



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.

August 11, 2015

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

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

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

Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager
Peter Boorman, Town Attorney
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue: He had asked the Town to reconsider using the lot on the corner as an impound lot which he noticed they had started to do. He suggested the Town hire a commercial assessor to determine the value of the current Town Hall building since he felt someone had to stand up for it. Regarding the amendment to the IHCC contract, he wanted to be sure they had enough liability insurance since there was a steep drop off from the gazebo that was recently built and someone could fall. Mr. Bachand mentioned the high rate of crime in Hartford and since it was a neighboring town, wanted to know if Newington was doing anything in regards to it.

Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street: He stated the office work place was changing and the size of space needed for each individual had changed to a much smaller space due to mobility. He wanted the Town to plan for the future, and to be aware of the large amounts of space requested by department heads and

the Board of Education. He felt the current building could be restructured with more open space and would evolve to a multi-purpose 24/7 facility used by the community. He said this was not being discussed by the current building committee and should be designed with the mobile future in mind.

Peter Arburr, 133 Tremont Street: he commented on the Town Hall Building Committee and the need for the Town Council to look at the big picture before rendering a decision. He stated there were other projects that were being planned like the Library expansion, Reynolds School and Churchill Park. He estimated the cost of all of the above with the Town Hall to be around \$59 million and suggested the Finance Department develop a flow chart to keep track of costs, starting date, bonding information and the impact on the budget.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She suggested residents keep track of the CIP plan where all the projects listed by Mr. Arburr were listed. She asked if there would be more public hearings on the Town Hall renovation, when the budget for the project would be set and a time frame. Mrs. Lyons indicated there would be a meeting with the DOT on August 19 at 6 p.m. regarding the traffic light at Alumni Road and Cedar Street and urged residents to attend.

Gary Bolles, 28, Burdon Lane: He stated at the last public hearing the cost for renovation of the Town Hall was about \$32 million with soft costs of \$5 million. He felt the \$5 million was a lot of money and questioned if there was an obligation to retain the builder and architect or could the Town choose other companies. He felt the budget of \$30 million should be adhered to.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS (Action May Be Taken)

A. Indian Hill Lease Update

Mr. Salomone indicated the lease was being changed to reflect some of the issues with the club and to ensure the Town's investment was protected. Mr. Boorman stated in 2014 the agreement was modified to reflect changes. To ensure long term success they needed to change the agreement once again since the assessment had gone down over the years and there have been fewer golfers golfing. The Town needed to take steps to protect a major asset.

Councilor Klett asked who in Town was responsible for negotiating the change with IHCC and Mr. Boorman indicated it was Steve Juda, Lisa Rydecki, and himself. She indicated that the Town was already ensured the property would be maintained in the original agreement and did not agree with forgiving money that was owed by the Club. Mr. Boorman indicated the Club and Town followed the agreement to the letter. Councilor Klett stated an audit had not been done and was concerned since it was in the agreement. The Council did not have a good handle to assess viability. Mr. Boorman stated the auditors indicated the information received by the Town was more thorough than what they would get through an audit and advised the Town to not do an audit. He said the Club culture had changed and they realized the old model of country club member would not work any longer. She was concerned they were being asked to make changes based on a document from 2013 and felt an audit should have been done to give the Council a full understanding of the issue. She wanted to know who attended the quarterly meetings and what information they got from those meetings.

Councilor Borjeson indicated he had been a liaison to the Club and felt they had done a good job. Golfing was changing, less rounds of golf were being played and a lot of courses were in trouble. The value of courses had gone down considerably. If the course was not maintained, it would go downhill very quickly and be difficult and expensive to bring back.

Councilor DelBuono indicated she had issues with forgiving the arrearage and thought \$27k was a lot to forgive. She thought the agreement should include language to have the IHCC pay the lease amount and \$1k toward arrearage. This type of agreement would not be done for other taxpayers she felt. She asked Mr. Boorman if the Club had added the 20 members as agreed to, and he indicated they had actually added 75 individuals. However, renewals were an issue.

Councilor Castelle indicated the worst thing that could happen would be for the club to fail and that it was Mr. Boorman's responsibility to give them terms to help them succeed. The Mayor indicated the arrearage and lease payments were two separate issues and if only the lease payments were to change, the item

would not have come before the Council. The Club did not have the money to pay the arrearage but were giving more of their assets to the residents, employees and out of towners.

Councilor Nagel was concerned about the numbers given and the audit, which he felt were confusing regarding the viability of the course and the revenues. Mr. Boorman said the issue was complex and included sensitive material like real estate that was proprietary.

Councilor Banach asked how much money was contributed by IHCC to the high school graduation and was told about \$700. He asked if the golf team paid for golf at the course and was told there was no charge and that other towns did pay to play at various other courses. He wanted to know what the cost to the town would be if the course failed and was told it would be approximately \$1 million a year. Councilor Banach stated in order to incur a smaller loss the agreement was necessary.

Councilor Borjeson moved the following:

RESOLVED: that the Newington Town Council authorizes the Town Attorney to execute the attached amended agreement between the Town of Newington and the Indian Hill Country Club.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Marocchini and passed on a roll call vote 6 – 3.
Yes: Councilors Banach, Castelle, Marocchini, McDonald, Mayor Woods
No: Councilors DelBuono, Klett, Nagel

**B. New Ordinance – Student Technology Insurance Fund
1. Set a Public Hearing Date**

Councilor McDonald moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That a Public Hearing be held on September 8, 2015 at 6:55 p.m. to consider a proposed ordinance entitled “Student Technology Insurance Fund”.

Councilor DelBuono seconded the motion and the motion passed 9 – 0.

C. Consideration of Cancelling the August 25, 2015 Town Council Meeting

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby alters its meeting schedule by canceling its regular meeting scheduled for August 25, 2015.

Councilor Nagel seconded the motion and the motion passed 9 – 0.

V. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Administrative Group Performance Evaluations/Merit Increases

John Salomone stated there would be a resolution at the next meeting to consider merit increases for administrative staff and other non-union employees in the amount of three percent. Department head reviews had been completed and next year's reviews would be done by department heads for staff reporting to them.

Councilor Nagel asked about previous raises being more than 3% and wanted clarification from Mr. Salomone. He was told that some could possibly get 3.5% and others 2.5% but the overall amount would not be more than three percent. Those employees who did not get an evaluation this year would get a flat three percent. The 3% was based on a statewide average and was already allocated in the budget.

Councilor Klett stated that last year seven of fifteen department heads received more than 3% and she objected to that. She felt nobody should get an increase without an evaluation having been done. Mr. Salomone stated that next year evaluations would be done for all employees but this year only the department heads have been completed. She felt the Town Council should have information to ensure the salary ranges for employees were within the same ranges as other surrounding towns. Mr. Salomone stated very few employees reached the top of their range and the ranges should be compressed.

Councilor DelBuono asked for information from neighboring towns and what increases have been given in the past several years in order to compare them with Newington union and non-union staff. She said the money was put in the budget with the hope that less money would be spent. Councilor Castelle said the Board of Education had put a freeze on administrative salaries in order to achieve a balanced budget, and he wondered if the Board had held to that arrangement. Mr. Salomone indicated he would get the information for them.

Mayor Woods said the 3% was not given by the Town Council but gave the Town Manager the money to disburse.

B. Update on Open Space

Mr. Salomone said Councilors Nagel and Banach had requested to meet informally along with Mrs. Conway. Good suggestions had been made and a framework created to charge a new committee with a different composition. Councilor Banach indicated the new committee would consist of seven members instead of eleven and asked if they needed a legal opinion from the Town Attorney. Mr. Salomone indicated the committee would be charged to make recommendations to purchase land but the actual negotiations for any acquisitions would be done by the Town Council and town staff.

Mayor Woods said the resolution would be given to the Town Attorney and then it would be reviewed at the September 8 Council meeting for further discussion. Councilor McDonald asked about open space versus blighted community space that could be used for economic development. She stated the rail system had been included in the information and was curious as to how that would fit into the dialogue of open space.

Councilor Nagel said the Council was being given an update on the ad hoc committee to let everyone know it was moving forward. Any appointments would be made in the future and probably after the next election. Mrs. Conway was gratified the committee was moving forward. There was no urgency since Cedar Mountain had been resolved.

VI. RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS (Action May Be Taken) - None

VII. TAX REFUNDS - None

VIII. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Regular Meeting, July 28, 2015

B. Town Hall Public Hearing, July 28, 2015

Councilor Nagel moved to accept the minutes as submitted and was seconded by Councilor Banach. The motion passed 8 – 0 with 1 abstention – Councilor Borjeson.

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

Mr. Salomone said the DOT public hearing was being held by the Town to get information from residents on Alumni Road before anything was finalized.

X. COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Nagel stated the School Career Technical Project Building Committee returned money to the Town since some items came in under budget.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue: He felt the minority party did not represent a lower class citizen and did not receive the respect from the Town Attorney and Town Manager they should. He was disappointed and said that it should stop. With regard to IHCC he wondered why the course was not open to all citizens to increase the number of rounds played.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She asked where public hearings were published and if local papers were used. She stated she did not think that Councilor Banach could not run for elected office and still serve on the Open Space Committee.

XII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Klett asked the Town Manager for the standards for AMR response times and if the issues of fines owed had been settled. Mr. Salomone indicated the fines were still being discussed. After the election she would like to have the Council take up the issue of reviewing bike lanes, trails, etc. to reduce greenhouse gases after receiving an email from a resident on the subject. She explained her vote on IHCC was not about open space but was one of fiscal responsibility and not having enough information on the issue.

Councilor DelBuono indicated the Council did not have any input into the IHCC agreement and felt they should have had. Her concern was not about open space but about the arrearage dollars being forgiven. She asked Mr. Salomone to look into the possibility of having lights installed on the path to the football field and indicated it was in disrepair since receiving an email from a resident on it. Councilor DelBuono asked for an update on the Young Farm and if the DEEP had scheduled an onsite visit.

Councilor Nagel agreed with the comments made by Councilors Klett and DelBuono on the vote against the IHCC agreement. He thanked the Parks and Rec Department for the recently held dog splash party.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Borjeson moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. and the motion was seconded by Councilor Nagel. The motion passed 9 – 0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council