

Unapproved
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2009

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

Present: Councilors Console, Forrest, Hemmann, Kotkin, Roberts, and Chairperson Adil.

Absent: Councilors Cascio and Walsh and Deputy Mayor Montinieri

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

Chairperson Adil said that there will be an Executive Session at the end of the meeting to discuss personnel matters – Town Manager search.

Councilor Hemmann led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Councilor Forrest moved **“TO ADD B.3.E. – AN 8-24 REVIEW FOR THE PURCHASE OF 22.5 ACRES ON THE EAST SIDE OF WILLOW STREET AND 24 ACRES ON THE WEST SIDE OF WILLOW STREET AND 34.5 ACRES ON THE WEST SIDE OF THORNBUSH ROAD IN WETHERSFIELD”** seconded by Councilor Console.

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

HEARINGS

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk read the Resolutions.

FAIR HOUSING RESOLUTION

ACCEPTANCE OF AMATO CIRCLE AND AMATO DRIVE AS TOWN ROADS

Mike Turner, Director of Public Works, said that he was speaking on the acceptance of the roads. He said that typically, when the Town Council holds a hearing on the acceptance of a street, the Engineering Division sends out letters to homeowners soliciting their input on the acceptance of the street. No response back by homeowners is considered no concern. The Town received three letters back. Two of the letters stated that the homeowner has no concern. One gentleman commented on cracks in the roadway. This subdivision was subdivided back in the 1980's. Mr. Amato has just come to the Town to have the roads accepted. The Town holds the deeds to the road and plows the roads dating back to the construction of the first home. Mr. Amato and his attorney were not available tonight but are in favor of this acceptance.

Chairperson Adil asked if these roads are completely finished and have no problems.

Mike Turner, Director of Public Works, said that there are no problems with the roads.

No one else wished to speak, Chairperson Adil declared the Hearings closed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, discussed on-going concerns with the lack of a stop sign and the condition of the sidewalks on Morrison Avenue. He asked why the Town Council did not respond to his remarks.

Chairperson Adil said that the rules do not allow for a response to the publics' comments and questions.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, said that Governor Rell gave a no tax increase State budget. In Connecticut, we pay the second highest property tax in the Nation. State arbitration leaves State officials powerless. The 169 towns in Connecticut spend 85 percent of their budgets to pay for municipal employees, both Town and Board of Education. Connecticut has one of the highest tax burdens in the United States. A families' networth has decreased 25 percent based on the devaluation of homes and the fall of the stock market. He gave statistic on the current recession. He hopes that the Legislative body will support Governor Rell's no tax increase State budget. The Town Council should ask the Town Manager to cut the budget by 10 percent. He can't get over, with the way the economy is, that the Town can continue to do this type of budget.

COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Councilor Console thanked Town Manager Therrien and Mike Turner for having the MDC come back to repair Jameswell Road area which previously had been left in a torn up state.

Chairperson Adil said that:

- The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the next Business After Hours on February 19th at Stillman Walk Adult Community Center from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- There will be a seminar on Solar Electricity for the Home on February 22nd at 1:30 p.m. at the East Hartford Public Library.
- The Volunteer Fire Department is hosting its 4th Annual Beer and Wine Tasting on February 26th from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
- That Nature Photography Exhibit is open during the Nature Center's visiting hours through February 28th.
- The Wethersfield Business and Civic Association will honor Bonnie Therrien as their 2009 person of the year at a reception to be held March 5th at the Wethersfield Country Club.

- The National League of Cities 2009 Annual Congressional City Conference will be held in Washington DC on March 14th – 18th. To Town Councilors, please let the Town Manager know if you are interested in attending.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO ACCEPT THE FAIR HOUSING RESOLUTION”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that every year the Town Council must approve this Fair Housing Resolution in order for the Town to receive State Small City’s Funds for housing rehab projects.

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

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO ACCEPT AMATO CIRCLE AND AMATO DRIVE AS TOWN ROADS”** seconded by Councilor Console.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that as Mr. Turner said this approval will allow the Town to accept Amato Circle from Amato Drive to the cul-de-sac and Amato Drive as public roads.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

BEAVER BROOK PROJECT STUDY

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that this is a presentation from Kathy Bagley, Park and Recreation Director, and Jef Fasser, Director of Landscape Architecture from VHB. The Conservation Commission has been working on this at the direction of the Town Council. There has been input from the Park and Recreation Commission and Conservation Commission. Town Council input is now needed and a final report will be completed. The final report will help the Town with grant funding and keep it in mind for future funding.

Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation, said that the Town Councilors were given maps of the area. The Town Council asked for an update of the 1969 Master Plan of Beaver Brook. She introduced Mr. Fasser, whose company was hired to update the existing plan.

Jef Fasser, Director of Landscape Architecture from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. went over the work to-date that his company has done as outlined in the handouts. He said that the site was examined first. The Beaver Brook was then looked at; the water system, the vegetation, and the land use. They then looked at the information collected by the Town and the State. They also

looked at other impacts that might affect the site. Some areas that were undeveloped at the time of the 1969 Master Plan are now developed. A summary of the information was completed and recommendations were received to start to protect this land to create a greenway system. The following recommendations were made: prioritize the southern half of the corridor, conduct a vegetation evaluation, prepare and implement vegetation management plan for the entire Beaver Brook corridor, evaluate Spring Street pond conditions, develop a more specific center of the area. He said that he would like to get comments from the Town Council.

Councilor Forrest said that members of the Conservation Commission have worked hard on the Beaver Brook project. He said that both the Conservation Commission and Park and Recreation Board support this. He said that the biking coalition is really trying to get people off of major streets and moving them on to safer areas. This north/south corridor seems to get the Town onto a path for bikes and walking instead of using the Silas Deane Highway. He said that he understands that there are private land owners that own some large blocks of this land and that there is a squeeze in the middle with easements. The ability, conceptually, to get a continuous path is extremely important. It will not all be built at one time or in one phase but this report will give the continuity that the project needs. The Conservation Commission was extremely thoughtful about the invasive species of vegetation. This environmental aspect can be really good for Brit and the ability to obtain funding for other sources.

Councilor Hemmann said that she read this with great interest since she lives so close and walks in the neighborhood. She asked about the improvement and about invasive species. Is that a project that the Town can take on in little pieces? Since it has been so long since the Brook has been refurbished, the Town should take a look at rates in the Brook at different points because it doesn't seem to go anywhere. She said that in North Carolina where she was working in the fall, there was a path that connected several different communities and it was funded by the communities. It was a walking path through the woods used by bikers and walkers. She is really pleased with the proposed plan and that the Town will be looking at grants.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the water flow was north to south and if it just goes out to the river through the meadows.

Jef Fasser said that it goes into the river eventually but he doesn't know if it goes somewhere else first.

Kathy Bagley said that it crosses over Route 3 and Spring Street.

Councilor Forrest said that at the pond on Spring Street there have been significant total overflows three or four times a year. It may fall under water management.

Chairperson Adil said that on figure two it may be worthwhile to add the bike trail that comes down Nott Street and crosses the area as a potential hook up. He asked if abutting property owners would be given a chance to comment on this plan and address concerns.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that there was no real plan to receive residents' input. The Conservation Commission could hold a hearing to get input.

Chairperson Adil asked that it be televised so that the public knows what the Town is doing. This project started in 1969. He asked that it go to the Conservation Commission so that some Federal monies could be found. This will help to clean up the area and create a park that the entire Town can use.

Jef Fasser said that one of the items in the final report will be potential grant sources. It will all tie into the ecological system of the area. There are some programs for storm drain manage that are available on a Federal and local level to control water into the system and dredging system to handle the water that comes into the system and deals with the invasive species.

Chairperson Adil thanked Kathy Bagley and Jef Fasser for the presentation.

Councilor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING TELEPHONE POLICY AND ADD IT TO THE RULES AND PROCEDURES”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

USE OF TELEPHONES DURING COUNCIL MEETINGS DRAFT

Town Council members shall be able to participate in Council meetings by telephone, however every effort should be made by members to be at all meetings in person and the use of telephones should only be used on rare occasions. A meeting quorum can only be determined by the members that are physically present in the meeting room. No votes shall be allowed to be taken via a telephone.

If the Council member knows well in advance of the need to call into a meeting, he/she should notify the Town Manager who will place the request on the next Town Council meeting for a vote by the entire Council. If there is short notice on the need to use a telephone for a meeting, it shall be with the agreement of two of the members of the Rules and Procedures Committee.

If allowed, the meeting will be held in a room open and accessible to members of the public, using teleconferencing equipment that enables everyone in the room to hear and, as appropriate, participate in discussions. Any printed materials, reports, graphs, etc. utilized by the person phoning in must be available in the meeting room.

This rule will be reviewed by the Town Council after every election of the entire Council.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that this item has been discussed by the Town Council several times and brought back to the Rules and Procedures Committee. If a Council member is

unable to attend a meeting, that member could use a telephone to take part in the meeting. This is the final draft being put forward by the Rules and Procedures Committee. It says that telephones should be used on only very rare occasions and no votes will be allowed to be taken via telephone.

Chairperson Adil said that one thing that needs to be agreed upon is that the vote taken at the budget meeting was allowed because nothing in the Rules and Procedures stated it was not allowed. The motion now is for participation but not voting.

Councilor Console said that in these times with so much going and the number of meetings that are held, Councilors that can't be at a meeting should be able to dial up and listen to the meeting and participate in conversations.

Councilor Hemmann said she appreciates that the Committee has looked at this issue. The language of this policy is clear and would be easy to follow through with. She agrees with the ideas that it be used rarely, that voting can't occur, and that a quorum must be present.

Councilor Roberts said that she appreciates the issue that this presents but she doesn't think that it is something the Town Council should do. The Councilors are elected to attend meetings. The Congress does not do this. If Town Councilors need to get caught up on a meeting they can listen to the tape or watch the video. She said that she has a problem with this in general and will vote against it.

Councilor Forrest said that this will allow debate during the meeting.

Councilor Console said that this isn't the Senate or Congress. The Councilors don't get paid for this work. The Town Councilors are dedicated to the Town. This policy will allow the Councilors to be a part of an issue if it is important. In this day and age this should be allowed. Councilors are not going to dial in to all of the meetings but on an occasion when one is out of Town it is important. He said that it should be given a try.

Councilor Kotkin said that he had concerns with an earlier version of the policy but they have been addressed and am comfortable with it. He was concerned with voting on the phone and lack of a physical quorum. Those issues were addressed and he can support this.

Chairperson Adil said that this is worth trying and if it doesn't work it can be brought back to the Town Council.

Councilors Console, Hemmann, Kotkin, and Chairperson Adil voted AYE. Councilor Forrest and Roberts voted NAY. The motion failed 4-2-0 for a lack of five affirmative votes.

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TRANSFER OF \$1,589 FROM THE CAPITAL RESERVE ACCOUNT 4100-54400 TO THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE PROJECT ACCOUNT 3000-54435-30612”** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Town Council has given money to make the facility handicap accessible. The only piece that has not been installed is the railing. It needs to be sturdy so a metal pipe railing will be installed. The lowest quote was for \$5,350. \$1,589 needs to be transferred in order to finish the project.

Chairperson Adil said that this is a worthwhile project.

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

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO APPLY TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR AND ACCEPT IF AWARDED, THE PROJECT REQUEST AS FOLLOWS:**

SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS	\$1,500,000
SALT SHED AND TRUCK GARAGE	\$1,500,000
LIBRARY RFID SYSTEM	\$ 230,000
COVE PARK IMPROVEMENTS	\$ 225,000
WPS COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM CENTER	\$ 300,000
WEBB SCHOOL WINDOW REPLACEMENT	\$ 500,000”

by Councilor Forrest.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Town has heard from Representative Larson’s office that there is a separate Federal bill appropriating funds for certain types of projects. A short summary of each project that fit into a category was already given to his office. The Library system, Webb Windows, and the Comprehensive Program Center have been approved to go to stage 2. The Town network system was reject the other items listed in the motion have not been decided on yet.

Councilor Roberts said that she was pleased to see the Webb window replacement on the list and asked how many phases there were.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that there are three phases.

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

Councilor Forrest moved **“TO SEND TO AN 8-24 REVIEW THE PURCHASE OF 22.5 ACRES ON THE WEST SIDE OF WILLOW STREET, 24 ACRES ON THE EAST SIDE OF WILLOW STREET, AND 34.5 ACRES ON THE WEST SIDE OF THORNBUSH ROAD”** seconded by Councilor Console.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Planning and Zoning Commission needs to vote on whether the Town should purchase the Wilkus' properties. They are three parcels involved at a cost of \$3,500,000. The voters have allocated \$4,000,000 in a bond for open space acquisitions. The money, along with \$500,000 in a State grant that the Town received for the purchase of these properties, will be used for the purchase. The Town has a letter of agreement from the family. The piece that will not be included will be the lot that the house is on. There will be a public hearing and then the Town Council will vote on whether or not the Town spends the bond money on the purchase.

Chairperson Adil thanked the Land Trust and Conservation Commission for their work on this purchase. This type of open space purchase does not come along very often. He hopes that this will move forward.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that since the Town is receiving State money, the Town can never build on it. It must remain open space.

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

BIDS

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO WETHERSFIELD SWEEPING SERVICE AND CLEANING OF CATCH BASINS AND STORM SEWERS, NOT TO EXCEED \$79,389”** seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that this service is bid out every year. This is for the street sweeping and pipe and catch basin cleaning. Less money is issued every year because of the new materials that are being used on the streets in the winter for ice.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Resolution for a Grant from the Historic Documents Preservation Program

Resolved: that Bonnie L. Therrien, Town Manager or Dolores G. Sassano, as Town Clerk, is empowered to execute and deliver in the name of and on behalf of the Town of Wethersfield a contract with the Connecticut State Library for a Historic Documents Preservation Grant.

MINUTES

Councilor Forrest moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 2, 2009”** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Councilor Kotkin said that on page 14 and 17, the motions should read 5-4-0 and 7-2-0.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:48 p.m., Councilor Hemmann moved **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS – TOWN MANAGER SEARCH”** seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0. No motions were made and no votes were taken during executive session.

At 9:15 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **“TO ADJOURN THE EXECUTIVE SESSION”** seconded by Councilor Forrest.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:15 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk