

MAY 1, 2006 REGULAR MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on May 1, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Silas Deane Middle School.

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

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 Councilor Kirsche.

Proclamation - Salute to Seniors

Chairperson Morin read and presented to Mary Ann Shinn, Silas Deane Middle School Home/School Liaison, a proclamation proclaiming May 18 Grandparents Day and May 19 Senior and Student Exercise Day in the Town of Wethersfield.

Ms. Shinn stated that the interaction of senior citizens and students make these two days the favorite of the Silas Deane Middle School Parent Action Committee as well as the students. She said that the purpose of the program is to build bridges of understanding between the generations and also to honor senior citizens. Ms. Shinn introduced Silas Deane Middle School staff members present at the meeting, as well as Intergenerational Chairperson Jane Johnson.

Ms. Shinn explained that every seventh grade student at SDMS wrote an essay about their favorite senior citizen and she introduced five students who received special recognition for their outstanding stories and asked them to come forward to read their essays.

Sal Basile wrote about his grandfather Peter Basile; Shandrika Knight-Teal wrote about her grandmother Ivette Marrero; Nicole Reyes wrote about her deceased grandfather Bernardino Reyes and her dad Bernie Reyes accepted in honor of her grandfather; Phillys Yang wrote about her aunt Nancy Tong and her mom May Wong accepted on her aunt's behalf; Emily Zambrello wrote about her grandfather John Carusone.

Economic Development Report

Town Planner Peter Gillespie gave a presentation of the April, 2006 Economic Development Report which included the following:

- 20-30 Beaver Road - Law Firm - Certificate of Occupancy issued
- 416 Silas Deane Hwy - Dunkin Donuts site work underway
- 1715 Berlin Turnpike - Car Wash Facility - construction underway
- Church Street and Silas Deane Hwy - Tim Horton's project to begin
- Ridge Road - Church Homes - zone change application submitted
- 1151 Silas Deane Hwy - Fire House Grill - plans submitted for outdoor patio
- Main Street - Village Cemetery - special permit application for small expansion
- 511 Maple Street - Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church - application filed for expanded parking facilities
- 121 Main Street - Rainbow Center - application filed for renovation
- 1866 Berlin Turnpike - People's Choice Pizza - plans and PZC application filed
- Cumberland Avenue - Northeast Utilities building - several offers made
- National Restaurant Chain - preliminary conversations held with representatives

Mr. Gillespie stated that the Silas Deane Highway Revitalization Committee is nearing the end of their work and the

final report is expected to be submitted by Fuss and O'Neill some time this week. He said that he met recently with representatives from the State DOT to discuss implementation of the report and they provided positive feedback on some of the ideas. Mr. Gillespie said that preliminary design work on improvements to the Church Street/Silas Deane Highway intersection will be initiated with the solicitation of an RFP for a designer. Mr. Gillespie announced that the annual State of the Town Breakfast will be held on March 3 at the Wethersfield Country Club. He said that finishing touches are being placed on the façade improvement program for the Silas Deane Highway as funded through the STEAP grant, and it is anticipated that requests will be solicited in late May. Mr. Gillespie stated that the Tourism Commission has contracted to place radio spots on National Public Radio during the month of May to promote the Town as a heritage tourism destination.

Councilor Kotkin asked at what level of Phase I the Church Homes project is. Mr. Gillespie said that they are currently working on financing, and have not yet submitted a building application; therefore, he assumes they're approximately one to two months from starting construction. Councilor Kotkin clarified that he asked about Phase I and Mr. Gillespie said that two models of Phase I will open in approximately two weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 70, DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS, PUBLIC REGULATIONS OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 113-02N OF THE CODE OF WETHERSFIELD

Kathy Griswold, 91 Gooseberry Hill, spoke in support of the changes to the Dog Ordinance regarding the Wethersfield Dog Park, and thanked the Council for their support.

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

Woodrow Warren, 9 Nutmeg Circle, spoke of respect for senior citizens, the cost of freedom, his experiences during World War II, and the peaceful kind of life expected in our country. He said that we are not learning from our mistakes, but rather compounding them. Mr. Warren spoke about censorship and the democratic process. He asked the Council to read the letter he provided them and Chairperson Morin said that he will read the letter.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, spoke to the earlier part of the meeting regarding the salute to seniors and commented that he doesn't believe that the Council is truly interested in what senior citizens have to say, and they should pay attention. Mr. Ruhe said that the comments made by a resident at the budget hearing trivializing the proposed average tax increase of \$465 were very unsettling to him. Mr. Ruhe commented on the possible need for disinfecting the artificial turf at Cottone Field and also of the work done at the High School regarding security, and when this work was actually done. Mr. Ruhe stated that it is not the responsibility of the citizens of Wethersfield to tell the Council where to cut the budget, but rather the job of the Town Manager and Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Ruhe commented that the Council's need to tolerate irritants is one of the prices to be paid for democracy.

Bill Sanders, 122 Windmill Hill, urged the Council to consider approval of the ordinance allowing for a property tax exemption for packaged solar energy heating and cooling systems, as well as renewable energy sources. He said that the proposed ordinance does not include an exemption for the removal of solar electricity generation.

Irving Wilson, 48 Pickering Lane, brought before the Council a garbage bag filled with three days worth of refuse he's picked up around Willow Street, and spoke of the concerns he has about people discarding garbage throughout Town and violating the environment. Mr. Wilson spoke of his concern over political and other signs being put up all around

Town and not taken down. He said that fines should be issued to those who don't take the signs down and urged the Council to do something about the issue. Chairperson Morin told Mr. Wilson that he can discuss this with the Town Manager if he calls her office.

Rich Campbell, 366 Hartford Avenue, spoke of a recent letter he received from the Town regarding his security system and the fees that are charged for false alarms. He said that he agrees with the false alarm fee; however he does not agree with charging a fee simply for having an alarm. Mr. Campbell stated that the Wethersfield Police Department has finite resources and an alarm system provides a benefit to the Town; therefore he should not be assed a fee for owning an alarm system, and he asked the Town Council to review the policy.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, expressed that he is pleased to see that the State budget is passed and that he hopes the Town receives extra funding. Mr. Young stated that it would be nice to be provided with information on how the Town Planner's monthly report items affect the grand list and property taxes. He urged the Council to reduce taxes by cutting costs as the taxes in Wethersfield are already too high.

Kitch Breen Czernicki, 239 Crest Street, asked if Library personnel will be working on their designated projects onsite or offsite during the closing of the library. She said that she asks this due to concern she has with the health of the employees during the renovations. Ms. Czernicki questioned if the new Technology position has been posted to the outside since it is a new position to the Town. She said that filling the position without posting it makes people uncomfortable and becomes suspect. Ms. Czernicki questioned whether the police radios are working as they should or if there are still days when they are not working properly. She asked if the radios are not working what is being done to insure the safety of Town residents. Ms. Czernicki expressed her concern over response time since she was personally aware of the police radios not working for a time last Tuesday and Wednesday. Ms. Czernicki requested that the Council remember that the monies returned to the Board of Education from last year were added to the base they've used to determine their 2006-2007 budget and that money returned to them several years ago went into the salaries account rather than being used for supplies for the students. Ms. Czernicki reminded the Council that several years ago the Department Head positions were removed as it was decided that those who work in the school system should teach, and with the current proposal to hire Department Heads, additional staff will need to be hired which will add to the bottom line for numerous costs not directly related to the children. She encouraged the Council not to go down this slippery slope. Lastly, Ms. Czernicki, requested that any unanticipated funding received by the State be returned to Wethersfield citizens by cutting the budget.

Ed Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, commented that he, too, received the letter regarding alarm systems and said that he has smoke alarms only. He said that he spoke with the Assistant to the Town Manager who apologized for the miscommunication. Mr. Tevald commented that the Town Manager's proposed budget calls for a sizeable increase in taxes and she has asked the Council to tell her where to make cuts. He said that even a "maintenance" budget will increase the taxes.

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

COUNCIL REPORTS & COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Fortunato reported that she attended the recent Library Board retreat with the Town Manager where representatives from throughout the Town were present. She reported that she attended the Parade Committee meeting along with Councilor Forrest and she announced that the Memorial Day Parade will be held on May 27 beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Councilor Kotkin reported that he attended the recent meeting of the Youth Advisory Board and after reviewing the survey conducted on the users of the Social & Youth Services Department services, it was concluded that a closer look needs to be taken into how the Department can interface better and more cost effectively with the Board of Education. Councilor Kotkin reported that he also attended the recent Insurance Committee meeting where it was reported that the amount the Town is spending on health care claims to-date continues to run below budget.

Councilor Cascio reported that he attended the Memorial Day Parade Committee where it was announced that this

year's Parade Marshal will be Alan Wamester. Councilor Cascio said that he also attended the meeting of Channel 14 where it was announced that they are planning to hold an open house on June 2.

Councilor Forrest reported that he attended the Riverfront Recapture Board meeting last week and there is an excellent relationship between the Town and the Board.

Councilor Adil thanked Mr. Wilson for picking up the trash in his area and bringing this issue to light. Councilor Adil said that he phones the Town Manager each week to report signs that have gone up throughout Town. He said that there may be a first amendment issue if an ordinance is passed restricting the usage of signs, although he agrees with issuing fines when signs are not removed in a timely manner.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato said that she attended the Nature Center Dance on April 22 and it was a well-attended event. She encouraged residents to take time to spend at the Nature Center facility. Deputy Mayor Fortunato verified with the Town Manager that the proposed CIO position is not currently included in the budget and is, in fact, a Board of Education position which was recommended by the Shared Services Committee. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that the CIO position has also been discussed at Information & Technology Committee, Fireside Chat, and countless Shared Services Committee meetings. She said that it was recommended by the Shared Services Committee that this move forward and she and the Superintendent of School have met to discuss the position. She said that the Information & Technology Committee has recommended that the salary for the position be \$90,000-\$100,000 plus benefits; however, with the budget crunch this is tough to swallow. The Town Manager stated that the Superintendent of Schools stated that he has a school employee who does an outstanding job for the Board of Education to develop a long-range plan for the schools, and that there may be a way to upgrade this position and share the cost of the position 75% Board of Education and 25% Town, with the Board of Education paying benefits and any secretarial support. She said that it was agreed to try the position for one year and since this is a Board of Education position, by Town Charter the Board of Education does not have to post the position.

Councilor Drake stated that this is the first he has heard of any of this other than the position being mentioned at the Fireside Chat meeting. He said that if the Town is going to be responsible for 25% of the salary for the position, the Council should have had some input on this. Chairperson Morin stated that at every meeting, there has been a consensus that this is something the Town is going to go forward with and support.

Councilor Cascio asked if it known how much the \$25 alarm fee will generate for the Town. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien answered that it will be approximately \$14,000. Councilor Cascio addressed Mr. Sanders' request to modify the ordinance regarding solar energy, and Councilor Cascio asked if this is something that can be done by the Council. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien stated that she will be requesting that the Solar Energy Ordinance up for introduction at tonight's Council meeting be pulled from the agenda for further review and possible revisions. Councilor Cascio asked if the Town is at risk with the condition of the current radio system and the Town Manager said that she was not aware that there was a problem last week and she will need to check on this with the Police Department. Councilor Cascio asked the Town Manager if she has looked into whether there is a parking issue at Ridge Road due to the cell tower. She said that Fire Chief Flynn is aware of the inquiry and has apologized for not having had time to address it yet, but will get to it as soon as he can. Councilor Cascio verified that the proposed budget is based on the elimination of the car tax, and asked the Town Manager to explain the impact. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that her proposed budget includes a reduction so that if the car tax is eliminated, there will not be a gap of \$300,000 in the Town budget. She said that she estimated \$2 million being removed from the Grand List due to the appeals of assessments, and the Board of Assessment Appeals voted \$2.4 million, which leaves a \$210,000 gap that needs to be left in the budget even with the car tax elimination not being passed. She said that the Town will be receiving \$14,000 in State aid and \$124,000 as one-time revenue sharing from the State. Councilor Cascio asked if the Town is coordinating work they'll be doing along the Silas Deane Highway with the paving work that the State will be performing. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has met a number of times with the State DOT who has requested that the Town complete all of their work before the paving is done. She said that the State is not proposing paving from Nott Street to Route 3 until 2007; therefore the Town needs to move quickly to complete work in this key area by then. Councilor Cascio stated that there seems to be a feeling that the Council is not doing their job with regard to the proposed CIO position, and it is really the responsibility of the Board of Education to deal with the hiring process for the position.

Councilor Kirsche stated that the members of the Information & Technology Committee would be the foremost authority on the desired qualifications of the CIO position, and he questioned if they were involved in the screening process. The Town Manager answered that they were not as there are no committees who are involved in any hiring process or screening. Councilor Kirsche asked if the idea of the position came from the Information & Technology Committee and the Town Manager said that it did. Councilor Kirsche asked if the Committee has expressed the qualifications they would seek in the position and if the person being sought for the position meets the criteria. The Town Manager said that the Committee did not suggest a job description and actually expressed the desire not to be involved in the development of the job description.

Chairperson Morin read into the record the remainder of Mr. Warren's letter regarding his opinions on the democratic process. Chairperson Morin thanked the Village Improvement Association for their support of the Arbor Day celebration and the tree planted at the Nature Center. Chairperson Morin announced a number of upcoming community events.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor Adil stated that he believes that the appointment to the School Projects Building Committee should be Mark S. Fanelli, Jr.; therefore he would like to strike this appointment until this is verified.

Councilor Drake requested that any appointments to the School Projects Building Committee not list a school after the committee name.

Councilor Adil moved **"TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF DAWN RICHARDSON SILVER TO THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS FOR THE TERM 5-1-06 TO 6-30-06; CLAIRE A. MEHAN TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE TERM 5-1-06 TO 6-30-07; AND JOSEPH M. MEHAN AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE TERM 5-1-06 TO 6-30-08"**, seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Forrest moved **"TO ADOPT THE ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 70-2 (2) AND 70-41a, DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Forrest moved **"TO ADOPT THE ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 113-02N, PEACE AND GOOD ORDER"**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Fortunato. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Budget Transfer - Non Union Department Heads

Councilor Adil moved **"TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF \$14,500 FROM ACCOUNT T1960901-5298 TO: \$7,976 TO ACCOUNT T1020-5001 TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE WAGES; \$840 TO ACCOUNT T1020-5100 TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE BENEFITS; \$5,280 TO ACCOUNT T1061-5001 FINANCE OFFICE WAGES; \$404 TO ACCOUNT T1061-5100 FINANCE OFFICE BENEFITS"**, seconded by Councilor Walsh.

The Town Manager explained that the Town's eight non-union administrative staff members are subject to an annual merit performance review prior to receiving a yearly raise. She said that each year, the funds for increases are budgeted

in a separate non-departmental account and must be transferred to the department at the end of the year to offset any approved increases.

Use of Wethersfield Cove - Riverfront Recapture

Councilor Forrest moved "**GRANT PERMISSION TO THE RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE GROUP TO USE THE WETHERSFIELD COVE BOAT LAUNCH RAMP THIS SEASON WHILE THEIR RAMP IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AS OUTLINED IN THE MEMO FROM PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR KATHY BAGLEY**", seconded by Councilor Adil.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that Riverfront Recapture has requested permission to use the Wethersfield Cove boat launch ramp on Wednesday evenings from 5:00-8:30 p.m. during boating season for their Big Bass Tournament activity, and for participants to pay the Wethersfield resident rate for this activity. The Town Manager said that this tournament will strengthen Wethersfield's working relationship with Riverfront Recapture and create more recreational activities for Wethersfield residents. She said that Riverfront Recapture staff will be at the Cove to monitor the activities.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Fair Housing Policy

Councilor Walsh moved "**TO ADOPT THE FAIR HOUSING POLICY AS FOLLOWS: THAT THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD HEREBY ENDORSES THE ATTACHED FAIR HOUSING POLICY TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL PERSONS TO RENT, PURCHASE, AND OBTAIN FINANCING FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING OF THEIR CHOICE ON A NON-DISCRIMINATORY BASIS; AND THAT THE TOWN MANAGER OR HER DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESPONDING TO AND ASSISTING ANY PERSON WHO ALLEGES TO BE THE VICTIM OF AN ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICE IN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD**", seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Adil moved "**TO REJECT THE BID FOR REPLACEMENT OF THE WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING POOL HVAC UNIT AND TO SOLICIT NEW BIDS**", seconded by Councilor Walsh.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien explained that Town staff solicited formal bids to replace the existing air conditioning unit at the Wethersfield High School swimming pool with a system that provides dehumidification to the pool areas, and the only bid received came in over the estimated/budgeted amount. She said that she will be discussing with the appropriate Engineering Department staff member why this may have occurred and suggest that the bid be re-advertised to a larger list of vendors.

Councilor Cascio asked if the Engineering Department would expect the bid to come in 50% less if the specs were revised and the Town Manager said that she is unsure, but will find out and put this in her Management Report.

Councilor Drake asked how many bids were received and the Town Manager answered that there was only one.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None.

MINUTES

Councilor Forrest moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF MARCH 27, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Deputy Mayor Fortunato ABSTAINED. The motion passed 8-0-1.

Councilor Adil moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 3, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Walsh moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING OF APRIL 10, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING OF APRIL 12, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Councilor Adil amended the minutes to indicate that he was present rather than absent from the meeting.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Drake ABSTAINED.

The motion passed 8-0-1.

Councilor Adil moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE BUDGET HEARING OF APRIL 17, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

Councilor Adil amended the minutes to correct Councilor Cascio's name appearing in the "Present" list.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Cascio ABSTAINED. The motion passed 8-0-1.

Councilor Kirsche moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING OF APRIL 19, 2006**", seconded by Councilor Walsh. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Forrest ABSTAINED. The motion passed 8-0-1.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 p.m., Councilor Forrest moved "**TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

At 9:33 p.m., Councilor Adil moved "**TO ENTER BACK INTO THE REGULAR MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Drake. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

At 9:33 p.m., Councilor Cascio moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved by vote of Council 5/15/2006