



James Krupienski
Acting Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

200 GARFIELD STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

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MAYOR BETH DELBUONO

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

John O. Higgins
Town Clerk

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

This meeting was presented as a Zoom Webinar/Hybrid Meeting.

Mayor DelBuono called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. ROLL CALL

Councilor Braverman *(via Zoom)*

Deputy Mayor Budrejko

Councilor Camillo

Councilor Donahue

Councilor Manke

Councilor Nagel

Councilor Page

Councilor Radda

Mayor DelBuono

Staff Attendees:

James Krupienski, Acting Town Manager

Erik Hinckley, Acting Town Planner/ZEO/Blight Officer

Janet Murphy, Director of Finance

Susan Gibbon, Council Clerk

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Councilor Manke to amend the agenda and move 5A, For New Business add 12.C. Seconded by Councilor Donahue. Motion passed 9-0.

5. AWARDS AND PROCLAMATIONS

a. Proclamation – Retirement of Marie Fox, Democrat Registrar

- Mayor DelBuono stated that we planned on doing this proclamation in December, but Marie was ill at the time and postponed it until January in hopes that she would be able to join us. Quite sadly Marie passed away and is no longer with us. We do have her family here to represent and receive the proclamation. We did actually read it her memorial service and would like to do it officially this evening to get it on record.

Motion by Mayor DelBuono

WHEREAS, Marie Fox was appointed as the Democratic Registrar of Voters on July 25, 1990; and

WHEREAS, Marie, during the last 32 years, has ensured that all voters within the Town of Newington have had the ability to exercise their constitutional right to vote on all measures affecting local, state and federal issues; and

WHEREAS, Marie was instrumental in the training, setup, management and accurate reporting of all election information to the Town Clerk and the Secretary of the State, ensuring that all votes were counted; and

WHEREAS, Marie, jointly with the office staff, managed eight (8) Presidential Elections, including Presidential Preference Primaries, Nine (9) Gubernatorial State Elections, and Sixteen (16) Municipal Elections and several stand-alone referendums on various issues; and

WHEREAS, Marie received her certification as an Elections Administrator from Briarwood College, and due to her strong work ethic, continued to train on elections procedures in an ever-changing landscape of rules and regulations; and

WHEREAS, Marie has advised the Town through three (3) mandatory redistricting cycles, while always being aware the impact that those changes have on the electorate; and

WHEREAS, Marie was a member in good standing of the Connecticut Registrar of Voters Association (ROVAC), where she also served as the Hartford County Chairman until 2012; and

WHEREAS, the Registrar of Voters, to ensure that elections were protected, designed an Emergency Contingency Plan for Elections in 2013, to address possible impacts from Storm Sandy. The existing plan was again revised to address the impacts of COVID-19 during the 2020 election cycle; and

WHEREAS, Marie was at the frontlines in November 7, 2006 election, as one of 25 pilot towns testing the use of Optical Scan Voting Machines as a replacement for older lever machines, knowing that the use of a physical ballot was important to ensure the integrity and security of the election system. Those same machines are still in use today throughout the entire State of Connecticut; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I Mayor Beth DelBuono, on behalf of the Newington Town Council hereby recognize and extend our sincere appreciation to Marie Fox for her professional service and dedication to the Town and its electors and wishes her the best in her retirement.

Second by Councilor Braverman. Motion passed 9-0.

- Deputy Mayor Budrejko stated it was sad Marie wasn't able to enjoy retirement. In Marie's recent campaign she use the words "honesty, integrity and experience" – they were not just campaign slogans or words; they described her tenure as a registrar of voters. Being a registrar of voters requires ethics and following directives and the law and staying apolitical. She elected and served and protected the rights of all voters. To her family here tonight, my sincere condolence, she will be missed. You should be proud of the legacy she left in this town. She did what she did for the best interest of all voters of Newington regardless of party and she didn't let politics interfere with her carrying out her duties.
- Councilor Manke offered his condolences to the family. When I enter this building I will see her in her red jacket and Election Day beads; I will see her at every poll, she is with us. The things she implemented to take our voting system to the next level will be with us forever. Last year when we were having the controversy over redistricting, her words that stuck with me were "I love the voters of Newington." That's what I'll remember.
- Councilor Donahue offered his condolences to the family. I got to know Marie when running for office. My only regret is that I didn't get to know here sooner. She was a pistol. You knew exactly where you stood with her.
- Councilor Nagel would like to offer his condolences as well. She put political differences aside and treated everyone fairly. I've known her for over 15 years. She was always aboveboard, honest and caring. She will be greatly missed. Her memory will live on and we will keep in our hearts the memories of the wonderful person she was.
- Mayor DelBuono stated that her family has her sincere condolences. I've known Marie for many years. Year ago my mother met Marie at the beauty parlor and they chatted every time they saw each other. Over the last few years, I got to know Marie more. To see her in action and her amount of knowledge regarding elections was amazing. She was a force of nature in that office. She never stopped learning and getting more. She was the resource for everyone. She will be sorely missed. It was truly an honor and a pleasure to work with Marie.
- Councilor Camillo stated that Marie was quite a lady. Thank you for sharing her with us. She was an asset and we are going to be lost without her.

- Councilor Radda offered her condolences. Met Marie as I became a councilor; but she knew my mother and brother and many, many people in the community.
- Sue Mazzoccoli, West Hartford, CT (*via Zoom*) Go back in politics to 1988, and we were on opposite parties; when I first started I would ask people if they were registered to vote. Had no problem telling people to call Marie. Never had any concern because she was a Democrat. She was always a very pleasant person. So impressed by how close Mike and Marie were. Only Marie could get me back into holding a sign on Election Day. All my best to Mike and your family. She will be missed.
- Theresa Avey, 71 Commonwealth Avenue. Met Marie many years ago; when I became a registrar she told me in the office you leave politics at the door. Everything I learned about how to run an election, about how to run the office, I learned from Marie. She probably forgot more registration statistics that I will ever learn in my time as a registrar. I attended a ROVAC meeting today and many people reminisced about Marie; she never had to call a registrar with a question, she knew it. Every day she taught me some that office will never be the same. I will miss her dearly every day. I have been blessed to call her a friend and mentor. She was full of compassion and love for our voters that will never be replaced. She was an amazing woman, mother and wife. Grateful and blessed to have had a chance to see the different aspects of that amazing woman.
- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive (*via Zoom*). Was unable to attend memorial service. Offer condolences to the family. She was truly one special lady and will be missed by everyone. My condolences to the family. Love you Mike, if you need us, we are here for you.
- Michael Fox thanked the town council and Newington. Got sick about a year and a half ago, tried starting sending out thank you cards. This town is wonderful. Marie really believed in her job. She didn't say I love the voters; she said "I love my voters." They were her voters. There wasn't a part of Section 9 she didn't know. Like Therese said, there were not politics, that was her, a registered Democrat, but when she walked into her office, that went out the door. Mayor, Councilors, thank you very much for this. Evidently she left more of an impact than we knew.

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. Annual Update on Blighted Premises

- Erik Hinckley stated that he took over the position in 2020, and when I started there were 100 blighted properties and have closed 90 of the complaints off that list. Received 30-40 per year. Have had 4 appeals/4 hearings; all notices and citations upheld by hearing officer. Not every complaint received as blight is blight. When possible I refer them to the necessary department. I get a lot of calls for people leaving furniture beside the side of the road. I get a lot of those now that people are getting charged. I get calls for hoarding. Inside the home I do not have purview, I contact the Safe Homes Taskforce. You will not see 260 Stamm Road on the list, it was blighted and was remediated with zoning enforcement action and they paid over \$24,000 in fines. It is still ongoing. Currently only town employee for all land use enforcement which includes blight, zoning and wetlands in addition to all my other duties. People may not be aware of the time and effort involved to enforce various issues. For example, when I receive a blight complaint, I have to go out and inspect it. If it is blight, I send a notice of violation is issued with 10-14 days to remediate, if not taken care of, a blight citation is sent and each can be appealed on its own. Any citation that is sent has to be sent to every lien holder on the property by state statute. I currently have a property where I have to notify 8 different lien holders. Once that is done I have a meeting with the Assessor, the Finance Director and Town Manager and they decide whether or not to proceed with remediation by the town, if they do a 10 day notice is placed on the blight list, a contractor determines the cost, an invoice is sent to the property owner and if they chose not to pay, we place a lien on their property. I recently received a call regarding a lien placed on a property when Mike Demato was here and they are foreclosing on the property with an \$8,700 fine.

- Deputy Mayor Budrejko state she can attest to how busy Mr. Hinckley is. Seems like many have been started in 2020; they are still open?
- Mr. Hinckley stated that he has not had an opportunity to clean up the list. Many have closed. Just haven't had time to get them off the list. More serious issues have been turned over to the safe home taskforce.
- Budrejko asked how many in litigation. Once they are completed they will be removed from the list.
- Mr. Hinckley stated 2 properties, same property owner. Mr. Hinckley stated that there are some ongoing issues with a couple of properties. I was advised to not enter the property without a police escort, because there are other issues. Probably 50% of the notices I send out I never hear from the people.
- Budrejko stated it is good you are working with human services as well. There seems to be quite a few on Maple Hill Avenue. Once one property goes, others tend to go as well. Glad the town is putting emphasis on other issues as well. Thank you for your efforts on this.
- Councilor Nagel stated it doesn't list any closed items or items that have been rectified. I know for a fact that at least one has been taken care of. It's wonderful what happens when human services gets involved.
- Mr. Hinckley stated that he has closed out at least 90. There is a separate tab on the spreadsheet; I do have list of closed properties.
- Councilor Nagel stated he assumed he did; it seems like that nonce have been closed. Could you please provide us an update of those that are closed? Also, realize that some are seasonal. There is a Blight subcommittee and have not met in a while. There are questions of the purpose or not purpose of it. Could you or the town manager call for us to meet. I may alleviate questions that the council may have.
- Mr. Hinckley stated he will be happy to discuss any potential issues with the town manager. We can certainly set up a meeting of the subcommittee.
- Councilor Nagel stated my point is that there is a committee available. Many people in town think it's blighted or it's not blighted and there are many different circumstances you mentioned before. It may be more efficient for you if we are utilized.
- Councilor Page thanked Mr. Hinckley for being here tonight. Asked Mr. Hinckley what his duties were.
- Mr. Hinckley stated that he is currently acting town planner, wetland agent, zoning office, blight officer
- Councilor Page asked Mr. Hinckley if his town duties are commensurate to other towns this size or do we need to look at that in terms of staffing.
- Mr. Hinckley stated that he thinks an enforcement officer, whether only part time, a shared position with a building official would be helpful. That way I can concentrate on the assistant town planner position and economic development. Obviously that's a decision you need to make.
- Councilor Page stated we have an obligation to tax payers, but want to govern responsibly. Thank you very much and for this detailed report.
- Councilor Manke stated he appreciates the update. Often heard that blight is only effective if in the front yard.
- Mr. Hinckley stated that the initial contact is a drive by from the street. Certain signs we look for hoarding as well. I cannot go in yards, etc. If there is nothing visible I cannot issue a citation. You can knock on the door and have a conversation as well. Try to keep delicate balance and keep everything in harmony.
- Councilor Manke stated it's a thankless job.
- Mayor DelBuono asked Erik to explain why issues are open for a long period of time, not an immediate action is taken.
- Mr. Hinckley stated as long as people cooperate things will get done. Sometimes it's not just me, and I need to get Human Services involved as well. Sometimes they can get volunteers to assist

with a project. Another issues is abandoned and unregistered vehicles. I've also created a list of 10-15 agencies that will come and pick up abandoned cars.

B. Anna Reynolds School Project Update

- Stephen Woods, Chairman (*via Zoom*) stated that a lot of work was done during the summer; most of the site work is 65-70% done. The team is continuing the work on the administration wing. Still on budget; have lagged behind schedule wise due to material delays. The new roof is going on. Starting on finishes in parts of the school. Have great team, work well together. We remain to stay on budget; some change orders, but minor in nature. Have completed approx. 18% of the project. Have used very little of the contingency budget and the contractor has used only a small portion of their contingency budget. The end date has not changed, everyone if confident we are going to meet that date. It's been a pleasure working with everyone. Councilor's Radda and Camillo have been very helpful in getting this done.
- Councilor Page asked what the target date for completion is.
- Mr. Woods stated that it is August 2024.
- Mayor DelBuono thanked Mr. Woods for coming and giving us an update.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (**Via Zoom Application or Phone**)
(3 MINUTE TIME LIMIT PER SPEAKER ON ITEMS IN GENERAL)

A. Public Comments

- Speaker, Knollwood Road. Most of the lights on the Berlin Turnpike are off center to the left. If you are in the left lane there's going to be an accident. Know DOT is in charge of the project. The lights should be in the middle of the lane.
- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. Wondering if ever be able to see speakers via Zoom. Good to see blight report this evening; wonder if the blight was supposed to report yearly. Thought blight committee was formed to update the ordinance. Like to advocate for that office; seems like a lot on that persons plate. In my opinion more people are needed. Would like to advocate for that office, and in my opinion more people are needed. Blight is one issue, zoning is another, trash is another, batteries on roads, trash bags on the street, furniture to the curb, it's not as easy to report issues. Hope to attend informational meeting for the Town Manager and would like to see a job description and some sort of residency requirement.

B. Email Correspondence

- None

7. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Councilor Page want to thank in advance the Acting Town Manager for looking into the issue regarding the lights on the Berlin Turnpike. What is the impact of the rescission of curb pickup for oversized items; concerned about illegal dumping and people leaving things just anywhere. Need to look at quality of life in town and that may be an unexpected consequence.
- Deputy Mayor Budrejko stated she was going to ask James to forward the gentlemen's concern to the DOT. Regarding the trash issue, I find it hard to believe that throwing a bag out a window or leaving a battery left in Market Square is due to the lack of bulk pickup; that's just pure laziness or disrespect. Whether bulk pick up is free or not, somebody is paying for it. Quality of life starts with the people and residents of this town and they need to be respectful when disposing of trash and be respectful of neighbors.
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated that when they get notification that trash has been dumped somewhere that we can't tie to a bulk pick up issue, Erik will contact the highway department to confirm there isn't one attached to that, they will inform the homeowner correct way to handle and direct them who to contact; otherwise we will take care of it on our own to ensure it is gone from the site. If you do get informed of a trash issue, please contact my office or Erik and we will respond to it.

- Councilor Manke stated that the blight committee met a few years ago and went over the ordinance with the enforcement officer at the time. This may be one of those things we need to look at again and see how other towns deal with it. Maybe there could be a regional enforcement in cooperation with another town.
- Councilor Nagel stated that he has been on the blight committee, have had the pleasure of looking over peoples fences. It was brought up that it needs to meet once again. In terms of the light construction on the Berlin Turnpike, I met someone who works at the DOT and is willing to come in and discuss it. Frustrated that someone from the DOT has not addressed these problems. Strongly suggest we have someone from the DOT come and explain to us what is happening.
- Councilor Donahue stated that he wants to address the NCTV broadcast – picking up Zoom feed, NCTV does not control the cameras.
- Councilor Manke stated that at Constance Lee and Cedar the light is being blocked. As far as town administration wearing many hats, not many people want to do these jobs. In order for them to want the jobs they need to treated better.
- Mayor DelBuono stated that we are getting a lot of complaints regarding the lights on the Berlin Turnpike. The signs and striping on the streets do not match by Bob’s Furniture. At the corner of Maple Hill and Robbins Avenue, the lines do not line up. These are issues we’ve been made aware of, if there are more, please let us know.

8. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

a. 2023 Annual Regular Meeting Calendar

Motion by Deputy Mayor Budrejko

RESOLVED:

The Newington Town Council, in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, hereby approves the 2023 Town Council Regular Meeting Schedule, as amended, as attached to this Resolution.

Second by Councilor Donahue. Motion passed 9-0.

- Councilor Nagel stated that April 6th is the first night of Passover.
- *A discussion was held regarding meeting dates.*
- Mayor DelBuono proposes we table this for this evening.
- Acting Town Manager asked the council to approve the meeting schedule without the April 6th date.

9. RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS

a. Appointments – Permanent Municipal Building Commission

Motion by Councilor Manke

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council here by makes the following appointment(s):

Permanent Municipal Building Commission

**5 members: 3 Public Trades members; 1 Member from each Party
Ex-Officio – Mayor, Town Manager or Designee; Building Official, Facilities Director, Fire Marshal, Town Engineer and Chief Information Officer, as determined by Town Manager; Chairperson of BOE and Superintendent for School Projects; Fire Chief and BOFC Chairperson for VFD Projects; Agency Requesting Project 3-year terms after initial appt**

Name	Address	Party	Term
Party Member		D	12/1/2022 – 11/30/2023
Alan Bongiovanni Public Trades Member	170 Barn Hill Lane	R	1/10/2023 – 11/30/2023
Public Trades Member			12/1/2022 – 11/30/2024
Public Trades Member			12/1/2022 – 11/30/2025

Second by Councilor Page. Motion passed 9-0.

- Councilor Page stated that is party is aware of the need for a member.
- Councilor Manke stated that there is still room for two additional public trades’ members, if anyone is interested, contact the town manager’s office.
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated he has one person in the wings; still determining whether or not he wants to step away from two other commissions; I should have an answer for you by the January 24th meeting.

10. REFUNDS (Action Requested)

- a. Approval of January 10, 2023 Refunds for an Overpayment of Taxes

Motion by Deputy Mayor Budrejko

RESOLVED:

That property tax refunds in the amount of \$11,613.42 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.

Seconded by Councilor Radda. Motion passed 9-0.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. December 7, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes
b. December 13, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion by Councilor Radda to approve the above minutes. Seconded by Councilor Nagel. Motion passed unanimously.

12. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Town Council Budget Meeting Schedule 2023

- Janet Murphy stated we may need to table this since this will need to be revised because we were trying to work off the regular schedule and get you here as little as possible during this time. We need to have two public hearings and have a certain time line to do it in. It could be a special meeting, but we don’t want to have to call too many special meetings. There is one Saturday, March 25th and that is a special meeting.
- Councilor Nagel stated that he will be away the last week of March going into April. I can review the video and discuss with fellow councilors.
- Councilor Page stated that this budget process is a little overwhelming. One thing I learned is that the previous town manager asked to have departments provide a zero budget increase. Would like to respectfully ask to please not have the departments provide a zero percent budget; would like to see what they need, staffing and resource wise to run this town responsibly. We can then have that difficult discussion.

- Ms. Murphy stated that not one department came in with a zero percent budget request. You can see the budget requests when looking at the budget and then you can question the town manager's decision not to uphold that.
- Councilor Page would like to see what the departments need to run this town in a responsible way and to have discussions regarding that.
- Ms. Murphy stated that we have already received that information and we are compiling that for your now. The town manager will review that prior to getting it to you. Nobody came in with a zero budget.
- Mayor DelBuono stated that from a perspective of the daily operations of the town, it's their job as staff to determine what is needed. That's why it is done this way and by Charter. As Janet mentioned, their requests are listed in the budget.
- Ms. Murphy stated that we will be scheduling meetings with department heads soon.
- Councilor Camillo stated that is our revenue hasn't increased you can't have an increase in your budget.
- Ms. Murphy stated that is not correct.
- Councilor Camillo stated if we didn't increase our mill rate, where is the money going to come from? Our BOE is bankrupting our town. Need to keep that in mind.
- Mayor DelBuono stated she appreciates the dialogue but this is not that time for that discussion. We need to stick to the agenda item which is the budget schedule.
- Councilor Page stated that he withdraws his question.
- Deputy Mayor Budrejko stated that she wants to make it clear that ever in the part has the budget process been approached irresponsibly or with uninformed decisions. The staff should not be maligned for the way the town has been run. I have full confidence in the staff we have now and will approach the budget process responsibly and will come to us with a well-defined, well thought out budget for the next year.

b. Mid-Year Transfers

- Ms. Murphy stated that this is done every January because we can't make any transfers until January between the departments. In our end of year memo, it looks like we are going to be about \$2.6 million favorable at the end of the year for revenue. Ms. Murphy reviewed the revenues, expenditures and appropriation transfers.
- Councilor Page asked how we are up when Wall Street is down approx. 20%
- Mr. Murphy stated that most of our funds are in interest bearing accounts which his helping offset our losses. A lot of the general fund money is in with state investment accounts which yielded a 4% increase.
- Councilor Manke asked if the motor vehicle decline is because of mill rate was lowered due to the state. Last year they said they would pay us the difference.
- Ms. Murphy stated that the mill rate by the state was dropped to 32 mills, they used to be 45 mills. This will affect our budget for next year. I did include the \$1.4 million for the sale of National Welding. The next section is expenditure and that is where I'll be asking the transfer for. The first increase is for Town Council, which was for notifications for Charter Revision notifications. Next is Town Attorney, which is due to labor issues we're having and I also did increase the budget for next year.
- Councilor Page asked about the \$20,000 for town attorney. Has that money already been spent on litigating the labor complaints or is that allocated?
- Ms. Murphy stated we haven't gone over the \$25,000 yet, but we are anticipating we will by year end.
- Mayor DelBouno stated that it says town attorney, but this money is being use for additional outside counsel, not just the town attorney.
- Ms. Murphy stated that Personnel is for outside personnel to assist with polygraphs, special exams, etc. Public Health, we anticipated a 5% increase but they had a 10% increase. Last is Grounds Maintenance, they have been asked to put Port-a-Pottys in many locations and the price

of those have tripled in cost, also an increase in tree removal for sidewalks. Looking at \$329,834 favorable. May have to come back at the end of the year for other transfers, due to shifts in personnel. Total transfers from contingency is \$66,720. Also requesting \$55,061 to pay interest on bonds. Also requesting transfer of \$45,000 for line painting machine.

- Councilor Page wanted to ask about the \$1.4 million. What is the status of the appraisal?
 - Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated there was no appraisal, going off assessment of property.
 - Councilor Page stated that is disappointing but not surprising. Does the \$1.4 million include the \$500,000 that the town is in the hook for remediation?
 - Ms. Murphy stated that that \$500,000 for remediation has already been appropriated in an expense account. One is in the grant account that we received from the state and they are allowing us to use \$272,000 to remediate and the rest is in a CIP.
 - Deputy Mayor Budrejko stated that the building permit fees have almost doubled.
 - Ms. Murphy stated that was due to construction projects moving along.
 - Deputy Mayor Budrejko asked why the overtime budget being high at this time.
 - Ms. Murphy stated that there are a lot of vacancies and the full time staff. We have 5 vacancies right now.
 - Mayor DelBouno stated that Chief Clark's wish for the new year is to be at full staff. Doing everything they can to get there.
 - Mr. Murphy stated that most towns are having a difficult time hiring.
- c. Neglected Cemeteries Grant Program
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated that we recently found out about this grant. It's a minor amount of \$5,000. Currently have cemetery staff and grant writer working on this. It's before you this evening because it needs to be submitted by February 8th. Discuss at this meeting and approve at next meeting. We may see a larger amount than \$5,000
 - Deputy Mayor Budrejko stated this is great. I'm assuming this will be targeted towards the center cemetery.
 - Councilor Nagel stated that this does not mean out cemeteries are in disrepair. It is just the title the state chose. Its monies coming in, always need for more money. Want to emphasize that.

13. WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

- Acting Town Manager stated that around 3:30 this afternoon, there was a small bus accident. There were no students injured and the bus had only minor damage. I will be touching base with the Superintendent tomorrow. Did have a minor flooding incident at the high school; costs to repair will be approx. \$25,000. New director of administrative services will follow up with claim. Tomorrow we will be having a public information gathering meeting at the senior center at 7:00 p.m. for the town manager search. For National Welding the 60-day EPA letter has been sent in. Jeff Baron has retired after 39½ years. On December 27th, Ms. Rimes has replaced him, she will be introduced at the January 24th meeting. Have executed another contract with Sonic Group for grant writing services. Currently soliciting for Volunteer of the Year candidates for 2023, nominations due by January 27th. Supplement and Mid-Year tax bills due by February 1, 2023. Will get update regarding blight and trash issues, as well as the lights on the turnpike, for you for the next meeting.
- Councilor Page asked if there was a phone link or zoom link to the meeting tomorrow.
- Acting Town Manager stated that we will be streaming the meeting tomorrow. Luckily the Library purchased a portable streaming system and we will be utilizing that.
- Councilor Radda stated she called the bulk waste people to pick up an item and they stated that anything that is metal needs to be picked up on a different time frame. Maybe we can clarify that on the website.
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated he will discuss that with Mr. Hillman and have the website updated.

14. COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Councilor Nagel stated that CROG met on December 21, presented to the group the legislative agenda to be presented to the state, they have four things 1. Regional storm water for the region; 2. Shared services between towns in the region and the state; 3. Infrastructure, especially regarding getting matching grants; 4. To create a regional planning commission so towns can coordinate getting grants and developing a metropolitan transportation plan. A virtual meeting with legislators was planned to present this, but I received a notice that it was postponed. The Senior & Disabled Center commission met on 1/4/2023, they are doing activities and are open as much as possible – the gift shop is open, the coffee shop is open unless unforeseen things happen. The membership will send to the town council an ordinance change, recommending the membership be changed from 9 to 7 members and they have purchased equipment in order to hold virtual meetings. The Library board met on 1/9/2023 and the roof repairs are continuing. The Winterfest on January 20th is sold out. Many schools in the area have virtually or in person visited the library to see what the library has to offer. The next book sale will be April 14 – 16. One of the highlights of the meeting is now that the library and Parks & Rec have teamed up to offer Ukulele lesson and plan to have a June concert.
- Councilor Manke stated he and Councilor Radda attended a Parks & Rec meeting before the holidays; Councilor Page and I attended a fire commissioners meeting regarding their budget.
- Councilor Page stated he wanted to clarify my question on the cost of living increase and they did request an increase in the per call fees. Would like to revisit the pension increase.
- Councilor Manke stated that the town manager search committee met last night with Randi Frank Associates. The goal is to work on a profile on what we want in a town manager. They were glad to see we removed the residency requirement because it does affect their ability to recruit qualified candidates.

15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (Via Zoom Application or Phone)
(3 MINUTE TIME LIMIT PER SPEAKER ON ITEMS IN GENERAL)

- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive stated she is delighted to see Jeff Baron has retired after 39 ½ years. Did he leave a report regarding the final cost of the town hall renovation after receiving grant monies? Will be asking if it could be written into the town managers contract that they live within a certain area.

16. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

- Mayor DelBuono asked if there has been a final report from the Town Hall Reno committee.
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski we are still waiting on the board of ed to finalize numbers they received for reimbursement from the state and plus there are other issues that have come up to be taken care of and the committee chair does not feel comfortable writing a final report closeout report until those issues are taken care of. Hope to have those issues resolved within 3-4 months.
- Councilor Page thankfully everyone was ok in the bus accident and the terrible crash on Cedar. Would like us to look at opportunities to do traffic calming strategies. Secondly is that we did neglect our cemeteries; I was part of neglecting our cemeteries in a budgetary sense. We should not have to rely on private donations or scouts to clean up our cemeteries.
- Mayor DelBuono stated that there is a cemetery fund in the budget.
- Acting Town Manager Krupienski stated that we do have a perpetual cemetery fund that can be utilized; we actually utilize it for staff reimbursement, but it can be utilized in other areas as well. I have to determine whether or not it was specially created for West Meadow Cemetery or it can be applied to others and if there are separate funds available. That is something we will be reviewing as we prepare the grant request.
- Councilor Manke stated he wanted to thank Human Services for their outstanding work during the toy and gift drive. Got the gifts they asked for, but also got to choose extras. The generosity of our community, along with the staff was amazing. My other comments are directed at Councilor Page and his comments at the end of our last meeting regarding the National Welding site and the sale price of \$1.4 million. I did some research and have a list of large land properties sold in Newington.

Important to keep in mind that this was a piece of property we've been trying to sell for years, get off the blight list and get taxes paid on. It was not a site for a park or anything like that. The staff did a great job selling it. It was always our responsibility to clean up the site; was not done until now because we were waiting to see what it was going to be used for. Anthony Properties will be encapsulating the site by putting a parking garage floor on it. The sale is in line with other sales of properties in town. It's a good use of the site and our staff did a great job.

- Councilor Camillo stated that another property is 550 Cedar. That was a dealership, they spend \$1 million on the property and another million plus to clean up the site. Industrial property is taking a dive because there is no demand for industry. It's all being done overseas. We are chasing them out of the state because of taxes.
- Councilor Page stated that the property that did not get an appraisal had a less value prior to the busway coming in. Previous councils put a moratorium on anything happening around the busway for many different reasons. Defend it as you want to, but you cannot defend not getting an appraisal on a piece of property we are selling; it is customary as a property owner to get an appraisal. All we are doing is speculating and that is not being a responsible steward of our resources. I see your points, but cannot defend not doing our due diligence on this piece of property.
- Councilor Manke stated he's not defending anyone, but to say that this piece of property is worth \$5-6 million is irresponsible.

17. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. by Councilor Camillo, seconded by Councilor Donahue.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Gibbon
Council Clerk