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SPECIAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

The Wethersfield Town Council held a Special meeting on September 29, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Fitzpatrick, Flynn, Gardow, Hemmann, Morin, Chairperson Czernicki.

Absent: Councilor Sassano and Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Peter Gillespie, Town Planner; Laurel Goodgion, Library Director; Michael Turner, Town Engineer & Director of Physical Services; Brian O'Connor, Chief Building Official; John Lepper, Wethersfield Tree Warden; David Drake, Chairman of the School Projects Building Committee; and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

Presentation of Plan of Conservation & Development

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien welcomed all in attendance and introduced Town Planner Peter Gillespie to present an overview of the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD).

Mr. Gillespie said that the POCD was adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission in June, 1999. It is a policy guide, valid for ten years, and is referred to when maintaining the zoning regulations. The POCD has a series of goal statements, policy statements, and a series of sixty-two specific implementation strategies for Town Boards to monitor. Twenty-five of the sixty-two strategies are ongoing and are looked at annually. Seventeen strategies are almost completed, and ten are actually completed. Two strategies are no longer valid and eight of the strategies are to be reviewed tonight to decide who has been or is to be working on them.

The first goal of Land Use and Zoning is to achieve a balance between commercial, residential, agricultural and open space land uses. Policy one addresses the highest and best use of commercial and industrial properties. Mr. Gillespie said that the final draft of the proposed new zoning regulations has been completed which addresses all of these goals and it is scheduled to be adopted by the beginning of 2004. Policy two deals with the protection and improvement of the quality of life in existing residential neighborhoods and the allowance for new types of residential development. Many of the quality of life and neighborhood and residential strategies are either ongoing or have been completed. Policy three deals with the preservation of existing open space and agricultural land. The Public Act 490 program is always looked at and the Town has limited funds in its agricultural land preservation fund. Whenever possible, Wethersfield works with the State to acquire the development rights for farms and open space. These policies are continually monitored to take advantage of all opportunities as they present themselves.

Mrs. Rosania asked what specifically is being done for the farms and open space in Wethersfield. Mr.

Gillespie said that there are private tax programs and other techniques used. He referred the question to the Town Manager. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will obtain the total of the money in the Town's agricultural land preservation fund and include it in her Weekly Management Report this week.

There is the possibility of using some of the open space for farming training as well as many other options.

Mr. Orsini referred back to Policy 2 stating that the Cell Tower on Ridge Road is a quality of life issue. It impacts the residents of the neighborhoods and the whole Town. The redesign of Spring Street has ended up looking nothing like what the residents of that area expected it to be. This is a quality of life issue. Residents on Ridge Road objected to the

new playground there because they were never part of the process. The bus on Goodwin Park Road impacted the quality of life of Wethersfield residents. The proposed plans are good, but Mr. Orsini does not feel that they are refined enough to deal with specific neighborhood issues. Mr. Gillespie said that the plan is very broad and general. As the Strategic Plan goes forward, it is expected that the neighborhood issues will be much more specific and itemized. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien verified that the POCD is a very general plan. What can be done in the future is to break into smaller subsets to address specific neighborhood issues.

Councilor Gardow said that former Town Planner, Stuart Popper, developed a survey of nine neighborhoods throughout Town and the results should be on file somewhere. The data should be leveraged so that we can move forward with it.

Policy four deals with the Historic Districts and the review and amendment of regulations as needed. An updated handbook of Historic District processes was approved by the Historic District Committee in August, 2003. Mr. Gillespie was informed that the Historic District Commission application to the State Historic Commission to be designated as a "Certified Local Government" is in the works and is expected to be finalized in the Spring of 2004. Councilor Gardow asked what a "Certified Local Government" is. Mrs. Kuckro said that that being designated as a "Certified Local Government" makes it possible for the Town to obtain certain funds. There is a series of regulations to which the Town must adhere. She asked if the Historic District has pursued this. Mr. Gillespie said that the State allows for Towns to have a "Business Improvement Area" allowing that area to be taxed at a slightly higher rate and to use the funds generated to fund programs and improvements within the district. Mr. Gillespie believes that Wethersfield should take a hard look at this. The Zoning Regulations have been updated to address a variety of issues and there will be a series of workshops in the near future for residents to comment on the recommendations.

Policy five addresses the preparation of a master plan for the Old Wethersfield Historic District to preserve and enhance the historic assets. Mr. Gillespie said that it appears that there are not sufficient resources to address the brick sidewalks and the time frame for the project has been left open. The present parking problem in Old Wethersfield is currently being monitored and there will be recommendations and changes made in the future to deal with the problem. Mrs. Kuckro said that the

Town should, at some point, make plans for the use of the current Motor Vehicle Department. Mr. Gillespie said that this recommendation is actually further along in the presentation. Mr. Courchaine said that the first set of improvements concentrated on the business-side and that further recommendations will address both residential and business issues.

Mr. Gillespie moved on to the Town's Economic Development Goal which is to attract and retain an appropriate mix of businesses for the purpose of increasing the tax base and employment opportunities in Wethersfield. An Economic Development Summit will be held in the near future. Police one promotes the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties. There has been an ongoing effort to establish a low interest loan program to assist businesses in renovating their buildings. Mr. Gillespie was asked if any of the business owners leaving the Colt Building have been contacted to consider relocating to Wethersfield. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she has been in touch with and sent information to David Glass and will look into contacting the others.

Policy two deals with the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the attraction of new businesses to Town. Recommendations to the Strategic Plan are currently being addressed. Mr. Gillespie will be responsible for developing a new Economic Development Program for Wethersfield. Mr. Orsini stated that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. has been pushing for Economic Development for the past ten years. The Strategic Plan and the POCD have been violated by condemning a tax-generating building to erect a new Police Facility. This did not promote the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties. Wethersfield officials must follow the Plans and not make decisions based on emotions. The Town Manager must be the spokesperson for these Plans. Mr. Gillespie continued that the Zoning Regulations continue to be modified to permit a variety of home based businesses. Mrs. Rosania agreed with Mr. Orsini in that it does not seem that we go in the direction of the recommendations. She spoke of the acquisition of the Beaver Brook Properties and the development of the Silas Deane. She strongly recommends that the road map of the Marketing Plan be strictly adhered to. Mr. Gillespie said that there is not a need for anymore Plans, but rather it is time to roll up our sleeves and get to work on the Plans Wethersfield already has.

The Development of a Tourism Plan for Old Wethersfield is Policy three. The first strategy of establishing a Tourism Commission has already been completed. The Tourism Plan for Historic Wethersfield (which includes the Old Wethersfield area, Griswoldville, and the Nature Center) requires that a direction for this area be established. The role of the Tourism Plan at this time is the packaging, marketing and public relations of the newly developed Tourism Brochure which have been distributed to seventy-two different hotels and motels along I-91 and I-84. Tourism-related events are also posted on a website calendar. A database of available space is being developed to promote the historic village concept: arts, crafts, antiques, and retail shop oriented.

Policy four deals with the enhancement of the Town's visual image as a way to attract and retain businesses. There is a proposal in the new Zoning regulations to establish a Design Review Board to review the design of buildings and design layout. There are ongoing efforts to increase public sensitivity toward the importance of the Town's appearance and to support the beautification efforts of volunteer groups. Chairperson Czernicki said that there has been a general education process in Town expanding the citizens' awareness of their responsibility of beautification issues. Rocco Orsini said that the Town's visual image is of great importance to the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. and he asked who is working to make sure that the beautification goals are adhered to and reached. Mr. Gillespie said that a balance must be struck between a proposed development and the desired appearance. A growing tax base is a top priority; however, we want to make sure that developments are aesthetically pleasing. This balance can be very difficult to accomplish without compromising.

The Transportation Goal is to maintain a safe, efficient and economically viable transportation system that will assist the Town in continuing to grow and prosper. Policy one supports the efforts to expand and improve the local and regional roadway network. These are mostly ongoing and annual efforts. There are specific highway improvements underway. The Capital Improvement Program and State funding will provide funds for ongoing improvements. Mr. Kardas asked if the Town has an ordinance stating who the responsible parties for these improvements are so that we can measure their ability to meet the goals. Mr. Gillespie said that an annual report is done stating goals, recommendations and guidelines for each Department. Part of tonight's goal is to divvy up the responsibilities and to make sure that someone is specifically tasked with working on goals. The present plan does not specify who is responsible for implementing the recommendations. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that there is not a need for an ordinance, but there needs to be delegation and updating of the progress of set goals. Councilor Gardow asked if the Plan of Conservation is referred to when developing road designs. Mr. Turner, Town Engineer, said that the plan is looked at as well as State guidelines.

Policy two sets goals to encourage safety on Town and State roads. Councilor Fitzpatrick commented on how difficult it is to get in and out of various businesses along the Silas Deane Highway and how necessary it is to implement techniques for traffic calming. Mr. Courchaine commented that the Police need to enforce the speed limit along the Silas Deane Highway. He said that what is difficult is that Wethersfield provides the Police force and plows the Highway; however the State gets all of the money collected from traffic fines. He suggests that we speak to our State legislators to address this issue. Councilor Fitzpatrick said that the traffic speed is the issue in some cases; however, the sheer volume of traffic on the Silas Deane Highway needs to be addressed. Councilor Morin clarified that the Town Highway Staff does not plow the Silas Deane Highway nor maintain it. The State is responsible for this. Mr. Gillespie continued that the Town continues to work with the State to reduce the rate of accidents along the Highway. Work has been done on the installation of signage for pedestrian safety at certain crosswalks. To-date, nothing has been done to the Bliss Market shopping area. Mr. Gillespie said that he will visit the owner of Bliss Market to continue the dialog of the situation.

Policy three addresses the improvement and expansion of all forms of transportation. Phase 1 of Wethersfield's Heritage Way has been completed and funding is being pursued for Phase 2.

Sidewalks in Town continue to be reviewed for improvements. Mass transit efforts continue to be supported and there are grant monies available for selected bus shelters. Mrs. Kuckro asked if the bus shelters could be installed closer to the shops in a shopping center rather than out by the road. This way people would not have to walk across the parking lot in order to catch the bus. Mr. Gillespie said that this depends on how easy it is for the bus to get in and around the lot and also on the level of patronage at any given shopping center. He will speak with CT Transit about this.

The Conservation and Open Space Goal provides for a wide range of recreational opportunities for residents and preserves and protects the Town's natural resources and open space. Policy one deals with connecting open spaces, recreation areas, wetlands and ponds with bicycle/pedestrian paths. As stated above, the Wethersfield Heritage Way is partially complete and work is ongoing. Mr. Adil asked what the funding options are. Mr. Turner said that the Town has applied for a grant for Phase 2.

Policy two is to identify, preserve and protect the Town's natural resources including the Connecticut River and its flood plain, and other unique geological and archaeological features. The Plan of Conservation and Development has a map identifying the Town's natural resources. The education of developers and the encouragement of conservation easements to preserve features continue to be ongoing.

Policy three addresses the preservation and enhancement of the Town's existing parks and recreational facilities. The Mill Woods Master Plan was recently approved by the Boards and Commissions of Wethersfield. There appears to be no efforts to pursue the goal relating to the 300+ acre parcel known as Crowe Point. The preservation of the 1860 Reservoir and surrounding open space is complete. The support for the continued operation and expansion of the Wethersfield Nature Center in its present or future location is ongoing and underway. The project of maintaining a clearing between Cove Park and the Connecticut River to provide better pedestrian access is ongoing. Last summer the Recreation and Parks Department went in a cut some brush and trees, but there has been no repair to the rip rap or road. Mr. Gillespie said that this sounds like a significant Capital project rather than simply maintenance. Councilor Flynn pointed out that the project is included in the update of the 1970 Master Plan for the Cove. Billy Logan stated that the Cove has not been dredged in over ten years and is in dire need of such. Councilor Hemmann said that it has actually been more like twenty-five years since the Cove was dredged.

Policy four deals with preserving existing open space and agricultural land. Mr. Gillespie pointed out that these recommendations are redundant and have already been discussed; however, it is important that they also appear in this section.

The Community Facilities Goal strives to improve and update as needed the quality of Town buildings. Policy one supports efforts to create a Town government center. Mr. Gillespie said that he is not aware of the DMV building being available at this time. This continues to be monitored. Mrs. Rosania said that we have all the plans for development, but we need to look at creative ways to raise revenue. Mr. Courchaine said that chasing after the DMV building and moving the Town center there completely goes against the Master Plan for the Silas Deane Highway. Mr. Gillespie can see the conflict and is surprised that this was not discussed at the time the Plan was adopted. A renovation plan and funds are available for the Library. The Police Facility is obviously completed. Mr. Courchaine pointed out that the renovation to the Town Hall is for the downstairs section only and that people should not expect to come in and see the whole building renovated.

Policy two addresses the space needs of Town facilities for more effective delivery of services to Town residents. Efforts are underway for the Stillman School building, the Moeller Home building, and the Physical Services building. Mr. Gillespie said that the Historic District will be added as a responsible party to both the Stillman School building and the Physical Services building. Mr. Courchaine said that the Town needs to develop a Public Works Plan which details buildings, renovations, landscaping and such. Mr. Gillespie said that a design guide book is appropriate to show people the type of architecture and site layout that is preferred by the Town. This document will have to be created in addition to the Zoning regulations. Mrs. Rosania asked Mr. Gillespie what he recommends to speed up the process of encouraging one-stop shopping for developers. Mr. Gillespie said that providing a guide book with recommendations will make the process less cumbersome.

The last goal of the PCOD is the Housing Goal and its purpose is to support the efforts of maintain a variety of housing opportunities for residents. Policy one states that the Town should support efforts to maintain existing housing for seniors and encourage the development of new housing types for seniors. Through the Housing Authority, there are ongoing efforts to insure that there are options in Town for quality housing for seniors. The Zoning regulations will be modified to provide housing options that may not have been allowed previously. The elderly housing in the former I-291 corridor is no longer valid.

Policy two states that the Town should support efforts to maintain and expand the stock of affordable housing available in Wethersfield. Wethersfield continues to support the Housing Authority's efforts to continue renovation of its aging housing stock. The low interest housing rehabilitation loan program has been completed and the Town continues to participate in the Tri-Town Home Ownership Assistance Program. Councilor Gardow pointed out that the Council recently approved a tax incentive for AHEPA to build forty-two additional units of affordable housing.

Mr. Gillespie said that the intent of this meeting is to whittle the PCOD down to items that have not been accomplished and insure that they are continuing to be worked on. He suggests that there be a brief meeting with the Town's Boards and Commissions and Town staff every six months to update any progress. Staff meetings are continually held to keep an eye on progress as well.

Mr. Gillespie reminded everyone of the Economic Development Summit on October 15 in the Community Room at the new Police Facility. There will be presentations by each of the Boards and Commissions updating all of their projects and activities.

At this time (7:35 p.m.) there was a thirty minute break.

OTHER BUSINESS

Architect Contract - Friar & Associates: Webb School

Councilor Flynn moved "**TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN THE AIA CONTRACT WITH FRIAR & ASSOCIATES FOR ARCHITECTURAL WORK ON THE WEBB SCHOOL**", seconded by Councilor Cascio.

Councilor Flynn asked that someone point out to him the language within Article 12.1 stating that the Town will take title to the designs once they are paid for. The Article states that we get paper and electronic copies, but Councilor Flynn is interested in the Town actually owning the rights to the drawings.

Mr. Drake said that when the contract was drawn up he also was concerned that the Town would own the rights to the drawings. The Town Attorney at that time added Article 12.1. Councilor Flynn does not think that the language takes the Town far enough. Mr. Drake, when first seeing the contract, immediately thought that it should be modified to state that the Town will own the drawings. Councilor Flynn said that there are other school buildings that will need renovations and there may be elements of the Webb, and even Stillman, designs that may be incorporated in other projects. Mr. Drake said that Friar is aware that the Town will own the designs. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that Friar had no problem with this; however she can go to either Attorney Bradley or Town Attorney Forsyth to request that the language is more specifically stated. Councilor Flynn said that this stipulation will need to also be applied to the Bianco contract. Mr. Drake said that the Council can accept the motion based on Article 6.1 being modified. Councilor Flynn still disagrees with the monetary provisions of the performance deadlines. They do not seem to be protective of the Town. Mr. Drake understands Councilor Flynn's concerns; however, the architects are well ahead of schedule. Councilor Flynn said that he is looking for more of a substantial penalty for both architects if they do not meet the performance deadlines. He also has no problem providing the architects with a financial benefit should they beat the schedule as the Town will benefit in the long run.

Councilor Flynn said that he has received numerous phone calls from parents asking how the Webb construction will be staged and what will be done with the students during the construction process. Mr. Drake said that there was a workshop held last Monday and the logistics of the project was discussed. The Board of Education will be looking for eleven classroom spaces and they are exploring their options. Once the locations within Town are chosen, a plan will be developed. Mr. Drake said that the necessity of the classrooms will be at different phases of the project.

Councilor Morin said that during the Board of Education meeting there seemed to be some discomfort as to where the classrooms would be going. He understands that the Board has not addressed the funding of the extra spaces and this is not part of the bonding project. Mr. Drake said that part of the Webb renovations and moving will become part of the budget.

Claire Carney, Vice Chairman of the Board of Education, said that the Board has not yet finalized the information and are hesitant to say too much as plans could change. There are certain requirements for the students and the Board would like them not to be in the school during renovations if at all possible. The Board would also like not to have to move the students during the school year. The Superintendent has been looking at various space options available.

Mr. Drake said that the schedule will be better detailed after more options are investigated. Councilor Morin asked the Town Manager if she was involved in this at all. She said that she was invited to the meeting but was away at a conference. Town Engineer, Mike Turner, was present at the meeting to represent the Town.

Mr. Drake said that the goal for project completion is set for September, 2005.

Councilor Cascio said that he was at the Board of Education meeting and that Dr. Proctor stated that "if he had his way, he'd like to see the building empty in September, 2004 provided he had the quality space that is educationally appropriate for the children". Neither the Superintendent nor the Board has formalized any plans at this time.

Councilor Gardow said that both firms are currently working without signed contracts and he asked Mr. Drake if the Town is going in the right direction with the firms. Mr. Drake said that the projects are moving right along and are in good shape. Councilor Gardow asked if the contracts were put together by the School Projects Building Committee. Mr. Drake said that the contracts are duplicates of contracts used before and the Building Committee voted unanimously to accept them.

The following roll call vote was held:

Councilor Cascio	AYE	Councilor	
Councilor Flynn	NAY	Fitzpatrick	AYE
Councilor Hemmann	AYE	Councilor Gardow	AYE
Chairperson		Councilor Morin	AYE
Czernicki	AYE		

The motion passed 6-1-0.

Architect Contract - Bianco, Giolitto, Weston Architects: Stillman Building

Councilor Flynn moved "**TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN THE AIA CONTRACT WITH BIANCO, GIOLITTO, WESTON ARCHITECTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL WORK ON THE STILLMAN BUILDING**", seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Construction Manager Contract - Newfield Construction, Inc.

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN THE AIA CONTRACT WITH NEWFIELD CONSTRUCTION, INC. AS CONSTRUCTION MANAGER**", seconded by Councilor Flynn. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Before leaving, Mr. Drake said that a close down schedule for the Silas Deane Middle School will be presented within the next two weeks. The presentation will include a budget of finishing expenses. The project is on schedule for an October/November completion.

Town Staff Representative to Teachers Negotiations

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that her last Town Manger's Report included the meeting dates for Teachers Negotiations. The role of the Council Representative is that he/she can take part in the discussions but has no voting power. The Representative will be a communicator to and for the Council.

Chairperson Czernicki asked if there is any member of the Council who would like to volunteer for the position.

Councilor Gardow said that he attended the first meeting and he was flattered to be recommended for the position. He will consider continuing if it is the desire of the Council.

Councilor Cascio said that Council efforts are very important and Council members' plates are already full. He applauds Councilor Gardow's recommendation; however, the Representative is merely an observer and Councilor Cascio believes that the Representative needs to either be rotated or there should be a Town Staff member delegated because they will be more consistently available for the meetings as well as being paid to attend them. Due to this, Councilor Gardow withdrew his choice to participate as the Council Representative.

Councilor Fitzpatrick asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien if a staff member is eligible to fill the position. The Town Manager said that the Representative does not have to be a Council member, but rather a Town Representative.

Councilor Fitzpatrick recommended that the Finance Director, Rob Buden, be selected as the Representative as he has the best knowledge of the status of the Budget. In his absence, the Town Manager could attend.

Councilor Hemmann agreed with Councilor Fitzpatrick. She believes that it is important to choose a staff member because many questions are more easily answered by a staff member.

Councilor Gardow is concerned about the negotiations occurring during the Board's Executive Session and wonders if the chosen Representative would be able to attend. Also, because it is Executive Session, the Representative would not be allowed to discuss the contents of the meeting. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Representative would need to be invited into the Executive Session. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Representative would need to be the same person consistently because they cannot discuss the contents of the meeting.

Councilor Cascio clarified that the Representative is not at the table with the negotiating team. The Representative gives input as to the financial status of the Town.

Councilor Flynn moved "**TO APPOINT THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE TOWN MANAGER AS REPRESENTATIVES TO THE TEACHERS NEGOTIATIONS**", seconded by Councilor Gardow. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 p.m., Councilor Flynn moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Morin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk