



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
Conference Room L-101 Lower Level – Town Hall
7:00 P.M.**

March 3, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Woods at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

Councilor Borjeson
Councilor Castelle
Councilor DelBuono
Councilor Klett
Councilor McDonald
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Rob Hillman, Assistant Highway Superintendent
Craig Minor, Town Planner
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue: He was pleased Toll Bros. had dropped their bid for development of Cedar Mountain and congratulated the Mayor for beginning the process of negotiating to purchase the property. He felt Balf would want to sell the land to the Town and there could be several creative ways to buy the land. With regard to the Town Manager's evaluation he stated he felt a neutral rating would be appropriate since there were many things in Town that needed to be straightened out. It was not wise to increase his salary now since it would add fuel to the fire.

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Dawn (inaudible): She was not in favor of giving the Town Manager an increase since she felt he had not fulfilled his role to the fullest extent. She had witnessed the Town Manager publicly humiliate and bully people and when asked for information, never gave a direct answer. She felt it was the Town Council's responsibility to represent the public who elected them and wanted to know why the Council members were in favor of a raise at the present time.

Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street: he was happy with the resolution of Cedar Mountain and thought it would be a good idea to contact the Trust for Public Land. The group might be able to help with the purchasing of the property. From an economic development perspective he felt the area could be marketed as a wildlife and birding area since he personally had spotted 100 different species of birds on Cedar Mountain. Mr. Zartarian wanted to congratulate the Conservation Commission, and Newington residents who fought for the preservation of the land. He felt that was the way democracy was supposed to work.

Meg Gilbert, 58 Coolidge Avenue: She was appalled at the proposed raise for the Town Manager being reintroduced since with the current budget situation services might have to be cut. It was not the right time for a raise since many residents have had their wages frozen over the years.

(inaudible): She was not pleased with the proposed raise for the Town Manager and felt the proposal was being snuck up on the Town since the amended agenda had been done late to include it. She questioned the democracy in Newington and was uncomfortable with the Town Manager and that money was not being spent in the right places.

Stan Greczkowski, 46 Miami Avenue: He congratulated the Town on Cedar Mountain. He was concerned that the special meeting on the budget was turned into a regular Town Council meeting. The evaluation had been voted on and denied but was brought back on the current agenda. He thought the prevailing members had to be the ones to reintroduce the proposal and did not understand why there was a mistake in the percentage of increase as well. He did not have feelings one way or the other about the raise but having the agenda changed at 2:30 p.m. yesterday was not right. The information online did not change but had the old agenda for the special meeting. The public had to have the ability to know what was going on and did not in this instance. It looked as though the Council was sneaking around and would have been better to include the item on a regular agenda meeting. He hoped the Council would not vote on the item tonight.

IV. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

None

V. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Manager Evaluation

Councilor Borjeson moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That reflective of the Town Manager's performance from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, the Town Council; hereby authorizes a salary increase of 3%, (\$4,211.34) on the current salary of the Town Manager, John L. Salomone for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2014.

Councilor Klett stated that according to Roberts Rules the prevailing side had to be the one to reintroduce a motion. Since the Democrats had brought the motion and it failed last week, she felt that according to Roberts Rules the prevailing side had to bring it back up. The Mayor indicated that the Town Council's Rules of Procedures trumped Roberts Rules, and the item had been added correctly to the agenda. The rules indicated the Mayor, the Town Manager, and a councilor could add items to the agenda.

Councilor DelBuono agreed with Councilor Klett and the Mayor indicated he had talked with the Town Attorney who stated the item could be added. Councilor DelBuono took exception that it was a special meeting and according to Roberts Rules a special meeting was called for a specific reason. Items at the meeting had to be related to the original reason the meeting was called. The items added supposed to be emergency items, which these were not. The Mayor stated the rules allowed for the adding of the items according to the Town Attorney.

Councilor Klett stated since the motion failed last week and there was no request to continue it on the agenda it appeared to her that the items were new business but placed under old business. If placed under new business it would have required a two thirds vote of Council. The Mayor said it had been discussed on February 10 and 24 and was old business.

Council Nagel asked what the Town Attorney had told the Mayor. According to the Council's rules they followed Roberts Rules but was anything null and void if the Mayor chose to make it null and void. The Mayor was told by the Town Attorney that the Council's rules superseded Roberts Rules. If the Council did not have its own rules, Roberts Rules would be followed.

Councilor Borjeson indicated as the Chair of the Evaluation Committee he went to Ann Harter and misunderstood her answer. There was discussion on which year was 2% and which year was an average of 3%. The correct amount was 3%, but he had misinterpreted the amount to be 2% and apologized for the error. The Town Manager had met his goals and there was no conspiracy involved. Councilor Klett was concerned that eight people discussed the evaluation and nobody had caught the error. Councilor Klett asked what the specific amount of the raise would be and Mrs. Harter indicated it was \$4,211.34.

Councilor Klett also wanted to clarify a newspaper article that indicated she and Councilor Nagel had blocked the vote last week. She stated they had voted No but did not block the vote.

Councilor DelBuono indicated it was not a matter of whether or not she supported the Town Manager's raise since she was not part of the process and would leave the room when the vote was taken. She asked if the raise had passed last week would they be asked to vote on an increase at this special meeting. The Mayor indicated they would have. She asked for the Town Attorney's opinion in writing. Councilor DelBuono thought it was wrong to slip something by the public without notifying them ahead of time since this was a budget meeting. She stated she had no opposition to Mr. Nafis' appointment but would not attend that vote either she was not in favor of that being added to a budget meeting.

Councilor Nagel agreed with Councilors Klett and DelBuono and was surprised since the item did not pass last week and the people could change their vote from one week to the next.

Councilor McDonald indicated she abstained last week since she had only been a councilor for a small portion of the period involved. She wanted to tell the public the cycle in question was for 2013- 2014 and not the current 2014 – 2015. She reviewed the evaluation documents in depth, reviewed the performance evaluation in more depth during the past week as well as the document put together by the evaluation committee. The Town Manager was given an above average rating and several commendations were included as well. She felt he had met his three main goals and had to put aside any matters that were related to his attitude, performance, behavior or communication with the public. Based on everything she had reviewed during the past week, she was in favor of the motion.

Councilor Klett asked what section of the rules the Mayor referenced for the meeting. The Mayor indicated that since the Town Council's rules did not suit the needs of the Councilor she was in favor of Roberts Rules.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Marocchini and passed on a roll call vote 5 – 2 (1 absent)
Yes: Councilors Borjeson, Castelle, Marocchini, McDonald, Mayor Woods
No: Councilors Klett, Nagel
Absent from room for vote: Councilor DelBuono

B. Budget Review: Public Works (Engineering, Highway, Sanitation)

ENGINEERING

- 310 Engineering
 - The Town Engineer requested \$8k for additional staffing for larger volume/backlog for meetings.
 - Recommended \$3900 to be added
 - Approximate 3% increase

- 320 Highway Administration
 - contains superintendent, assistant superintendent, admin assistants
 - centralizes certain costs within department
 - \$12,700 is a contractual amount

- 322 Highway Operations
 - Increase of 1.88%
 - Bulk of public works employees
 - Snow removal not included

- 324 Snow and Ice Control
 - Budget for average year
 - \$148k should be sufficient for OT in an average year
 - have restocked supply of materials

- 325 Traffic
 - Responsible for signs and painting of lines in roads
 - Includes utilities like town owned lights (\$22,480)
 - Cut amount to be used for replacing directional signs in Town. Will be phased in over 2 years

- 327 Vehicles and Equipment
 - Department maintains all equipment and vehicles except for busses
 - Fuel and Lubricants down due to lower petroleum costs

- 328 Leaf Collection
 - six week program in Fall dependent on weather and when leaves drop
 - supplies were cut \$1k.

- 351 Solid Waste Services – Refuse collection
 - Contract reflects new price and less than last year

- 352 Refuse Disposal
 - Includes part time employee and tipping fees
 - Contract increase and tonnage adjusted

- 353 Recycling
 - Cost of recycling contract
 - Small decrease in budget

C. Budget Review: Community Development and Improvements (Town Planner, TPZ, ZBA, Building Department, Conservation Commission, Economic Development Commission)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 420 Planning and Development
 - Includes salaries for full time employees
 - Part time position eliminated

- 430 Town Planning and Zoning Commission
 - Part time clerk (\$9,662) for verbatim minutes
 - Public notifications was decreased by \$1,875

- 440 Zoning Board of Appeals
 - Includes salaries
 - Public notifications was decreased by \$300

Councilor Klett asked about the cost of hiring a consultant and was told there was not an exact figure and money would be transferred to pay for the item.

Councilor Castelle mentioned that all programs under Planning and Development had a decrease in the budget.

- 450 Building Department
 - Slight decrease in budgeted amount
 - Three people do all inspections on construction and improvement projects

- 460 Conservation Commission
 - Lists the costs needed to run the commission
 - Town Engineer is the staffing person
 - Slight decrease in amount budgeted

D. Budget Review: Health

PUBLIC HEALTH

- 511 Health Services
 - This is the first increase in about three years (4.31%)

There are two full time employees dedicated to Newington since 1.5 persons were needed to inspect restaurants.

VI. RESIGNATIONS & APPOINTMENTS

A. Appointment: Town Hall Renovations Project Building Committee

Councilor Marocchini moved the following:

RESOLVED; that the Newington Town Council hereby appoints the following member to the Town Hall Renovations Project Building Committee:

Name	Address	Party	Term	Replaces
Public Member: Alan Nafis	49 Whitewood Road	D	Immediate– Indefinite	J. Murphy (resigned 2/2015)

The motion was seconded by Councilor McDonald and passed 7 – 0 (Councilor DelBuono absent from room for vote).

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She had no problem with the raise for the Town Manager but questioned the process and manner in which it was done. It was not common practice to add items to an agenda and felt it was offensive to the public. Mrs. Lyons added that the Town Attorney's opinion should have been read into the record.

Alan Paskewich, 100 Cambria Avenue: He commended the Highway Department for all their hard work in clearing roads. He stated that people did not realize how much the Town Manager and his staff had to handle. He has always found the staff to be cooperative and helpful. He hoped that all commissions and boards would work cooperatively together to find a balance of facility needs and usage as well as resolve any issues on a friendly basis.

Scott Greczkowski, 46 Miami Avenue: He indicated that during the recent OSHA inspection the Town was asked to move the food stored in the stage area as soon as possible. He suggested the use of a truck stored outside. He stated he had written the Town Manager regarding the rules and procedures of the Town Council since he could not find them on the website and was waiting for a reply. He felt it was important for the public to know what rules the Council was operating under. Mr. Greczkowski asked for contact information for the Town Attorney, which he could not find on the website either. Lastly he apologized for his previous actions and had thought Councilor Borjeson had stuck his tongue out at him.

Sarah Jorgensen, 53 Crestview Drive: She stated they had received preliminary plans for the Town Hall renovation project and hoped they would be made available to the public soon to get feedback before moving forward. She was disappointed about the behavior of Council members and felt that even if you did not agree with someone's opinion, there was no reason to be rude.

John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue: He was disappointed at the hostility between Council members and felt the Mayor could have handled the situation more diplomatically. The Council members had raised legitimate questions on procedures and said the Mayor had won the battle but could lose the war. He felt the raise for the Town Manager would cause further division and people were not happy about it.

(No name/address given): He felt the public was asking for unrealistic response times from Town Hall. There was research that needed to be done in order to give a correct answer to a question from a resident.

Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street: he stated he did not feel the Mayor came across favorably on TV and was troubled with it. The situation could have been handled much more diplomatically and offered to have fewer services in Town.

No Name/Address given: She indicated she was happy about Cedar Mountain but disappointed in the Mayor's behavior and in Councilor McDonald for changing her vote on the Town Manager's evaluation.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: She had no issue with Mr. Salomone's raise but in the manner in which it was done. When the Mayor consulted with the Town Attorney over the process, she felt that indicated the issue was on shaky ground to begin with. It put a damper on the raise and her concerns were about the process and not the raise itself.

VIII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor DelBuono felt the Town Manager's evaluation was handled poorly and could not understand why, if one councilor was uncomfortable with the proceedings, it could not have been tabled for more discussion. She apologized to the Town Manager since they spent the time talking about procedure and not the substance of the evaluation. She explained she had abstained because she had only been on the Council for four months of the process and was not part of the actual process. When she was appointed to the Council recently, she said the Mayor had told her he was aware that she and Councilor McDonald would be abstaining on the evaluation. She read a letter into the record (attached) requesting a special meeting of the Town Council.

Councilor McDonald stated she had told no one about how she was voting last week on the Town Manager's evaluation. Based on the executive session being short, the actual evaluation had been discussed for a minute or so, and she felt she did not have enough information to vote on the subject. After the vote, she communicated with the Mayor and committee that a disservice had been done to the Town Manager and elected to review the documents included in the evaluation this past week. Councilor McDonald felt a yes vote was OK to give Mr. Salomone a raise since his performance had merited it.

Councilor Klett suggested the Trust for Public Land be contacted about help in purchasing the Balf property as suggested by Mr. Zartarian. She stated that regarding the Roberts Rules vs. Town Council's Rules there should have been a written opinion from the Town Attorney which would point to the specific rule involved. She would still like to have that information. She congratulated Councilor Borjeson as Chairman of the Town Manager review on an excellent job. When a Councilor expressed at a meeting they did not have enough information to vote, the item should have been tabled last week and put on the next regular Council meeting. It should not have been put on a Special Meeting agenda 24 hours before the meeting.

Councilor Borjeson stated he had not stuck his tongue out which anyone could check on the video and was not an excuse for the resident's behavior. Last week they met for a second goal setting meeting and talked about what needed to be done to make Newington a better place. Part of the discussion was elevating discourse and eliminating innuendos and nasty things being said. He was disappointed with the discussion tonight and hoped in the future to change the behavior.

Councilor Nagel felt the major concerns he had about the issue tonight was about communicating, notifying and the way it was accomplished.

Mayor Woods stated that anyone could have spoken to the Town Attorney and he did because he knew the action would be challenged. After talking to the Attorney, he was still convinced he was right. Items were added to the agenda occasionally and felt it was not right to get people riled up because of it. He said it was a disgrace to drag the Town Manager through this and it was very uncomfortable but intentional on the part of certain people. Mr. Salomone earned his raise and it was a simple mistake in the percentage mentioned at the last meeting. The Council was clear the Town Manager was going to get the same raise as the administrators. Councilor Borjeson asked Mrs. Harter for the preceding year but the raise was based on the current year. This year the raise to administrators was 3% and last year the raise amounted to 2%.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Marocchini moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. and was seconded by Councilor Borjeson. The motion passed 8 – 0.

Respectfully Submitted,


Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council (IT)

Cc: T. Lane, Town Clerk
Att.

March 3, 2015

To: John Salomone

Town Manager, Newington CT

We would like to request a Special Meeting of the Town Council be scheduled at the earliest convenience for the following purposes:

- For review and explanation of the Town Council Rules by the Town Atty, Peter Boorman.
- Specific clarification should be focused on the use of Roberts Rules as part of Town Council Rules of Procedure
- Additional discussion related to general questions/clarifications regarding Town Council Rules of Procedure.

- Discussion regarding Special Meetings

Please inform the Council and the Public of this request as soon as it is able to be scheduled.

Thank-you,

Beth Ann DeRuono
Maureen H Keenan

