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REGULAR MEETING MARCH 3, 2003

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, March 3, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Fitzpatrick, Gardow, Hemmann, Morin, Sassano, Deputy Mayor O'Connor and Chairperson Czernicki. Absent: Councilor Flynn.

Also present: Joseph Swetcky, Jr., Interim Town Manager, and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

PRESENTATION: FRIENDS OF THE NATURE CENTER

Pat Yagmin, representing the Friends of the Wethersfield Nature Center, spoke on renovating the Moeller Home into a new, larger Nature Center named as a memorial to Eleanor Buck Wolf. Ms. Wolf was one of the founders of the Friends of the Wethersfield Nature Center. She spent much of her lifetime devoted to encouraging and leading this organization. The Friends goal is to relocate the Nature Center to the Moeller Home providing the additional space necessary for program expansion. Ms. Yagmin introduced Dr. William Haines, Vice-president of the Friends, to explain the details of the renovation.

Dr. Haines, 516 Highland Street, spoke in favor of the renovation and placement of the Nature Center at the Moeller Home facility. There is much greater exposure at this location. Being right next to the entrance of the park would allow for the Recreations Parks department to expand their programs to include the Nature Center. Elders living next door at the senior housing would be encouraged to mentor younger people participating at the Nature Center. The new facility would double the size of the Nature Center at its present location. The new facility would also honor Eleanor Wolf who is so deserving of this honor. The Friends are committed to this proposal. There are various resources for funds. There is a State Grant in the amount of \$250,000, an anonymous donation of \$200,000; the Friends will contribute \$50,000. The Friends look forward to an opportunity to meet and discuss the facts and figures.

Chairperson Czernicki asked if Council members had any questions. There were none at this time.

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO REFER THE PROPOSAL TO THE SPACE NEEDS COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW**", seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A LEASE FINANCING AGREEMENT

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON BAHALF OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF WETHERSFIELD TO IMPLEMENT WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS

There being no one wishing to speak, the Chairperson declared the Hearing portion of the meeting closed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Thomas Wraight, 22 Coleman Road, endorsed the proposal of renaming the Nature Center in honor and recognition of Eleanor Wolf whether it remains at its present location or moves to the Moeller Home. The move to the Moeller Home is a good idea that should be seriously explored. Mr. Wright said that he does not necessarily oppose the tax abatements, but he strongly urges that should the proposition proceed forward we do so with care. Lastly, with regard to the appointment of the police chief, Mr. Wright is astounded that Jim Cetran is not among the finalists for selection. Every Fire Chief and Police Chief that Wethersfield has had and has served the community so well has come from the ranks. The Council has stressed in the past that they need to make it clear that people within our organization have the opportunity to grow and advance and become the head of their organization. This is a chance for the Council to put their authority where their mouths are. Council should be making a motion to direct Interim Town Manager Swetcky to name James Cetran as Police Chief. He knows the town, the businesses, the people and the force.

Paul Courchaine, 481 Main Street, chairman of the Silas Deane Renovation Committee, updated Council that the proposal submitted to CRCOG has been accepted and we have been selected to be on the short list of candidates. The Renovation Committee will appear before the State Transportation Committee on Monday, March 10. There are eight other applicants. The Renovation Committee is hopeful that they will be one of the four chosen to go forward.

Gene Grayson, vice-chairman of the Library Board, thanked the Council, especially Councilor Cascio, for their support of the library. He mentioned two new programs offered by the library. They are the "Book it for Me" and the "Fast Lane" programs that will help to get best sellers out to the readers. The "Book it for Me" programs allows readers to sign up for their favorite authors and the library reserves the book and sends you a notice whenever that author comes out with a new book. The "Fast Lane" program makes an extra copy of a best seller available on a 7-day loan.

Richard Dobmeier, 42 South Pembroke Street, spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Advisory Recreation and Parks Board and supports the proposal of the Friends of the Wethersfield Nature Center to renovate the Moeller Home as a freestanding Nature Center. This would be a wonderful way to honor Mrs. Wolf.

Judy Keane, 126 Broad Street, spoke as a representative of the Keane Foundation. The Foundation has completed nearly 18 months of fundraising and has begun actively submitting Grant proposals. On March 30 a fund raiser, the 2nd annual 3-on-3 basketball tournament, will be held with the assistance of the Recreation and Parks Department. There will be a golf outing on June 2 in coordination with Unico and a 5-K walk/run on June 8. The Foundation will continue to submit Grants and work with Town and State officials, as well as Senator Chris Dodd and Senator John Larson. She thanked the Council for their support and assistance. On October 11 at 960 Main Street, Hartford there will be a back to the 50's fund raiser. Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Ms. Keane how much the Foundation has raised to-date. Ms. Keane reported that the amount is in excess of \$250,000.

Thomas Brown, 15 Harding Street, asked Council members to support Wethersfield schools. People need to realize that there are costs in keeping a community like Wethersfield strong. He and his family did not move to Wethersfield two years ago for a tax break. They came for quality schools and a strong community. Education costs money and needs continued support to maintain quality. We must not sacrifice this.

The following spoke in support of hiring Acting Police Chief Cetran as Wethersfield's new Police Chief. They spoke of his great leadership, motivational skills, professionalism, and dedication to both the police force and the Wethersfield community. He is highly respected and extremely experienced and competent. He is a great benefit to this town.

Brian Skeehan	Tom Smitney	Jim Darby
Richard Truex	Jack O'Leary	Cheryl Gubbins
Tom Pentalow	Mark Poisson	Craig Davis
Dave Scales	Jim Turquotte	Gary Santoro
John Salvatore	Oscar Rivera	Lisa Fournier
Alison Sullivan	Mike Zapatka	Mike Godart
John Saccente	Dave Santoro	Jess (Cetran) Minicino

Paul DeJohn, WAA (+4 others)	Richard Walsh	Roy Warmington
Kevin O'Leary	Marcello D'Alessandro	Norberto Mendez
Dave Warriner	Rob DeRoehn	Anthony Demonti
Don Crabtree	Barry Skiff	John Miller
Dave Gove	Thomas Wraight	Wayne Cefaratti
Tom Dunn	Kevin Dillon	

Eleanor Sarge, 33 Colonial Drive, asks the Council to take a good look at the budget. Wethersfield cannot afford the budget. The proposed budget will bring hardship to many Wethersfield residents. It's time to cut costs. This is not the time for "wants"; we simply do not have the money.

Phil Rocquie urged Council to approve the Spring Street land abandonment.

Paul Courchaine, 481 Main Street, was struck by the outstanding support shown tonight for James Cetran. We are a democracy, and a democracy has to consider the voice of the people.

Ed Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, commented that after hearing all the support for James Cetran, he finds it hard to understand how the system eliminated him for consideration. If there is no flaw in the department, why did anyone even want to look outside? If there is a flaw, it is in the selection process that eliminated him. To promote anyone other than Mr. Cetran would be a big mistake.

Chairperson Czernicki thanked the members of the Police Department and public who felt it important this evening to express to the Council their support of Acting Chief Cetran. She asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky to explain how the hiring process works.

Interim Town Manager Swetcky explained that an advertisement was run and applications were accepted for a specific period of time. After the closing period, 78 applications were received. After review, that number was reduced to 17. After subsequent review the number was brought down to 12. Of the 12, 9 accepted an invitation to come before an oral panel made up of two police chiefs and two town managers. The nine were graded and ranked based on questions asked of them during the oral panel process. The top three applicants/grades were turned over to Interim Town Manager Swetcky for further consideration for appointment to the position of Police Chief.

Thomas Wraight, 22 Coleman Road, commented that this is the same speech that he heard last Monday. He said that Interim Town Manager Swetcky reports to the Council and that he is obliged to do what they direct him to do. There are occasions when the Town Manager and Council will not agree; however the Town Manager must do what the Council wants done. The Council must direct Interim Town Manager Swetcky to appoint Acting Police Chief James Cetran as Police Chief.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, said that Council cannot overlook all the positives said this evening on behalf of Acting Chief Cetran. Council must think twice as they make the decision. He urges Council; however not to be stampeded into making that decision. They should reflect on what has been shared and make a decision that is in the best interest of the Town and the Police Department.

There being no one else wishing to speak, the Chairperson declared the General Comments portion of the meeting closed.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved "**TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A LEASE FINANCING AGREEMENT**", seconded by Councilor Morin.

Interim Town Manager Swetcky explained that last November a bid submission was brought before Council to purchase hardware for the Police CAD RMS system. The hardware was to be financed through a lease agreement. Council approved the lease financing arrangement for approximately \$149,000. The leasing company is requiring a

resolution approved by the Council. It is a 4-year lease agreement with Kansas State Bank of Manhattan.

Councilor Fitzpatrick asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky to highlight the changes required by the leasing company. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that what had been used was a bid submission form and that there hadn't been a formal resolution. This will accomplish that.

Councilor Sassano asked how a resolution will differ from what is before Council tonight. Is this basically housekeeping? Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that this resolution is a very simplified resolution and he is actually surprised by the insistence that it be passed.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if it is common for a lease company to tell Council what to do in order to complete a transaction. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that it is common for lease companies to provide a draft resolution initially and that is usually brought to Council. In this case, the resolution came at the time to close on the lease. The resolution may have been overlooked.

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

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF WETHERSFIELD TO IMPLEMENT WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS"**, seconded by Councilor Morin.

Interim Town Manager Swetcky explained that this resolution is a reaffirmation of a resolution that Council passed several years ago. As part of CRCOG, the Town is involved with the Workforce Investment Act. This is a work training program that receives federal funding. The consortium is made up of the thirty towns in the Capitol region area. In 1998, the federal law changed resulting in the Governor expanding the consortium to include seven additional towns. Council now has to approve a new resolution to authorize participation in the expanded consortium.

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

Councilor Sassano left the meeting at this time (8:40 p.m.).

Councilor Cascio moved **"TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF ELIZABETH M. KIRKPATRICK TO THE COX CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR A TERM OF MARCH 3, 2003 TO JUNE 30, 2004"**, seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Councilor Gardow moved **"TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF BARBARA J. RUHE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATIONS COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF MARCH 3, 2003 TO JUNE 30, 2005"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Sassano returned to the meeting at this time (8:45 p.m.).

OTHER BUSINESS

EXPLANATORY TEXT FOR APRIL 1, 2003 REFERENDUM

Councilor Cascio reported that the Shared Services Committee met last week and there was a lot of input to the explanatory text. Some Council members have called with corrections and Councilor Cascio questions whether this is the time to make changes. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that changes could be made right now. Councilor Cascio said that it could be stated when the Stillman Building was opened. Also the same for the Physical Services building. A point of interest with regard to the Stillman Building is at the fourth bullet where it lists a 3,658 square

foot addition to accommodate an elevator and restrooms, handicapped accessible. This wording could be changed to "may be used" indicating that there may not be a need for an elevator on the exterior. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that he'd have to check with bond council with putting in the words "may be" as to whether this limits us or not. It is difficult to do things beyond what the text indicates.

Councilor Morin spoke of the disconcerting news regarding the grand list. This is based on the grand list growing 1% per year and Wethersfield is not seeing this right now. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that the 1% is used as an average over a ten-year period. Over the twenty-year life of the bond, we will probably average close to 1%. He will ask bond council if the language should be left as is or if the word "average" should be added.

Councilor Sassano noted that it would be consistent to provide a street address for the Webb School.

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO AUTHORIZE AN EXPLANATORY TEXT FOR THE REFERENDUM QUESTION**", seconded by Councilor Gardow. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

REQUEST FOR ABANDONMENT OF A PORTION OF TOWN ROW ON CHURCH STREET

Interim Town Manager Swetcky shared that recently a property owner on Church Street, Mr. Kelly, submitted a request that the town abandon a portion of the right-of-way on the corner of Church Street and Main Street. At the time the intersection was improved, the Town took a considerable amount of property and is retaining more than the normal right-of-way area. The request is that the Town abandon a portion of that area so that Mr. Kelly can add it to his property. Interim Town Manager Swetcky recommends that this go to the Planning Zoning Commission for a Section 8-24 review.

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO REFER THE REQUEST FOR ABANDONMENT OF A PORTION OF TOWN ROW ON CHURCH STREET TO THE PLANNING ZONING COMMISSION FOR A SECTION 8-24 REVIEW**", seconded by Councilor Morin.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky if in referring this to Planning Zoning that should the request be approved, that it is contingent upon the Hall completing its renovations. His concern is that the property owner will turn around and sell the piece of land. Can we stipulate that when the renovations are complete that the Town will then grant the right-of-way? Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that Council rather than Planning Zoning would want to stipulate this as part of the resolution. Staff who have reviewed this request have come back to him with certain conditions they would like to see as part of the abandonment.

Councilor Gardow said that possibly we could not abandon the entire southeast corner of the property where there is a sharp bend. This would provide less of a curve when turning from Church Street onto Main Street.

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

RECREATION PARKS REQUEST FOR PROGRAM FEE INCREASES

Interim Town Manager Swetcky referred to the memo in Council's packets from Recreation Parks Director Kathy Bagley requesting fee increases for some of the Recreation programs offered. These increases would contribute approximately \$9,000 to the General Fund Budget.

Councilor Cascio asked Ms. Bagley how Wethersfield compares to the surrounding communities with like programs. Ms. Bagley said that we are generally competitive with them. The increase is a matter of course as she goes through the budget process. Unofficial surveys with other departments are done to make sure that we are all at a similar rate. The pool pass rate is difficult to compare as different things are included in each town's pass rate. Wethersfield is in the middle range. Councilor Cascio asked if all the programs currently being run are self-sustaining. Ms. Bagley said that not all of them are. The programs run out of the operating fund are generally not self-sustaining; which is why these programs are being brought to Council for an increase. The majority of programs; however, are not only self-sustaining, but they generate revenue.

Councilor Sassano asked Ms. Bagley if the \$9,250 amount is because that is for a partial year as opposed to the \$16,000 for the 2003-04 fiscal year. Why is there a difference in the amounts? Ms. Bagley said that part of the fee increases are for self-sustaining programs which don't come to the Council for approval. These programs make up the dollar difference. Councilor Sassano asked if there is any projected attrition due to the fee increases. Ms. Bagley said that the department works hard to prevent that from happening. She feels that the fees are reasonable and within the market range. Councilor Sassano asked how close to the ceiling we are on these fees. Ms. Bagley said that we are close and that some of the self-sustaining programs will see no increase next year because of this.

Councilor Gardow asked when the last time was that fees were increased. Ms. Bagley said that the self-sustaining rates are looked at every year. Of the programs listed on the memo, Dance Drama was raised two years ago, Swim passes and Therapeutic Recreation programs have remained the same since 1994.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked what the resident vs. non-resident revenue percentage is with regard to the swimming program. Ms. Bagley said that there is not a pool pass available for a non-resident. The fee is for residents who bring a non-resident guest. There are not a lot of non-residents who come swimming. An educated guess would be revenue of approximately \$100 for non-resident swimming. Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked why non-residents aren't charged an additional amount to swim outdoors as they are to swim indoors. Ms. Bagley said that the fees for indoor swimming are also the same for residents and non-residents. She would be willing to look at the option of charging an additional fee for non-residents.

Chairperson Czernicki asked why Wethersfield has not chosen to go with a year-round pool pass. Ms. Bagley said that it was reviewed and that more money can be made the way that the program is currently offered. Chairperson Czernicki asked if, other than the Adult Social Club, if all the Therapeutic Recreation programs are for children. Ms. Bagley said that this is correct. Chairperson Czernicki asked if a similar increase in programs has taken place for the other children's daycare programs. Ms. Bagley said that the same has been proposed for those programs, but that they do not show up on this memo as they are self-sustaining programs. Chairperson Czernicki stressed that she does not want to eliminate the affordability of programs; however we need to push at the fee ceiling to see which programs are really desired.

Councilor Morin commented that Wethersfield certainly needs more funds; however with regard to the non-resident pool fees, we shouldn't be looking at this as a means of revenue just because your child wants to bring a non-resident buddy to the pool for the day. He's not comfortable with this unless there are some sort of numbers to substantiate it. Chairperson Czernicki suggested that Ms. Bagley supply Council with these numbers at the end of this season.

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO APPROVE THE INCREASE REQUEST FOR PROGRAM FEES**", seconded by Councilor Flynn. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Sassano moved "**TO AWARD THE BID FOR SMALL CITIES GRANT ADMINISTRATION TO RAMILI ASSOCIATES, LLC IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10,000**", seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

Interim Town Manager Swetcky explained that the State of Connecticut awarded Wethersfield a small cities grant of \$390,000 for accessibility improvements to the Town Hall and the Community Center. The grant has many federal stipulations and requires hiring a consultant to help us administer this grant. The consultant, with a maximum fee of \$10,000, will help us with the project monitoring requirements. Ramili Associates is the consultant who helped to put the application together for us.

Councilor Hemmann asked if this would normally go out to bid. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that if it exceeded \$10,000 it would go out to bid. Consultant contracts are not required to go out to bid. The \$10,000 is built into the grant as part of the administration costs.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky what the amount paid to Ramili was to put together the grant. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said the amount was \$3,000. Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if the \$10,000

is exceeded, would we have to continue paying them. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that he would need to come back to Council for a change order to the contract or cut back on their services. Most grants are administered in house by the department responsible for submitting the grant. Coordinating and accounting is done by the finance office. There is a vacant position authorized by Council for a Grants Coordinator. This position will not be filled until June/July 2003. The small cities grant for housing rehab is being administered through L. Wagner and Associates who are charging us \$19,000. Deputy Mayor O'Connor is concerned with how competitive Ramili's fees are as opposed to administering in-house or bringing on a part-time administrator.

Councilor Morin agrees with Deputy Mayor O'Connor as far as administering grants in-house. He believes that we have people on staff who could handle this until the position of Grants Coordinator is filled. He won't support spending \$10,000 as this is not that big a deal that it can't be administered in-house.

Councilor Cascio asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky if there is staff in-house at this time to handle this project. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that come May or June there will probably be some staff available to do this project, although not with the efficiency that the consultant can. They are familiar with the small cities process and with the grant application and requirements. There will be a learning curve for the staff in-house to pick up on this. Councilor Cascio asked what the critical issue is if this firm is not hired. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that it is basically complying with the recording requirements. This grant is very report-oriented. There are a lot of state and federal compliance issues involved.

Councilor Sassano is surprised that we even hired a firm to help us with applying for the grant. He wonders if this has been done in the past. Also, have we had firms help us administer grants in the past? He asked how we know that this \$10,000 is competitive without sending it out to bid. This appears to be a kind of back door outsourcing or privatization that is a policy decision of the Council's. He cannot support this bid in its current form.

Councilor Hemmann asked if we administer the grant from within, would we be in danger of losing the grant due to compliance issues. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that there are interim and final audits conducted on small cities grants that look for noncompliance. There is a time frame required to commit and spend the money. This grant allows for two years. We have until November, 2004 to fully expend and close out this grant program. Interim Town Manager Swetcky addressed Councilor Sassano in saying that this is the second grant that we have used an outside consultant. The town was not always successful in obtaining these grants and it was decided to use a consultant for the last two grants received under the small cities program.

Councilor Cascio asked if we should table this issue until questions are resolved. He also questioned that since there is a hiring freeze, do we have staff available to handle administering this grant. Can we go on an hourly basis with this firm? Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that it is possible to approach the firm and negotiate with them an hourly basis fee and only administering until a certain date. We will make every effort not to lose the grant. Staff will make time to make sure we comply.

Councilor Fitzpatrick stated that we have borrowed against this grant for the new Police Facility. It is critical that we hang onto this grant. The administration of this grant is coming out of the grant itself. It will not affect the general fund or the tax rate. Hiring an in-house part timer will not be paid for out of the grant.

Councilor Gardow commented that \$10,000 at \$60/hour is 160 hours. He asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky if this is a reasonable amount of hours over a period of 1 1/2 years. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that because of the small cities requirements a lot of the hours are burned up at the beginning of the grant. The next step is to provide public notice, next the company will have to review the bid specifications. They'd have to help us insure the proper prevailing wages for this type of work. Last, is monitoring and keeping up with reporting requirements. Approximately 1/3 of the hours are burned up at the beginning and as the grant proceeds, less hours are used. He cannot see using 160 hours to administer this grant.

Councilor Morin asked if the consultant is a member of the Police Building Committee. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that he is. Councilor Morin said that this doesn't seem right to him.

Councilor Gardow agreed with Councilor Morin.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky if construction will stop if Council chooses not to make a decision on this matter. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that the administration of the grant would be fit into the in-house schedule. It would delay some of the work taking place. The elevator would be done midway through the project and other accessibility issues would be delayed until August or September. In-house administration would need to be done by Interim Town Manager Swetcky or Ray Carpentino, Town Planner and neither has the time, presently, to do so.

Councilor Cascio commented that with staff not having the time and there being a hiring freeze in place, what does Council want to do at this point to move this grant along.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor does not want to hold up the project, nor wait until Spring or Summer and recommends that Council make a motion to offer \$50/hour with a maximum of \$5,000. Interim Town Manager Swetcky suggested that Council reject this and direct him to either renegotiate with the consultant or put it out to bid. Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if it is put out to bid, would it be ready for the next Council meeting. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that it would not. It would be ready for the second Council meeting in April.

Councilor Gardow would not support a consultant who is also on the Building Committee. He sees a conflict of interest with this.

Councilor Morin commented on the comment made that if we hired a part-time person we would have to find things for him to do. The Council has stressed that we need to be more active in applying for grants. This part-timer could be doing this. He is comfortable with putting this position in the Budget if the position is utilized properly.

Councilor Hemmann agrees with Councilor Morin's comments. She'd feel more comfortable if this issue went out to bid.

Chairperson Czernicki asked how long the hiring process would take to get this person on board. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that it would take approximately five weeks and it would take the person (at 10 hours per week) three weeks to get up to speed on the grant.

Councilor Sassano doesn't agree that there would necessarily be a conflict with the administrator also being on the Building Committee; however it gives the appearance that he was awarded the position because of some sort of insider status. He doesn't think that resigning from the Committee would make any difference.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor commented that \$60/hour equates to \$125,000 per year which is a lot of money to administer paperwork. He will not support this motion.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved "**TO TABLE THE MOTION TO AWARD THE BID FOR SMALL CITIES GRANT ADMINISTRATION TO RAMILI ASSOCIATES, LLC IN THE AMOUNT OF \$10,000**", seconded by Councilor Hemmann. Councilors Cascio, Czernicki, Fitzpatrick, Gardow, Hemmann, and O'Connor voted AYE. Councilors Morin and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-2-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ABANDONMENT OF A PORTION OF FORMER SPRING STREET RIGHT OF WAY IN THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following described property, being a portion of that Town land abutting 171 Spring Street, but no longer within and necessary to the Spring Street right of way due to the roadway relocation, be **ABANDONED** as an excess portion of the public road of way, and be quit claimed to the abutting property owner, subject to such utility easements and access rights which presently exist;

Description: A piece or parcel of land which abuts the Spring Street right of way which has been relocated about 30 feet east, thereby leaving this excess right of way, consisting of approximately 1,327 square feet, or 0.0305 acres more

or less, as depicted in the Detail of Proposed Abandonment Area on a map entitled "Property Survey, Property of Kimberly Drouin, Assessors Parcel 242-011, 171 Spring Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut, dated Nov. 25, 2002, Scale 1"=40', Sheet 1 of 1, prepared by Hallisey Pearson Cassidy, Civil Engineers and Land Surveyors, Rocky Hill, Connecticut, Lloyd A. Pearson. LS"

RESOLUTION ALLOCATING \$40,000 FOR AIR CONDITIONERS AT THE HIGHCREST AND HANMER SCHOOLS

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council allocate up to \$40,000 to the Board of Education for the purpose of installing air conditioners at the Highcrest and Hanmer Schools.

MINUTES

Councilor Fitzpatrick moved "**TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 18, 2003**", seconded by Councilor Cascio. Councilors Cascio, Czernicki, Fitzpatrick, Gardow, Hemmann, Morin and Sassano voted AYE. Deputy Mayor O'Connor abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Reports

- a. Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. 2002 Annual Report

COUNCIL

Chairperson Czernicki noted that the ribbon cutting at the new Wethersfield Police Facility will be this Saturday, March 8 at 11:00 a.m. Also, she had the honor of attending the Celtic Cultural Association honoring of the grand marshal of the Hartford St. Patrick's Day parade. The honoree is John Harrington, a resident of Wethersfield. The Wethersfield parade marshal is Father Jim Moran.

Councilor Fitzpatrick announced that the parade is Saturday, March 15 beginning at the capitol at 11:00 a.m. Line up will be on Washington Street and Lafayette Street.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky where we are in the process of renovating the Town Hall. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that the Building Committee has directed that an RFQ be put out for an architect to do renovations to the Town Hall and the Library. One architect will be selected to do both. This has been advertised and proposals are being accepted until the end of March.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if Town Clerk Sassano would speak up if Council is out of order at any time during the meeting.

PUBLIC

Robert Garry, 54 Main Street, spoke on the Recreation Parks program fees increase. He believes that if a program is not self-funding that a fee for non-residents is a fee in principal. If a participant is not a resident, additional fees should be charged. Mr. Garry is a member of the Historic District Committee and has seen the plans for the old Hall at Church and Main Streets. The renovations are quite extensive for this beautiful building. There is a lot of foot traffic in this area as well as a lot of on-street parking. There is not visibility coming out of either Church or Marsh Street onto Main Street. There has already been one tragic accident there and he'd hate to see another. He feels that there should be a 4-way stop at the intersection. Also, the stopwalks at the intersection make no sense.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Interim Town Manager Swetcky if the Planning Zoning will be looking at any of Mr. Garry's concerns with regard to the abandonment of a portion of Church Street. Interim Town Manager Swetcky said that Planning Zoning should have looked at all of this when the renovation proposals were before them. The traffic concerns could be looked at by the appropriate staff. Chairperson Czernicki said that the letter regarding availability of

off-street parking will be going out to Main Street business owners this week.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on the small cities grant. He agrees that it should be tabled at this time. He encourages it being administered in-house. He fears that if residents' tax bills go up higher, the \$10million referendum could be in jeopardy. With regard to the Board of Education budget, he noticed that in the budget forecast, there are a lot of line items overexpended. There are also a number that are underexpended. The underexpended amount should be used as the basis of budgeting for next year. The Board of Education was talking 6.9% and have reduced that to a 6% increase. When the two budgets are consolidated the Council needs to stay in the zero range to get this referendum passed.

Rocco Orsini, 95 Broad Street, spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. He was encouraged to see so many police officers here on behalf of Acting Chief Cetran. The Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. has reviewed the hiring process and has to disagree with speakers who request that the Council override the Town Manager in making a decision of who to hire. He suggests that Council audit the process. If they don't then the entire process was a waste of time if they're going to simply overrule it. Mr. Orsini also spoke of the meeting the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. held last week. The meeting usually runs 7-10 p.m. The Library and Town Hall close at 9:00 p.m. and they were asked to leave. In the past, because the Police Department was located in the building, people could stay as late as they desired. Regarding the Nature Center, they submitted a well-written memo. A good objective to put forward to the Nature Center would be to make their programs self-sustaining so as to decrease any town share to fund their Center. Mr. Orsini was approached and asked why "Habitat for Humanity" type groups can't be recruited to fix up the Moeller Home. Mr. Orsini commented on the resolution to install air conditioning at Highcrest School. The Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. does not agree with this. He's only heard two parents complain in the past year. He's not heard any complaints from the principal or the nurse, or any formal complaints that there are problems. To take this and put it on the top of the capital improvements list is not right if it wasn't even in the top ten last year or this year. Finally, Wethersfield's grand list went up .64. If our taxes are going to be too high, Wethersfield will become an undesirable community in which to reside or do business. He urges Council to put a sense of urgency on the subject of Wethersfield's budget.

Edward Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, commented on the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. He is curious as to how much weight the Council gives this Association. He feels that a member of the Association should publicly state what their membership is. He has been informed by other town residents that they have the same questions regarding the Association. Mr. Andrew Adil wrote an article in last week's Wethersfield Life regarding the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. Chairperson Czernicki stated that Mr. Adil was a former council member. Mr. Adil wrote that he had canvassed a number of his neighbors and none of them were members of the Association and that they all agreed that the Association does not speak for them. Following the February 3 Council meeting a member of the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. notified Mr. Tevald that the Association has 450 members. Mr. Tevald has also been told that there are less than 20 members. Mr. Tevald received an e-mail from a member of the Association indicating he believes there are 500 members and that the mission of the Association is "responsible taxation". The fee for joining the Association is \$9 per year. Assuming there are 500 members, that is only a 5% representation of the 9,800 residential property owners of Wethersfield. Council needs to keep in mind that the Association is speaking only for that 5%.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented that one of the wonderful things about this country is the citizens constitutional right to speak to their government. He believes that when citizens speak at Council meetings on a regular basis, that they are interested citizens of the community. All comments by the public are worthy of Council's attention. Council needs to consider the seriousness of the challenges confronting this town and its budget. Comments and concerns need to be directed at how those in positions of authority can run this town more effectively, not how private citizens function, operate and collect data to share with the leadership with the intent of providing guidance.

Tom Brown, 15 Harding Street, clarified that his rhetorical question of why people don't move out of Wethersfield was taken out of context. He'd like to see more people move into Wethersfield and the way to do that is by keeping its strong school system. This helps to market our town and improve its tax base in the future.

Paul Langdon, 159 Beverly Road, moved here one year ago. The main reason he and his family moved here was for

the school system. He believes that 0% growth is death to the town.

George Wallace, 22 Chesterfield Road, shared with Council data from the Wethersfield portion of the 2000 U.S. Census and also the Strategic School Profile for 2001-02. The census states that there are 26,271 citizens in Wethersfield. For ages 5-18 there are 3,550 citizens which represents 13.2% of the community. For ages 65+ there are 6,165 citizens which represents 23.4%. The mean retirement income for the 6,165 citizens is \$19,199 (information provided by the IRS). The average price of a home in Wethersfield for tax purposes is \$111,000 and the new tax rate is 33.80 which comes to an average tax payment of \$3,751. After deducting this amount and others for Medicare, prescription insurance, utilities, and other necessary living expenses, a couple would end up with \$6,443 per year which equates to \$536 per month. The Census tells us that in that 65+ group of citizens, 323 citizens are at the poverty level. It also tells us that of 7,400 families in our community, 1,231 earn less than \$35,000. There are also 321 citizens in this town who earn \$200,000+. The total budget increase from the 1993-94 budget to the 2002-03 budget is \$474,354,688. Of that, \$272,257,106 or 57.4% went to the Board of Education. The total increase for the ten year period is \$16,980,964. Of that \$9,922,973 went to the schools and \$7,059,999 went to the Town. There is so much information out there that there is no excuse for anyone not to have their facts straight. The information is available on the computer and also the library provides a wealth of information. He urges Council to review these reports before sitting down to set a budget.

Councilor Cascio announced that during Council hours last Thursday, a resident of Spring Street asked that the speed limit be enforced on that road.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:35 p.m., Councilor Morin moved "**TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS POTENTIAL LITIGATION**" seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 10:50 p.m., Councilor Fitzpatrick moved "**TO GO OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AND BACK TO REGULAR SESSION**" seconded by Councilor Morin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 10:51 p.m., Councilor Sassano moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk