

**REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 18, 2008**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, August 18, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

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

Absent: Councilor Cascio and Hemmann

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.

375th TOWN ANNIVERSARY UPDATE

Paul Courchaine, 481 Main Street, a member of the 375th Town Anniversary Committee, said that this is a very hard working committee. He named the Committee members. He said that the Historical Society has put together a wonderful book on the history of Wethersfield. The Committee has also put together tote bags with the red onion on them. He handed out a list of events that would incorporate the 375th Anniversary theme starting with the New Year's Eve dance. He listed other events that would include the anniversary theme. There will be fireworks planned for July and a parade on September 26, 2009. The Committee needs to begin looking for lineups for the Parade if a significant number is wanted. Some of the groups are not inexpensive. Again, all of the events that the Town usually holds will incorporate the anniversary theme.

Councilor Walsh thanked the Committee for its work and enthusiasm. It will be a very special anniversary.

Chairperson Adil said that he sees that Witches of Black Bird Pond will be incorporated into the celebrations. He asked if the Committee has approached the high school or teen theater about performing one of Tom Tryon's plays. It would be great if it could be adapted.

Councilor Roberts asked where funding for events will come from, the budget or through some fundraising efforts.

Paul Courchaine said that the Committee has discussed fundraising for the Parade. Other events will be funded by the organizations involved.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Town Council allocated a significant amount of funding for the celebrations. She said that she will give the Committee an exact figure but it is between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

Geraldine Munroe, 855 Ridge Road, said she would like to have all of the information on the website as soon as possible so that she can get the word out.

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Chairperson Adil said that Ms. Munroe represents the Tourism Commission.

Paul Courchaine said that the budget amount is significant but some of the groups for the Parade charge a significant fee.

Councilor Roberts said that bands charge \$700 to \$1,000 each.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that Peter Gillespie, Town Planner, is on vacation. She highlighted the following economic development report:

MONTHLY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESSES

Liberty Bank – 171 Silas Deane Highway (Former TD Banknorth)

Renovation of this space is nearing completion and a grand opening was held on August 18.

National Health Care – 850 Silas Deane Highway

A Certificate of Occupancy will be issued soon for the renovation of this space.

580 Silas Deane Highway – The Boiler Room (Former Wild Rover Restaurant and Pub)

Has reopened as The Boiler Room.

APPROVED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS/UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Former Fire House Grill – 1151 Silas Deane Highway – Humphrey’s Restaurant

An interior demolition permit has been issued to conduct some interior work to this building. An application has been approved by Design Review and a building permit application has been approved. Construction is now underway.

Nathan Hale Apartments, AHEPA, Inc. – Elderly Housing Project – 1532 Berlin Turnpike

An application was approved by the ZBA and the PZC to permit the construction of an addition to the existing building to accommodate 42 additional units. A building permit has been approved. The project was delayed as additional State funds were pursued to cover budget overruns. A Certificate of Occupancy is anticipated shortly. There have been a number of construction issues with the project and until these are resolved, no temporary certificate of occupancies can be given.

Former Amici’s Restaurant – Pal’s Pub – 672 Silas Deane Highway

Approval has been granted for the renovation of this building and for the use of an outdoor patio for a new restaurant/café in this building. Construction is now underway. A Certificate of Occupancy is anticipated next month.

Town Line Road – KFC/Hines Sudden Service

The PZC has approved plans for the demolition and reconstruction of buildings on this site to accommodate 2 new buildings, a new restaurant and larger office building. Construction is now underway.

Lot 4 Progress Drive – Office Building

A PZC application and plans were approved for site plan approval for the construction of a 2 story medical office building at this site. The building is roughly 20,000 s.f. and will be known as the Connecticut Center For Cosmetic Enhancement and Young Pharmaceuticals.

Progress Drive – CREC – Soundbridge School

On April 1 the PZC approved plans for an expansion to the school which would double the size of the building. Building permits have been taken out for this project and work is underway.

280 Main Street – Massage Therapy and Wellness Center

Interior renovations are underway to renovate this space.

54 Beaver Road – Dog Grooming Business

Interior improvements are planned.

UNDER PERMIT REVIEW

Cottone Field – Sports Lighting

At their August 5 PZC meeting plans were approved to install sports lighting at Cottone Field.

1260 Silas Deane Highway – Hartford Hospital

At the August 5 PZC meeting, revised plans that include an expansion of 13,000 s.f. to the existing building and parking lots to accommodate the growing needs of this medical facility were approved.

322 - 334 Silas Deane Highway – Zone Change

A zone change has been approved to rezone various properties located north of Nott Street on the east side of the Highway as recommended in the Silas Deane Highway Master Plan.

295 Ridge Road – Church Homes – Assisted Living

A Certificate of Occupancy has been issued for the renovation of this building to accommodate 13 condominium units. A preliminary plan has been submitted for the second phase of this project which would change the approved plans and include an assisted living facility. At the August 5 PZC meeting a zoning regulation amendment application was approved that would permit assisted living in this zone.

411 Hartford Avenue – Buck Arts Academy

Plans have been submitted to the Historic District Commission for demolition and renovation to the barns on this property to accommodate an arts academy.

DEVELOPER/PROPERTY OWNER/REALTOR CONTACT

- **Comstock Ferre and Co. – Main Street**

We have been approached by a new interested party working on plans for this property. Negotiations are underway and no plans have been submitted yet.

- Discussed conceptual plans and site improvements with an engineer representing a Silas Deane Highway shopping center.
- Discussed possible purchase of Silas Deane Highway Shopping Center property.

SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

- Work continues to progress on the Church Street streetscape project as paver sidewalks, ornamental walls and stairs are constructed. Street lights have now also been installed.
- A draft mixed use zoning regulation is presently being reviewed by a subcommittee consisting of representatives from Design Review, PZC and the Redevelopment Agency.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- Continue to meet with property owners interested in the façade program. Have committed funds to 10 business/property owners to date totaling \$256,212. One closing was held in July and two additional closings are planned in the next few weeks.
- The Town Manager has signed a STEAP contract for an additional \$200,000 to be used for properties in Old Wethersfield and the Berlin Turnpike. We will be sending out a mailing to property owners to promote the program.

OTHER NEWS AND INITIATIVES

Economic Development and Improvement Commission

- Continue to work with Keiler Inc. on marketing and promotion of the Town.
- The Commission has initiated a process to review and revise the 2001 Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- Several members are working with the Tourism Commission to organize a Farmers Market.
- On July 30 staff participated in a webcast entitled “Executing Your Retail Marketing Strategy and Achieving Results”.
- Continue to administer façade improvement programs.

Tourism

- We continue to work with Allegra Farms from East Haddam to operate the Horse and Carriage rides in Old Wethersfield through our recent State grant. The effort has been very successful and we intend to continue to operate this program throughout the rest of the year on select weekends. Rides have been held in July and the hours have been adjusted to later in the day to avoid the heat of the day. A heavier schedule of rides is planned throughout the fall.
- The three Historic Wethersfield billboards have been installed on I-95 and I-91 in the New Haven area. The effective circulation of each site is over 90,000 adults/day.
- The Commission has signed up with both the Connecticut and Massachusetts versions of the Staycation programs to encourage local residents to visit attractions closer to home this summer and fall. We will be tallying web site hits in response to this new initiative.
- The Commission has recently coordinated a discount coupon program with local merchants and is making it available through the Staycation program.
- Working with Chairman on Annual Report for Council.
- Coordinated meeting with Old Wethersfield Stakeholders to communicate ongoing efforts amongst all groups. Will continue with regular schedule of meetings into the future.

Redevelopment Agency

- The Agency continues to meet with property owners to discuss potential for redevelopment opportunities and partnerships.
- The Agency is working on plans for the second community forum to be held in the Fall. Tentative date is October 15.

Preserve America

- A public hearing on the draft plan was held on May 20th and the Committee is waiting for revisions to the plan based upon the public comments. It is anticipated that the revised draft will be presented to the Council in September.
- We have heard that we have been awarded \$90,000 to be used for a wayfinding signage program. We will shortly begin a process to review and detail the final design and locations with the various stakeholders.
- We have been advised that the State will be awarding an additional \$115,000 towards the gateway project. We are working on plans in anticipation of putting the project out to bid in the near future.

Meeting/Event Schedule August

Aug 5	PZC 7:00 pm
Aug 11	EDIC 12 noon
Aug 13	Redevelopment 4:00 p.m.
Aug 20	DRAC 6:30 p.m.
Aug 26	Tourism 5:30 pm
Aug 27	Redevelopment 4 pm

Chairperson Adil said that Liberty Bank has a program for new home purchases that will give a 3.5 percent interest rate on a 30 year mortgage. The bank has also donated \$5,000, \$1,000 each to the Library, Social Services Department, Park and Recreation Department, Historical Society, and the Keane 9/11 Memorial project.

Councilor Console asked what was going on with Humphrey's Restaurant.

Bonnie Therrien said that they have their permits but the work is taking a long time.

Chairperson Adil said that the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the lights for Cottone Field at its last meeting. He asked what the next step would be in the process.

Bonnie Therrien said that she does not have the State grant paperwork yet. She said that she does not expect the lighting project to be completed this fall.

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, took attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS**HEARINGS****ORDINANCE FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE RENUMBERED 2008 CODE****RESOLUTION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY**

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**AND THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD, LOCATED IN DEMHS REGION 3,
REGARDING STATE USE OF FUNDING GRANTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY**

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING AN APPLICATION TO THE STATE OF
CONNECTICUT TO OBTAIN LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
FUNDS TO RECONSTRUCT A PORTION OF MIDDLETOWN AVENUE FROM
SPRING STREET NORTH TO BROAD STREET ABOUT 1500 FEET**

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING CAPITOL REGION PRE-DISASTER NATURAL
HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

**RESOLUTION APPROVING REVISED TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD VOLUNTEER
FIREFIGHTER PENSION PLAN**

**ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE I, SECTION 139 - REMOVAL OF
OBSTRUCTIONS**

No one wished to be heard and Chairperson Adil declared the Hearings closed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Robert Young, 21 Coppermill Road, said that he was surprised to see the fire truck purchase and that there was no discussion by the public on the purchase. He assumes that was the strategy of the Town Council. He said that some time ago, he gave the Town Council a spreadsheet with his analysis on the Board of Education's budget figures. He made a presentation on his analysis. At the next meeting, Councilor Forrest made accusations that his analysis was erroneous and coached. He resents that implication. He asked Councilor Forrest to explain some of his comments but got little response back from him. The Town Council took away the rights of the public to speak at the end of a Council meeting, because there are other ways to communicate with the public. The way Councilor Forrest handled this situation shows that the Town Council doesn't communicate with the citizens.

Chairperson Adil asked that Mr. Young refrain from insulting Town Councilors.

Robert Young said that the information in his analysis was good, but it was characterized by a public official that it was erroneous. He said that he came to Wethersfield 25 years ago, and his tax bill was \$2,200. That was a lot of money at the time. He said that his taxes went up \$1,600 in 20 years. Over the last five years, his taxes have gone up \$2,900.

Melissa Josefiak, Interim Director of the Wethersfield Historical Society, said that she is joined by Dorene Ciarcia, President of the Historical Society Board. She said that the Society has completed the writing and editing of the new book on the history of Wethersfield. The book contains more than 200 photographs from Wethersfield's recent past. The photographs came from the Society's own collection as well as those from private collections, private citizens, and businesses. Arcadia Publishing has assured the Society that the books will be ready in December. They can be purchased for \$2.00 less than the market price at the Keeney

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Cultural Center gift shop. The Historical Society had a busy summer with its programs and activities. More than 800 people enjoyed the free summer concert series and over 80 children took part in the camp. There will be an exhibit including a 200 year old portrait of Wethersfield's own Lieutenant John Church. The portrait was donated last fall to the Wethersfield Historical Society. The Society has a busy fall planned with the annual craft fair, antique show, and numerous programs. She thanked the Town Council and Town staff for all its help with the renovations of the Keeney Center after the fire last year. The scaffolding has been removed just this week and the lightening rods installed. She said that she appreciates all of the Towns' support for the Historical Society.

Edward Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, said that he likes to think that the Town Council believes in the freedom of speech. It is protecting the Town Councilors, but it is not protecting the public speakers from questions about their integrity and honesty that comes from the Councilors. He said that on May 19th, a Town Councilor said that Mr. Young's comments were erroneous. In three months, there was no comment. It is time for this Town Council to come forth with information. The entire Town Council should not allow a Town Councilor to make a comment about a speaker and not show anything to support the comments. The Town Council has done nothing about it. The Councilor made a public statement and now drops it. How dare the Town Council do this. He said that the Wethersfield Post says that the Town is spending \$700,000 for the Little League field and the lights at the High School and Town funds won't be used. State funds will be used. He said that he pays State and Federal taxes.

At 8:10 p.m., Councilor Forrest moved **"TO RECESS THE MEETING FOR A MEDICAL EMERGENCY"** seconded by Deputy Mayor Montinieri.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 p.m., Councilor Roberts 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

*Approved by vote of Council
September 2, 2008*