

Unapproved
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2009

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Console, Hemmann, Roberts, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Montinieri, and Chairperson Adil

Absent: Councilors Forrest and Kotkin

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

Chairperson Adil announced the cancellation of the executive session that was scheduled for the end of the meeting.

Councilor Walsh led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, said that today is a great day in American history. He is confident that under the model that Barak Obama presents the people of this Country will refocus priorities, that all levels of government will be changing their tone. Americans in general are hopeful that the nightmare of the last eight years is over. He said that he received two positive e-mails from relatives from overseas concerning the election of Mr. Obama. Mr. Ruhe said that there needs to be great respect and awareness for what the citizens are sharing with the leadership. He said that Mr. Obama made that very clear. He said that he knows that sometimes the Town Council doesn't like what residents say and it is evident in the body language and conversations that are being held between Councilors. The Town Councilors must show the public the appropriate courtesy because the Town Council works for them. This is a two way street. In recent years there have been some unpleasant things that have been taking place that have upset a fair number of citizens. A recent item is the scheduling of a referendum at times when it becomes very difficult for citizens to go to a single polling place in February to vote. These are the kinds of things that he suggests the Town Council look at. Unless many people are speaking, it doesn't matter if a speaker speaks for five or six minutes. One thing that is a thorn in the side of this citizen and many others in the community is the inability to comment at the end of meetings for things that are discussed at the meeting. These kinds of impediments that limit the involvement of the citizens, all seem to have taken place during the Bush administration. These were the kinds of things that were taking place in Washington D.C. There will be trying times in the future and it is important to give the citizens the opportunity to speak.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, said that the residents are still waiting for the stop sign. The snow piled between the street and sidewalk is not easy. He is waiting for the Town Attorney. He wanted to know if anyone has checked with the MDC regarding the water main. It doesn't seem

Unapproved

like anyone checked the work before and after the project. The sidewalks were cracked during the construction by the MDC and they should pay for the repairs.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, said that revenues were down for the 4th quarter of 2008. The Town has another six months to see how things will really be going dollarwise. From what he has read, it looks like State revenue and taxes are down. Money should be spent on the food pantries and energy assistance. Today there was a party in Washington D.C. for \$170,000,000. He said he was shocked. That was a lot of money being spent. Somehow things need to tighten up. The State is in for some bad times. The Governor has asked all departments to reduce their spending by 10 percent. He hopes that the Town Manager is instructing Town departments to do the same thing. The Board of Education should be asked to do the same. This Town has a lot of elderly and the seniors spend a lot more of their income on their houses and taxes. The Town needs to do something to tighten up the spending. Mr. Ruhe mentioned reinstating the second public section at the end of the meeting. He agrees with him.

Chairperson Adil said that he wanted to echo some of what Mr. Ruhe said about today's inauguration. It was a red letter day in democracy. As the President said, sixty years ago he wouldn't be allowed to eat in some restaurants and he is now the President. When people like to criticize government, they need to remember this is a country where anyone can become the President. Citizens should think about how lucky they are to be living in this country. As the Town gets close to budget time, people in Town Hall will have to make some sacrifices in order to run the Town efficiently and maintain quality schools. The Town Manager has asked for a few more dates for another Core Services meeting so that Department Heads can be given their marching orders so that the Town can achieve a ten percent cut. It will be a bad year for all. The President has already said that the Federal government can't bail everyone out. States and Towns will have to make necessary cuts.

COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Councilor Cascio said that last week he and the Mayor were judges at the Dancing with the Teachers at Wethersfield High School. It is a fundraiser for the High School Dance Team who will be competing February 7th at the Connecticut Expo Center. It was a lot of fun to have the teachers on stage dancing. It was a great event.

Councilor Walsh said that the 375th Anniversary Committee has had part of its budget frozen. The 300th Anniversary was during the depth of the depression and the Town still found money to celebrate its heritage and history and bring people into the community. The Committee is continuing fundraising and soliciting businesses. It is critical to realize that this is the oldest community in Connecticut and observance of the anniversary will help to draw visitors to the Town.

Councilor Console said that the Wethersfield Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities cancelled its January 18th meeting. He said that he has been receiving calls about fire hydrants not being cleared. It is very important that the snow is removed from the hydrants.

Unapproved

Chairperson Adil said that he wanted to remind residents not to snow blow snow into the streets.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **“TO APPOINT PHILIP SMITHWICK AS THE TREE WARDEN FOR A TERM FROM 1/20/2009 TO 12/31/2009”** seconded by Councilor Walsh.

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

Chairperson Adil asked that the Town Clerk send a letter to the former Tree Warden thanking him for his service.

OTHER BUSINESS

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE USE OF COVE PARK BY THE KEANE FOUNDATION FOR A CARNIVAL ON OCTOBER 16, 17, 18, 2009 AND TO AUTHORIZE THE SALE OF BEER AND WINE AT THE SOLOMON WELLES HOUSE FOR THIS EVENT, PROVIDED ALL TOWN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE FOLLOWED”** seconded by Councilor Cascio.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Keane Foundation has spoken to the Town Manager, Police Chief, and Park and Recreation Advisory Board about holding this event on October 16th, 17th, and 18th. It would be a carnival at the park. They would operate food, beverage concessions, and rides. It will be part of the 375th Anniversary Celebration. It needs to be approved by the Town Council for the use of Cove Park and to sell alcoholic beverages. She and the Police Chief have met with the Committee to make sure that all of the regulations have been met concerning the sale of alcohol. The Committee will work closely with the Police Department and is in contact with other Towns that have run carnivals. One concern is the issue of Police costs. Next year’s budget will be so tight that Police waivers will be eliminated. The Keane Foundation has agreed to put the Police costs into the cost of the entire event in order to have the event. Judy Keane, Mark Trahan, and Kathy Bagley are at the meeting to answer questions.

Judy Keane thanked the Town Council and former Town Councils for their support of the 9/11 Memorial Sports Complex. It is in full swing. Mark Trahan is the Chairperson for this event and he will be able to answer questions.

Mark Trahan said that the Town Manager summarized the event. The Committee is still in the process of putting together the hours of the event. He is working closely with the Police to ensure proper security for the event. The Committee will have to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals for approval, once the Town Council approves it. Gillette Shows Inc. of Pittsfield, Massachusetts will run the event. They are a forty year old family business that is top shelf. They have been to Cove Park and are thrilled with the site. October is a good time of year to have this event. This would be a family event that is good for the community.

Unapproved

Councilor Cascio stated that the Fire Department held a carnival for its anniversary at Cove Park. He recommends that the committee contact them to see what did and not work.

Mark Trahan said that is a great idea.

Councilor Walsh thanked the Committee for all its work in putting this proposal together. His only question is about the liquor sales and liability.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that normally in a situation like this the organization sponsoring the event would get the proper insurance but also the Town passes it through its insurance. If there is a rider, it is usually a nominal event.

Mark Trahan said that during the process, the question of alcohol was discussed. The Committee is providing that form of beverage as a service to those who would like it but if it impacts the Keane Foundation's reputation, it will not go forward. The Town Manager has given the Committee a contact in Enfield where they successfully hold a similar event. If the Committee gets to the point where it is not comfortable with it, the Committee will pull the plug on it. Based on the data the Committee received so far, it feels the sale of alcohol can be handled well.

Chairperson Adil said that an area could be roped off like at the Cromwell Golf Tournament to take the pressure off the people pouring the drinks. He said that he hoped this event would be working around other events that are held in October.

Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation, said that there are no conflicts with the dates.

Chairperson Adil asked about any concerns with the level of use of the athletic fields.

Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation, said that with any group they have to restore the field afterwards if there are problems.

Mark Trahan said that the amusement company was very proactive about keeping the field condition up to par.

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

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO WORK WITH NARL, THE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB OF CONNECTICUT’S CAPITAL REGION TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO PROVIDE AMATEUR RADIO SERVICES DURING A TOWN EMERGENCY AND TO DETERMINE WHAT EQUIPMENT CHANGES, IF ANY, MAY BE REQUIRED TO THE TOWN HALL ANTENNA”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that Mary Hobart the President of the Amateur Radio Club of Connecticut asked to work with the Town in the emergency center during an emergency. She has

Unapproved

been working with Dick Fippinger the Town's Emergency Management Coordinator and Michael Turner, Director of Public Works to make sure the new Town Council chambers can accommodate the use. It does appear that can happen. There may be an expense to the Town to make sure the system doesn't interfere with the Town's system. It can be a fabulous asset to the Town.

Mary Hobart, 259 Prospect Street, said that the radio operators are licensed and run on a frequency different from the police and fire radios. The only thing that she has asked for is the hole in the wall with the coaxial cables to the antenna. It will be ongoing to make sure that there is no interference with the Town's systems. The cable and radio system will be provided, only the hole is needed. Core volunteers will be needed in the event of an emergency. She will hold a class about FCC regulations and what is required of emergency operators in order to provide volunteers to Wethersfield in case of an emergency.

Councilor Walsh asked if this is a back up to the Town system or an augmentation of the system.

Mary Hobart said that it can be either. During an emergency, no one likes to think that the emergency system could go down. They don't go down completely. The Ham radios can go up for 48 hours while core services in the community get back up and running. It will supplant the emergency system. Her idea is to have teams of volunteers to work during an emergency.

Chairperson Adil asked when the training would occur.

Mary Hobart said that the training would start February 4th at the Ambulance Facility on Prospect Street. Training will run every Wednesday until the examination session on April 1st.

Councilor Roberts asked if there was an age limit.

Mary Hobart said no, she had a seven year old in a class. This is a great thing for middle or high school students who need community service.

Chairperson Adil thanked Mary for doing this and for her continued generosity to the Town.

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

Councilor Walsh moved **"TO REFER THE REQUEST TO PURCHASE TOWN PROPERTY ABUTTING 57 BARSTOW DRIVE TO THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FOR A REVIEW AND REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH 8-24 OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that there is a small piece of Town owned property abutting 5 Barstow Drive that the owner has been using for a pool retaining wall and shed. The property line ends about ten feet short of the existing fence. There have been some complaints about this and the Town researched the issue. It is Town property but is not a part of Wintergreen Woods. Wintergreen Woods has deed restrictions on it.

Unapproved

Chairperson Adil asked how the Town would determine what the parcel is worth.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Assessor would go out and appraise the property once it goes through Planning and Zoning. Town Attorney fees are also charged to the person.

Councilor Console asked if the property lines were passed down in the deed.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she is sure it was, but the previous owner was using the property, too.

Councilor Walsh said that after this goes to the Planning and Zoning for a review, the Town Council should dedicate the rest of the area as parkland.

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

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TRANSFER OF \$50,000 FROM THE CONTINGENCY ACCOUNT 1910 59250 TO THE PHYSICAL SERVICES ACCOUNT 1457559 53340 FOR THE PURCHASE OF SALT”** seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that these storms on the past weekend have most likely taken the Town over in the salary accounts. There is \$308,680 still left in the Contingency Account. There is a shortage of snow materials in the State. The salt is coming in from Providence. There is a freeze on all spending over \$1,000. Part of the freeze is so the Town can fund issues like this. Hopefully, in April if everything looks good, she can release some of the freeze amounts. This authorization is for materials only tonight.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that he remembered a discussion during the budget about a different product that could be put down that may be less expensive.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she would check with the Director of Public Works and put the information in the Management Report. She believes that there were environmental concerns with that product. Also, new truck beds would be needed with the other product and that would be extremely expensive.

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

BIDS

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT’S LOW BIDDER, WARNOCK AUTOMOTIVE, INC. DBA WARNOCK FLEET, FOR FOUR POLICE CRUISERS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$92,940”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that in this year’s budget, there are four police vehicles that need to be replaced. The cruisers to be replaced have 118,000; 110, 000; 101,000; and 95,000 miles

Unapproved

on them. The Town has been replacing four vehicles a year in order to keep the fleet in shape. This is a State contract bid to Warnock, a company the Town has used before. The bid is a little over what was budgeted but the Police Department saved some money on the Animal Control Van. The Police Chief is at the meeting to answer any questions.

Councilor Console asked if the vehicles are set up as police cruisers.

Jim Cetran, Police Chief, said yes they are.

Councilor Console asked where the cruisers would go.

Jim Cetran, Police Chief, said that they would go to administration first and then to patrol. Once the cruiser hits the line, the Town only gets about a year and a half out of it. This way a car can be used for three or four years. Some Towns do the same thing that Wethersfield does. This system works well for the Town. The cars are turned over to Patrol with less than 20,000 miles on them. The car is still new. A light bar and the police markings are added before it is given to Patrol.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked if the State bid process has looked into hybrid vehicles or other vehicles that could address the issue of fuel savings.

Jim Cetran, Police Chief, said not with the Police packages at this time.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that speaking from her own experience, the Town of Berlin went to natural gas vehicles and there is just not the power that the Police need if there is a chase. Berlin got a very good deal through the State for the vehicles but they had to be given away. She said that she hoped something would be able to be used for other Town vehicles that are energy efficient.

Councilor Walsh said that one of the vehicles has other options. Are those options necessary?

Jim Cetran, Police Chief said that all of the vehicles should be equipped but because the bid came in higher, some of the equipment is not being installed on all cars.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that if there are savings in this year's Police Budget, would that be able to carry over to next year?

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the operating budget would not be carried over. She said she can carry over CNEF and one time Capital expenses.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that he is thinking about the exercise that the Town Council will be taking part in shortly. If the Town was looking at a \$100,000 line item now and say in light of the budget and future budgets if the money wasn't spent at this time, would the money be available for the Town as the Town Council looks at cuts.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that CNEF stays. If the Town purchased a car that was

Unapproved

\$4,000 less than the Town thought, the \$4,000 goes into a fund balance into the CNEF and that money could be used the following year for another CNEF item. CNEF is 99 percent vehicle purchases.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that the Town Council is going to be dealing with budget issues shortly. He wonders if this is one of the items that would give the Town Council some capacity to reign in some big numbers. If this passes tonight, the budget is spent.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that CNEF will only help CNEF for future vehicle purchases. A lot of the Capital Budget items have been frozen now. If those moneys aren't spent and there is a reserve there, the money can be used for future Capital expenses.

Councilor Roberts asked if the Town is changing the cruisers to the black and whites.

Jim Cetran, Police Chief, said yes. Ford stopped making the dark blue. Other Towns are going to the black and white and it makes for a more uniform look for cruisers. It is part of the regionalization theory.

Councilor Console asked what is the additional cost for the installation of the light bars and markings.

Jim Cetran, Police Chief, said that the Police Department makes a request to the Physical Services Department for this work.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she thinks it is about \$2,600 per car but she will have to double check that figure.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

none

MINUTES

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 5, 2009”** seconded by Councilor Walsh.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Cascio abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

Councilor Walsh moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 5, 2009 AT 5:30 P.M. (EXECUTIVE SESSION WITH THE PAR GROUP)”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

Unapproved

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Cascio abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

Councilor Roberts moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 5, 2009 AT 7:00 P.M. WITH THE MDC”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Cascio abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

Councilor Walsh moved **“TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 10, 2009”** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Cascio abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk