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SPECIAL MEETING JUNE 30, 2003

The Wethersfield Town Council held a Special Meeting on Monday, June 30, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Wethersfield Police Facility at 250 Silas Deane Highway.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Gardow, Hemmann, Morin, Deputy Mayor O'Connor and Chairperson Czernicki.

Absent: Councilors Fitzpatrick, Flynn, and Sassano.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk; and Michael Paine of Paine's Refuse Inc., Joseph Hart, Physical Services.

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

Automated Refuse Pickup

Chairperson Czernicki said that the Refuse Committee met two weeks ago with Mr. Paine and asked Council Gardow to report on the meeting.

Councilor Gardow said that the Refuse Committee met with Mr. Paine, Town Manager Therrien, and Physical Services Director Joe Hart to discuss the budget adjustment made in the recycling program to change to biweekly recycling pickup. Councilor Gardow said that Mr. Paine warned that biweekly recycling might increase the recyclable items going into the weekly regular trash. He provided the amount of tons recycled for the last year when biweekly recycling was done. The amount was 2,247 tons. In 2002-2003 there were 2,741 tons. Mr. Paine thinks that the difference of 500 tons was recycling material going into the regular trash. As of July 1, 2003 the CRRA tipping fee will increase to \$63.75 per ton. This equates to \$31,500 for the 500 tons of recycling that is going into the waste bins instead of being recycled. This worst case scenario shows that we would actually be losing money by going to biweekly recycling. Councilor Gardow said that we are meeting tonight to discuss the automated pickup. He introduced Mr. Paine to comment on this.

Mr. Paine said that Councilor Gardow accurately reflected his concern with going to biweekly recycling pickup. Money would be saved on the service side of the recycling; however the tip fee will increase as some recyclables will go into the trash. Mr. Paine suggests that the Town go to automated trash service as many other Towns are now doing. The first year's bill will be reduced by \$10,000 and Mr. Paine has given Town Manager Therrien a proposal on a five-year contract. Mr. Paine has purchased new trucks for the automated pickup and cannot offer any more of a savings because of this. A year ago many options of automated pickup were discussed. Some of these options are no longer feasible because the money is no longer available from the State. Paine's will need to purchase automated trash pickup trucks as well as the barrels. The total for this is in excess of \$750,000. Mr. Paine said that he would like to work with the Town as much as he can.

Councilor Gardow said that the State Grant available last year was to assist municipalities with the purchase of barrels. Mr. Paine said that this has since disappeared.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked the Town Manager about the new proposal. Town Manager Therrien said that the proposal is in the Councilors' packets. There is a breakdown of the costs. The increase of the costs each year is tied into the CPI. The worst case scenario shows a 3.5% increase each year. These figures are not concrete. Councilor O'Connor asked if there would be a \$10,000 savings every year. Mr. Paine said that there is a savings in the first year of \$10,000 and after that the fees will resume without the discount. Paine's has significant costs due to the fact that this is a very different proposal than the one discussed a year and a half ago. The State Grant is no longer available and he

is trying to work with the Town to work this out. He cannot afford to give a \$10,000 discount each year. Councilor O'Connor said that the difference in the automated pickup fee from year one to year two is a \$300,000 increase. He verified that the only savings we'll see in the first ten years is the first year's \$10,000. In year ten, there is an additional \$50,000 savings. For years two thru nine the Town is going to be charged as if the trash is being picked up manually. Councilor O'Connor said that we're saving only about \$1,200 per year.

Councilor Cascio thanked Mr. Paine for coming tonight. He asked who would incur the costs of the three different sized barrels since the State Grant is no longer available. Mr. Paine said that Paine's will purchase the barrels. Mr. Paine said that there will be 65 gallon and 95 gallon barrels available. He doesn't feel that there is a need for a third size barrel. The 65 gallon barrel is adequate for most people. Garage service for the handicapped and elderly can be directed by the Town. Councilor Cascio asked if people can purchase an additional barrel if they so choose. Mr. Paine said that this is being discussed. He is willing to give the Town an additional hundred barrels. Councilor Cascio is concerned that the Council is not convinced that automated pickup is the way to go. He asked Mr. Paine to provide information that would reassure the Council that this is the way to go. Mr. Paine said that communities that have gone with the automated pickup are very satisfied. Residents can still call for pickup of occasional larger item pickups. The cost of Paine's purchasing new trucks and barrels will be passed along to the Town.

Councilor Gardow asked how bundles of brush would be disposed of. Mr. Paine said that he suggests that they be put into the barrel. He also said that tip fees will decrease because the garbage is dryer being that the covers don't blow off.

Councilor Morin said that he has never been a great fan of the automated system. He disagrees on the simplicity of it. It is bulky. A savings of \$10,000 for the first year does not seem to reap a benefit for the Town. It will restrict what residents are used to and he sees an inconvenience to the Town. He's taken the time to speak with people in other Towns who have automated pickup and many are not happy with it. He does support recycling on a weekly basis as he agrees that many people will start to put recyclables into the regular trash.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Paine if, with regard to the additional 100 barrels, the Town should charge residents for additional barrels or if a lottery system should be set up. Mr. Paine said that residents should be charged a nominal fee for additional barrels. He said that by contract Public Works directs Paine's as to who will receive backyard pickup. There would be an additional fee if this number were to increase significantly. Chairperson Czernicki asked how this is calculated. Mr. Paine said that there is a number set up and this number is multiplied by the number of homes requesting backyard pickup. Chairperson Czernicki asked if there is an additional charge for pickup if a resident has two barrels.

Mr. Paine said that he does not think there would be an additional charge as long as the total number of barrels does not become too big. Chairperson Czernicki said that her family living in a shore side community as well as their neighbors are delighted with the automated pickup mainly because the covers fit so tightly that there are no rodents invading their trash and also because the trash is less smelly.

Councilor Gardow said that we can roll the dice for a year and see how the biweekly pickup goes with regard to getting real numbers. We need to see the real numbers in order to calculate the savings.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor does not feel that rolling the dice makes sense. He thinks that recyclables are going to end up in the garbage once resident's recycling bins are full. He supports the idea of automated pickup. Council recently passed a blight ordinance to make people more accountable to the presentation of their property and this falls in line with that. He'd like to see a greater savings as \$10,000 is not a lot of money. Having one barrel may force residents to recycle more. This would be a benefit to the community as a whole. He thinks automated pickup is a great idea. There should be a greater savings to the Town as automated pickup increases Paine's profits due to lower liability coverage and time savings. The Town should get a bigger piece of these profits. Councilors O'Connor is not interested in biweekly recycling. He'd like to get more information as to whether recycling went up and in turn tipping fees down in communities who have changed to automated pickup.

Mr. Paine said that he can try to get this information. He pointed out that CRRA is blaming their increases on Enron. CRRA is talking about an 8% increase going out into the next 7-8 years.

Councilor Gardow asked Town Manager Therrien if she has obtained information yet from East Hartford. She said that it is hard to compare us to them as they have their own internal employees for trash removal. She told Councilor Gardow that she can provide the information given to her in regard to the savings in tipping. She can also get information from Rocky Hill.

Chairperson Czernicki thanked Mr. Paine for coming to the meeting tonight and answering Councilors' questions. She also thanked him for reminding the Council that the fee from CRRA is beyond their control and will have to be passed along to residents. Any further questions by Councilors will be filtered through the Town Manager to Mr. Paine.

Grass Clippings

Chairperson Czernicki said that the Refuse Committee also met to discuss the grass clipping situation. A number of residents responded to Council members that they desire that the Town continue to accept grass clippings. Most of these residents said that they would be willing to pay a fee for the service.

Councilor Gardow said that the Refuse Committee received information from Mr. Prescott with an analysis of the grass clippings disposal costs. There was also data received from Mr. Hart, Director of Physical Services, as to the suggested cost per bag. There was a line item of \$25,000 per year in the budget for the cost of disposal of grass clippings. There were approximately 100 residents using the service and it was decided by Council to remove the service. As it turns out, there are actually more than 600 households using this service. Physical Services derived a suggested fee of \$3 per 32 gallon bag of grass disposal. The residents who appeared at the meeting did not seem to have a big issue with this fee.

The Refuse Committee voted positively on the \$3 per bag charge. This fee would commence July 1 and the Physical Services Department will devise a coupons system to be used.

Councilor Cascio thanked Councilor Gardow and the Refuse Committee for the information. He also thanked Mr. Interlande and Mr. Prescott for keeping this issue alive. He thinks that it is a great idea that the program can be self-sustaining. He is concerned that \$3 per bag will not be enough to charge. Mr. Hart said that fee is based not on the cost per dump, but at the cost per ton going into the dump. The labor has been added into the cost of dumping. Councilor Cascio asked what would happen if we based it on the cost per dump. Mr. Hart said that DEP has not established a standard yet for how often grass is to be dumped. Should a dump be required once a day, the amount dumped can vary depending on how much grass was put into the dumpster. Councilor Cascio is concerned that since the number of residents using the program has now increased from 100 to over 500, each load dumped may be over the capacity allowed. Mr. Hart said that the price is a unit price and the funds we collect will go up proportionately to the amount we transport to be dumped.

Councilor Morin asked where the grass is dumped. Mr. Hart said that it goes to Greencycle in West Hartford. They charge \$49 per ton plus a \$154 hauling fee. If the grass were to be brought to Hartford it would have to go through the landfill. Councilor Morin asked if there is anyone else who does this or if we are limited to whom we can go to. Mr. Hart said that there is only this one source.

Chairperson Czernicki said that at the budget hearings Mr. Hart reported that 100 residents using the service cost \$25,000. Mr. Hart said that the 100 number was a guess on his part at the time and it was a bad guess. The numbers provided at the budget hearing were not accurate. Chairperson Czernicki said that this inaccuracy puts the Council in a difficult position. They made decisions based on the \$25,000 and 100 residents figures. To now hear that the number is 500% larger may certainly change the Council's decision. She asked Mr. Hart if there is any way to track the residents using the service. Mr. Hart said that this will be done. At the time of the budget hearings he was reluctant to supply a number but did so because a number was required. He does not think that anyone will be able to project a number on a program with which we have no experience. He accepts any recommendation for a method to track the use.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Hart if he is positive that the \$3 fee will cover the Town's needs. Mr. Hart said that he is fairly confident based on the way that the number was calculated.

Councilor Hemmann verified that the DEP changed the laws for disposal as of July 1, 2002. There was a large change in what is accepted. It is important to note that Council did not just decide to eliminate the program; there was a

change with the DEP.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that Council doesn't really have any choice in the matter. If residents are forced to be more economical, everyone in Town will benefit. If residents are forced to mulch their grass, less will be thrown into the dump and our tipping fees will decrease.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"TO ACCEPT THE FEE OF \$3 PER 32 GALLON CONTAINER OF GRASS CLIPPINGS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2003"**, seconded by Councilor Gardow.

Mr. Hart pointed out that the 600 number will begin to drop once a fee is charged for the service.

Councilor Morin said that he'd like to see the DEP regulators come back and try to help us out. He does not support residents paying for this service. He'd like to talk to our legislators and have a meeting with the DEP to come up with a more economical way of handling this.

Chairperson Czernicki said that the Town Manager can write to our legislators and speak to unfunded mandates.

Councilor Cascio asked how often the dumpster is dumped. Mr. Hart said that it is dumped when it begins to smell even if it is not full to capacity. Councilor Cascio said that there are a lot of things that are not mandated and many children's activities are on a pay for play basis. There is a \$350 cap per family. He does not think that any grass clippings per family will exceed \$350.

Councilor Gardow said that if Council votes this motion down, residents in Wethersfield will have nowhere to go to dump their grass clippings. For those residents who do not care to mulch, this motion is better than nothing.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that the motion is per 32-gallon container.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Morin voted NAY. The motion passed 5-1-0.

Chairperson Czernicki acknowledged Mr. Hart's many years of service and noted that this is his last day as Director of Physical Services.

Goal Setting

Chairperson said that this is Council's first opportunity to sit down as a body with Town Manager Therrien to express desired goals. The goals range from short term to about three years out.

Councilor Gardow said that in the last year there have been many issues regarding projects that have gotten residents up in arms. There are two procedures that must be followed and they are the Strategic Plan and the Plan of Conservation and Development. He would like to see by the end of September, two two-hour training sessions of what these two documents entail and how to implement them to all the stakeholders of the Strategic Plan and the Plan of Conservation and Development. The new Town Planner or the Town Engineer could provide insight to information to bodies such as the Council, Planning & Zoning, Zoning Board of Appeals, Inlands & Wetlands Commission, Building Committees and the Chairmen of other Boards and Commissions. This will educate, inform and inspire the members of these Boards and Commissions to have a common goal for the Town. We can develop a vision between all Boards and Commissions on where to go with these documents. The public and other appropriate Town staff should be invited as well.

Councilor Cascio said that there are a lot of crossovers with these committees. Having a joint meeting allows them to hear what they need to be accountable for and what they're working on. Isolation is not good. This could help to make the community aware of what other groups are doing.

Councilor Gardow suggested the dates of August 25 for the Strategic Plan and September 22 for the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Councilor Hemmann said that Councilors received a copy of the structure of the Physical Services and the changes in staffing. Town Manager Therrien said that the Charter says that the Town Manager is the Director of Public Works unless Council agrees to actually have a Director of Public Works. With Mr. Hart retiring, the Director of Physical Services position will not be filled. The Council has been given a copy of a new organizational chart of how the position will be configured. This could result in an upgrade for someone in the Public Works Department. This is a trial basis and will be reviewed on October 1.

Councilor Cascio said that during her interview process, Town Manager Therrien said that she had a real strong background in Personnel. He would like to see a short-term goal set to develop performance-based evaluations for Department Heads. Each Department Head would have to take ownership of issues and solutions to the issues with which they're working. This would create and develop accountability and help Town Manager Bonnie Therrien set criteria.

Chairperson Czernicki expanded on the performance-based evaluations. She'd like to have Town Manager Bonnie Therrien implement a policy that initial reporting be submitted to the Town Manager within two to three business days of its request. This would enable Council to have more time to review information before deciding on important issues. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she could develop such a policy.

Councilor Morin asked if this is to create a quicker turnaround time for action to be taken and Chairperson Czernicki said yes. She said that the Department Head could at least indicate that it would take a specific longer period of time to obtain the information.

Chairperson Czernicki said that she'd like to see at specific intervals (quarterly), a review of the budget expenditures with an eye toward cost efficiency. She'd like to see Department Heads and staff continually on the lookout for ways to save money and share these with the Town Manager.

Councilor Morin would like to look more into open space conservation. He has, in the past, approached the Council with DEP grants for substantial amounts of money. We need to show a commitment for the three or four properties identified. He'd like to see some type of action as the benefits to the Town are great. This is a quality of life issue. He supports what the Silas Deane Revitalization group is proposing, but it is a huge process to get anything done as this is a State road. It is basically a bureaucratic nightmare.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien if a portion of the money available in the Open Space budget can be used to hire a grant writer to go after Federal funds for open space. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that we already have a position open. She said that she would have to check into this and see if there would be specific parameters to the position.

Councilor Morin said that we probably would have someone in-house prepare these with the Town Manager's guidance.

Councilor Cascio said that we could pull together the Town Planner, EDIC, Wethersfield shopkeepers, the Chamber of Commerce, Silas Deane Highway and Berlin Turnpike merchants, the Open Space group and the State Highway people for an economic development summit. They could come together rather than always separate meetings of them all. Also, regarding the personnel issue, Councilor Cascio said that we could also continue the opportunity for employees to meet with the Town Manager and talk about ideas and concerns confidentially. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has expressed this already as she has met with employees as a group. She said that employees will learn that there is a definite trust factor as they see that issues are discussed and no information has leaked out. Councilor Cascio would like to see this continue.

Chairperson Czernicki referred back to the Economic Summit and feels that it would be very important to identify the areas deserving of special attention. The Council has discussed this in the past and the areas include the Fun Zone, Goff Brook Shops and at Warehouse Department Stores. These properties have been problems for a long time and the new Town Planner could focus on these. These, however, are certainly not the only areas requiring focus. We want to retain current businesses and welcome any opportunities for redevelopment.

Councilor Morin said that he'd like to see a package put together for the area behind Carmen Anthony's on the Berlin Turnpike. His only concern is that there will possibly be too many meetings. People may start to get "meetinged out". He supports coming together with a plan.

Councilor Gardow said that he'd like to see something done about the gas station on the Berlin Turnpike that was sold.

Councilor Hemmann said that her new pet peeve is technology. As we move to greater capability and efficiency, she'd like to see our web page used in a very functional way. She'd like to see policies and procedures posted on the web page for access to staff and the general public. This could cut back on paper use. We want to strive to use the technology we have in the most efficient way. Just simply having the technology isn't enough. She'd like to see inventory tracked and historical records of our buildings kept on software that is provided for such use. This will be a great help to Town staff.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the system that the Town is currently using is awful. It is very inefficient and time is wasted in verifying if information has been received or not. Councilor Hemmann said that we can at the same time look into the technology provided at the schools. We can add to what is currently in place.

Councilor Cascio said that he'd like to see a short term goal set to look into the development of an administrative support system where there is cross training of support staff to cover busy times in certain offices. He's not sure if this would be allowed by the Unions.

Chairperson Czernicki said that she'd like to see the Town Manager develop some efficiencies for the Council. She said that Council members have been very pleased with the Town Manager's Weekly Management Reports. It is a new way for them to receive information and it is a good format. She said that the agenda is set up nicely in that it provides information on each topic without having to flip back and forth between pages. Chairperson Czernicki said that the Councilors are called out a lot and there are a fairly high amount of Council subcommittees. She'd like to see, in the next three months, the Town Manager provide guidance to Council to consolidate some of the subcommittees so that they can do their business in a more efficient manner. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has begun to work on the areas of efficiency and rules & procedures. Chairperson Czernicki said that she'd like to see an RFP for the cost of an outside vendor to do the Town-wide payroll. Another RFP would be for the cost of outsourcing leaf collection. Information on both of these would be beneficial to Council. Chairperson Czernicki asked if the Charter indicates that the Council could not have a meeting about the budget prior to the first April date. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Charter does not state that. Chairperson Czernicki said that she'd like to see a first budget meeting for strategy planning by February 15 each year. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that it is being recommended that budget meetings begin early on to decide on a bottom line and then back into it. Chairperson Czernicki said that there were a lot of problems this year with the budget books staying together because of all of the flipping back and forth of pages. She wonders if there is any other way of developing the book so that it is more user friendly. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the current budget book is not user friendly at all and would like to see a different setup. The line items do not seem to make sense. They need to be more specific. There is nothing that prohibits the Council from redesigning the budget document. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will provide Council members with a couple of samples of different types of budget setups.

Councilor Cascio said that a long term goal to look at is all of the building projects coming up. He'd like to get an inventory and even a tour of all of the facilities. Also, Councilor Cascio walked the Forest Drive area and found the conditions of the roadways to be far from acceptable. He said that we need to review the road map plan on which we've spent so much money. We need to come up with a better way to review our cost of road repair; possibly even bonding. Councilor Morin said that the consultant came in to speak to Council about this topic and he explained that once a road gets below a certain level of deterioration, it will take a lot of money to repair it. Councilor Cascio said that whatever Town Manager Bonnie Therrien can offer in her experience with roadway upkeep would be helpful.

Councilor Gardow said that the use of technology and the software product that we've purchased to keep up with road repair is very important. We can provide on the internet the pecking order of road repair for the public.

Councilor Hemmann said that data relating to our infrastructure needs to be put together into a usable format. A tour of a facility could include a summary of the results. This would make it easier to decipher the information provided rather

than drawing it from so many different sources.

Councilor Gardow said that there are four major projects going on in Wethersfield right now. First is the Silas Deane Middle School which is wrapping up. Second is the Police Facility which is almost done. Third is the Library and Town Hall. Fourth is the Webb, Stillman and Physical Services Buildings. We need to develop a time line for these projects and make this information available to the public on the web site.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that he'd like to see for a year-out goal is a Town-wide consolidation of Maintenance of grounds and facilities. The Board of Education can focus on the education and services for the children and let the Town take care of the maintenance of the facilities. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that we are just about there as far as grounds go. She and Dr. Proctor are looking at other ways of consolidation.

Councilor Cascio said that there was talk years ago of consolidating into one Townwide finance department.

Chairperson Czernicki said that in one of the Town Manager's Reports, Town Manager Therrien stated that she and Superintendent Proctor are looking at the consolidation of Maintenance and Data Service & Technology. Council is asking them to include the consolidation of Town-wide Finance.

Councilor Gardow said that the Town, through Social Services, handles a lot of the Youth Services items. He'd like to see some of these items spill over to the Board of Education for them to handle. He'd like to see Town Manager Bonnie Therrien make this part of her discussions with Superintendent Proctor. Chairperson Czernicki said that for a long time part of the reason for the need to keep Youth Services on the Town side is the presence of the Police Department. Since the Police Department is no longer housed at the Town Hall, this may be a good time to look at the transition to the Board of Education.

Councilor Cascio said that there have been many short and long term goals discussed this evening and he asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien how her last couple of months have been. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that her biggest frustration has been the computer and phone systems, and their non-efficiency. She said that we need to upgrade the things that will make staff's lives and therefore everyone else's lives easier. Chairperson Czernicki said that there was a budget analysis done a couple of years ago that made Council aware of what could be bonded and the implication to taxpayers. She asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien if this could be looked at again. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has already met with the Town's Financial Advisor to get a handle on the budget and bonding. She is hoping that he will provide a presentation to Council in July.

Chairperson Czernicki said that an organizational chart has been worked up that has to do with consolidation of services between the Town and the Board of Education; as well as within the Town side alone. It is hoped that those on the Charter Revision Committee will look with an open mind toward reorganization. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will be looking very seriously at reorganization on the Town side anyway. Chairperson Czernicki said that a number of employees took advantage of the early retirement incentive package and today was the last work day for them. These retirements allows for the Town Manager to fill the vacancies with team members who will advance her mission. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that those who have retired take a lot of history and experience with them. They have all left their phone numbers with her in case she has any inquiries. She said that the newly hired staff will bring new faces and fresh ideas to the Town.

Councilor Gardow asked if there is a way in the next couple of weeks for the Town Manager to provide feedback on the goals suggested this evening. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will take a look at the suggestions and review them with the appropriate staff. She will notify the Council if there are any goals that she feels cannot be achieved.

Chairperson Czernicki said that this is just the beginning of the dialogue. She said that during her interview with the Council, Town Manager Bonnie Therrien suggested a Council retreat with her. The Council feels strongly that this should occur. Chairperson Czernicki would like the Town Manager to provide a couple of dates to them for such a retreat hopefully sometime in August or September.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that this goal setting meeting has been very helpful for her.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:00 p.m., Councilor Cascio moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Gardow. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk