

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

31.

TUESDAY
APRIL 11, 2023
6:30 P.M.

AMENDED RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES

The Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, was called to order at 6:35 p.m. There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were: Autumn Allinson (phone), Samuel Carmody, Craig Fishbein, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Christina Tatta, Vincent F. Testa, Jason Zandri, and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Mayor William W Dickinson, Jr., Town Attorney Janice Small, Corporation Counsel Janis Small, and Controller Timothy Sena were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Consent Agenda
 - 3a. Consider and approve Tax Refunds totaling \$19,264.43 (#670-710) Acct. #1001001-41020 – Tax Collector
 - 3b. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$4,000 from Contingency-Misc., Acct. #10019000-58820 to Engineering-Capital Copier, Acct. #10030050-57000 - TBD – Engineering
 - 3c. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$5,000 from Contingency, Acct. #10019000-58820 to Maintenance of Signals, Acct. #10030050-54305 – Engineering
 - 3d. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$5,000 from Contingency, Acct. #10019000-58820 to Capital-Copier, Acct. #10010300-57000-TBD – Law
 - 3e. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$2,348 from Office Exp. & Supplies, Acct. #10010300-56100 to Capital-Office Furniture, Acct. #10010300-57000-TBD – Law
 - 3f. Consider and approve Extension of Bid for Solid Waste Transfer Station Operator – Public Works
 - 3g. Consider and approve a Resolution Adopting the 2023 SCRCOG Hazard Mitigation Plan Update for the Town of Wallingford – Planning & Zoning
 - 3i. Consider and approve Appropriations of ARPA funds in the amount of \$611,792 to approved Non-Profit Applications – Law
\$611,792 To: Revenue-Federal Grant Acct. #2391002-45200
\$611,792 To: ARPA-Nonprofits Acct. #23940300-58830-TBD
 - 3j. Consider and approve Appropriation of ARPA Funds in the amount of \$40,000 to approved Business Applications – Law
\$40,000 To: Revenue-Federal Grant Acct. #2391002-45200

\$40,000 To: ARPA-Business Acct. #23940250-58830-TBD

3k. Consider and approve Interlocal Agreement between the Town of Wallingford and the City of Meriden – Police Dept.

3l. Approve Town Council Special Meeting Minutes of March 21, 2003, and Town Council Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2023

MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROVE OR ACCEPT CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS 3a THROUGH 3g, AND 3i THROUGH 3l.

MADE BY: FISHBEIN

SECONDED BY: CARMODY

RECUSED: TATTA

VOTE: ALL AYE

MOTION: PASSED

4. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

3h. Consider and approve Appropriation of ARPA funds in the amount of \$67,490 to Surveillance/Security Cameras at Doolittle Park – Recreation

\$67,490 To: ARPA Fund- Revenue Acct. #2391002-45200

\$67,490 To: ARPA Expenditure Acct. #239-TBD

MOTION WAS MADE TO consider and approve appropriation of ARPA funds in the amount of \$67,490 to Surveillance/Security Cameras at Doolittle Park

MADE BY: ALLINSON

SECONDED BY: MARRONE

In attendance were: Police Chief John Ventura and Kenny Michaels, Director of Parks and Recreation

Chief Ventura reviewed recent incidents that led to the agreement that something is needed 24/7. A camera plan was developed. bids were solicited and a vendor was chosen (Security 101). They are currently in process of doing a fiber run to transport the image to the Police Department.

Councilor Testa stated that his main objection is the proposal to pay for it with ARPA funds. He supports the purchase of the equipment. He asked if it will always be on and if there will be a video recording. Chief Ventura replied that the image transmits to the Police Department where it will be live-streamed in the dispatch area. The cameras have infrared so they will also work at night. Councilor Testa asked the Mayor why the ARPA funds are being used when he understood that funds were already set aside for this project. He understood the funds were to be used to improve, enhance or address issues or shortfalls due to the pandemic. How does adding security equipment fit? He stated he is in favor of the purchase and that if everyone else is comfortable using the ARPA funds, he will support this.

Mayor Dickinson replied that it is appropriate to use the funds to make the parks safe and that using the APRA funds instead of the budget allows us to move quickly. The ARPA funds can be used in an almost unfettered way. Mr. Sena stated that there is \$10 million to use however we want for capital expenditures. The Mayor stated that making parks safe is a recognized reason, otherwise, we would have to wait for the end of the budget year to find the money.

Councilor Marrone stated that this is in line with what other towns have done. The pandemic caused people to spend more time in town and the parks. Improvements to the park are an appropriate use.

Councilor Zandri stated that he has no issue with using the funds this way. He asked how it would have been paid for if there were no ARPA funds. He asked how much is in the Contingency fund and if those funds could be used for this. Mayor Dickinson replied that he would have to wait until after April 1st to see what is left in the budget. This allows us to move quickly. Mr. Sena noted that there is about \$200,000 in the contingency fund. Mayor Dickinson stated that he chose to use the ARPA funds. Councilor Zandri stated that he doesn't understand why other options were not considered. He supports this because it needs to get done.

Councilor Fishbein asked about the recordings. Chief Ventura stated that it will be saved on a server at the Police Department. Councilor Fishbein noted that eventually, we will need to do this at other parks and ARPA funds will not be available. He asked if there is any money in the Park & Recreation or Police Department budgets to support this. Mr. Michaels replied that their budget is very lean. He doesn't think they could fund even half of it. Chief Ventura stated that he has new positions starting so can't make that decision at this point. In addition, in May when the fiber installation is complete, the department will start getting bills for the service. He clarified that the ongoing costs for the fiber will go to the Police Department. Councilor Fishbein asked if the motion can be amended to change where the money comes from. Mayor Dickinson replied that the Council needs to act on the documents before it. Atty. Farrell stated that the money can't come out of contingency without an appropriation from the Administration. The place the money comes from is based on the agenda. Councilor Fishbein stated that the place the money comes from is not detailed in the Charter. The Mayor explained how an appropriation is done.

MOTION WAS MADE TO have the appropriation of \$67,490 come from the contingency account as opposed to ARPA Funds.

MADE BY: FISHBEIN

SECOND: none

Motion failed

Councilor Tatta stated that she supports using the ARPA funds. She stated that she hates that we have to install cameras in public parks.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Gross, Long Hill Road asked why some of the funds left from replacing the playground equipment are not used for this. Mayor Dickinson replied that the funds from Choate will have to be used at the park and this is an appropriate use of funds. He doesn't want to patchwork funds for this project. He added that the deductible that Mr. Gross is referring to was taxpayer money that was not spent vs. recovered money.

Mike Glidden, Pomeroy Avenue listed incidents that show escalation of problems in the park. He encouraged Council to move forward with this project.

Jason Michael, Meadow Street asked if the public will have access to the live security feed. Chief Ventura replied no, but they can request a copy. The system is designed to feed to the Police Department and a secure server. It was a challenge to get the footage into the building with the firewalls. Mr. Michael asked if it were possible for the public to access it, would there be an objection? Mayor Dickinson replied that it would open the system to hacking to eliminate evidence.

The feed has a limited purpose for law enforcement. The Mayor confirmed that he made that decision. Mr. Michael asked about the use of ARPA funds. He encouraged looking at a list of projects before we start slicing off pieces.

Councilor Allinson stated that she doesn't agree with making the feed public. A reasonable FOI request is a solution. She agreed that we need meaningful projects completed with ARPA funds. She would like to see proposals for projects.

Councilor Fishbein asked if the cameras will be high enough to avoid tampering and if signs notifying the public of the filming will be posted. Chief Ventura replied yes. He clarified that it will be video only, no sound.

ROLL CALL VOTE:		MARRONE:	YES
ALLINSON:	YES	TATTA:	YES
CARMODY;	YES	TESTA:	YES
FISHBEIN:	NO	ZANDRI:	YES
LAFFIN:	ABSENT	CERVONI:	YES

7 – AYE

1 – NAY

0 – ABSTAIN

1 - ABSENT

MOTION: PASSES

5. PUBLIC QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD

Mike Glidden, Pomeroy Avenue asked Council to consider establishing a Juvenile Review Board ordinance as an alternative to the criminal justice system. He read the statement of purpose and provided a draft ordinance. Chairman Seichter stated that the Ordinance Committee agrees.

Chief Ventura stated that they are working on establishing one that will roll out in a couple of weeks. He added that they worked with Meriden and New Haven to develop it and are already training officers.

Chairman Cervoni closed the Public Question and Answer Period.

6. Discussion regarding the Pension Valuation Report dated July 1, 2022 – Councilor Tatta
In attendance were: Gary Draghi, Chair of the Pension Commission, Tony Trangesi, Fiducient, Advisors, the investment consulting firm for the Pension Committee, and James Hutt, Human Resources Director

Councilor Tatta asked for highlights of the Pension Valuation Report. She asked if the 14.9% loss in market share is typical of this market. She also asked how the 24.8% contribution compares to other towns. Mr. Trangesi replied that that is the last fiscal year's returns and are roughly in line with markets in a tough period. The portfolio is well diversified and designed to absorb years like that. He explained how the actuaries use smoothing to offset these periods and continue contributions at the same level. Mr. Sena stated that 24.8% is the percentage of payroll used to fund the pension. We are funding the actuaries' recommendation at 100% by contributing that percentage of payroll. Councilor Tatta asked if the funding policy (report page 5) is anticipated to be sufficient to cover costs indefinitely. Mr. Draghi stated that he is not an actuary. He suggested thinking about it like paying down a mortgage. As long as you keep making the payments you will pay for the house.

Councilor Zandri asked for clarification of 100% of funding. Mr. Sena replied that we fund what the actuaries recommend. Each year we try to get above 75%. Mayor Dickinson stated that this is an unfunded liability. In 2007 or 2008 we were 100% funded, but then the markets changed. The actuaries tell us what to put in the plan to get back to 100%. Councilor Zandri asked if we would fall short if everyone retired at the same time. Mr. Sena replied yes. He noted that it is a requirement that we get the actuarial report, but we can choose not to follow the advice. The Mayor added that credit agencies look at this.

Councilor Testa asked if any changes in investment strategies led to the increase in the annual effective rate of return of 28% in 2020 and why it changed again in 2021. Mr. Trangesi replied that they take a long-term approach instead of responding to markets. They expect years on either extreme. Recent years were difficult for pension funds. Mr. Draghi explained how smoothing works over 5 years. He added that it is hard to be 100% funded because people are still working and the money comes due in the future. Councilor Testa asked about the change in plan for newer employees. Mr. Sena replied that new hires are still part of the plan, just in a different form. He reported that contributions would be higher if that change had not been made. Mayor Dickinson added that it will be 25 or 30 years before we see any real reduction in costs. Mr. Hutt added that it may be closer to 30 or 40 years. He explained how the cash balance plan is different from the traditional defined benefit plan.

Councilor Carmody asked if the cash balance plan is considered a defined benefit plan. Mr. Hutt replied yes. The Cash Balance plan was selected because the money is in the same pot and the costs are less. Death and disability are in the same plan instead of separate. Mr. Trangesi added that the defined contribution plan is common in other towns but the cash balance plan is more attractive.

7. Discussion regarding traffic concerns/sidewalks on Johnson Road – Councilor Testa
In attendance: John Ventura, Police Chief and Anthony DeMaio, Deputy Chief

Councilor Testa stated concerns with speed problems around town. Chief Ventura shared a PowerPoint presentation. He explained that post-COVID traffic behaviors have gotten worse all over the country. He explained that they have used tools including UConn's Crash Repository and three speed tracking methods. He shared data from Highland Avenue and North and South Main Street and explained the 85th percentile. He also shared samples of techniques to calm traffic and change behaviors. They include roadway design changes. Deputy Chief DeMaio explained why posting cops on the side of the road doesn't work anymore. Due to changes in laws and pursuit policies, the bad actors know they won't be chased.

Chairman Cervoni asked how the fixed license plate reader works. Chief Ventura replied that the department gets an alert when a stolen car enters town, giving officers a head start to use stop sticks or other measures. He agreed that they wouldn't chase.

Councilor Zandri stated that he likes how the license plate readers allow the police to be strategic. He noted that speed cameras and red light cameras result in tickets to owners even if they are not driving. Chief Ventura agreed that those are effective but problematic. Councilor Zandri what the police department would want if funding was not an issue. Chief Ventura replied that he would purchase more speed enforcement equipment. Deputy Chief DeMaio added that these devices help allocate resources more effectively. They also help differentiate perceived issues from real issues. Chief Ventura noted that he'd have to look at the statistics and complaints to determine how many he would need. The most effective is the feedback sign.

Councilor Testa stated that South Main Street seems to have increased traffic and speeding complaints. He asked for a 4-way stop on Cedar Street. Chief Ventura agreed that congestion on Rt 5 is affecting residential roads like South Main Street. He stated that he would look into doing something there. Councilor Testa asked about the sidewalk request on Johnson Road and Gregory Road. Chief Ventura replied that it is a legitimate request as that is a busy, narrow roadway. It would increase safety. Councilor Testa mentioned a request for school speed zone signs around town. Chief Ventura replied that they can do a traffic study to see what the current number of cars and speeds are and can set speed limits. The area has to be marked accordingly. He can look into it for all the schools. Deputy Chief DeMaio added that all the pedestrian signs in town were updated a couple of years ago. Councilor Testa said that he will forward the State document with measures that can be taken and will talk with the administration about sidewalks on Johnson and Gregory.

Councilor Fishbein asked about the November 30, 2022 spike in traffic on Highland that was shown in the presentation. Chief Ventura replied that it must have been an event at the school. There was also a construction project in that area during that period. Councilor Fishbein asked for confirmation that they cannot chase a stolen car. Deputy Chief DeMaio replied that it depends on the circumstances, but in general, they cannot chase. Councilor Fishbein noted that red light camera tickets in Waterbury are not going to court because there is no procedure or retention period. He stated that he is in favor of the license plate readers. Chief Ventura added that they receive a hot sheet with stolen cars that is entered into the camera system.

Councilor Tatta asked if the police department has jurisdiction on state roads. Chief Ventura replied that they can put up monitoring equipment and enforce it but can't change the speed limits. Any road improvements would have to be done with the State. Councilor Tatta noted that Rt. 68 seems worse since they repaved it. She thanked the department for what they do and for being professional and knowledgeable.

8. Consideration and possible action on the Right of First Refusal for the purchase of 862 North Farms Road – Law Dept.

Councilor Fishbein recused himself

Atty. Small explained that the property abuts the firehouse on North Farms and has a house on it. We were approached by the owner a few years back. The house was listed for sale and they have an offer for \$249,100. The Right of First Refusal allows the town to buy the property on the same terms as the offer. She recommended that if the Town is not interested in the property, Council can vote not to exercise the right of first refusal.

**MOTION TO waive the right of first refusal for the purchase of 862 North Farms Road.
MADE BY: MARRONE
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI**

Chairman Cervoni asked if the town has a use for the property.

Councilor Testa asked for verification that there is no town department that can use the property. Mayor Dickinson replied that he is satisfied that there is no need for the property.

**VOICE VOTE:
7 – AYE
0 – NAY**

1 – ABSTAIN
1 - ABSENT
MOTION: PASSES

- 9. Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(D) with respect to the purchase, sale, and/or leasing of property – Councilor Testa
MOTION WAS MADE TO move to Executive Session pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 1-206d with respect to the purchase, sale, and/or leasing of property.

MADE BY: TATTA
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI
VOTE: ALL AYE
MOTION: PASSED

Chairman Cervoni declared the Council in Executive Session at 8:45 pm.

Councilors in attendance were: Autumn Allinson, Samuel Carmody, Craig Fishbein, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Christina Tatta, Vincent F. Testa, Jason Zandri, and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Mayor William W Dickinson, Jr., Town Attorney Gerald Farrell, and Corporation Counsel Janis Small were also present.

MOTION WAS MADE TO conclude Executive Session and return to the public session.

MADE BY: FISHBEIN
SECONDED BY: ALLINSON
VOTE: UNANIMOUS
MOTION: PASSED

Chairman Cervoni declared the Council in Public Session at 9:13 pm.

Councilor Testa stated, on behalf of the Friends of the Animal Shelter, that the second week of April is National Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week. He recognized and thanked our Town’s Animal Control Officers, Mitch, Rachel, Casey, and Sarah for their dedicated service.

MOTION WAS MADE TO adjourn at 9:15 pm.

MADE BY: FISHBEIN
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-24-23
AT 1:05 p.m. AND RECEIVED BY
Deborah McKernan TOWN CLERK

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl-Ann Tubby
Recording Secretary



Vincent Cervoni, Chair

27 APRIL 2023

Date



Joan M. Stave, Acting Town Clerk

4/28/23

Date