

JANUARY 28, 2006 SPECIAL MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on January 28, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. in the Lower Level of the Board of Education Building, 127 Hartford Avenue.

Present: Councilors Adil, Cascio, Drake, Kirsche, Kotkin, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Fortunato and Chairperson Morin.
Absent: Councilor Forrest.

Board of Education Present: Matthias J. DeAngelo (10:15), Michael F. McKenna, Janis K. Malec, Julie L. Montinieri, Raul A. Rodriguez, Penny Stanziale, Vice-Chairperson Gerri Roberts, and Chairperson Stacey Hodges.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk; Patrick Proctor, Superintendent of Schools; Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance; Moe McCarthy, Supervisor of Maintenance & Operations; Representative Paul Doyle; Senator John Senator Fonfara; and Brian Clement, Chairman, and other members of the Information and Technology Committee.

Meeting with State Legislators - Education Funding

Chairperson Morin explained that Mid-State Consortium meetings are held on a monthly basis and Representative Doyle has been in attendance regularly when discussions regarding additional funding for education are held. Chairperson Morin said that a breakout of the loss of ECS funding for the Town of Wethersfield from 1998/99 - 2005/06 has been provided to all in attendance at today's meeting, and he asked Dr. Proctor to address this. Dr. Proctor explained that if the ECS formula were operating as it was intended to operate, and if it were sufficiently funded, Wethersfield would be receiving additional dollars than is currently the case. He said that because the formula is not operating as it should be, some fifty-five towns, including Wethersfield, have lost dollars instead of receiving them under the standard formula.

Representative Doyle said that he has spoken with Dr. Proctor about this previously and although he does not disagree with Dr. Proctor's rationale, he explained that the net effect is that each year there has been increased State aid; however there is not enough money funded overall. He said that there are always limited State monies and also a continuous fight of the General Assembly for the funding between urban and suburban areas.

Councilor Kotkin verified that the chart depicts the money that would have been received if the ECS formula was fully funded. Dr. Proctor said that the chart depicts the money received if the formula is allowed to operate per the present State Statute. Councilor Kotkin said that it would be helpful on the chart to indicate the percentage and the amount of what Wethersfield actually received.

Chairperson Morin announced that information has been received from the Connecticut Coalition for Justice of Education Funding regarding their lawsuit regarding this issue and he suggested that the Shared Services Committee discuss whether Wethersfield wishes to participate in the lawsuit.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato said that she would like some feedback on the CCJEF's information and she asked Representative Doyle if there has been any further action on the State's part to investigate alternatives. She also asked if the plan is being reviewed for feasibility by anyone involved in the State government, especially with regard to the spending cap.

Representative Doyle stated that there is a Governor appointed Committee currently studying the ECS issues and the spending cap is very important, especially with regard to pending and future litigation.

Senator Fonfara agreed with Representative Doyle and said that Wethersfield is in a unique position in that the Town will benefit from either approach succeeding. He said that he is strongly in favor of the Coalition's initiative and has said that Wethersfield should join it. Senator Fonfara said that Connecticut is currently not measuring up very well in

comparison with the rest of the country as far as education costs for kids goes; therefore, he is hopeful that this effort will prevail forcing Legislators to change the formula.

Ms. Montinieri asked if the State task force is looking into what is occurring with other States' educational funding. Representative Doyle said that the task force will be taking a comprehensive look at all areas, including other States. Ms. Montinieri verified that the mini-conference at the LOB on April 11, 2005 was a group who worked cooperatively with the State legislature and that there was not a lawsuit from this group. She said that the Wethersfield Parent Council would like to see Wethersfield join in the current lawsuit in order to keep this issue on the front burner.

Councilor Drake asked if Wethersfield is in a sense getting "gypped" on the formula with respect to what other towns like Wethersfield are receiving. He said that he would rather pay more locally and have better control over the funding. Dr. Proctor said that there are not enough dollars in the overall funding and there is an issue with how the dollars are being distributed to different towns; therefore Wethersfield is receiving less funding because of these two reasons. Councilor Drake asked if Wethersfield fought for their fair share, would they receive it. Dr. Proctor said that, even if the plan is not fully funded, Wethersfield would receive more money because the distribution would change. He said that Wethersfield is not being intentionally gypped, but rather is not getting all the money they would be getting if the formula were revised.

Representative Doyle said that Wethersfield is part of a class of towns not receiving sufficient funding under this cap scenario.

Senator Fonfara said that the two main topics are who pays and what the formula for distribution is. He said that Wethersfield is not in the same category with wealthier towns in the southwestern area of Connecticut. He said that the lawsuit asks the question of how much the State should be contributing to the education of children throughout the State vs. how much individuals should be contributing. He said that Wethersfield needs to consider how much it stands to gain if the lawsuit were to prevail vs. how much if the Governor's initiative prevails. Senator Fonfara said that the lawsuit will mean many more dollars for Wethersfield.

Mr. Rodriguez said that during the CCJEF presentation the question came up as to what the lawsuit was looking to achieve and the CCJEF Representative stated "I don't know and I don't care". Mr. Rodriguez asked for information to be provided as to how much Wethersfield will gain if they support the lawsuit as opposed to not supporting it. Mr. Rodriguez said that the only two things he sees happening is to increase taxes or take money away from the cities. He said that he's in favor of more funds for education; however he's not in favor of suing the State every time someone doesn't receive funding.

Councilor Cascio said that on the night of the CCJEF presentation, he asked what the guarantee is that Wethersfield will receive additional funding if the lawsuit is successful, and the CCJEF representative did not have an answer. He said that he also asked how many people are currently involved in the suit and a current number could not be provided at that time. Councilor Cascio asked if an amount is currently available. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that her latest information indicates twenty-two towns have signed on. Councilor Cascio asked if any of the twenty-two towns are in Wethersfield's ERG. The Town Manager said that she can obtain this information. Councilor Cascio said that he has concerns about the issue and that it needs to be further researched with another less jaded presenter returning to Wethersfield. He said that, in his opinion, the original presenter's discussion with the Council was very condescending and one-sided. Councilor Cascio said that one of the items to look further into is how long a lawsuit of this nature takes to resolve, since the minimum funding for Wethersfield to participate is \$5,000 per year with a minimum of five years according to the original presenter.

Chairperson Morin asked if there is a timeline for the Governor's study and Senator Fonfara said that he imagines there'd be a report during this session, but that he is not sure. Chairperson Morin said that he did not get the feeling from the Council at the previous presentation that there was anywhere near a consensus to join in the lawsuit at that time. He suggested that this issue continue to be monitored, possibly through Shared Services, and that the Town Manager keep the Council up to date on any changes.

Councilor Walsh asked if the ECS funds are tied to any specific State mandates. Dr. Proctor said that they are not directly tied to any mandates. He said that this is foundation funding that comes directly to the Town, for education, in

the form of revenue and that the Town is expected to respond to special education mandates through ECS funding. Councilor Walsh asked if Wethersfield is under funded for special education. Dr. Proctor said that excess cost is funded to approximately 70%-75% of the actual cost. He said that under the Federal Government's IDEA promise to fund special education costs at 40%; this amount is currently being funded at 18%, which results in a loss in Connecticut of approximately \$350 million. Councilor Walsh said that he agrees with Senator Fonfara in that he hates to see the unfunded and under funded mandates being passed down to local communities.

Ms. Roberts said that the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding representative did nothing to sell Wethersfield, and perhaps other towns in the district, on the lawsuit; however, the cost of \$5,000 each year may be worth it for what the Town can gain down the line.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked the State delegation to monitor the issue on the Town's behalf and to periodically provide the Town Manager with any new information, including any comparison between what the State is recommending and what is in the lawsuit.

Representative Doyle said that he will provide information and apologized for Senator Ciotto and Representative Guerrera not being here today as they had a funeral to attend.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien commented to the State legislators that the Town's redevelopment attorney has requested that the State Statute referring to redevelopment be tweaked to clarify the ambiguity regarding revenue bonds.

Update on Shared Services Goals - MUNIS

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that a lot of progress has been made with the MUNIS system through the work of Finance Director Lisa Hancock who presented an update.

Ms. Hancock explained that the MUNIS process of implementation has been underway since October, 2005 and that the chart of accounts is approximately 50% complete with an anticipated completion date of March, 2006. She said that once this is complete, the next step will be to initiate with the project manager the implementation plan which includes several modules. She said that before this can be done, the Board of Education must be up and running on MUNIS, which is currently underway. Ms. Hancock highlighted the modules and the processes within each to be implemented which include General Ledger, Payroll/Personnel, Purchasing, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Fixed Assets, and Printing and Sealing Enhancement. She said that the entire process of implementation can take 1 1/2 to 2 years to complete, with most of it occurring within the first year.

Ms. Hodges said that this is an exciting event for the Town and she thanked the Shared Services Committee for their diligence in working together on this project.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato, as Council liaison to the Shared Services Committee, commented on the diligent work of the staff, in particular Ms. Hancock who provided experienced guidance on the project. Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked the Town Manager to provide information on the financing of the system between the Town and the Board of Education, and how it will play out in the budget.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that there are three scenarios to be discussed in the next week between herself, Dr. Proctor, Ms. Hancock, and Board of Education Business Manager Gary Miller as to the Town/Board of Education breakout of the \$117,000 cost for the system. Ms. Hancock verified that the \$117,000 includes an application service provider.

Councilor Drake said that he is happy to see this going forward as it has been discussed for a long time. He said that he would like to see discussion held in the next two years of the Board of Education and the Town being put together, in terms of financing, as one group.

Chairperson Morin said that anything can be discussed; however, they may or may not be able to be combined due to

a number of reasons.

Ms. Hodges said that first Wethersfield needs to move ahead with the current implementation and then other options can be discussed in the future.

Councilor Cascio suggested that the option to outsource payroll services still be considered.

Update on Shared Services Goals - Infrastructure Database

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that Mo McCarthy and Mike Turner have been working on this ongoing project and have completed the first four listings on the Building Blitz Status list.

Mr. McCarthy said that the project is moving along; however, it is very time consuming to perform the inspections along with other daily business issues. He said that the schedule is currently one to two buildings behind due to scheduling conflicts.

Chairperson Morin said that the report is a living document to provide information for the future as to past conditions of Town facilities.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked if the time needed to input the data is creating a conflict and Mr. McCarthy said that it is the site inspections, which he and Mr. Turner prefer to do themselves, that is creating the time and scheduling conflicts. Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked if there are any members of the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee who are familiar with the Town's facilities and could assist in the site inspections. Mr. McCarthy said that he and Mr. Turner prefer to do the inspections since they are the ones who will appear before the Council to report the findings and answer questions; however at some point someone else could help with the data input. Deputy Mayor Fortunato suggested that external help may be helpful in assisting with the prioritization of data. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will be meeting with CCSU next week on a different topic and she will ask if they can think of anything that an intern could assist the Town with regarding the facilities database.

Councilor Adil said that a lot of the problems during the Town Hall renovation which have caused delays in the project are a result of the lack of both documentation and maintenance, and he sees the development of this database as a wonderful project as it will alleviate these types of problems in future projects.

Mr. McCarthy said that typically, by State law, any time renovations occur there has to be an engineered plan which the Town has done both electronically and on paper.

Board of Education member Matt DeAngelo arrived at this time (10:15).

Councilor Cascio said that the term "priority" needs to be defined in the document, as every building is a priority. Mr. McCarthy said that in the document, "priority" means that a newly renovated building is not a high priority. Councilor Cascio said that this needs to be documented.

Councilor Drake said that the database is a great concept and asked if there will be an additional report that will spell out the maintenance plan for each facility. Mr. McCarthy said that there will be such a plan.

Report from the Information Services Technology Committee - Chief Information Officer

Chairperson Morin introduced Brian Clement, Chairman of the Information and Technology Committee, to provide a Committee update.

Mr. Clement introduced members of the Committee and staff liaisons who were in attendance, and recognized Deputy Mayor Fortunato as the Town Council liaison. Mr. Clement reviewed the mission statement, vision statement, and provided a status update on the Committee's activities since the last Fireside Chat. He said that the status update includes the proposed hiring of a Chief Information Officer (CIO) position to handle technology management town-

wide, and he reviewed the issues and concerns, the benefits, and the responsibilities of the position. Mr. Clement said that ten of Connecticut's 169 towns have shared IT services and he shared the information he received from research conducted by speaking with these ten towns. A copy of Mr. Clement's presentation can be obtained from the Town Manager's Office.

Ms. Montinieri asked Mr. Clement to summarize some of the difficulties and benefits that have occurred in other towns as a result of hiring a Technology CIO. Mr. Clement said that some of the difficulties have been the struggle to make sure that both sides feel that they are being treated fairly, the changing political environment, the consolidation of staff members, multiple unions, customer understanding of responsibilities, prioritization of Board vs. City/Town, navigating dual operational process and procedures, and the decrease in funding. He said that some of the benefits include the consolidation of similar resources, economies of scale from both a resource and purchasing perspective, common platforms, jointly sponsored saving and funding, increased services, and cohesive integrated support for enterprise services. Mr. Clement said that he can provide a written compilation of responses to the Town Manager for distribution.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato commended the members of the Information and Technology Committee for responding to the information she had shared with them. She said that the responsibilities of the proposed CIO position are actually what the Town is currently taking responsibility for in terms of project management and security. Deputy Mayor Fortunato verified that the phasing-in of the position means that the CIO would initially focus on the needs and issues of the Town, and she asked if at that time there would be a mechanism in place for interaction with the school system and library. She also asked Mr. Clement what the time line for the phasing in will be. Mr. Clement said that the Committee is considering three different approaches to this which are to hire now, hire with a phase in, or leave the situation as it currently is; and if a vote were taken at this time, all Committee members would vote to hire someone full-time right now with municipal experience to immediately handle all three areas of the town.

Councilor Adil said that he supports the position and suggested that a wireless system be examined. Mr. Clement said that if the Town can decide on a platform where 95% of the hardware is consistent, they will receive better pricing for hardware, desktop software, outsourcing, and maintenance contracts. Councilor Adil said that some municipalities distribute paperless Council packets, and it would be nice to see Wethersfield move toward this.

Ms. Hodges commented that she appreciates the hard work done by the Information and Technology Committee and expressed her concern that the Board side is adequately serviced. She also said that the Board currently employs a part-time technology staff member and wonders what the phase in of a Technology CIO will mean to this position and the Board's structure. Mr. Clement said that organizational diagrams have been created by the Committee to incorporate the staff currently in place.

Chairperson Morin said that he expects the Superintendent and Town Manager to work together in coordination with the Information and Technology Committee as well as the Shared Services Committee.

Councilor Kotkin said that he would be interested to know how many people are employed on both sides in the technology area, their salaries, and how much money is spent to acquire equipment and licensing agreements. Chairperson Morin said that the information would need to distinguish between equipment used by staff as opposed to that utilized by students.

Councilor Kirsche asked if there are any preliminary savings projections anticipated by centralizing the technology, and asked for any feedback on the opinions of the Committee regarding combining the Town and Board of Education through the MUNIS system. Mr. Clement said that he does not believe there will be any measurable savings associated with hiring a Technology CIO as there will be an additional cost to the salaries and benefits amounts, but the members of the Committee believe that the Town will save money in the long run by doing this by providing more consistent technology to Wethersfield.

Councilor Walsh asked if in their support of hiring a CIO at this time, the Committee considered where the Town is in the MUNIS integration and the benefits of a CIO coming on now as opposed to later. Mr. Clement said that the Committee is aware of this and supports the MUNIS integration, and feels that it is in the financial, security, and staffing best interests of the Town. He said that the MUNIS integration does not impact one way or the other the

immediate or prolonged hiring of a Technology CIO.

Councilor Drake said that he is excited about this and supports the hiring of a Technology CIO, as some of the problems it would eliminate are ones that he experienced in the renovation of the Silas Deane Middle School.

Chairperson Morin said that he would like to see this item continue to be discussed between the Town Manager, Dr. Proctor, and the Shared Services Committee.

Board of Education Assistance with Economic Development Efforts - Peter Gillespie

Chairperson Morin introduced Town Planner Peter Gillespie and Economic Development Improvement Committee Chairperson Betty Rosania who introduced other members of the Committee present at today's meeting. Ms. Rosania commented that the Town needs to get on board with a Technology CIO, and that the time to act was yesterday.

Chairperson Morin said that he noticed at Wethersfield school sports events that there are people from all throughout the State present and that there seemed to be no advertisement of Wethersfield's stores, restaurants, or tourism sites. He said that it would be wise therefore to incorporate the Board of Education into the Town's Economic Development Plan to market the Town.

Mr. Gillespie referred to a document in Councilor's packets entitled "The Community and School as an Economic Development Team" which suggests that local school systems can partner with the business community to provide additional benefit to economic development. He said that school athletic events could present an opportunity for marketing the Town and he will discuss this with the Chamber of Commerce and local restaurants and businesses. Mr. Gillespie said that local businesses have responded that town's people do not support them as much as they would like to see. He said that it is hard to attract new businesses when this type of comment is being made by the current business owners. Because of this, Mr. Gillespie said that the EDIC would like to work with residents to educate them on how important it is to support local businesses in order for them to succeed. He said that this type of education could start earlier if the EDIC works with the schools as well. Mr. Gillespie said that the schools could also be utilized by creating curriculum that could lead to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Chairperson Morin said that the surest way for Wethersfield to be noticed is for businesses in Town to have high sales volumes; therefore residents need to support Wethersfield's local businesses. He said that it is also to get students to think in an entrepreneurial manner through school programs.

Ms. Rosania asked if Civics is still taught as a class in school, since bringing local government to light to school children through speakers and special programs could achieve the desired result.

Dr. Proctor said that there is a Civics requirement at the high school level that was recently mandated by the State and that local government is woven through the school's curriculum. He said that any subject matter can be made lively and interesting depending on how it's taught and who is teaching it.

Ms. Rosania said that there has to be ongoing and enhanced communications between the Town, the Board of Education, and the community. She suggested that a Public Relations Coordinator position be considered.

Dr. Proctor said that the Board of Education recently identified six major areas of priority and one of those areas is public relations. He said that there is currently a standing Board Committee on Public Relations which met last week and discussed quality communications such as how to get to the media and how to get positive messages out.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato suggested providing discount coupons to students to various businesses throughout Town. She also suggested informing local businesses of school events so that they could prepare for the possibility of higher visitation on those dates. She said that the PAC at the middle school does a good job of recognizing those businesses who donate for the printing of the school's newsletter, and she would like to see those businesses recognized by the Board of Education. She said that a workgroup to develop a marketing campaign could be created of representatives from all of the Town's different interest groups.

Ms. Malec said that many sporting events are used as fund-raising opportunities; therefore care must be taken as to the business solicitation at these. She said that a coupon to many local businesses would be great, but would have to be carefully thought out. She said that weekend sporting events opens up the opportunity for the marketing of lodging and restaurants.

Mr. DeAngelo said that there is a concern about parking facilities at sporting events and he suggested that a shuttle service could be provided to sporting events at the high school to relieve some of the parking and traffic congestion. He said that the shuttle pickup could be at a business along the Silas Deane Highway where participants would be exposed to various businesses in the area.

Councilor Kotkin said that there is no local advertising on the fences of sports fields throughout Town, as this is currently not allowed. He said that it would be a good idea in terms of marketing and fund-raising to allow local businesses to advertise in this way.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Parks & Recreation Board has looked into this and it has been controversial in the past. She said that the Town of Berlin made a lot of money doing this and it was big for public relations. She said again that this is being looked into for Wethersfield and a recommendation will be made to the Council.

Chairperson Morin said that most little league outfield fences throughout the State are lined with sponsorship signage from local businesses.

Councilor Adil said that the Fuss & O'Neill study is currently looking for a theme for the Silas Deane Highway and that this could provide an opportunity for a "theme contest" to be introduced into the schools in Town.

Ms. Jacobs commented that she'd like to see a joint effort by the Board of Education and the Town to try to attract businesses like Kaplan for tutoring services and SAT prep courses. She said that Wethersfield could attract students from Newington and Glastonbury as well. She also suggested that the Town invite Hartt School of Music to have a branch in Wethersfield for the convenience of those in this area.

Ms. Hodges suggested that an electronic calendar of events be erected outside of key Town buildings to provide the community with information.

Mr. Knecht, Planning & Zoning Commission liaison to the EDIC, said that Channel 30 has a program on high school sports and suggested that Wethersfield get together with them to develop a program for the advertisement of local events. Mr. Knecht said that entrepreneurship courses should be offered at Wethersfield High School.

Mr. Cornelio asked how the Board of Education will spark interest in students to motivate them to become involved in the Town's economic development and businesses. Dr. Proctor said that the Board of Education has to take the lead in providing courses and service opportunities to students. He said that currently there are marketing courses offered.

Councilor Drake suggested the purchase of an electronic sign to be placed outside Wethersfield High School or the Town Hall which would promote upcoming events. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that as part of the Phase II renovations at the Town Hall, the sign at the front of the building will be replaced.

Ms. Rosania suggested that a sign providing information be installed inside the Town Hall as well.

Councilor Walsh suggested that thought be given to compiling a book of coupons for local businesses to be distributed. Mr. Gillespie said that this is being looked into as one of the components of the program to enhance local shopping.

Chairperson Morin thanked the Board members, Council members, State Legislators, and Town staff for attending today's joint meeting. He said that he looks forward to follow up information on the issues discussed at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:05 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kirsche. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk