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REGULAR MEETING DECEMBER 16, 2002

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, December 16, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

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

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 Councilor Gardow.

PRESENTATION: National League of Cities 15-Year Plaque

Chairperson Czernicki read from a letter sent from the National League of Cities which expressed their appreciation to Wethersfield's elected Town Officials for their membership and participation over the past 15 years. The letter thanked the Officials for sharing their leadership, knowledge, skills and experience in events and activities over the years. Wethersfield joined the NLC on August 1, 1987.

Chairperson Czernicki also read a letter from Town Manager Swetcky regarding the retirement of Police Chief John Karangekis after over thirty-seven distinguished years of service to the Town of Wethersfield. Chief Karangekis' last official day with the Town will be December 31, 2002. Lieutenant James L. Cetran has agreed to serve as Acting Police Chief effective January 1, 2003.

Chairperson Czernicki shared a letter from Penny Stanziale, Chairperson Wethersfield Board of Education which invites Council members to attend a workshop meeting of the Board on Wednesday, December 18, at 7:30 p.m. to review the architectural study on the use of Webb and placement of Administration, Maintenance and Operations. At 6:45 p.m. that evening there will be a small thank-you reception for Dr. Robert Goldman, Interim Superintendent of Schools. Chairperson Czernicki stated that there will be a report from Fletcher/Thompson available at the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

The notice did not appear in the newspaper as is required by Town Charter and the rules of procedure. The Courant has a new system, they did not publish it. Town Clerk did have it posted. We will resubmit it for a public hearing on January 6, 2003.

No one wished to speak and Chairperson Czernicki declared the hearing closed.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Richard Lasher, Mayor of Griswoldville, expressed his appreciation to the Council members by sharing gifts for the holiday season.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, expressed his expectation of elected and paid officials to be advocates for the people of Wethersfield, to protect the interests of the Town and to bring a certain level of competence to their jobs. The master plan of Mill Woods talks often of irrigation and also a foot-bridge at the southern end of the park. He

found nothing in the report that addresses the narrow strip of land from the bridge to Griswold Road. This is the area where Winding Brook Turf Farm had a fire truck pumping water all last summer. He thought the Recreation and Park Director should be aware of this situation. In the plan under "Water Service" taxpayers will have to pay MDC for water to irrigate the park, while giving away water to the Turf Farm. He advises the Council look at the management of all departments that have permitted this plan and licensing agreement to come forth. He would like to verify the fact that no turf is being grown on Town land. He urged the Council to stand up and defend the rights of citizens and this Town.

Jim Clynych, 903 Ridge Road, offered his condolences to the family of Bob Steele who was a great ambassador for the Town of Wethersfield. He feels the Dial-a Ride service for 19 people, 38 trips per day, \$21.07 per trip; \$800.66 cost per day for the Town of Wethersfield doesn't make sense. He wonders if items other than rides are being charged by Dial-a-Ride to this budget. He is not saying to do away with Dial-A-Ride. Now is the time to look into some other way that the Town can provide this service at a much lower rate before the contract with Dial-A-Ride expires next year. Newington and Rocky Hill do not have the coverage that Wethersfield has; however, their service requires much less money from the budget.

Chairperson Czernicki stated that the fee paid to Dial-a-Ride does not include any other services. The fees paid are solely for rides.

Rocco Orsini, 95 Broad Street, spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association Inc. He agrees the Council needs to continue to look into options other than Dial-A-Ride, find out why others dropped the service. They do not want to eliminate service but this is an expensive service. He wondered if the Manager had information on the Weight Watchers building changed to retail use.

Town Manager Swetcky did not have specific information as to type or name of store(s). Mr. Swetcky said the Goff Brook Shopping Center was recently sold and that there are concepts being discussed to make significant changes there.

Mr. Orsini recently walked the Mill Woods Park trail and noticed sewer and natural gas lines that run the whole park and ball fields. He feels that if Wethersfield owns the land, it should be staked. It is hard to tell if the equipment is on Mr. Morgan's land or Town land. If this water and land belongs to Wethersfield then the Town should not enter into an agreement with the Turf Farm. Mr. Morgan is getting a competitive advantage by getting free water. He has other options. There is a great master plan, but if a right of way is given to Mr. Morgan, the master plan will have to be scrapped because his pipes will go over the walking trail. If a deal is met with Mr. Morgan, he should be charged, but the Taxpayers Assoc. prefers to leave the park alone.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, understands why Wethersfield's costs are so high with regard to Dial-A-Ride as Hartford is not known for keeping costs under control. He is not surprised the new Police facility is running over budget. Assurances had been given that there was ample money for inflation and this was not addressed at the meeting previously held this evening. Suggests better controls over how money is spent and having the financial reports public, showing the budget, the actual and the overage. On the new Superintendent of Schools, he is concerned the \$145,000 being paid is \$30,000 over the previous salary. He does not want to see that type of increase for the new Town Manager and new Police Chief. He suggests consolidation of groups under one manager. Regarding Mill Woods Park, feels we should pump water out of our own brook for irrigation. Asks why we should pay MDC for water while Mr. Morgan pumps water from our brook for free.

Peter Sposito, spoke for the Randy Lane Association, emphasized the Association's interest in having a just solution to the Turf Farm problem. He handed a packet to Council members including photos, memos dated July 9, 2001 from the Town Insurance Advisory Committee, a letter dated April 10, 1984 allowing the Turf Farm to take water if they get the required , a letter of March 30, 1984, Jack Pettus, Deputy Director of Public Works wrote to Attorney John Harvey and there is a memo from Sargent Power Department of Public Safety. The Police have installed 24 hour surveillance equipment in the park and specifically on the Winding Brook Turf Farm equipment. Randy Lane Association would like a cease and desist order until this matter is completely resolved.

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

COUNCIL ACTION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Roy Pinette, Wethersfield Director of Human Resources, said that he spoke with Mr. Bennett on December 9 and was told that there were 26 applicants at that time for the Town Manager position. The deadline for applying is December 20. Mr. Bennett will narrow down the applicants to ten and would like to meet with the Council during the week of January 13 to present 9-10 applications for review. He recommends the Council choose 6 applicants for interviews. Mr. Bennett indicated that the process takes approximately three days. On the first day, the candidates come into town and tour the Town facilities and schools. This would be done on Friday, January 31. A program will be put together for the applicants by Town Manager Swetcky. Mr. Bennett would like to have the candidates interviewed on Saturday, February 1. Each applicant should be allowed 1 1/4 hours for their interview. The candidate pool will then be narrowed to three and on Sunday, February 2, the top three candidates will be interviewed and the Council will decide to which candidate an offer will be made.

Councilor Cascio asked that the Council choose Monday, January 13 as the date to choose six applicants during an Executive Session.

Chairperson Czernicki asked that a confidential mailing of the ten candidates be mailed to the Council members on the Thursday prior to this date so that they can review the applications and be better prepared for the January 13 meeting. All Councilors agreed to the January 13, February 1 and February 2 dates. Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Pinette to pass this along to Mr. Bennett.

Councilor Gardow is concerned with compressing this into just three days. To make a decision in that amount of time doesn't seem wise. He'd like more time to think about the decision.

OTHER BUSINESS

BIDS

Councilor Cascio moved "**TO AWARD THE BID TO BIDDER CREATIVE RECREATION - IN THE AMOUNT OF \$32,541 FOR PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT FOR GREENFIELD PLAYGROUND**", seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Councilor Gardow verified that Wethersfield is going in with other communities on this bid in order to get a better deal on the price.

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

Councilor Fitzpatrick moved "**TO AWARD THE BID TO BIDDER RCI ELECTRIC - IN THE AMOUNT OF \$19,023.42 FOR SDMS CHANGE ORDER**", seconded by Councilor Gardow.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

RESOLUTION of Municipal Support of Silas Deane Highway Revitalization- STP Enhancement Project

Revitalization of Silas Deane Highway, from Hartford City Line south to Intersection of Nott Street.

WHEREAS, the Town of Wethersfield has published a news release, mailed the news release to a number of officials and agencies, and mailed a formal letter to abutting property owners, announcing the availability of plans for public inspection on the proposed grant application for a STP Enhancement project known as Silas Deane Highway Revitalization Project;

WHEREAS, plans were made available for public review and residents and businesses have had the opportunity to voice their concerns at a Public Informational Meeting hosted by the Wethersfield Town Council's Traffic & Transportation Committee on December 9, 2002; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Region Planning Agency has solicited proposals and grant applications to utilize federal funds for right of way and construction activities; and

WHEREAS, the project is located on the Silas Deane Highway, a state route which is integral to the State's emergency bypass system and the key gateway into our Town from the States Capital City, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered the concerns of the residents and businesses, and from the Silas Deane Revitalization Ad-hoc Committee, and from the public information program and finds the proposed Silas Deane Revitalization STP Enhancement project is in the best interests of the Town of Wethersfield, and will promote the health, safety and general welfare of its businesses and residents and foster an atmosphere for economic development and provide for convenience and safety of the motoring and pedestrian public;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Wethersfield, based on the above information, and by virtue of this resolution, hereby fully supports the proposed project, and fully recognizing the engineering phase and construction will utilize 20% municipal funds, and 80% Federal funds, the Town herein commits and will include in its 10 year Capital Improvement Budget the necessary 20% Local Match;

Adopted by the Wethersfield Town Council of the Town of Wethersfield, Connecticut this ____ day of January 2003.

Clerk (seal)

Date

MINUTES

Councilor Morin moved "**TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 18, 2002 REGULAR MEETING**", seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Councilor Gardow regarding page 15358, asked to change deputy manager to deputy mayor. Also on page 15367 vote was no, but dive team was a yes.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Chairperson Czernicki abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

Councilor Flynn moved "**TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 25, 2002 SPECIAL MEETING**", seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Fitzpatrick, Councilor Morin and Deputy Mayor O'Connor abstained. The motion passed 5-0-3.

Councilor Hemmann moved "**TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 2, 2002 REGULAR MEETING**", seconded by Councilor Morin.

Councilor Gardow said on page 15387 Baldwin is still at 140 Griswold Road.

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

Reports

- a. Financial Report - State Grant Recission Impact
- b. 800 MHz Radio System Backup
- c. Voice Logger DVD's
- d. BOE - Appointment of Interim Superintendent
- e. Status of Flood & Drainage Projects
- f. Status of Leaf Pick-Up Program
- g. Emerson Williams School Bus Incident
- h. SDMS Update

Town Manager Swetcky commented on the State Grant Rescission Impact. Because of the State budget crisis, the Governor rescinded \$68 million of changes to the budget in order to save money. Included in that amount is \$24 million of grant "take-backs". The Town of Wethersfield will not be receiving \$59,404 in State grants for this current fiscal year. These are grants that impact the general fund budget.

Additional cut backs could be forthcoming. Town Manager Swetcky is imposing a spending and hiring freeze until April 1, 2003 in order to assess the grant "take backs" impact on the Town budget. A financial report was distributed to Council members which shows how the "take backs" reduce the surplus; however there continues to be a surplus.

Councilor Flynn asked Town Manager Swetcky about the suspension of State aid for school construction. Town Manager Swetcky said that he hadn't heard anything about this. The only educational grants discussed to date were the ECS grant and the public transportation grant and a couple special revenue grants.

Chairperson Czernicki referred to the report regarding the 800 MHz Radio System Backup. Will the system at Kelleher Court ever be used as a backup by the Police? Town Manager Swetcky said that only during failure of the trunk radio system during an emergency. Kelleher Court will still be used by fire and Town services.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor thanked Town Manager Swetcky for the response regarding the voice logger DVD's. He is concerned about the expense of the CD. He feels that \$63 is a lot of money for a blank DVD. Town Manager Swetcky stated that these are not standard universal discs

Chairperson Czernicki asked Councilors to look at the Town Wide Clean-up Program report and to speak to Councilor Gardow if they have any input. She also urged town citizens to approach Councilor Gardow with any ideas regarding the Town Wide Clean-up Program.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Town Manager Swetcky to share the status of the Leaf Pick-up Program. Town Manager Swetcky said that an attempt is still being made ;however they are at the mercy of the weather. Bucket loaders and dump trucks are being used to pick up the leaves as they are wet and frozen. They are sticking with the main route, trying to make sure that everyone in town gets two sweeps. This will continue as long as the weather holds out.

Chairperson Czernicki said that citizens are concerned about narrow streets where school busses need to turn. The busses are sliding on the leaves. She asked how leaves on the snow shelf will be removed. Town Manager Swetcky said that the leaves will be removed from the snow shelf, it will just take more manpower. He urges residents not to rake the leaves into the road, but instead to leave them on the snow shelf.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if there are any budget issues with having to pick up the leaves in this manner. Town Manager Swetcky said that it is clearly more efficient and quicker to pick up the leaves with the vacuum. There will be an additional cost in terms of equipment and time but this is a priority.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked how the Town budget for snow collection looks. Town Manager Swetcky said that the budget is O.K. as 3 of 4 times to go out recently were during the work day.

COUNCIL

Councilor Gardow asked for the status of the roof replacement. Town Manager Swetcky said that the Board of

Education will be voting on a resolution to be sent to the Council for action. To apply to the State for review, the Board of Education has to actually pass a resolution requesting that Council approve the submission of an ED045 to the State. This is the next step.

Councilor Cascio spoke of the new Library policy manual. The policy effects behavior, confidentiality, interdisciplinary loans from other libraries, non-residents use as well as policies for personnel. He thanks the staff at the library for rearranging the look of the library. He thanked the town staff for changing light bulbs and also installing a new bathroom facility together. The Library received the funding to move forward with renovations. Councilor Cascio suggested that the meeting with the Board of Education be moved up to review the situation that both the Town and the State are facing financially. He suggested that the meeting be moved to Saturday, January 11.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Councilors to be available 9:00am to 12noon on Saturday, January 11.

Councilor Hemmann reminded Councilors that tomorrow is the Wethersfield Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities holiday party from 6:00-9:00pm in the Community Center with a snow-date of Wednesday.

Councilor Morin complimented Town staff who is picking up the leaves. He said that on December 27th and 28th there will be a Wethersfield Girls Basketball Tournament. Friday's game starts at 5:30pm. Councilor Morin shared that he had asked the Board of Education to consider temporarily filling the Superintendent position with someone internally as we did for the Interim Town Manager position. They obviously did not want to do this.

Chairperson Czernicki shared that the Board of Education needs to be aware that their pot of funds is not endless. She passed along thanks from Firefighter Frank Strong to all Council members for his being given a Town Chair in recognition of his years of service. Chairperson Czernicki also shared a letter from the MDC announcing the appointment of M. Stephen Rhodes as the new District CEO. There will be a reception welcoming Mr. Rhodes in January.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor congratulated the firefighters honored and expressed his regrets for not being able to be at the ceremony.

PUBLIC

Jim Clynch, 903 Ridge Road, commented on the beautiful job done on the Town calendar. He commented there are a number of Town officials on State committees. Are these people double dipping? He would like to put it into new contracts that an Official cannot sit on a State Board while collecting a Town salary.

Ballou Tooker, 65 Harmon Place, feels the \$19,000 from the State for Dial-A-Ride will likely be cut.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, stated that Councilor Gardow's concern for allowing extra time to evaluate candidates for the Town Manager position is valid. Also, he agrees with Councilor Morin with regards to the Board of Education's decision not to temporarily fill the Superintendent's position from within. He asked Town Manager Swetcky who put the video cameras in the tree at Mill Woods.

Town Manager Swetcky said that there was no video camera in the tree. There was a camera in the cab of the fire engine which was put there by the Police Department after receiving call of vandalism. This was authorized by the Chief of Police.

Mr. Ruhe suggests the Council should be aware of Police abuse suggesting they did not care about an unlicensed fire truck on Town property, yet they led a citizen away in handcuffs. He strongly suggests that the Council look into the placement of cameras.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, is concerned about the Board of Education not being fiscally responsible. There must be some way that the Council can sit down with them and explain dollars and cents. When Education dollars are cut, programs will be cut. Parents will blame the Council. The Board of Education needs to be more responsible for their spending. The students should not be punished for the arrogance and mistakes of the Board of Education.

Alexandra Pappas, 282 Ridge Road, attended the last Planning & Zoning meeting and is disappointed the Town is relying on these people's lack of foresight. She invited all Commissioners to her home for coffee to view the new tower. Two Commissioners asked her if she would like a pitched roof or a flat roof on the shed that they had to put in. Next to a 180' tower, she was not concerned with what type of roof will go on the shed! After some research, she has found out that no one has an option to buy on 295 Ridge Road.

Rocco Orsini, Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. said that it is refreshing to hear Councilor Morin talk dollars and cents when talking about the Board of Education. The Wethersfield Taxpayers Association's feels its input at Board of Education meetings is neither recognized nor heeded. This is the year to treat all employees equally and ask for 0% in salary increases in the first year. How will this happen when the Board of Education has offered 2 3/4%? They thought the plan was for the Council to meet with the Board of Education to strategize on how to go forward with Union Contracts. There has been no communication. As far as the financials go, the Police Building will overrun by \$100,000; the radio system may overrun; the town got shorted \$60,000 on State grants, which doesn't include anything from ECS. Dial-A-Ride, even with changes implemented will still run over this year by \$80,000. What will happen with Union contracts coming up? How will teachers stand for 1% when administrators just got 3%? They feel the opportunity to do something has been lost. The Town needs givebacks just like the State. We had the 3 1/2% roadmap and the first year was 5% and this year was 4 1/2 %. We need to keep our 3 1/2% promise. Why do property taxes have to go every year? Federal and State taxes don't go up every year. He asked about the Library monitors and would like a report.

Town Manager Swetcky reported that a gentleman was hired recently and a report will be given to the Council in the spring. All comments to-date have been positive. He wished the Council a happy holiday season.

Chairperson Czernicki extended the Council's wishes to those attending and to those watching at home for a happy, healthy holiday.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:10 p.m., Councilor Flynn 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