

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

*Town Council Chambers*

February 8, 2011

The following Minutes are a record of the Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Town Council that was held on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall. The Meeting was Called to Order at 6:32 P.M. by Chairman Robert F. Parisi. Responding present to the Roll Call given by Town Clerk Barbara Thompson were Councilors Vincent Cervoni, Nick Economopoulos, Jerry Farrell, Jr., John LeTourneau, Robert F. Parisi, Rosemary Rascati, John J. Sullivan and Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Councilor Craig C. Fishbein was absent from the meeting. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr., and Town Attorney Janis Small were also in attendance. Comptroller James Bowes arrived at the meeting 6:40 P.M.

The meeting began with a prayer by Deacon Eugene Riotte. Most Holy Trinity Church. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Roll Call was taken.

Chairman Parisi announced the recognition of Joseph Geremia as one of the ten outstanding farmers nationally.

**3.** Consent Agenda

- 3a.** Consider and Approve Tax Refunds (#537 - #550) totaling \$20,520.36  
Acct. # 001-1000-010-1170 - Tax Collector
- 3b.** Approval of Merit Increases for two employees - Personnel
- 3c.** Consider and Approve a bid Waiver Request for Capital Region Education Council (CREC) Raising Reader's Program in the Amount of \$7,220  
– Youth & Social Services
- 3d.** Acceptance and Appropriation of Donation to Quinnipiac River Linear Trail Enhancement in the amount of \$500 to Donations Acct # 302-1045-040-4052 and to Trail Enhancement Acct # 302-1403-816-3052 – Town Engineer
- 3e.** Consider and Approve an Appropriation in the Amount of \$45,000 to Materials & Supplies Acct # 001-5015-401-4100 from Contingency-General Purpose Acct # 001-7060-800-3190 – Public Works
- 3f.** Consider and Approve an Appropriation in the Amount of \$45,000 to Overtime Acct # 001-5015-101-1400 from Contingency-General Purpose Acct # 001-7060-800-3190 – Public Works
- 3g.** Consider and Approve an Appropriation in the Amount of \$10,000 to Purchase Professional Services-Tree Contract Acct # 001-5015-901-9023 from Contingency-General Purpose Acct # 001-7060-800-3190 – Public Works
- 3h.** Approve minutes of Regular Town Council meeting of January 25, 2010
- 3i.** Approve minutes of Regular Town Council meeting of January 11, 2010

*Wallingford Town Hall, 45 South Main Street*

**3j.** Approve minutes of Special Joint Town Council meeting with Planning & Zoning of December 20, 2010

**3k.** Approve minutes of Regular Town Council meeting of December 14, 2010

**ADDENDUM – CONSENT AGENDA**

**3l.** Approval of a Transfer in the Amount of \$10,000 to Maintenance of Buildings & Grounds Acct #001-2005-560-5100 from Regular Wages Acct #001-2005-101-1000  
– Police Department

**MOTION and SECOND**

Mr. Farrell announced the inclusion of one Addendum item, 3l. into the Consent Agenda and made a motion to approve 3a. to 3l. Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

**4.** Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

*None*

**5.** Request report from Public Works with regard to snow removal/snow plowing  
– Councilor LeTourneau

Chairman Parisi began with high praise for the Public Works department in the management of snow removal and snow plowing in the successive snow storms that have occurred. Mr. McCully gave a report with regard to the snow removal and snow plowing stating that all of his crews, including his office staff, have been and are doing an outstanding job in dealing with the catastrophic winter weather. He said that tomorrow his crews will begin to remove snow and ice banks on frequently traveled roads, on roads where there are many renters and around some schools. He announced that the current Parking Ban is in effect indefinitely until roads can be cleared to his satisfaction to allow for improved traffic flow. He announced that he will decide when to lift the parking ban and asked residents to be gracious in the meantime and to plan routes that involve four-way stop signs and traffic lights and to drive slowly watching the speed limit. It is a time for patience, he said. Wallingford has 620 streets and 120 cul-de-sacs that will keep Public Works plows on the job for 12-hour days this week. He explained how plowing is accomplished and how plow speed effects where snow lands in response to Mr. Letourneau's question with regard to how much snow there is from the curb and mailboxes. Moses Y Beach School was termed as very hazardous, especially at dismissal time. He explained that his department has been working with the Police Department to remove cars from the roads so they can be plowed. He reported that the town has no problems with snow removal when the use farmland was suggested by Mrs. Rascati.

**WAIVE RULE V**

**MOTION & SECOND**

Mr. Farrell a motion to Waive Rule V in order to take up an item for an Appropriation in the Amount of \$15,000 as requested by Public Works. Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

from

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye to Waive Rule V. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

**MOTION & SECOND**

Mr. Farrell made a motion to Approve an Appropriation in the Amount of \$15,000 to Maintenance of Vehicles Acct # 001-5015-550-5000 from Contingency-General Purposes Acct # 001-7060-800-3190 as requested by Public Works.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

**ADDENDUM TO REGULAR AGENDA**

- 5A.** Request status report from Police Department with regard to snow removal on Police Station roof and water leaks – Councilor John LeTourneau

Chief Dortenzio reported on the four-inch thick ice dam and the resulting damage to the police facility that has caused an unusual amount of water damage not only to the walls and floors but also to the work space with the loss of 6 or 7 offices. He discussed the snow clearing, insurance coverage and the reparations that are being made. He also discussed the roof and its replacement. Councilor Testa asked about the roof replacement and made an observation about the cost of the new roof while plans are being discussed for a new police facility. Chief Dortenzio spoke about the water that is in the evidence room effecting evidence on pending matters and on historical data but his greatest concern is for the million dollar investment in the department's hardware in a room that now has ruined air conditioners due to the ice. With these multi-layered problems, he indicated that restoration with take time.

The agenda item for the \$10,000 transfer of funds to enable hiring the company that will clear the ice and snow was done on what is called an 'emergency purchase order', approved by the Mayor.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTION & ANSWER**

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, made comments with regard to the town's budget planning, planning into and for the future, cutting in the federal budget, cutting in the state budget and the ripple effect to the town's budget. He does not agree with the Mayor that the town is in 'sound and stable financial condition'.

Robert Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, made comments with regard to the Pension Commission, 'reserve's status during the budget year, the Pension Plan, the budget and self-insurance.

- 7.** Report regarding selection of a firm to conduct a municipal audit for FY 2011, 2012 and 2013 - Comptroller

Councilor Farrell read the letter sent from Comptroller Bowes to the Mayor and the Town Council. The letter outlined the request of Mr. Bowes for guidance of the Council in the selection of an independent firm of public accountants to audit the financial accounts of the Town. The letter suggested three options as follows:

1. Put the service out to bid
2. Waive the bid procedure and authorize the utilization of the RFP method.
3. Authorize Mr. Bowes to negotiate pricing from the current firm for possible retention of the current firm. If this option is selected, the Council could waive the bid and vote to rehire the current firm based upon the outcome of the negotiated pricing obtained.

Mr. Bowes' letter noted that municipal auditing has become a 'very specialized professional field' and he said that there are only about four firms that conduct the majority of municipal audits in the State of Connecticut. And that in light of this, Wallingford's current firm, Blum, Shapiro and Company, conduct approximately 50 Connecticut municipal audits, Mr. Bowes stated in the letter that 'we have noted that they conduct this function with a high degree of accuracy, professionalism and independence'.

Mr. Bowes stated that there are specifications from the last time this was bid and that he is OK with bidding but that it's the time it takes in the selection. He would like to have this question settled by the end of March this year. Mr. Bowes and the Council discussed the length of time a firm stays with a town. There are no length-of-engagement standards in years for towns to retain the same firm but that some towns favor only three years. Mr. Bowes indicated that he thinks building solid ground with a firm is about five years but that he prefers ten to twelve years. They talked of comfort with a firm and too much comfort and familiarity. Towns with problems were mentioned. Councilor Sullivan feels that this is an important decision and that rotation of firms is a good thing. He would like to avoid long periods with the same firm.

Mr. Bowes stated that Blum Shapiro & Co. have been with the town for eight years. He remarked about utilities and enterprise funds and that the town would want a firm with utilities experience.

Councilor Sullivan reported that there are five communities in Connecticut with power companies. He would like to see use of the RFP and just firms that deal with communities the size of Wallingford.

Councilor Cervoni's inclination would be to look at the RFP process to flush out the firms that meet our needs.

Mr. Bowes and the Council began talking about fees, and Mr. Bowes confirmed that he has not spoken with Blum Shapiro with regard to what their next fee would be. Mr. Bowes stressed that he wants the Council to be satisfied. He stated that Blum Shapiro & Company are doing what they were hired to do. Their increases have been moderate.

Councilor LeTourneau expressed that he thinks that after three years we should take a look at others.

Councilor Rascati asked Mr. Bowes that if he got pricing, would he come back to the Council. Mr. Bowes said that he could have pricing for the next Town Council meeting. Mrs. Rascati noted that it's an unknown since there is no one to compare it to. Councilor Economopoulos made an observation that when you have a respected firm with a respected town, then you are OK. He stated that he agrees with keeping Blum Shapiro and Company.

Chairman Parisi asked how many firms have experience with enterprise funds. Mr. Bowes responded that there are four or five and becoming less and less. Chairman Parisi said that he has faith in Mr.

Bowes and that one more three-year term wouldn't hurt. He said that he supports having Mr. Bowes negotiate a price with the existing company.

Mayor Dickinson stated that if the Council is indicating comfort in staying with the current auditor that that decision does not need to be made tonight. Mr. Bowes said that he can find out but that there is no commitment at this point.

Councilor Sullivan emphasized the need for transparency and in giving the option to put out an RFP to see what else is out there. He would like to see which accounting firms fit with Wallingford, including Blum Shapiro. He suggested finding out which firms discussed tonight that would qualify for that. He expressed that he has a problem with ten or twelve years with the same firm and does not want fertile ground for problems. He stated that in fairness to our taxpayers in how we manage our government, we need to look at other firms.

Mr. Bowes said that was helpful to know that Blum Shapiro is still in the mix.

Councilor Sullivan said he would like to see and would agree to having Mr. Bowes research the firms that have worked with municipalities the size of Wallingford with the same demographics, the same utilities, etc. and then bring the researched information back to the Council along with Blum Shapiro, so the Council has more options to review. He asked can we charge Mr. Bowes to get that information and come back to us at a later date?

Chairman Parisi said to get six or seven that fill the bill and bring that back, and perhaps at that point, we can decide which way we want to go. Mr. Bowes said it will be ready for the next Council meeting. There was clarification that Mr. Bowes would not ask Blum Shapiro about pricing as part of his research.

8. Executive Session pursuant to §1-200 (6) (D) of the Connecticut General Statutes with respect to the purchase, sale and/or leasing of property – Mayor

*Withdrawn*

9. Executive Session to discuss pending litigation Lube v. Town Council pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1-200 (6) (B)
10. Executive Session pursuant to §1-200 (6) (B) of the Connecticut General Statutes regarding strategy and negotiations with respect to the pending workers' compensation matter of Delfino v. Town of Wallingford – Town Attorney

#### **MOTION and SECOND**

Mr. Farrell made a motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to:

- Item 9. Executive Session to discuss pending litigation Lube v. Town Council pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1-200 (6) (B)
- Item 10. Executive Session pursuant to §1-200 (6) (B) of the Connecticut General Statutes regarding strategy and negotiations with respect to the pending workers' compensation matter of Delfino v. Town of Wallingford – Town Attorney

Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

The Council entered into Executive Session at 8:25 P.M.

**MOTION and SECOND**

Mr. Farrell made a motion to come out of Executive Session. Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

The Council exited Executive Session at 8:53 P.M.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION ATTENDANCE:**

Item 10: Eight (8) Councilors with Mr. Fishbein absent, Mayor Dickinson, Town Attorney Janis Small, Personnel Director Terence Sullivan; and Risk Manager Kurt Treiber

Item 9: Eight (8) Councilors with Mr. Fishbein absent, Mayor Dickinson, Town Attorney Janis Small,

11. Motion to Consider and approve a settlement of the pending workers' compensation matter of Delfino v. Town of Wallingford as discussed in Executive Session – Town Attorney

**MOTION and SECOND**

Mr. Farrell a motion to approve a settlement of the pending workers' compensation matter of Delfino v. Town of Wallingford as discussed in Executive Session. Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed.

**MOTION and SECOND**

Mr. Farrell made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Rascati seconded.

**VOTE**

All Eight (8) Councilors present voted Aye. Councilor Fishbein was absent from the meeting.

The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra R. Weekes  
Town Council Secretary  
Meeting digitally recorded

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Robert F. Parisi, Town Council Chairman

Date

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Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk

Date