



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

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

July 8, 2014

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 Cohen - absent
Councilor Dinunzio
Councilor Klett
Councilor McDonald
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager
Andy Brecher, Economic Development Director
Jaime Trevethan, Assistant to the Town Manager – Admin.
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gary Bolles, 28 Burdon Lane- Read a statement regarding his concern that the area the Community Center would be built on was wetlands and would cause problems in the years to come.

Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street: He stated he was the creator and administrator of the Facebook site Save Mill Pond Park and was concerned with the Town setting a precedent that land in Newington was up for grabs.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: She wanted to know if after an environmental study was done it was found there would be significant damage to wetlands, Falls or park, would the project be stopped. She asked if environmental issues could override the referendum vote. Mrs. Budrejko felt the taking of outside space for inside space was not a fair trade off since many people use the park for recreational activities. Her last question was why that was the only location in Town the Community Center could be located on.

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Sharon Braverman, 39 Churchill Way: She offered to share a table at the Extravaganza for people to give feedback on the project.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She had gone to the meeting the previous evening and did get some answers to her questions regarding the standalone Community Center building. She was unsure how the votes were taken during the committee meetings and questioned the building being put in a area known for wetlands. She also asked about the outreach to the public with workshops to include cost, why it was needed, and why it was a good time to do this. After the outreach the committee could judge the public reaction and adjust the project accordingly. Mrs. Lyons felt these meetings did not happen and there had been no dialogue with the public.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS
A. Town Hall Renovation Project – Discussion/Updates

Councilor Castelle read a list of questions asked during the public hearing and responses to them into the record. The list is attached.

John Salomone addressed the question of what the line item budget was for the project. He reviewed the project budget. The Mayor stated that if any part of the project fell into a regulated area, it would have to meet the conditions of the Conservation Commission. If the Commission found significant impact, it would likely have to be moved. Mr. Salomone said there was a long range master plan for the Parks and Rec Department for over six years as well as a plan for the campus around the Town Hall, which would include the Library, Senior Center, and the park. He felt the project fell within the plan, and it was important to listen to the public regarding the encroachment of park land. If the pool was eventually replaced, it would be placed next to the Community Center and would be able to use the locker rooms there. The pool was already included in the CIP plan and debt service schedule.

Councilor Klett asked if there were State statutes the Town was required to do environmentally and was it required to go to the State Conservation before the referendum. The Mayor indicated the final design plans had to be developed and would not be done prior to the referendum. The exact location of the Community Center had not been determined and would not until after the vote. The Councilor was concerned about the brochure to be sent to Town residents and how to ensure State regulations were followed. In the past the Council had input into the brochure to make sure it did not cross the line that was allowed. The Mayor explained the bond attorney would review the document to guarantee compliance. The Council members as individuals could be for or against the proposal but the Town employees could not take any position when they were working. If they want to state opinions during lunch or after hours, that was fine. Mr. Salomone indicated Jamie had worked on the rough draft of the brochure which would then be reviewed by the Town Clerk and the Town Attorney. The Bond Attorney would then review and make changes. At that point the Town Council would be given the brochure to review and to determine when it would be mailed to residents.

Mr. Salomone stated he had been invited to present the project at various groups in town, which he would do during lunch or after hours to ensure compliance. He was going to have IT set up an electronic town meeting for the public in text format live, and he would answer any questions live. The brochure could be put online for public access.

Councilor Klett was concerned that the referendum would be held during a half-day of school and wanted to ensure that safety precautions would be taken with so many people in and out of the schools. The Mayor and Town Manager had conversations with school officials who were not overly concerned but would secure the buildings for the children.

Councilor Dinunzio expressed concern about the cost of the project which had been estimated to cost \$15-16 million originally and had doubled when presented to the Town. He also had traffic concerns at the intersection of Cross and Willard, which was already busy. Councilor Nagel indicated the Town could not swap out one piece of Mill Pond Park for use of another. Indoor and outdoor recreations were not the same. Councilor Borjesson indicated he had a traffic pattern report he would give to the Council and asked if there would be consideration given to the traffic in the area as part of the project.

V. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Grant Funding – Former National Welding Building

Mr. Brecher stated more PCB's and contaminates had been found, which would make the project more expensive. The contractor made an application to the Department of Health for alternative work practice, which would eliminate the need to build a containment area over the building. If the application were accepted, the building would be taken down bolt by bolt and everything taken down would be captured, contained and disposed of in an environmental safe manner. The announcement for the bidding process would be in the near future and would be on the Town website. Fencing around the site would be the next step in the process.

Councilor Nagel asked if there were any State mandates the Town needed to adhere to regarding the demolishing of the building. Mr. Brecher said there were many but most were process related. DECD would require information on bidding documents, advertising, who the bidders were and their bids, and what was the basis on determining the award.

Councilor Borjeson indicated the site was a good example of the Town and State working together. There were funds available for brown field remediation and transit oriented development. He recognized there were fears the State would tell the Town what to do with the property but the Town was proactive in stating what Newington wanted to do. Councilor McDonald asked about the restrictive covenant and what uses the land could be used for. Mr. Brecher indicated it could be a blend of single use, or mixed use but the Town was not committed. He hoped to develop the approximately four acres as quickly as possible to contribute to the Grand List.

The item will be on the Council July 22, 2014, agenda.

B. Consideration of Canceling the August 26, 2014 Town Council Meeting

Mayor Woods indicated he had no problem with cancelling it but wanted to wait until the next meeting to take the vote.

VI. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

A. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Councilor Borjeson moved the following:

RESOLVED, that the Newington Town Council appoints the following member to the Newington Housing Needs Study Committee:

Name	Address	Party	Term
Senior Center Member (Public): Maureen Lynch	165 Foxboro Drive	D	5/13/14 - Indefinite

The motion was seconded by Councilor Castelle and passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Cohen, absent).

VII. TAX REFUNDS

Councilor Marocchini moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That property tax refunds in the amount of \$ 497.28 are hereby approved in the individual

amounts and for those named on the "Requests for Refund of an Overpayment of Taxes," certified by the Revenue Collector, a list of which is attached to this resolution.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Dinunzio and passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Cohen, absent).

VIII. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Action Requested)

A. Public Hearing, 6/24/14

Councilor Marocchini moved to accept the minutes and the motion was seconded by Councilor Borjeson. The motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Cohen, absent).

B. Regular Meeting, 6/24/14

Councilor Dinunzio asked that the record reflect a corrected vote on page 4 for the amended resolution. The roll call vote was:

Yes: Councilors Borjeson, Castelle, Marocchini, McDonald and Mayor Woods

No: Councilors Dinunzio, Klett, Nagel

Absent: Councilor Cohen

The minutes incorrectly stated the vote was unanimous. The vote passed 5-3.

Councilor Dinunzio made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected and was seconded by Councilor Nagel. The motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Cohen, absent).

IX. WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER, OTHER TOWN AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC

John Salomone mentioned he had been receiving invitations to answer questions regarding the referendum and was going to give the Council the schedule and invited them to attend any of the meetings they could. He reminded them the meetings would be off hours and/or during lunch hours. The Town Manager although in favor of the project would answer any questions as neutrally as possible. In response to a question from Councilor Dinunzio he stated the mailer would hopefully be ready for the Council to review at the next meeting and to be mailed at the discretion of the Council.

Councilor Nagel asked the Town Manager at each meeting he attended in Town to give an explanation that he was there to give factual information and not to state opinion. Councilor Klett stated she had not heard about a Plan B in case the referendum did not pass and what would happen if it failed. The Mayor stated a Plan B would cost money and no money would be spent until after the referendum vote and the results were evaluated.

Councilor Borjeson said the Council had the responsibility to ensure the Town Hall was renovated; and if the referendum failed, the renovations still needed to be done. There was a need for basic renovations to be done.

X. COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Sharon Braverman, 39 Churchill Way: She stated that her offer to share a table at the Extravaganza would be withdrawn if it was illegal. She thought it would be a good way to give the public an opportunity to express their opinions and the Mayor indicated he was not sure, due to new legislation, if it would be possible.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She stated she thought the brochure should include a description and address of the new Community Center to ensure residents knew it was a separate building in the Park. She felt there would be traffic issues on Willard, Moreland and Wilson Avenues and should be reviewed. Mrs. Lyons stated there was a title search done on the property and wondered why and the results. During Mr. Brecher's presentation he mentioned the project would cost more, and she wondered where the money would come from. Mrs. Lyons asked when something would be done about traffic on Elton Drive. She offered to attend any civic group meetings to give her opinion on the project.

Stacy Partlow, 143 Dewey Avenue: She stated as a business owner and parent she wanted the Town Hall to be renovated but if the Community Center was built in the Park, she would vote No on the project.

Gary Bolles, 28 Burdon Lane: He stated that if the Community Center was built on a slab it may in a few years begin to sink, which could cost a lot of money.

Patty Foley, 51 Cottage : She asked for a private viewing of the presentation since she did not belong to any of the civic groups in Town.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace: She agreed with Mrs. Lyons regarding the brochure describing the renovation and a separate Community Center and stating the location was vital to ensure residents knew it was in the Park.

XII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Klett asked when the chairs for Councilors McBride, DelBuono and Bottalico would be available. The Mayor indicated they were delayed in getting which chairs they wanted and as soon as they were available, would be presented at a Council meeting.

Councilor Castelle indicated there had been an article regarding Project Choice and a student who had gone through the Newington school system from Hartford. It reflected very well on the tutors and teachers of Newington and wanted to express his thanks to all those involved.

Councilor Borjeson reminded everyone that the Extravaganza was to be held on Saturday.

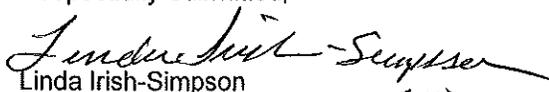
Councilor Nagel suggested the minutes of the meetings should include a tape of the NCTV so there was no doubt about what went on during a meeting. Jamie explained the tape of each meeting was filed with the Town Clerk and was available to the public. The Mayor explained the video was available several days after a meeting, which was also available to the public. John Salomone explained the official record of each meeting were the minutes approved by the Council and the tape or video were adjuncts to the record.

Councilor Klett asked the Council be informed if a Council member made suggestions as to what was included in the Town Manager's presentation to civic groups.

XIII: ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Marocchini moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. and was seconded by Councilor McDonald. The motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Cohen, absent).

Respectfully Submitted,


Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council (JS)

Attach.

1. **Why doesn't the referendum offer a choice between a Plan A (renovation of Town Hall and construction of a new Community Center separate from Town Hall); and a Plan B (renovation of Town Hall and the current Community Center within the Town Hall complex)?**

A single Plan--Renovation of Town Hall and construction of a new stand-alone Community Center--has been the object of this Committee since it met for the second time in its present form on **February 21st, 2012**. At that meeting, the committee resolved by consensus that it was interested in moving the Community Center to a new location.

The rationale for doing so was the following:

--Renovations on site would require the gym to be closed for a year or more--probably for two winters--forcing cancellation of the intermural (travel) basketball program, as well as the volleyball, badminton, dance and exercise programs now held in the Community Center during that time.

--The current space does not meet the present and future recreational interests and needs of the community. After examining the site, the Building Committee determined there is not sufficient space to build the additional facilities needed, either adjacent to the current Town Hall or on the other side of Mazzoccoli Way.

--Much of the space that will be vacated by the Parks and Recreation department is intended to accommodate swing space while sections of the Town Hall are being renovated. This will allow each Department to remain open and conduct the Town's business during reconstruction of its own office space..

--This same space, vacated by Parks and Recreation, is necessary for the expansion of office and storage space of the Departments that remain in Town Hall. The primary beneficiary would be the Human Services Department, so that residents who utilize its services will find a more private and accommodating setting.

With these thoughts in mind, a formal vote was taken on **July 17th, 2012**, to build a separate community center as part of the Town Hall Renovation project, passing with three out of four members present in favor.

On **January 7th, 2013**, after a lengthy review and selection process that began on **October 1st, 2012**, a motion to accept the site at Willard and Cross Streets passed unanimously (6-0).

The motion to approve this single plan, and recommend it to the Town Council, was made and passed unanimously on **April 28th, 2014**.

2. What are the potential environmental impacts on the neighboring wetlands, brook, pond and water fall?

Following passage of the referendum, the project will be referred to the Inland Wetlands Commission for review. That body would assess potential environmental impacts, and propose necessary measures to protect wetland areas during and after construction, exactly as they did following the referendum that approved bonding for the new Police headquarters, and prior to work beginning on the synthetic turf field at Clem Lemire Park.

3. Why are we choosing to build the new Community Center where the youth soccer fields are now located?

After several months of deliberations, during which nine different options were evaluated, the Committee determined that the location at the intersection of Cross and Willard was the one that best served the interests of the Town. Committee members and staff saw this area as outdoor recreational space that could be converted into mostly indoor space for similar purposes, and voted 6-0 in its favor.

Since that date, the site of the new community center has been central to the Committee's plans, and has not been a subject of internal debate

It also took into consideration that, although not the object of the current referendum, the Town's formal long-term plan includes renovation of a pool, and possible removal of the bath house and other structures on the banks of Mill Pond, to be replaced by the locker rooms in the new Center. The central area of the Park around Mill Pond could thereby revert to its more natural state.

4. How can the Committee justify borrowing 30,000,000 to pay for this project?

The cost of the project is a reflection of its scope—primarily the need to replace nearly all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in the current Town Hall, including the roof.

A fully renovated Town Hall will be an attractive and safe space for both Public and Staff—the front parlor of the Community, fully ADA compliant, safe, and easy to access—a proper environment in which to conduct business with the Town.

The new Community Center will accommodate the expansion of existing programs, as well as new programs to be developed by the Parks and Recreation Department in accordance with community interest.

A maximum debt of \$ 30,000,000 is a relatively modest figure for a Town the size of Newington, with a Grand List of \$ 2,500,000,000. With Town revenue estimated to be approximately \$ 87,000,000., the maximum annual debt service projected of \$ 3,400,000 is well within accepted norms, and can be accommodated within the \$ 6,300,000 that the Town customarily budgets annually for debt service and pay-as-you-go projects.