that she can look into this.

Councilor Forrest asked how the two options for referendum question in November would affect the aesthetics of the Town Hall, both interior and exterior. Mr. Wells said that the aesthetics would hardly be affected as the renovations would be purely structural interior renovations. Councilor Forrest is concerned that the public will not approve of additional expenditures if the appearance of the Town Hall will not be changed. He said that if money is going to be spent on the inside, it needs to be spent on the outside of the building as well. Councilor Forrest asked how much it would cost to update the architectural study done fifteen years ago on the Town Hall. Mr. Wells said that he could look into this and that it would also be a very good idea to look to the future and a plan for the anticipated space needs of the Town Hall.

Deputy Mayor Karangekis commented that this is a good idea but the Wethersfield taxpayers have to be considered as to how much bond funding they will consider to be reasonable. Residents will also have to weigh the renovations to the Town Hall with other priorities in Town such as road conditions.

Mr. Wells left the meeting at this point (6:30 p.m.) stating that he will work with the Council to do whatever it takes, and to provide any pertinent information and expertise to move the project along.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:30 p.m., Councilor Adil moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk