

SPECIAL MEETING

JULY 7, 2003

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on July 7, 2003 at 6:45 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

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

Absent: Councilors Flynn, Hemmann, and Sassano

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Chairperson Czernicki stated that the subject of the special meeting concerns the Revitalization Committee's work on the northernmost portion of the Silas Deane Highway. Chairperson Czernicki introduced Paul Courchaine, Chairman of the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee.

Mr. Courchaine introduced other members of the Committee who were also in attendance. They were Carmela Moore, Bev Pierz, Sy Adil, and Arthur Nacht. To date there has been a lot of design work done as well as financial proposals with the Council. A plan for the northern end of the Highway has been established and Mr. Courchaine was in attendance to review this plan. The plan shows an existing planted area at the entrance of the Highway from Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford. In the area there will be trees planted with pavers underneath to leave room for watering. Granite will be installed around the island to protect it from plows and such. The island will continue to approximately the corner of Jordan Lane and then thin down to brick pavers without plantings. The "Welcome to Wethersfield" sign will be moved from the corner of Wethersfield Avenue and Hartford Avenue to a location near the exit of Route 15. Funds have been provided from the Chamber of Commerce to construct a stone wall behind the sign with cascading roses and other plantings near the sign. There will also be up lighting of the sign. This location allows for the sign to be seen when coming off the highway as well as approaching from Hartford.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Courchaine to give some background as to the genesis of the ad-hoc committee.

Mr. Courchaine explained that the committee grew out of several meetings held by civic committees in Wethersfield. It started in the Village Improvement Association and the Beautification Committee. There are members from both of these committees as well as the EDIC. The original intent was to go back to the plan approved for the Silas Deane Highway in 1987. The original plan is available in the library. The EDIC was formed at this time and was responsible for implementing the plan. The plan included a Town Center, islands put into the Silas Deane Highway, hedgerows at each intersection of the Silas Deane and a street, tree plantings, sidewalk curbing, and many other concepts. The next phase was the application for the STP grant in the amount of approximately \$1 million. The Committee presented a plan to the State and unfortunately was not approved for the grant. The Town, in the budget process, has given the Committee \$50,000 and the Committee has looked at what can be done for this amount. Additional funds from the State are also being sought. The Chamber of Commerce, Village Improvement Association and the EDIC have each made a commitment of funds as well.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked Mr. Courchaine to summarize what is being done for the \$50,000. Mr. Courchaine said that all of the work done for the new signage is included as well as paving and planting of the islands up to Jordan Lane. Also included will be the stamping of the concrete at Jordan Lane to indicate turn lanes and plantings at Jordan Lane and the Silas Deane going east. The Committee wants to set a pattern for business owners in Town. Deputy Mayor O'Connor would like to see a sign saying "Welcome to Wethersfield, the Oldest Town in Connecticut" and have an arrow pointing to the historic district. This would highlight the fact that Wethersfield has a historic district. Mr. Courchaine said that the sign will say "Welcome to Wethersfield" with a small drop sign saying "Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce". The Wethersfield Tourism Commission is working on directional signs indicating various points of interest in Town. Deputy Mayor O'Connor thanked Mr. Courchaine and the Committee members for the great work they've done. This is a wonderful first step.

Councilor Gardow asked if the Shade Tree Commission will be tied into the plantings of trees along the medians. Mr. Courchaine said that a member of that commission, Mr. Lepper, is on the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee. Councilor Gardow asked if there are regulatory hoops to deal with since the Silas Deane Highway is a State road. Mr. Courchaine said that the DOT will need to be in on many of the changes taking place. The Committee will be moving the sign in the near future and hope to do plantings in the fall when it is not as hot. Some trees are better suited to being planted in the Spring.

Councilor Cascio asked when the Committee will begin their communications with the DOT. Mr. Courchaine said that the communications have already begun. Councilor Cascio asked if there has been dialogue with Senator Fonfara regarding how things are going. Mr. Courchaine said that Senator Fonfara is a member of the Committee and if he cannot attend a meeting, he sends his representative David Larkin. Councilor Cascio asked if there needs to be a bid process when the work is started. Mr. Courchaine said that a bid is required for any work totaling over \$5,000. Councilor Cascio asked if it is anticipated that any Town services will work on the project. Mr. Courchaine said that it is anticipated that the Mason will work on the stone wall. The rest will depend on the funding level obtained by the State. The \$50,000 will definitely get the project started.

Councilor Morin asked if the DOT has suggested specific plantings which are more acceptable in our changing climate. Mr. Courchaine said that the Committee has not gotten down to that level of detail yet with the DOT. The plantings chosen are the same as those recently installed on Farmington Avenue in West Hartford which have done quite well. Councilor Morin asked what the anticipated total cost of the project on the Silas Deane will be. Mr. Courchaine said that the project is expected to cost a total of \$180,000 for the current phase. It is hoped that this phase will be the design guideline as the Town moves forward with the Silas Deane Revitalization project. Mr. Courchaine explained to Councilor Morin that increased safety is a key issue in the Revitalization project. What is being looked at for turning is stamped concrete in the turn lanes.

Chairperson Czernicki thanked Mr. Courchaine for attending the meeting and bringing the Council up-to-date with the project. She suggested to Mr. Courchaine that the committee work with the Traffic & Transportation Committee of CROG to find another access to DOT. She thanked the Committee for their perseverance in this project.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:15 p.m., Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved "**TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 6-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk