

**REGULAR MEETING
JULY 1, 2013**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, July 1, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann. Absent: Councilor Drake, Councilor McAlister

Also present: Mike Turner, Town Engineer, Kathy Bagley, Director Parks and Recreation, Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Dolores Sassano led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave. commented on the lack of a stop sign on Morrison Ave. and asked the Council to help him understand the reasoning behind that decision. He also requested a second opinion from the State Traffic Commission because of the safety concerns.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd., commented on the town-wide radio system and stated that he doesn't understand why we need a new system after only 10 years of the current one. Also, he commented that we should try and purchase replacement parts to fix the fire truck rather than purchasing a new one; purchasing a new one is irresponsible spending.

Harry Litchenbaum, 16 Town House Rd., commented that our Honorary Mayor, Dick Lasher, turned 94 years old last week and is in good health and good humor. He then read a letter from Mr. Lasher regarding being a volunteer fence viewer for the Town of Wethersfield.

John Miller, 45 Highland St., commented construction will be starting at the north side of the high school and the Council should be concerned about some of the decisions coming out of the Building Committee. Someone should be questioning the Committee about them and not just accepting suggestions such as the geothermal project, the tennis courts removal and PCB removal reimbursement.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Kotkin commented that through May, the Health Insurance budget was more than \$2.1 million below what had been allocated. It's a combination of much lower in terms of large claims and lower claims per employee as well. Mr. Kotkin explained that it is actually lower than previous years, which is actually striking in today's age. It will allow us to put more into the OPEB trust which we continue to fund. The other item is that the Insurance Committee made a

recommendation based on cost to switch life and disability provider from CIGNA to Aetna and it's a savings of about \$15,000 a year or so for the town and will guarantee rates for three years. .

Councilor Kotkin reported that in September the Insurance Committee will look at whether or not to recommend to Council an audit of claims to determine whether or not the incumbent, Anthem, which we've been with for some time, is paying the claims as they should under a particular contract. He explained they had looked at it previously but weren't sure if they were going to stay with Anthem. When the Committee determined they should, the question is whether to do an audit because as it could be a \$30,000 or \$40,000 expense. Councilor Kotkin stated that he doesn't think we've ever done it as a town, but obviously with a \$10,000,000 insurance budget, there are a lot of dollars there. We just want to make sure that the claims are being paid based on the contracts. There are 11 different contracts they are overseeing. It may come to the Council this Fall.

Deputy Mayor Console reported a meeting held last week regarding the radio system. A report was given by Keith Witt from Trott Communications. The report gives a very good evaluation of the background of the old radio system, what went wrong and why we are pursuing a new one. Mr. Witt is very knowledgeable. Town Manager Bridges and Assistant Town Manager Palmer put together a lease payment analysis which is not cast in stone at this point, but it gives a good snapshot of where Wethersfield is going with this system. Deputy Mayor Console said he would recommend townspeople read this and to familiarize them with why we are doing what we're doing. He is a very frugal person, but this is something that we need to do. He explained there were errors and promises made years ago. There are parts that we can no longer get and we're in a position right now where there is not many alternatives for public safety. As the head of the Public Safety Committee, even though this is going under Infrastructure, I would again urge all residents to really read this proposal of why we are doing this and the need for it. An article was in last week's Rare Reminder which discusses a lot of the facts and figures. He explained we are at a point where this Council has to make this fix. He thinks it will be a fix that affects this town for the next 17 years. He commented it was an in-depth meeting and he was glad that he went, it was quite well attended and we just need to keep moving forward on this.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Console asked Mr. Bridges and Mr. Turner if they were going to get the list of the street paving project tonight.

Mr. Bridges responded that the Committee has not yet met but as soon as they meet, they will get that. He stated that it will be ready by the next meeting on the 23rd.

Deputy Mayor Console suggested to Mr. Bridges that the appropriate staff meet together on Morrison Ave. and actually physically be there to discuss Mr. Colantonios' stop sign issue and answer Mr. Colantonios' questions in an attempt to resolve this issue.

Mr. Bridge responded that less than a year ago they had a meeting on this with the police and everyone was in the room. Everybody went over it and he doesn't know what we are going solve being out there again and stated the warrants for a stop sign have not been met.

Deputy Mayor Console stated that if Mr. Bridges doesn't think it is necessary then he would understand.

Deputy Mayor Console agreed Mr. Miller raised some valid questions. The Building Committee will be coming back next week on the 23rd with all the information as far as all the bids that are coming in.

Mr. Bridges responded that the first phase of bidding will be on the agenda for award and he made a note to have the information on why we can't spend the same reimbursed dollars twice [for PCBs].

Deputy Mayor Console commented that there will be a meeting on July 23rd and will have that information.

Councilor Roberts commented on the Wethersfield High School graduation and the effects that the weather had on it. She asked if there was any way that the Valedictorian and Salutatorian can come in and give their speeches before the Council and at least that would be televised and the people in town would be able to see what they intended to say.

Mr. Bridges responded that we can ask them but he believes that the Board of Education did tape them and it is on the Board of Educations' website.

Councilor Roberts commented that they have a liaison to the Building Committee, Dave Drake, who attends and reports faithfully to us. She stated that the Building Committee meetings are open to the public and they are the Mondays that the Council doesn't meet. Councilor Roberts stated that she believes that anybody in town can go and see what is going on and comment. She commented that when people come in and act like the Building Committee has no supervision or the Building Committee is off on a tangent and nobody knows what they're doing, it's totally incorrect. She believes the Building Committee would relish having some people show up to the meetings and express their ideas. She stated that their meetings are posted and the chairman has indicated before if anybody wants to attend, please feel free and they will answer your questions. Councilor Roberts commented that there is a misperception, especially every time certain people come and talk to us about what the Building Committee is up to, who's doing this, and why are they doing it. Councilor Roberts stated that they are a very transparent group and she wants to make sure that people know that.

Mayor Hemmann commented that we are aiming for a meeting with them as a joint group every other month. She stated that if she remembers correctly, they met with them last month to review

the PCB issue and really felt that it was a good forum and will be meeting with them on a regular basis.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the Millwood's beach and grass look great and it appears that the work that has been done there is keeping the beach intact. He asked if we can get Kathy Bagley or Jeff's comments about how it is working.

Councilor Hurley commented that he has talked with Kathy and stated that they actually got a test of the system before it opened with the rain storm and it basically worked as it was supposed to maybe one glitch but they fixed everything and he believes that we are perfect for the whole season.

Mayor Hemmann commented that it is nice to see something come together successfully.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Bridges reported that there will be mosquito spraying in some areas due to the perfect conditions of mosquito breeding in town. He stated that we do have a plan to spray the public areas like the park areas, the outdoor areas in town that are public and the meadows in Old Wethersfield. He stated the spraying will be weather dependent.

Dolores Sassano commented the thank you letters are ready to send out thanking the current board and commission members for their service.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor Hurley moved **"TO POSTPONE THE JULY 15, 2013 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING TO JULY 23, 2013 AT 7 PM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS"**, seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

Mr. Bridges explained that this will not only be for the bids but it will be the regular Council meeting for July so there will be other business before you including the radio system. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **"TO APPROVE THE AMENDED RECONSTRUCTION AND PAVING OF WEBB PARKING LOT AS A 2013-14 CAPITAL PROJECT AND TO AUTHORIZE A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT WITH GENERAL PAVING IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$218,000 FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION AND PAVING OF THE WEBB SCHOOL PARKING LOT"**, seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges explained that we had an additional \$200,000 in the Capital Fund and at the time felt that repaving of the Webb parking lot would be an appropriate use of those funds. Mr. Bridges explained that Mr. Turner is here this evening to answer any questions. He explained that

basically what we want to do is a change order with our general contractor, General Paving, to do the work on the parking lot. He stated that the area that was discussed but not needed to be repaved, will just be more or less an overlay to make it match up with everything and there won't be a full reconstruction of that piece and it is \$200,000.

A discussion ensued with Mr. Turner regarding the specifics of the paving areas of the project. Councilor Kotkin expressed concern about getting the Webb tennis courts done before the high school construction.

Councilor Manousos asked if there is a way where we can get the area done where the kids play at recess since all the paving equipment will already be there on site.

Mr. Turner responded that to get that area done, it would cost about another \$18,000 at about 10% over budget.

Councilor Manousos moved to amend the motion not to exceed \$218,000 in order to repave the recess play area.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 5-2-0. Deputy Mayor Console and Councilor Roberts voted no.

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO APPROVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE EMERSON WILLIAMS PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION INCORPORATED FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A PLAY STRUCTURE AT THE EMERSON WILLIAMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UPON TOWN ATTORNEY ACCEPTANCE”**, seconded by Councilor Montinieri.

Mr. Bridges explained that the town and PTO is in the position and representatives are here this evening and can validate that they have money in their own kitty to build a new play structure at Emerson Williams. Mr. Bridges explained that the desire is to get it done before the school year starts and now is the time to do it and between ordering materials and having it constructed, there is a small window of time. He explained that the town has been awarded a grant of \$100,000 to complete the project in conjunction with the Emerson Williams PTO money, but the grant funds won't be available for expenditure until the end of August and that is how long it's going to take to get the paperwork done to where we are authorized to spend the funds. Mr. Bridges explained that we have worked on a series of agreements and conditions with the PTO under which they could somehow pay us back if we didn't get the grant but their bylaws prohibit them from incurring debt so we couldn't do that. So now we are in the position where in the Park and Recreation Department there is a revolving escrow fund that has about \$52,000 and Kathy is able to put \$52,000 into the project along with the PTO's \$60,000 to make this happen and then we will pay ourselves back with the grant and finish the agreement. Mr. Bridges stated that the PTO cannot commit to a repayment plan because that would incur debt and so forth. So we are kind of in a conundrum where the grant will come, but not in time and we have resources to spend but

we don't have the ability to get a commitment from the PTO to pay us back for a grant we are pretty sure we are going to get. So we want to know how comfortable the council is for fronting the money and waiting on the grant to pay us back.

Councilor Hurley asked when you say pretty sure, what do you mean.

Councilor Montinieri replied that he spoke to Russ today and there is no question about the grant and that it is coming, it's just a timing issue and he thinks we should definitely move forward and support that proposal and urged the council to get that done.

Mr. Bridges explained that what we would ask is that we do have at least an agreement with the PTO that we would contribute up to \$100,000 which would be the amount of the grant and they could sign that, but there would be no conditions on repayment and they would front us the \$60,000 to get this started and we would make up the difference for the materials and other things which equal about \$52,000 condition upon approval of the town attorney.

A discussion ensued regarding the Emerson Williams playscape. Kathy Bagley explained that it was built in the early 90's and have done little things on it over the years, but parts are hard to get now and it's hard to replace them. She stated that the new playscape will be totally ADA accessible and will be brought up to the 21st century and they will put a whole new playscape in.

Councilor Kotkin confirmed that at the end of the day the town is not putting any money into it. It would be 90% from the State and about 10% or so from the PTO.

Ms. Bagley responded yes, pretty much and the town had committed to doing the labor for the site work and we've done that for past playground installations.

Mayor Hemmann asked Ms. Bagley to say a few words about Millwoods.

Ms. Bagley commented that if we had all this rain last year, the beach would have washed out numerous times but it hasn't. She commented that they put new sand in there and it has worked out very well and the drainage that is out there is doing really well too with all the storms that we have had. She mentioned the big storm where in 20 minutes or an hour we got 2 inches of rain. She commented that the park was flooded all over the place, but the beach sand did not wash out. She commented that it is nice now that it's open and people are really enjoying it. Ms. Bagley commented that we think we are going to have a sand castle building contest because they are digging like crazy out there and putting sand castles up.

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

BIDS

Deputy Mayor Console moved to **“ACCEPT AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO THE MARKETING**

AGREEMENT BETWEEN DIRECT ENERGY SERVICES, LLC AND THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD”, seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Mr. Bridges explained that the Citizens Energy Committee has been negotiating with Direct Energy for a renewal of our current marketing program and they’ve come in and the best Direct Energy can do is a 6-month rate. Mr. Bridges stated that you can see the comparison between the new rate and the old rate and it is going up. He explained that CL&P’s base rate may have come down somewhat below this rate and doesn’t know where that leaves us with the council’s desire to continue this program. Mr. Bridges stated that he has been unable to get the rate but knows that there is a 4-month rate that is lower but has not seen the new CL&P rate. He stated that he has not seen the new CL&P rates but he know they are out there.

Councilor Roberts commented that the new CL&P rate is 7.573 cents a kilowatt hour.

Brendon Szemplinski from Direct Energy stated that they are only nominally lower and the price of energy has been going up. He explained that CL&P buys differently and as a result the best rate that we can offer right now and also provide money back to the town which we still would have in our new contract is the 7.5 on a six-month offer.

A discussion ensued regarding guaranteeing and providing the best rates for our residents. It was explained that the lowest rate cannot be guaranteed.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion failed 0-6-1. Councilor Kotkin abstained.

Deputy Mayor Console moved to **“APPROVE THE BUDGET STABILIZATION PROGRAM WORKER’S COMPENSATION AND LAP INSURANCE RENEWAL WITH CIRMA”**, seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

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

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None.

MINUTES

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 17, 2013”** seconded by Councilor Hurley. Some of the Council members had not yet reviewed the minutes, therefore, it was tabled to the July 23, 2013 Town Council meeting. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion was tabled 7-0-0.

Councilor Kotkin commented on the motion for the June 26, 2013 meeting and stated that only

four councilors attended. Ms. Sassano stated that it was an Infrastructure Committee meeting and that it was not necessary to have it be motioned for approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Ave. commented on the stop sign measurements on Morrison Avenue and stated that he will be going to the State Commissioner regarding the issue.

Jim Clynch, 903 Ridge Rd., commented on the taxes for the Town of Wethersfield and how Simsbury is one of the top towns in the State and how the taxes went down there. He also commented on the road improvement tax and mentioned how the roads are in such disrepair.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Rd., commented on his Wethersfield tax bill and stated that he expected it to go down to give the tax payers some kind of relief. He commented on the advancement of money to the Emerson Williams PTO and doesn't think that we should be doing business like that. He commented on the football turf investment stating that we should be seeing each year how much revenue came out of that particular fund or investment. He commented that cash should have been collected to replace the surface of that field and not to go out and borrow again. He also commented on how we didn't have a hearing or a referendum on the radio system.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved by Vote of Council
July 23, 2013