

**REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 17, 2012**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri (left at 8:00 p.m.) Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk. Also, Chairperson of the Wethersfield High and Hanmer Schools Building Committee and Rusty Malick of Quisenberry Arcari Architects.

Councilor Roberts led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**HEARING**

An ordinance appropriating \$74,816,617 for costs with respect to the design, construction, equipping and furnishing of additions and renovations to Wethersfield High School, and authorizing the issue of bonds and notes to finance the portion of such appropriation not defrayed from grants.

Presentation by the School Building Committee and architects – Christine Fortunato, Chair

Christine Fortunato provided background information on the project. She reported the committee was formed in 2008 for renovations to the high school and the project was then put on hold due to the down turn in the economy. Approximately one year ago the project was resurrected and has been worked on with the architectural firm of Quisenberry Arcari Architects. The educational specifications were adopted by the Board of Education and reviewed by the present Town Council members and are the driving force behind the renovation project. An environmental study has been done and the budget has been refined.

Chairperson Hemmann reported that the high school building was built in 1952, was renovated in 1971 and again 1992 and noted that the Town Council supports this project as it is proposed. She noted that “doing nothing” is not an option and code compliance and ADA needs are immediate. Less costly band aids will end up costing more in the long run. State statutes and regulations mandate many of the items included in this project. Educational delivery and curriculum has changed since 1991.

Martin Walsh, from the Board of Education expressed his agreement with Chairperson Hemmann that “doing nothing” is not an option and hopes the referendum passes in April. He noted that the renovations done from 1989 to 1992 were primarily done for asbestos removal.

Mr. Thomas Moore, Wethersfield High School principal, commented that the project is more than just aesthetics and cosmetics. He noted that the existing infrastructure of the school needs

immediate attention as it dates back to 1952 and the building has been cited by the Office of Disabilities for inadequacies and accessibility for handicapped individuals. He agreed that the educational specifications truly meet the needs of the high school students in the community.

Rusty Malik, architect, from Quisenberry Arcari Architects, commented there are four key components to the site: (1) circulation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and enhance safety; (2) increase number of parking spaces by 100; (3) accessibility to all facilities and general upgrades, including the bleachers; and (4) three areas of expansion: new gymnasium, new media center, and expansion of the music room for the band. He also noted that State reimbursement is less if a new building is built, rather than renovations.

Jeff Bridges reported on the project costs and changes in legislation in terms of school financing. The Town is now being asked to have the referendum approved for the full amount of the cost. The expectation is that the State will fund \$30.2 million with the Town share being \$44.61 million and it is anticipated to be a 36 month project. He further explained the financing of the project.

Christine Fortunato reported on the key dates: April 24 Referendum to authorize the project will be held; between May and June 2012, the EDO49 grant application will be prepared to get into the State no later than June 30, 2012. If the Referendum does not pass and the Town submits more applications, it will be more than a year before the Town could submit a new application. If the Referendum does not pass, the Building Committee will have to go back with the Board of Education and look at changes. If the Referendum passes, the project is expected to start after school ends, June, 2013.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following people spoke in support of the Referendum with the following comments:

John Porriello, 49 Dudley Road  
Martha Conneely, 12 Fairmont Street  
Maggie Pace, 26 Victory Lane  
Michael Aparo, 82 Schoolhouse Crossing  
John Miller, 45 Highland Street  
Patti Silva, 24 Hillcrest Avenue  
Robin Bourassa, 248 Dale Road  
Mike Conneely, 12 Fairmont Street  
Mike Grabowski, 46 Westway  
Jennifer Hedlund, 480 Wolcott Hill Road  
Barbara Bellas, 21 Round Hill Road  
Corine Nocida, 319 Nott Street  
Shirley Steinmetz, 375 Brimfield Road  
Michael McKenna, 100 Grist Mill Road  
Gloria McLean, 38 Midwell Road

Brendan Flynn, 109 Springdale Road,  
Mike Koziol, 225 Amherst Street  
Michael Zaleski, 23 Black Birch Road  
Mia Caulfield, 120 Main Street  
Jim Turcotte, 47 Hillcrest Avenue  
Cindy Jacobs, 71 Sunrise Terrace  
Rob Lowe, 188 Cricket Knoll  
Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street  
Bill Eck, 54 Boulter Road  
Larry Spellacy, 215 Pine Lane  
Peter Baranowski, 65 Westway  
Rita Dikegoris, 16 Bay Roc  
Tracy Eck, 54 Boulter Road

Some of the comments: The potential of property values decreasing if the high school is not redone; giving the children an opportunity to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; meet the educational needs of the children; high school is a main draw for people with a family looking to relocate; band aids are not the solution; science labs are needed that meet State standards; failure to pass the Referendum may have people relocating to another town; students deserve a first class education; by not renovating the high school, the Town is not giving the children the best that can be given; the concerns raised involve the future of the children; if the high school is not renovated now, Wethersfield will not be considered a viable, first class community for families and businesses to move to; residents who do not have children in the public school system may feel resentment for being asked to fund public education, and the people who have children in the school system who are also funding the public safety, roads, health and social services are also being funded by the same families with children through their taxes, and they are not asking the senior citizens to live with the same substandard conditions that their high school students are presently living with; high school should be a point of pride, which presently is not; take advantage of State funds; Title IX issues that need to be addressed; money will be saved in the long run with better windows, boiler system, etc.; need to spend money to make money; education is not an expenditure, but an investment in our young people; Town buildings are for everyone whether your children are in school or not – buildings are utilized in many different ways

The following people spoke against the Referendum with the following comments:

Joel Garcia, 33 Sherburne Road  
Doreen Garcia, 33 Sherburne Road  
Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue  
Jaime Griswold, 56 Gristmill Road  
Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road

High costs and extravagant plans; school population is not projected to increase so why increase the space 26,000 square feet; what will happen to the people who cannot afford the additional

taxes; buildings do not provide education, the desire to learn comes from the parents and the child; concern about whether the Town will need to bond any money the State doesn't cover.

## **HEARING CLOSED**

### GENERAL COMMENTS (9:15 p.m.)

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on issues brought up this evening – windows and roof at the Webb Elementary School; feels the high school is a maintenance problem and the Board of Education was given money for maintenance but the money was spent somewhere else; too much money for the project; there is no adjustment cap on what the Town is responsible for paying if the State does not come up with the \$30 million.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue; commented on the Morrison Avenue sidewalk, driveway apron issues, stop sign issue, no parking signs.

Jeff Bridges commented that all the sidewalks have appropriate accessible sidewalk aprons in place.

Patti Silva, 24 Hillcrest Avenue, gave her support for the April 24 Referendum, also reported that the WSPC parent Council is having a screening of "Race to Nowhere" on January 26 at 7:00 p.m. in the Middle School auditorium.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented the Council on their patience during the comments during the public hearing.

Martha Conneely, 12 Fairmont Street, commented that the Wethersfield PAC has been meeting with Berlin PAC to discuss their renovations that are similar to what Wethersfield wants to do and noted that it's not simply replacing a water damaged ceiling tile but replacing the roof.

James Griswold, 56 Gristmill Road, commented on the number of houses for sale in Wethersfield and that children should do what they want to do and not what others want them to do.

Peter Baranowski, 65 Westway, commented on the issue of having separate budgets for projects.

Chairperson Hemmann responded that there are separate budgets.

Connie Rosato, 581 Crest Street, commented that she is displeased with the Town's taxes and that she is not against the proposal and the Town should work together so that everyone benefits.

Matt Koziol, 225 Amherst Street, commented on remarks made by Ms. Rosato.

David Caruk, 149 Broad Street, commented that the high school referendum is to bring the building up to standard and accommodate more programs and students with expectations of what is a good school.

### COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Drake commented that the School Building Project met last week to review the PCP reports and to prepare for tonight's meeting. He also reported for the Infrastructure Committee which met concerning Wilkus Farm which was decided that based on the original Ordinance which stated that the property goes to the highest bidder; Jeff Bridges is going to have the Town Attorney review the Ordinance and provide a possible change in the terms of selling the property. The streetlight project was also discussed and the insurance company provided five scenarios to lowering streetlight costs. A decision was made to bring the wattage down to a lower level which will save approximately \$12,000/year and a timer is also going to be put on every other light on the Silas Deane Highway and the Berlin Turnpike so every other light will shut down at midnight and turn on again the next day and will save an additional \$13,000/year.

Deputy Mayor Console had asked the Town Manager to find out from the State why the Town of Wethersfield pays for streetlights on state owned roads.

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

Deferred until the next meeting due to the hour.

### TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Deferred until the next meeting due to the hour.

### COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Console moved **"TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF WENDI JOHNSON, 16 GOOSEBERY HILL, FROM THE YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD,"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **"TO APPOINT CHRIS HEALY, 27 DORCHESTER ROAD, FROM ALTERNATE TO FULL MEMBER TO THE BOARD OF ETHICS, FOR THE TERM 1-17-2012 TO 6-30-2014; PAUL E. COURCHAINE, 481 MAIN ST, FOR THE TERM 1-17-2012 to 6-30-2014; TO APPOINT GEORGE BASHURA, 120 MOHAWK LANE, TO FILL A VACANCY AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE BOARD OF ETHICS FOR THE TERM 1-17-2012 TO 6-30-2014; TO APPOINT ROBERT COBB, 99 MEADOW VIEW DRIVE, AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS FOR THE TERM 1-17-2012 TO 6-30-2012"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Drake moved “TO APPROVE AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING **SEVENTY-FOUR MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED SIXTEEN THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN DOLLARS (\$74,816,617)** FOR COSTS WITH RESPECT TO THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF ADDITIONS AND RENOVATIONS TO WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL, AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUE OF BONDS AND NOTES TO FINANCE THE PORTION OF SUCH APPROPRIATION NOT DEFRAID FROM GRANTS,” seconded by Councilor Manousos.

Jeff Bridges reported that the Building Committee has put forth a very comprehensive plan and program for the update to the High School. Staff supports the plan and finds it in the best interests of the Town of Wethersfield to approve the ordinance and place the question on the ballot for referendum.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that Council members and Town residents should be aware of the rules sent out by Jeff Bridges regarding the prohibition and expenditures of public funds relating to referendum.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0. Councilors: Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console and Chairperson Hemmann. The motion passed 8-0-0. Councilor Montinieri was not present.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Peter Gillespie, Director of Planning and Economic Development presented his monthly report:

**TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD**  
**Planning and Economic Development Department**  
**MONTHLY REPORT**  
**January 2012**

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- Peter D. Gillespie, Town Planner and Economic Development Manager
  - Phone (860) 721-2838 e-mail: peter.gillespie@wethersfieldct.com
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#### **RECENT PROJECTS**

- A CO has been issued for a change of use and façade improvements for the former Tim Horton’s restaurant building at 486 Silas Deane Highway. The tenant is Farmington Bank. A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for Thursday January 19 at 10 am.
- Plans have been approved and completion is nearing to renovate the former Angellino’s restaurant at 1115 Silas Deane Highway in the Wethersfield Shopping Center into a Thai Restaurant the Tamarind Grill.
- Façade improvements have been completed at the Dunkin Donuts at 225 Silas Deane Highway and at 1030 Silas Deane Highway.

- A CO has been issued for interior renovations to accommodate a furniture and clothing consignment store Kids At Heart at 732 Silas Deane Highway.
- PZC approved plans for a small engine repair shop to be located in the rear of 512 Silas Deane Highway (former Ritz Camera).
- Wethersfield Monument Company has opened in 512 Silas Deane Highway (former Ritz Camera).
- A final inspection is scheduled for January 13 for the Tilted Kilt at 1151 Silas Deane Highway.
- At 580 Silas Deane Highway a new restaurant Bella Anthony will soon be opening in the former Bluto's.
- At 685 Silas Deane Highway the Great Wall take out restaurant has opened.
- At 137 Main Street Primary Residential Mortgage Inc. has opened.
- A new veterinary clinic has opened at 60 Beaver Road – Beaver Brook Animal Hospital.
- The PZC approved an 8-24 referral for planned improvements to Wethersfield High School.
- Plans have been filed by Metro PCS for improvements to the cell tower at 75 Wells Road.
- The Tobacco Place has opened at 202 Silas Deane Highway.
- Mr. Tint has opened at 1812 Berlin Turnpike.
- Diana Stutz Design has relocated to 280 Main Street.

#### **Developer/Tenant Contacts**

- Discussed interest with developer for the redevelopment of the former Fun Zone at 1290 Silas Deane Highway.
- Met with potential buyer of the office building at 1290 Silas Deane Highway.

#### **Redevelopment Agency**

- Working with property owner and developer interested in redeveloping 1000 Silas Deane Highway. Pursuing possible Brownfield grant/loan opportunities with State of Connecticut to assist.

#### **Economic Development and Improvement Commission**

- Approved small Façade loan application for site improvements and façade improvements at 271 Main Street - Main Street Creamery and Café.
- Approved Façade Loan application for site improvements and façade improvements at 334 Silas Deane Highway for a mixed use building.
- On December 8 the EDIC hosted the Salute To Business event at the Wethersfield Country Club and recognized the accomplishments of 17 new businesses, 18 businesses that have been in Town for 30 years, 5 façade improvement projects and 7 special awards for outstanding contributions to the Town's economic development.



- The EDIC hosted a Fall business breakfast meeting at the Wethersfield Country Club.

### Tourism

- **ibrochure** – Completed work with Madden Media on the development of an electronic promotional brochure (ibrochure) which will be used as an alternative to our printed brochure in response to inquiries received from our recent ad in the CT Getaway Guide. Please visit the Historic Wethersfield website to review [www.historicwethersfield.org](http://www.historicwethersfield.org)
- The Commission is working with the Pita Group on a number of marketing initiatives relative to our recent grant from the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. Specifically, we just completed the design of our Fall ad and work is underway to complete the Spring Ad..
- Work continues on the implementation of the **Wayfinding Signage** project. The sign fabrication is underway and is anticipated that sign installation can occur through the winter and Spring.

### Plan of Conservation and Development

- The PZC has retained Planimetrics Inc. to assist us with the review and update to the 2000 POCD. Staff have been promoting a series of upcoming meetings designed to encourage citizen participation. On Jan 18 at 7 pm the PZC has invited all Boards and Commissions to attend a meeting and on Jan 31 at 7pm at the Community Center a public meeting has been scheduled and all members of the public are strongly encouraged to attend. A website has been set up for this purpose [www.planwethersfield.com](http://www.planwethersfield.com) and we have recently installed lawn signs throughout Town for this purpose.

Councilor Kotkin commented that there seems to be a lot of restaurants coming in and asked if a study has been done that Wethersfield needs more.

Peter Gillespie responded that he hasn't seen any studies with regards to the number of restaurants, but they are hopeful the community supports them.

Councilor Kotkin asked if litigation is still pending between the Town and the proprietor of the Main Street Creamery.

Peter Gillespie responded that he is not aware of any litigation.

Deputy Mayor Console asked what was going in at 255 Main Street which was originally the bed and breakfast.

Peter Gillespie responded that it is a public relations media consultant.

Councilor McAlister noted that there is a rumor going around that a lot of businesses are moving into Town to beat the price increase before the high school project is done.

Peter Gillespie responded that he cannot confirm that.

Councilor Hurley asked on the status of Panera Bread.

Peter Gillespie responded that to date, the building and site contractor have met and the building will be ready in two weeks, but the site improvements are delayed because of the weather and the asphalt companies are closed for the winter.

Councilor Drake inquired as to the status of the Porter & Chester building.

Peter Gillespie responded that he has put a call into the new owner and has asked him to clean up the property.

Councilor Roberts remarked on the size of the Conservation Committee signs around Town and suggested if future signs are made, to enlarge the size of the font regarding the meeting information.

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO APPROVE AN ORDINANCE AT THIS MEETING BE SUBMITTED TO A REFERENDUM VOTE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TOWN CHARTER ON APRIL 24, 2012, BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 6:00 A.M. AND 8:00 P.M. UNDER THE FOLLOWING BALLOT HEADING:**

**‘SHALL THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD APPROPRIATE \$74,816,617 FOR COSTS WITH RESPECT TO THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF ADDITIONS AND RENOVATIONS TO WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL AND AUTHORIZE THE ISSUE OF BONDS AND NOTES TO FINANCE THE PORTION OF SUCH APPROPRIATION NOT DEFRAID FROM GRANTS?’**

**AND THAT THE TOWN CLERK PUBLISH A NOTICE OF PASSAGE AND NOTICE OF SUCH REFERENDUM AND MAKE ABSENTEE BALLOTS AVAILABLE; THAT THE TOWN CLERK IS AUTHORIZED TO PREPARE AND TO CAUSE TO BE PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 9-369b OF THE GENERAL STATUTES OF CONNECTICUT, REVISION OF 1958, AS AMENDED, AN EXPLANATORY TEXT WITH RESPECT TO THE AFORESAID QUESTION TO BE SUBMITTED TO REFERENDUM VOTE; AND THAT THE TOWN MANAGER IS AUTHORIZED TO PREPARE AND TO CAUSE TO BE**

**PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED SUCH ADDITIONAL EXPLANATORY MATERIALS WITH RESPECT TO SUCH QUESTION AS ARE PERMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SAID SECTION 9-369b,”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

Jeff Bridges reported this is the Referendum question as prepared by the Bond Counsel and this action will set the referendum date and question.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE.

Councilors: Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console and Chairperson Hemmann.

The motion passed 8-0-0. Councilor Montinieri was not present.

Councilor Manousos moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER, ON BEHALF OF THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY, TO APPLY TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT FOR BROWNFIELD REMEDIATION FUNDING TO ASSIST WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT OF 1000 SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY,”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Jeff Bridges reported the Town Planner/Economic Development Director is working with the property owner and a potential developer for this parcel. Funding assistance from the State of Connecticut will help to put together a deal to redevelop the property. There are several programs available and staff is still working with the interested parties to determine the appropriate one. Town Council authorization is required to proceed. No Town funds are committed at this time. As soon as the details are worked out, that information will be forwarded to Town Council.

Councilor Kotkin asked if there is any general information as to what may be the level of funding.

Jeff Bridges responded that there are a series of programs available with loans ranging from \$30,000 to grants of several hundred thousand dollars.

Peter Gillespie noted that it is not felt that the magnitude of the problem is on the upper range, but there are identified issues in the ground, and if the building is demolished, there are items that need to be disposed of a certain way.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AUTHORIZE CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE SMALL TOWN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (STEAP) AND TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO NOTIFY THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

**OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ACTION,"**  
seconded by Councilor McAlister.

In July of 2007, Wethersfield was ranked number 41, therefore becoming a Public Investment Community. In the applicable State of Connecticut Legislation (Chapter 116c) "public investment communities" are defined as municipalities requiring financial assistance to offset their service burdens. This designation moved the Town out of eligibility for the Small Town Economic Development Assistance Program (STEAP) grant funds and into the group that includes the State's large cities. Although Wethersfield has not been ranked as a PIC community since July of 2007, the designation continues for the year after the initial designation and for four additional years. PIC communities can elect to become eligible for participation in the small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) in lieu of Urban Action Bond assistance. In February 2008, the Town Council requested and was granted participation in the STEAP program. This participation has proven very effective for the Town, with grants to complete the Silas Deane streetscape, a façade improvement loan fund grant and the recent grant for Millwoods Park. The Town must renew the request to participate in STEAP. To opt into the STEAP program, Town Council must authorize continued participation in the STEAP program and authorize the Town Manager to notify the State, that Wethersfield elects to continue participation in the STEAP Program. This authorization will be valid for four years.

Councilor Drake asked if this is the last year that the Town is participating.

Jeff Bridges responded yes, without reauthorization.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

### BIDS

None.

### ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Introduction of the Resolution concerning application to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

### MINUTES

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 3, 2012"** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, noted that in his previous comments, he wanted to clarify that he was not questioning the ADA requirements for the sidewalk ramps.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented that he is in favor of saving money, but he noted that the Town calendars were not mailed out this year and the calendar is a basis for a way for a lot of people to contact people.

David Caruk, 149 Broad Street, commented on the outpouring of support that showed up tonight for the Referendum.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:20 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk  
*Approved by Vote of Council*  
*February 6, 2012*