

MARCH 6, 2006 REGULAR MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on March 6, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

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

Absent: Councilor Cascio.

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 Fortunato.

Chairperson Morin announced that the St. Patrick's Day parade will be held in Hartford on Saturday, March 11, beginning at 11:00 a.m. He introduced Jack O'Leary, member of the Parade Committee, who invited the Council members to participate in the parade on Saturday and stated that Wethersfield will be marching second in the parade this year.

Proclamation - St. Patrick's Day - Irish Person of the Year

Chairperson Morin read the proclamation of Paul Doyle as Irish Person of the Year as chosen by the Wethersfield St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee and congratulated Mr. Doyle on the honor.

Mr. Doyle thanked the Committee stating that it is a privilege to be chosen as the Irish Person of the Year to represent Wethersfield. He thanked the Council for taking the time to recognize the honor and he said that he looks forward to seeing everyone at the parade on Saturday.

Proclamation - St. Patrick's Day - Town Parade Marshal

Chairperson Morin read the proclamation of Richard Christ as Wethersfield's Parade Marshal in the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Mr. Christ thanked the Parade Committee for selecting him as Marshal and said that he looks forward to seeing everyone on Saturday.

Economic Development Report

In the absence of Town Planner Peter Gillespie, Town Manager Bonnie Therrien gave a presentation of the February, 2006 Economic Development Report which included the following:

- Cedar Hill Cemetery, Berlin Turnpike - certificate of occupancy issued for new mausoleum
- Turnpike Brokers LLC, 1884 Berlin Turnpike - new business
- Second Slice LLC, 1279 Silas Deane Highway - new business
- New England Patio and Hearth, 974 Silas Deane Hwy - interior renovations underway
- Kenny, Brimmer and Mahoney, LLC, 20-30 Beaver Road - permits issued for interior renovations
- Church Homes, Ridge Road - preliminary plan for Phase 2 submitted
- Car Wash Facility, 1715 Berlin Turnpike - building permit applications submitted
- Harris Property Age Restricted Property, Old Reservoir Road/Back Lane - hearing on the zone change has been further continued
- Fun Zone, Silas Deane Highway - possibility of a new prospective tenant
- Office Tenant - copies of Town's tax abatement program have been forwarded to a local realtor representing a

tenant seeking approximately 10,000 square feet of space

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien reported that the Silas Deane Highway Revitalization Committee is expected to deliver their final draft at any time and a public meeting is scheduled for March 27 at the Rocky Hill Town Hall. She said that the Design Review Advisory Committee has reviewed and approved the Fuss & O'Neil plan and the draft design guidelines will be discussed at their next meeting on March 1. The Town Manager reported that the Economic Development and Improvement Commission will be sponsoring a workshop on March 15 to profile successful business techniques. She said that the EDIC has received six responses to the marketing and public relations rfq and anticipate making a recommendation to the Council at the March 20 meeting. The Town Manager announced that there are presently vacancies on both the EDIC and the Silas Deane Highway Revitalization Committee and those interested in serving can express this in writing to her. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien reported that the Tourism Commission is working on a display board and presentation to be used at the CT Convention Center's Destination Connecticut event which has been rescheduled to June 1. She said that the Commission is also working with the Historical Society on a visitor survey tracking the quantity and types of visitors to Wethersfield and the impact on the local economy, and also that one of the Commission members is working with staff at the Convention Center to develop a relationship with various event planners in order to coordinate visits to Wethersfield. The Town Manager announced that the March edition of Yankee Magazine has an article on Old Wethersfield. She reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission is currently reviewing the zoning regulations as they relate to the parking of commercial vehicles in residential zones, and is considering a request by the Main Street Creamery to permit an expanded menu and events that would occur in the back yard of this property on a seasonal basis. The Town Manager said that the Planning and Zoning Commission has met with representatives from the Village Cemetery to discuss plans for expansion of the cemetery. She said that the Old Wethersfield Shop Keepers Association has provided comments to Mr. Gillespie regarding their interest in having the zoning regulations modified to permit temporary signs and banners in this commercial district.

Councilor Drake asked what the zone change would be for the Church Home property. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will look into this and include the information in her Weekly Management Report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 160, VEHICLES, INOPERABLE OR ABANDONED

No one wished to speak and the Chairperson declared the Hearing segment closed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Dick Foreman, Harmund Place, spoke in support of Councilor Drake's proposed resolution for a tax break for senior residents of Wethersfield who have lived here for ten years or more. He said that this would be a good thing for the Town to do.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented that he would prefer that the public comments be restored to the end of the Council meetings and also commented on the rigidity of the five minute comment rule. Mr. Ruhe commented that the kind of thing that made Abraham Lincoln great was that he gathered the opinions of all the people around him. He stated that his use of the word "corruption" at a recent Council meeting was used in reference to the random problem running amuck in this country and was not intended to indicate that the Wethersfield Council is corrupt. Mr. Ruhe stated that the Council needs to always be aware of what the public may consider ethically suspect and he commented on a number of Town scenarios that raise concerns with him.

Susan Fennelly, 57 Country Club Road, said that she objects to and finds offensive the term "corrupt" being applied to any of the Councilors, stating that she has the utmost respect and appreciation for all of them.

Edward Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, spoke of his opposition to the five minute restriction for public comments and spoke in support of restoring the public comment segment to the end of the Council meeting. Mr. Tevald said that he has concerns over the low selling price of the Olson House. Mr. Tevald said that he supports Mr. Ruhe's comments regardless of the use of the word corruption.

Chairperson Morin commented that the sale of the Olson House was an issue that was handled in public and there was no hiding of information since the transaction went through the proper process with the Town Manager, Historical Society, Town Attorney and appropriate Town Staff. Chairperson Morin said that the sale price reflects the cost that it will take to renovate the building, which was much more than the Town could afford for renovations.

No one else wished to speak and the Chairperson declared the General Comments segment closed.

COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Fortunato reported that the Information and Technology Committee met earlier this month and continues to discuss the proposed CIO position and were presented with a list of all technology requests from Town staff which they will be reviewing. Deputy Mayor Fortunato reported that the Infrastructure Committee recently met to develop a lease with the Historical Society for the buildings they manage on the Town's behalf. She said that the Infrastructure Committee is recommending that funds from the Capital Improvement Budget be used to make sidewalks throughout Town handicap accessible. Deputy Mayor Fortunato stated that the representatives of the Building Committee were present at the recent Library Committee meeting and provided an update of the Phase I work which is expected to be complete by the end of this summer, with Phase II beginning at the end of June. She said that the Library has received 480 surveys back from the public which will be used in their current strategic planning process. She said that some of the issues raised by the Library Board about the proposed CIO position included security and a town-wide disaster recovery plan.

Councilor Kotkin reported on the recent Insurance Committee meeting at which a discussion of the significant increase in the workers compensation premium due to a weak incident trait over the last few years took place. He said that there has been a good experience with the liability and property claims which will result in only a slight increase, and the medical insurance is running lower than the estimates projected. Councilor Kotkin said that the Insurance Committee is recommending that the Town Council consider establishing a medical insurance reserve fund in the budget over the next few years.

Councilor Adil moved "**TO REMOVE ITEM B.2.a, DIAL-A-RIDE BUS BID FROM THE TABLE**", seconded by Deputy Mayor Fortunato. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Adil said that Parks & Recreation Director Kathy Bagley has informed him various groups were represented at a recent meeting of the Millwoods Master Plan and much input was provided to move the Plan along. Councilor Adil said that during his recent Councilor hours a resident came in to voice support for the proposed CIO position. Councilor Adil expressed his congratulations to former State Representative Bob Gilligan who has been appointed by the Governor to the State Superior Court.

Councilor Kirsche stated that he supports the reinstatement of public comments at the end of the Council meetings. He also commented that it is important to point out that due diligence was followed in all steps of the sale of the Olson House and he clarified that the value of the house was diminished by the Historic District restrictions and the tremendous investment costs that would be incurred by the Town to refurbish the building.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato commented that she attended the commemoration at the State Capitol in honor of former Governor Ella Grasso. Deputy Mayor Fortunato said that Governor Grasso was a legend in her own right and a wonderful leader of Connecticut. Deputy Mayor Fortunato reported that she attended the recent Town of Wethersfield Employee Recognition Luncheon and she thanked all employees of the Town and the Town Manager for the work they do for the Town.

Councilor Walsh commented that he continues to object to the idea that the Council is muzzling public speech. He said that during the course of the election campaign in 2005, he did not hear anything from the public regarding their displeasure with the five-minute speaking rule; therefore he can only conclude that it is not a big issue with the majority of the public, but with a select few individuals instead.

Councilor Drake commented about a recent article he read regarding the Town of Simsbury recognizing the problem their long-term senior citizen residents are having with paying their taxes. Councilor Drake requested that in the near future Town Manager Bonnie Therrien have a conversation with Simsbury's Town Manager regarding this issue in order to gain some insight into the problem.

Chairperson Morin said that he also attended the recent Town of Wethersfield Employee Recognition Luncheon and he congratulated Lori Schroll and Brenda Moore from the Social and Youth Services Department who were recognized for their fine efforts. Chairperson Morin announced a number of upcoming community events.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor Forrest moved **"TO APPROVE THE ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 160, VEHICLES, INOPERABLE OR ABANDONED"**, seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that there are two amendments made in the proposed ordinance changing "residential" zone to "any" zone under paragraph A of section 160-3, and to increase the permit fee for a storage area from "\$5" to "\$25" in section 160-7.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Dial-A-Ride Bus Bid

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO LOGISTICARE TO PROVIDE DIAL-A-RIDE TRANSPORTATION AND THERAPEUTIC RECREATION TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BID SPECIFICATIONS AND CONTINGENT UPON APPROPRIATION IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007 BUDGET"**, seconded by Councilor Adil.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that this bid had previously been tabled by the Council in order to obtain information as to whether the contract is for a one or three year period. She said that normally the contract is for three years, but the bid went out for only one year. She said that Logisticare was the only bidder and the Town's current provider. The Town Manager said that she asked Dr. Stilwell to inquire of Logisticare if they would be interested in a second or third year bid and they said that they are and are willing to hold the current price for year one and two with only a 3% increase in year three. The Town Manager said that this is an excellent offer and the Council can extend the contract by amending the motion to include the current offer by Logisticare.

Councilor Forrest asked the Town Manager where the extension appears in the paperwork provided to the Council. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the paperwork should include an email from Logisticare and if not, she will provide it to the Council.

Councilor Adil moved **"TO AMEND THE MOTION IN ORDER TO AWARD A THREE YEAR CONTRACT WITH LOGISTICARE, THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF WHICH THE FEES WILL REMAIN AS CURRENTLY QUOTED WITH A 3% INCREASE IN THE FEES FOR THE THIRD YEAR"**, seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion to amend passed 8-0-0.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The amended motion passed 8-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Elimination of Municipal Vehicle Tax

Councilor Adil moved **"TO ASK WETHERSFIELD'S REPRESENTATIVES NOT TO SUPPORT THE ELIMINATION OF THE MUNICIPAL VEHICLE TAX"**, seconded by Councilor Forrest.

Chairperson Morin explained that a number of municipalities are very concerned over this proposal for many various reasons.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she is glad that this is on the agenda because she is getting requests from both COST (Council of Small Towns) and CRCOG (Capital Region Council of Governments) regarding Wethersfield's stand on the issue. She said that there is not enough information regarding the issue being offered by State offices to municipalities and there is concern by municipalities that the State funding in place of the vehicle tax will decrease as years pass.

Councilor Adil said that he is also concerned about the State funding possibly decreasing in the future and also about the tax incentive currently provided to Wethersfield's fire and ambulance volunteers.

Councilor Drake said that he is concerned that sufficient information has not been provided as to how the Town will get additional tax money, how much the Town will lose, and questioned why this motion is being made now when the Town Manager has admitted that she does not understand the numbers. Councilor Drake said that he feels it is too early to make a decision and that the Council should hold off and see what comes forward.

Councilor Kirsche agreed with Councilor Drake stating that he also thinks that this is a preemptive motion. He asked if this motion is a direct response to the inquiries from COST and CRCOG.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that because of the short State Legislative session and since things are moving so fast, COST and CRCOG are looking for municipal responses and she has additional information that could be brought back to the Council before they vote on a decision.

Councilor Kirsche said that he cannot support the position as proposed at this point.

Councilor Forrest said that he understands Councilor Kirsche and Councilor Drake's concerns; however, this is a bill that is being seriously considered at the State level and the Town needs to consider it even without all the information they currently have. He said that it is very difficult to support something of which the Council does not know the consequences; therefore the Council needs to vote against the concept in a sense stating "no, we do not support this since we do not understand the impact". Councilor Forrest expressed concerns about money coming through the ECS fund and also the Town's inability to make decisions on adjusting its tax base by handing this over to the State instead. Councilor Forrest stated that he supports the motion as it stands.

Councilor Walsh clarified that it is the opinion of local officials that the Town Manager is not receiving enough information from the State level to understand what the effect of this will be. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that this is correct, especially the concerns coming from the Finance Director's Association. Councilor Walsh expressed concerns over the State's future funding to municipalities and the burden falling on local homeowners. Councilor Walsh stated that he supports the motion made.

Councilor Kotkin stated that with tax reform there is usually a lengthy study period and that with a major shift, there will be a phasing in period so that Towns affected can account for this in their budgets. He said that it would be very difficult for any Town throughout the State to react to this while in the midst of their budget preparations. Councilor Kotkin said that he supports the motion as it stands and that he also has concerns that should State funding diminish in the future, the tax burden would fall on local homeowners.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato stated that she does not see the Casino revenues as being the answer to the problems and that

she agrees with a number of the comments made by the Councilors.

Councilor Drake stated once again that he does not understand how a motion can be made when the Council does not have all the facts one way or the other.

Councilor Adil pointed out that Phase 2 of the Governor's proposal eliminates the \$350 property tax credit.

Councilor Drake said that the Council should do nothing at this point.

Chairperson Morin said that he has discussed this with the Town Manager who has attended many of the regional meetings, and he supports the motion since the Governor's office and State delegation need to be aware of the Town's concerns. Chairperson Morin said that he sees this as a shell game where the State will take money from one place, move it around, and bring it back again to the Town. He said that he fears that as soon as the State has a tough year and money stops coming in, the Towns will be stuck scratching their heads trying to figure out where they will get the money they need.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Drake and Councilor Kirsche voted NAY. The motion passed 6-2-0.

Debt Management Policy

Councilor Adil moved "**TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY**", seconded by Deputy Mayor Fortunato.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that as part of the adopted Strategic Plan, there were a number of financial plans to be put together and this is the first one, the Debt Management Policy which has been reviewed and approved as amended by the Budget Committee, and also reviewed by the Town's Financial Advisor.

Councilor Kotkin said that he was a member of the Budget Committee when this document was reviewed and a number of revisions were made. He said that the Town staff did an excellent job of incorporating the recommendations over a two-month period. He said that the Policy states that the Town will be conservative in the way it manages its financing, and in the way it borrows money in that when money is borrowed over the long term, it is for long term projects. He said that the Policy also indicates that the Town will maintain a very strong credit rating.

Councilor Drake said that he supports the Policy except for the concept regarding short term debt. He said that he does not agree with the Town borrowing money over the long term to pay for short term interest.

Councilor Forrest said that he supports the Policy in that it is a great benchmark for the Town's financial stability in the future.

Chairperson Morin thanked Deputy Mayor Fortunato and Councilor Adil for bringing this forward as it is an important step for the Town in guiding financial policies.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Redevelopment Authority

Councilor Adil moved "**TO DIRECT THE TOWN MANAGER TO PREPARE AN ORDINANCE THAT ESTABLISHES A REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**", seconded by Councilor Forrest.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that the Council met with the EDIC to discuss the establishment of a Redevelopment Authority and this motion gives her the directive to prepare with Bond Counsel an ordinance establishing such an authority.

Councilor Adil said that this has been a long time coming and the general consensus of the Council seems to be to move forward with a Redevelopment Authority. He urged the Council to support the ordinance establishing the Redevelopment Authority when it comes before them.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato stated that she supports the motion, although there are some areas that need to be researched, in particular the relationship between the Council and the EDIC. She said that the Council members need to proceed once all the questions are satisfied and an ordinance is prepared and brought before them.

Councilor Kirsche said that he can see no reason not to support the motion, but he will be interested and concerned about the powers, duties and responsibilities entrusted to the Redevelopment Authority.

Chairperson Morin said that a lengthy discussion took place regarding development and redevelopment and more discussion will likely ensue once the Town Manager develops an ordinance establishing the Redevelopment Authority.

Councilor Drake said that this is a good place to start and he supports the motion since the Town really needs to have a Redevelopment Authority.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Waiver of Showmobile Fees - Central CT Celtic

Deputy Mayor Fortunato moved "**TO WAIVE FIFTY PERCENT OF THE SHOWMOBILE RENTAL FEES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$175 FOR THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT CELTIC CULTURAL COMMITTEE FOR THIS YEAR'S GREATER HARTFORD ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE**", seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Chairperson Morin said that past practice has been to waive fifty percent of the fee.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

BIDS

Goff Brook Watershed Study

Deputy Mayor Fortunato moved "**TO AWARD A CONTRACT FOR COMPLETION OF A STUDY OF THE GOFF BROOK WATERSHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TERMS AND CONDITIONS, FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$39,000**", seconded by Councilor Forrest.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that the current budget has \$40,000 for the study of the Goff Brook Watershed to develop an approach to short term and long term management of the waterbodies associated with this watershed, specifically Bell Pond, Millwood's Pond, Murphy Pond, Griswold Pond, and the 1860 Reservoir. She said that the appropriate Town Staff have recommended awarding the contract to Decarlo and Doll, Inc., the lowest responsible respondent, for the amount of \$39,000.

Councilor Adil asked why one of the bidders amount was \$81,000. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has no idea why. Councilor Adil said that many residents have expressed concerns about the sediment in these ponds and mosquito control. He said that it is critical that this motion move forward for the Town to develop a comprehensive plan.

Chairperson Morin said that the ponds are beautiful and most are man made. He said that when an active waterway is dammed up, the water settled and sediment forms, creating a problem. He asked the Town Manager to provide information on clean energy issues, and the dam being used for electricity.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Beaver Brook Berm

Councilor Walsh moved **"TO AUTHORIZE THE AWARD OF THE BEAVER BROOK BERM MODIFICATION BID TO S. DEANGELO CONSTRUCTION FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$16,355.75"**, seconded by Councilor Forrest.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that \$30,000 has been budgeted for this project as a part of the Capital Improvement Program. She said that the difference between the \$30,000 and the bid of \$16,355.75 will go into the Capital Reserve Account.

Councilor Forrest asked how close this project is to the reconstruction just south of Route 3 that just took place, and if there is any co-ownership of this project. Town Engineer Mike Turner said that the project is approximately two hundred feet south of that. Councilor Forrest asked if there is any cause and effect of the work that was done which is resulting in this project needing to be done now. Mr. Turner said that there is not and that this is an old farm road which used to cross Beaver Brook. He said that it was identified in 1985 as an obstruction to Beaver Brook and the removal of the obstructions will equal the capacity of the culvert.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

RESOLUTION FOR HISTORIC DOCUMENTS PRESERVATION COMPETITIVE GRANT 2007

RESOLVED, That Bonnie L. Therrien, Town Manager, or the Town Clerk, Dolores G. Sassano, as her designee, is empowered to execute and deliver in the name of and on behalf of Wethersfield, an application and contract with the State Library for an Historic Document Preservation Grant.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN OFFICE OF DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut Homeland Security Grant Program allows for reimbursement of compensation paid to eligible emergency service volunteers participating in training sessions or exercises approved by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (hereinafter "ODP"); and

WHEREAS, eligible municipalities may request such reimbursement from the Capitol Region Council of Governments (hereinafter "CRCOG") at such time when funding is made available; and

WHEREAS, compensation will be provided for participation of eligible emergency services volunteers in ODP approved training sessions or exercises only when reimbursement funding for such compensation is available through ODP. Such compensation shall be at a rate in accordance with ODP reimbursement guidelines as amended; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Wethersfield Town Council hereby authorizes the Town's participation in this ODP reimbursement program.

MINUTES

Councilor Adil moved **"TO ACCEPT THE AMENDED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF FEBRUARY 1, 2006"**, seconded by Councilor Forrest. Deputy Mayor Fortunato and Councilor Kotkin ABSTAINED. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-2.

Councilor Walsh moved **"TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 21, 2006"**, seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed

8-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved by vote of Council 3/20/2006