

REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 7, 2008

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, January 7, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

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

Absent: Councilors Cascio and Kotkin

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

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, discussed the following:

- Recently Completed Projects/New Businesses - A certificate of occupancy has been issued for the 5th Avenue Motel on the Berlin Turnpike. The former Diamond Pizza on the Silas Deane Highway has reopened as Mangia Pizza and Deli.
- Approved Development Projects Under Construction - One half of the permits issued for Stillman Walk are under construction, some with deposits. In the next few weeks the former Bunker Café should open as the Wild Rover Irish Pub. The Folly Brook Commons project is nearing completion of the first building. Plans have been approved for the use of the space at 943 Silas Deane Highway for a massage therapy business.
- Planning/Design Stage - Comstocke Ferre and Co. has had its application approved by the Historic District Commission for the demolition of the rear portion of the building. The Hartford Hospital plans for expansion are with the Army Corp of Engineers right now. There are a number of concerns that are being addressed. The former Fire House Grill has been issued an interior demolish permit to create a new restaurant called Humphrey's. Lot 4, Progress Drive has an application before Planning and Zoning Commission for a 20,000 square foot medical office building. Soundbridge School on Progress Drive has plans for an expansion this summer to add more classroom space.
- Development/Property Owner Contact - The former Weight Watchers building at 1000 Silas Deane Highway is under contract. The former Porter and Chester School on the corner of Jordan Lane and the Silas Deane Highway is also under contract. The former Amici's Restaurant is in the permitting process to open as another restaurant. A Berlin Turnpike property is also under contract. Lastly, the Fun Zone building is under contract. With the proper permitting process, it should be under construction this year.
- Silas Deane Highway Revitalization Program - The façade program is very successful. To date, the Town has committed funds to 10 businesses in the amount of \$256,212. The Town is waiting to start the streetscape project on the Silas Deane Highway. The contractor has agreed to start the project this spring.
- Other News and Initiatives -
 - Economic Development and Improvement Commission - He thanked all who attended the Salute to Business event. He said it was the largest turnout to date.
 - Tourism - The Horse and Buggy Rides in December were very well received. The rides will continue throughout January on weekends. Rides may continue for the year in a combined effort with the Historical Society. Yesterday, in the Boston Globe, there was an article that focused on the Silas Robbins House.
 - Redevelopment Agency - The Agency is assessing for the future. It will hold a dialogue with the public and make a presentation to Council in the next few months on how it will continue. It is continuing its efforts to obtain grants.
 - Preserve America - The Preserve America Master Plan draft report should be received by late January or early February.
 - Planning and Zoning Commission - The Commission is in the process of reviewing a series of

amendments to its sign regulations.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri thanked the Town Planner for his efforts with the Salute to Business program. He said there are several construction projects that developers have started and then left without completing them. Some properties high on the list, seem to be moving. Can you share what level of confidentiality exists with the developers and the Town? If there is an openness, is there anything that the Town staff and Town Council can do to take part in seeing these projects completed?

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that it is extremely early in the game to be having discussions with some of these developers. He said he has let them know that the Town is willing to talk with them. This offer has not been taken up yet.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that a lot of these developers want confidentiality and do not want to talk to the Town. The Town has to be very sensitive to this issue. Sometimes even the Town Planner does not know who is involved, only that it is a firm from Boston or New York.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that he understands that, but developers who are concerned with confidentiality, under the right confidential scenario, may be willing to express some of the speed bumps that are in the way with the leadership in Town. He said he would like developers that step back from projects to give some feedback to Town Staff, again in a confidential way. He said that he thinks with some of these projects, there are so many tentacles involved getting these projects to move forward. The Town is defining a business friendly approach and needs to get that message to these developers.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that the developers are very cautious about sharing information. He said there is a time and place for those kinds of dialogue.

Chairperson Adil asked what the status was of the overlay zone.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that there are some issues, but it is a priority of the Commission. The Committee will meet again in the next few weeks and will develop a timeline.

Chairperson Adil asked what some of the objections are of the neighbors regarding signs placed at the Little League Field in Mill Woods Park.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that some of the neighbors just don't want to see signs on these properties. Others felt that it is opening up the parks to commercialism and they were concerned about sign content. He reported that the hearing has been kept open until the January 15 meeting.

Chairperson Adil said that he understands that there will be another Boston Globe article on Wednesday that will be more substantive of Wethersfield.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that it is a general article about the community as a place to visit. He is hoping for a full page touting the praises of the Town.

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk took attendance.

Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO ADD TO THE AGENDA APPOINTMENTS"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

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

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **"TO ADD TO THE AGENDA AN ADDITIONAL EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM - PENDING LITIGATION"** seconded by Councilor Forrest.

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

Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO ADD TO THE AGENDA AN UNFINISHED BUSINESS ITEM -**

APPOINTMENT TO THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION" seconded by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, spoke about the signs that were discussed at the Planning and Zoning meeting. He said that there is also discussion on creating screens so neighbors don't see the signs. He said the Town shouldn't spend more money for the screens. He cautioned that if the Town allows signs on one place, before long they will be all over. He said he read that the Redevelopment Agency is still discussing why the bond referendum failed. He said that to have a survey done would be expensive. The Public spoke and this is a dead issue. The time of Town staff and copies all cost money.

Lee Sekas, 117 Wells Road, said that he is speaking about the sidewalk situation in Town, particularly at the intersection at the Silas Deane Highway and Mill Street. Two years ago there was an article about the snow on sidewalks. If the Town wants the Silas Deane Highway to be business friendly, the Town needs to maintain the accessibility of the sidewalks. He made several telephone calls and to date nothing was cleared at that intersection. One of his suggestions was having shoveling done as a civics project by high school students.

Chairperson Adil asked the Town Manager to look into these concerns.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that this was the first she heard of these problems. She said she would follow up.

Edward Teval, 894 Ridge Road, said that he did not think that the Redevelopment Agency meeting was well attended. The meeting was held in a small room so the Agency does not plan on many people attending the meetings. People oppose the Redevelopment Agency because it duplicates the Town Planner's job.

COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Councilor Forrest said that at the last meeting of the Youth Advisory Board he learned that the Town was awarded a grant in the amount of \$90,000 for an after school programs, the summer youth program and other youth programs. It will serve the youth of Wethersfield well. The Youth Conversation with Newington and Rocky Hill is ongoing. There will be a meeting on January 16th at 5:00 p.m. in Newington. It is a community conversation and all are welcome. He said that it is also prom dress time. The Prom Dress Shop is looking for donations of gently worn prom dresses for the upcoming year. Donations can be made to the office at the High School. The names of those donating dresses will be entered in a raffle.

Councilor Walsh said that the Redevelopment Agency met on January 2nd and was not as well attended as previous meetings. The Agency is continuing to work on ways to increase public support. The Agency is discussing more outreach with different groups in the community and is also entertaining the idea of a survey. The Capital Improvements Advisory Council met and will have meetings in January and February.

Chairperson Adil asked if the survey is not about trying to figure out why the referendum didn't pass, but as much as where the public feels the Town should be.

Councilor Walsh said that everyone has a good idea of why the referendum failed, now the Town has to come up with a package that can be supported.

Councilor Hemmann said that the Infrastructure Committee met and is working on the issues on Morrison Avenue. One resident is concerned with how information is being received. He felt that the residents' questions were not taken seriously and they felt that they were of significant more importance.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that the Town Hall/Library Building Committee met. The Committee said that the

Town is at the 45 percent mark for the completion of phase II. The project is on time as of today for the June completion. There was an additional unforeseen element that has been addressed regarding the footings that were not in the drawings. There were some rubble areas as opposed to core footings that the contractors were not aware of until they opened up the walls. That is being addressed. They are drilling through the outside wall and adding some additional support to the lower floor. That work should be completed in the next three weeks and should not cause any delays. It will create some costs. The contractors are doing a great job with communicating with the Building Committee.

Chairperson Adil said that there was a Rules and Procedures Committee meeting tonight. Former members of the Board of Ethics presented a comprehensive talk on the changes that the Board has recommended. The Committee will meet once more and then make a recommendation to the Town Council.

Councilor Roberts said that on January 19th the Irish Parade Committee will be holding its annual Irish Dinner. The Town will be honoring Larry and Mary Spellacy. They have worked hard for the Town. Tickets are \$25.00 per person and can be purchased from Brendan Hallisey, John McAuliffe, Dorcas McHugh, or herself.

Chairperson Adil said that he regrets he will not be able to attend.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that on January 17th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. the Library will be hosting an expansion celebration for the area that has been reopened. The Friends of the Library are sponsoring it.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **"TO APPOINT MICHAEL J. DICIOCCIO TO THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMITTEE FOR A TERM FROM 1/7/08 TO 6/30/09"** seconded by Councilor Walsh.

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

Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO APPOINT CHRISTOPHER J. NOVAK TO THE CLEAN ENERGY COMMITTEE FOR A TERM FROM 1/7/08 TO 6/30/09"** seconded by Councilor Console.

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

Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO APPOINT GERALDINE MUNROE AS A FULL MEMBER TO THE TOURISM COMMISSION FOR A TERM FROM 1/7/08 TO 6/30/08"** seconded by Councilor Console.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO APPOINT GEORGE OICKLE AS A FULL MEMBER OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FOR A TERM FROM 1/7/08 TO 6/30/09 AND DAVID L. DRAKE AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FOR A TERM FROM 1/7/08 TO 6/30/09"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved **"TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT IF AWARDED, TWO CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CULTURE AND TOURISM GRANTS, ONE FOR BILLBOARD ADVERTISING AND ONE FOR A MARKET ACTION PLAN"** seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Town has applied for two grants that just recently came out. They have a very short deadline. The Tourism Commission met with the Town Planner and Assistant to the Manager to get this together quickly. They recommend that the Town Council put in matching dollars for next year's budget, \$12,000, for billboard signs in the New London area and the I-91 corridor from late May to July. The second grant they would like to apply for is a marketing action plan. The Town has plenty of marketing plans and now needs to get them into action. The action plan will cost about \$10,000 and will cost the Town about \$5,000 in a match.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked about the billboard program. He asked if Wethersfield would be specifically mentioned in that billboard.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that the signs would be specific to Wethersfield. In response to Councilor Walsh's question, he said that as part of the grant, they will provide funds for design assistance with a marketing company that has billboard experience. The signs will include the website address.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that the website is working with the Historical District on its theme. He asked if that would be tied into the signs.

Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, said that the community will be promoted as a place to visit.

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

Councilor Roberts moved **"TO TABLE THE APPOINTMENTS TO THE WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL AND ALFRED HANMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE"** seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Councilor Roberts said that a list was submitted for consideration made up of paid staff members and that has not been who the Town Council usually appoints to such a committee.

Chairperson Adil asked that anyone who would like to serve on this committee should contact him or the Town Manager. There will be seven members on the Committee, three from the minority party. The Board of Education Chairperson and he will go over the list before bringing the names back to the Town Council.

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

BIDS

Councilor Walsh moved **"TO APPROVE THE BID FOR AN ATM MACHINE INSTALLATION IN THE TAX OFFICE TO UNIVERSAL MONEY"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the award of the bid was introduced to the former Town Council in October. It was referred to the Budget and Finance Committee regarding how much the employees would have to be involved with the machine and how much service charges are. The motor vehicle tax releases must be paid by certified check or cash. If someone comes to pay it and doesn't have the cash, that person leaves and doesn't always return. The ATM would be installed when the renovations are completed. Universal Money does not charge the Town for this service. There is a service fee of \$2.25 per transaction for someone using the machine. If it does not work out well, it can be removed after a year.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked if there was a contract with a length in it.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that there is a one year contract and the Town must give 30 days notice. The ATM will be located in the tax office and it will be locked after hours.

Chairperson Adil said that there was some concern with security. He asked if that was addressed.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that there are security provisions for the Tax Office in general and there

shouldn't be an issue with the ATM.

Chairperson Adil asked if there are any plans with the renovations for security cameras.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said not that she is aware of.

Chairperson Adil asked the Deputy Mayor to bring that idea to the Building Committee and get a price on the installation of security cameras in Town Hall.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None

MINUTES

Councilor Forrest moved "**TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2007**" seconded by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

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

Councilor Forrest moved "**TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2007**" seconded by Councilor Console.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:42 p.m., Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved "**TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS REAL ESTATE NEGOTIATIONS AND PENDING LITIGATION**" seconded by Councilor Walsh. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0

At 8:49 p.m., Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved "**TO LEAVE EXECUTIVE SESSION**" seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:49 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Hemmann. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL JANUARY 22, 2008