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**SPECIAL MEETING
OCTOBER 6, 2008**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Monday, October 6, 2008 at 5:30 p.m. in at the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School, Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present from Council: Councilors Cascio, Console, Forrest, Kotkin, Roberts, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Montinieri and Chairperson Adil

Absent from Council: Councilor Hemmann

Present from Board of Education: Gina DeAngelo, Marie Massaro, Michael McKenna, Raul Rodriguez, Penny Stanziale, Vice Chairperson Julie Montinieri, and Chairperson Stacey Hodges

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, Michael Kolhagen, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Negroni, Mr. Moore, Mr. Bushey and Ms. Clancy, Glenn Yeakel from Friar Associates and Mr. Arcari, Mr. McIlveeh and Mr. Dewey of Quisenberry Arcari Architects.

Chairperson Adil welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked that members of the Board of Education and Town Council hold questions until the end of the presentations. He said that he hopes there will be time at the end of the meeting for public questions.

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, took attendance.

REPORT FROM THE ARCHITECTS ON THE HANMER SCHOOL PROJECT (FRIAR ASSOCIATES, INC.)

Glenn Yeakel said that over the past six weeks the design team has been working on the Hanmer School project. He presented the proposed site plan and proposed floor plan (*see attachment 1*).

Bruce Dalkowski presented the Sustainable Energy Technologies of the report (*see attachment 1*). He said that about 30 percent of the energy costs for the school can be reduced by implementing some of these technologies.

They discussed State reimbursement and proposed plan slides (*see attachment 1*). He concluded by saying that this was a very quick snapshot of the programming, educational pieces of the building, mechanical/electrical/plumbing aspects of the building, and the technology of the renewable energies.

Councilor Kotkin asked why the State standard in the eligibility area is so different from where the Town is going to end up.

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Mr. Yeakel said that the State has not changed the standards in 25 years, although the educational requirements have changed. Essentially, what happens is that Towns cheat here and just to get the programs in. The reality is that the buildings don't meet the educational needs of the students. There is the possibility of a waiver granted by the State, but that takes a ruling by the Commissioner of Education.

Councilor Kotkin asked what would happen if there were more students in the school and more classrooms to accommodate more children.

Mr. Yeakel said more students in a classroom would bring the overall number of students up. Adding another classroom adds to the square footage and doesn't really help the cost.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked why the Town doesn't back into the numbers. The future growth number puts it at 397 which would accommodate a State building area of 52,000 square feet. If the Town uses the 52,000 square feet number that the State accommodates, using the \$300 per square foot cost, it would take the project down to \$17,000,000 with the State reimbursement at 50 percent. It would reduce the Town obligation notably. He asked why the Town isn't working within the parameters of the 50 percent reimbursement.

Mr. Yeakel said that they looked at a number of options with the floor plans and the educational programming and it can't be done without making substantial sacrifices to the overall educational programming.

Councilor Console said that there are ineligible costs renovating as new or as a standard alternate. In both of those scenarios, who is responsible for those payments of ineligible costs?

Mr. Yeakel said all the ineligible costs are the Town's responsibility. The Town's share includes the ineligibles.

REPORT FROM THE ARCHITECTS ON THE HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT (QUISENBERRY ARCARI)

Mr. Arcari presented the report, Additions and Alterations for Wethersfield High School (*see attachment 2*). The science area of the building was given specific attention as new requirements will be implemented. The existing media center would become additional science space and a new media center would be built on the second floor. The second major change would be to create an auditorium separate from the existing building. It will allow for the expansion of the arts. Replacement and maintenance items are not eligible for State reimbursement.

Mr. Dewey presented the report, Probable Estimate of Project Cost (Limited Scope Alterations), Probable Estimate of Project Cost (Renovate as New), and Projected Energy Incentives (*see attachment 3*).

Mr. Dewey said that on the Limited Scope Alterations handout there is \$48,547,000 including soft costs, the percentage used is 37.36 or 41.36 and that is just a basic renovated new comparison so both of those, depending on a final scenario of the renovation work, could add to the costs associated to the Town. For example, the \$48,547,000 Limited Scope Alterations just taking the reduced percentage rate, the cost to the Town will be 30.4%. There are items that are not eligible for reimbursement. He said that he is doing everything to maximize the work at the renovation for reimbursement by the State. The cost to the Town may end up going up. The Renovate as New Plan is the same square footage, but every single room would be completely renovated. In the other plan, some of the rooms would only receive heating upgrades and some data upgrades. There will not be reimbursement for all of the seats in the auditorium. It is based on the enrollment numbers. The incentive is there to go forward with this project.

Councilor Cascio said that he is disappointed with the area of the physical education component and the gymnasium. At one of the Shared Services Meeting, there was mention of the gymnasium area being an addition to the existing facility because of the use of the building. When that building is used, it is very crowded and he questioned the safety. He said that this new auditorium was not on the plans that he saw during the Shared Services Meeting.

Mr. Dewey said that there is a line item for the addition of a gymnasium. There were many questions about whether the proposal should be a field house or another gymnasium.

Councilor Cascio said these same questions came up in the 1980's with the previous renovation and that was why the gymnasium was not renovated then. He said in Shared Services he mentioned that the Town will never see the gymnasium come up to speed or renovated again in his lifetime. The gymnasium does not house two school teams, cheerleaders, parents, and students at the same time. When an activity is going on, it is not appropriate. A redo will not solve the problems that face the community.

David Drake, Building Committee Vice Chairperson, said that the new gymnasium is item 12 on Hard Costs – Construction. He said that the Committee is here tonight to get the Town Council's feedback about items.

Councilor Cascio said that when he left the Shared Services Committee meeting, he thought that the gymnasium was in the plan and he thought it would be part of the presentation tonight.

Stacy Hodges, Chairperson of the Board of Education, asked what the proposed gymnasium would include.

Mr. Dewey stated that at this point the price of the gymnasium includes a high school regulation basketball court and seating for at least 600 people. The biggest issue now is there is not a lot of sideline space. There is not a lot of space to renovate the existing space differently.

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Christine Fortunato, Chairperson of the Building Committee, reminded the elected officials that the Building Committee was asked to follow up on the study that had been done in 2006 about the needs of the building. Additional alterations are being presented. As the Town goes through the exercise of putting numbers together for a renovated school, in the 2006 study that was done the additional gymnasium was not included in the plan presented. There are core goals that are being strived for: science, civil rights violation enhancements and energy. There are goals that the Committee is working to meet. If the Town Council wants to discuss the funding or add an item, it that can be done and the projected cost can be computed.

Chairperson Adil said that because of the time constraints at the meeting, he would like to see the presentations made and questions answered at a future workshop after the information is digested.

REPORT FROM ATTORNEY JENNIFER JANELLE ON ENERGY GRANTS/REIMBURSEMENT

Jennifer Janelle said that she would read from her Wethersfield High School handout saying that the information was also accurate for Hanmer School. She discussed what the Town was eligible for, but not exact dollar amounts as they would change depending on the size of the installation and how it would operate in the building. She cautioned the Town against chasing dollars, but rather have the architects look at what applications will really work for the building. She also said that many times, Town Building Committees look at out of the box capital costs and not long term operating costs. The Town will be paying for the operation of the building for over 30 years. The designer needs to evaluate the energy improvements of the building. The energy costs have skyrocketed in previous years and will continue to increase. Right now, the State of Connecticut will throw money at a Town to make it more energy efficient. The Town should take advantage of it. It will save millions of dollars to the taxpayers. She presented the attached reports of Hanmer Elementary School and Wethersfield High School Energy Grants/Reimbursement. (*see attachment 4*). She said that she would run actual numbers after working with the design professionals and as they further refine the fit for the building. It will include the capital costs and also the long term operating savings.

David Drake, Vice Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that he would like to clarify that the Connecticut Energy Fund will pay for windows and controls, the difference between the good ones and the lousy ones.

Jennifer Janelle said that it would depend on the funding the Town goes through. It will pay for lighting, dimmers, sensors, and controls. They don't pay anything on windows. Windows, if part of an integrated project for energy opportunities to evaluate the entire building envelope, then there is a kicker for windows.

David Drake said that he wants to reiterate that it only pays for the difference.

Councilor Forrest said [under number 3—Photovoltaic's] he was curious about the lump sum 15 year payment that was attached to the energy credit. Could the Town go above the \$850,000?

Jennifer Janelle said that the renewable energy credit does not effect the \$850,000 limitation. It is a separate payment that the Town takes upfront and is not affected by it.

REFERENDUM TIMELINE AND DOLLAR ALLOCATION FOR EACH PROJECT

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the original timeline (*see attachment 5*) is in the Fireside Chat packet. The intent is to get this referendum done this fiscal year because there is a fear that the State will change the reimbursement rates. All of the paperwork will need to be in by June 30th. A lot needs to be done to have a February 10th referendum. The Superintendent would like to move the referendum date, three or four weeks. The problem is if the referendum fails and there needs to be some changes, the Town Council only has a very small amount of time to make the changes and get a new date, sixty days ahead and still make the June 30th deadline. The timeline presented tonight is based on future Town Council and Board of Education meetings. To change the date, there will have to be many special meetings. The Town Council needs to decide whether to stick to this timeline and have special meetings or change the date and revise the entire timeline. Whichever date is picked, the Registrar of Voters would like one polling place. There are dollar allocations for each project and she and the Finance Director will work with Webster Bank for model debt plans, so that the Town Council will see what this will look like in the debt scenario.

Councilor Forrest asked if the Town locks into the State reimbursement at the time the referendum is passed.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she believes the lock in is when all of the paperwork (EDO-40) is into the State. It will take a couple of months to get that paperwork together and it should be submitted to the State in June. The timeline is so tight.

Councilor Kotkin said that the money the Town would get for energy efficiency improvements, in no instance would that be a cause of a reduction of the traditional funds.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that when the Town goes out to bond, it goes out for the entire amount including the reimbursement from the State. In the bond ordinance, there will be reference to what that means in terms of grants and State reimbursements. The bonds are for the 100 percent amount.

Councilor Kotkin said that if the Town ends up with a \$20,000,000 project and the reimbursement for energy efficiency is \$500,000, the amount that the Town would get from the State for the traditional rate would in no way be reduced, because the Town is getting a certain amount returned. Any of that would be added to the amount by the State.

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Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she believes that is correct.

Jennifer Janelle said each item is put into the State. So if the Town has an energy project for \$100,000 and the Town gets \$50,000 in grant money, the \$50,000 is off the top and the Town puts in for the other \$50,000 for the State to reimburse half. The Town is paying \$25,000 for a \$100,000 project.

Councilor Kotkin said that it is pretty difficult to get 100 percent funding for energy projects but the Town may get something pretty high and certainly no energy efficiency money for non-energy related projects.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that he would like a clarification in the timeline. What is it about the timeline and compressing it? Is the Town already behind? She inferred that there was an issue with maintaining the existing timeline. What is that issue?

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that according to the timeline, the Building Committee has to finalize their recommendations that go to the Board of Education tomorrow night. The Town Council still hasn't made decisions. The architects are working diligently, but still have things up in the air. The Town is behind and may be able to make it up with a number of special meetings.

David Drake, Vice Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that the Committee needs to know if the projects can go forward in their entirety or if things need to be picked out in order to be at an amount that the Town can be sold at. The Building Committee needs that direction.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked when the Building Committee needs that response from the Town Council.

Christine Fortunato, Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that honestly the Committee doesn't want the Town Council to rush into the decision. The sketches brought to the Town Council are what is being moved forward. The Committee is checking in with the Town Council tonight for feedback. The Committee is here to advise the Town Council and give it information, but rest assured that the Committee has done its due diligence on this project.

David Drake, Vice Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that the Town Council has two weeks to make recommendations. The energy projects can also be stand alone questions if the Town Council wanted to move that way.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said he appreciates the timeline and realizes that the Town is being pressed into a timeline but it seems to me that the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools would be desperate for public input. He urged consideration of that point. As elected officials, to suggest that with no public input the Town Council could make an intelligent stab at this and make an attempt at throwing this out for public fodder. The reaction by the public will

be woe. The numbers will double in two years time. The public needs to have a reaction to this and get a balance on this.

David Drake, Vice Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that for the Wethersfield High School renovation, the Town Council needs to have discussions with the Board of Education in terms of priorities.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that there have already been discussions on some issues. The High School number is overwhelming. The Town needs that public input and he is looking to the Board of Education and Superintendent for figuring out a way to get that in a reasonably prompt fashion.

Michael Kohlhagen, Superintendent of Schools, thanked the Building Committee for working so hard on these projects. He said that there is funding available for these projects. The timeline needs to be considered. A year ago these discussions started. He highlighted the handout entitled Examining Potential Building Projects (*see attachment 6*).

Chairperson Adil thanked the Superintendent for his work on these projects.

QUESTIONS AND WRAP UP

Councilor Forrest asked what was the timeline for seeing actual operating budget numbers and payback timeframes.

Michael Kohlhagen, Superintendent of Schools, said that his staff is entering those things into the cost models now and are looking at current operating budgets and square footages of the buildings. The reductions will be seen in the operating budget down the road. He said that there will have to be several more discussions on these projects and the additional three weeks may buy him time to have those additional conversations with large groups. This is only pre-referendum work. The plans tonight are not the final plans. The costs are the strongest estimates, so that the Town can move forward with a decision to implement part or whole of the projects. Also, there is a public hearing that will serve as a culminating event.

Chairperson Adil asked when the Town Council should act on the question of whether the Town Council should extend the timeline.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the decision needs to be made no later than the next regular Town Council meeting. It would be better if it could be done faster.

Chairperson Adil asked Town Councilors if a Special Meeting could be held.

Stacey Hodges, Chairperson of the Board of Education, asked about the State reimbursement.

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Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the reimbursement is actually when the Town goes out to bond. With a project like this, the Town may sell notes first and not go out to bond for awhile. The notes will be locked in as soon as the bids go out for them. Afterwards, the Town will take the notes and sell them as long term bonds on the Municipal Bond Market. Right now the market is horrible.

Stacey Hodges, Chairperson of the Board of Education, asked what that timeframe looks like if the Town is on track.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that if the Town sells all the bonds at once, that is a lot of money, the Town is probably looking at selling notes around 2009/2010. It would depend on the revenue flow. There are other bonds out there, too.

Councilor Kotkin said that that there is a lot of potential State money on the table. It seems to him that by having the architects at Hanmer go back and by decreasing the amount of administrative space and increasing the classrooms of the children, the Town could potentially get more State reimbursement.

Chairperson Adil said that he would like to add to the Deputy Mayor's comments about getting public feedback. People are very nervous about money now. He said that the Town needs to get reasonable assurance of the plans' passage.

Christine Fortunato, Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that this decision is very long term. It is a very difficult financial time, but several years from now this will be that much harder. The Committee worked diligently to bring information forward including energy efficiencies. Any opportunity there is to talk to PTA's to get the education goals out will be done. She said that she is more than happy to have the architects come to a meeting for the public.

Chairperson Adil said that the Town Manager is available to talk to the public via telephone or e-mail. The Town Council, Board of Education, and Superintendent of Schools can all be reached via e-mail as well.

David Drake, Vice Chairperson of the Building Committee, said that regarding the square footage question by Councilor Kotkin, the Committee actually asked Glenn what the difference between 62 and 59 and it was less than one percentage.

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ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 p.m., Councilor Forrest moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk