



John L. Salomone  
Town Manager

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

**MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT**

## MINUTES

### NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL – SPECIAL MEETING

**March 17, 2008**

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

**I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**II ROLL CALL**

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach  
Councilor Boni  
Councilor Bottalico  
Councilor Bowen  
Councilor Cohen  
Councilor Lenares  
Councilor Nagel  
Councilor Nasinnyk  
Mayor Wright

Staff Present:

John L. Salomone, Town Manager  
Lori Verreault, Executive Assistant  
Ann Harter, Finance Director  
Ken Freidenberg, Director of Human Services  
Dr. Ernest Perlini, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Jeffery Schumann, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

**III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA (none)**

**IV CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS**

**A Budget Review – Board of Education**

Mayor Wright thanked the members of the Board of Education for attending the meeting. Dan Carson, Chairman of the Board of Education, introduced the members of the Board of Education: Vice Chairperson Beth DelBuono, Secretary Mary Niro, Steve Woods, Marc Finkelstien, Meg Casasanta, Pam Raynock, Nancy Petronio and Sharon Braverman. Mr. Carson stated that this effort started ten years ago with a new vision for education excellence and a targeted roadmap to success. He stated that a component of the progress of our schools have been achieved, demonstrated and highlighted by consistent improvement of academic results. He stated that these results could not have been possible without the leadership provided by the Town Council over the years to fund education at levels that have allowed for consistent improvement. Mr. Carson stated that the mission of the Board of Education and Newington Public Schools is to ensure that every student acquires the knowledge, skills and attitudes to continue to learn, live a productive life and

Phone: (860) 665-8510 Fax: (860) 665-8507  
townmanager@newingtonct.gov  
www.newingtonct.gov

contribute to a diverse, rapidly changing society. We place priority on fostering a strong educational partnership of school, family and community. We provide a caring environment and a program of quality learning experiences that challenge and encourage each individual to reach full potential. Mr. Carson stated that the 2008-2009 budget process included many challenges. He stated that during the budget process the Board of Education sought input from all staff in order to meet the objectives, parameters and guidelines for operation of the Newington Public School system.

Mr. Carson presented the proposed 2008-2009 Board of Education Budget:

#### Board of Education Guidelines

- Improve student achievement – provide resources to advance student achievement on State and national tests
- Improve student/teacher ratio
- Support technology plan – complete technology infrastructure while continuing to make use of this learning tool
- Address State and Federal initiatives – funding needed in the areas of professional development, high school reform, preschool education, recruitment, retention, diversity and enhanced minority staffing
- Address capital improvements – the age of the facilities will require more and more maintenance
- Support of the NEAS&C (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) process – provide implementation of the recommendations of the various NEAS&C reports
- Fund contracts and benefits
- Improve safety and security
- Provide new learning opportunities – advance curriculum and add new learning areas necessary for students' success at the next level
- Recognize the ability of the community to support education – the Board of Education must continually balance the educational needs of the students with consideration of the ability of the people of Newington to provide financial support

#### Proud of Student Achievement

- State level tests
- State performance in the arts
- Placement beyond high school – over 90% of high school students pursue additional education opportunities
- Low student dropout rates – less than one-half of 1% of students drop out of Newington schools
- Involvement and contributions to the community – last year NHS students contributed over 13,000 hours of community service

#### State Level Testing – Reading/Mathematics/Writing

- The State provides competitive data for seven grade levels
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas
- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade – better than state average in all areas

#### Priorities

- Continue to improve test performance:
  - Revise curriculum
  - Provide professional development
  - Provide instructional material
  - Lower student/teacher ratio
- Continue to provide students with life skills

#### Budget Process

- Strives to achieve a delicate balance between educational financial needs and community financial needs
- Superintendent's requests:
  - Reallocate existing staff – address the highest priorities without adding positions
  - Address ESOL population
  - Provide student-assistance councilors to implement State laws to address discipline issues
  - Support for students with specials needs as mandated
  - Fund the highest priority of textbooks and supplies – due to budget restraints only about half of the requested textbooks were added to the budget.
  - Fund utility and benefit costs

Increase Summary – Superintendent's Proposed 2008-2009 Operating Budget

<b>Item</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Salary	3.09%
Benefits	2.08%
Utilities	0.44%
Special Education	0.32%
Insurance	0.03%
Other (textbooks, supplies)	(0.22%)
Total Inc. = \$3,076,812	5.74%

Board of Education Adjustments - February 2008

<b>Item</b>	<b>\$ Adjustment</b>
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	(\$645,976)
Supplies	(\$50,000)
Pension Adjustment	(\$51,500)
Add two social workers	\$127,072
Utilities Cost Adjustment	\$52,462

- Adjustments result in a budget increase of 4.68%

Benefits

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>% of the Budget</b>
Health Benefits	\$308,490	0.58%
Other Benefits	\$107,774	0.20%
Total Benefits	\$416,264	0.78%

Operational Materials - Adjustments

<b>Item</b>	<b>\$ Adjustment</b>
Maintenance	(\$5,100)
Plants	\$235,340
Transportation	(\$14,171)
Insurance (Worker's Comp)	\$16,950
Community Service	\$0.00 (no change)

Increase Summary – After Board of Education's Revisions of Superintendent's Budget

<b>Item</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Salary	3.33%
Benefits	0.78%
Utilities	0.54%
Special Education	0.30%
Insurance	0.03%
Other (textbooks, supplies)	(0.32%)
Total Inc. = \$2,508,870	4.68%

Efforts to Control Expenditures

- Only one new position
- Reductions in the number of new textbooks, supplies and materials
- Deferral of new textbooks and programs

Immediate Concerns of the Board of Education

- Class size compared to State average:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>State Avg.</b>	<b>Town Avg.</b>	<b>Change</b>
K	18.2	20.4	2.2
2	19.5	19.3	(0.2)
5	21.3	20.6	(0.7)
7	20.8	22.6	1.8
HS	20.0	21.1	1.0

- Reduction of supplies – all areas
- Phase in of textbooks
- Implementation of NEAS&C regulations
- Special education costs
- Utilities cost
- Need of additional support services
- Safety Committee recommendations

Conclusions – 2008-2009 Education Budget

- Reallocated staff
- Cuts in most areas
- Limited increase to only salaries, benefits, utilities, special education, insurance
- Limited purchase of textbooks and supplies

Conclusions – Increase Summary

- The Board of Education requests that the Town Council approves an increase of 4.68% taking into consideration that this is the second year in the State budget which will guarantee the Town of Newington a minimum of \$532,417 in educational cost sharing.
- Impact of cost sharing is 1% of increase
- Recognizes the needs of the school district within limited financial resources
- Recognizes the ability of the community to fund education within limited financial resources
- Recognizes additional funds from the State to supplement local financial resources
- Recognizes a desire to maintain a quality school district within limited financial resources

- B Handicapped Accessibility Code Correction Projects
  - 1 Newington High School
  - 2 Newington High School Field House

Mr. Carson presented the following information about the OCR audit:

What is an OCR Audit?

- Looks at all aspects of NHS programs and facilities from a civil rights perspective:
  - Handicapped accessibility
  - Gender equality
  - Racial equity
- Includes the following areas:
  - Main campus
  - Athletic fields
  - Field house
  - All program offerings

Program Background

- May 2007 – site visit by the Office of Civil Rights
- September 2007 – citation report issues

- October 2007 – corrective action response provided
- Town has the responsibility to make ongoing progress – not optional

#### What Does the OCR Look For?

- Handicapped accessibility to all programs
- Title 9 violations
- Gender equality issues
- Equivalent resources and opportunities

#### Process

- Review of program activities to evaluate whether student participation in various programs is unbalanced from a racial, gender or ethnic perspective

#### Implications for Newington

- Due to the age of the NHS building, numerous citations for ADA violations
- Handicapped accessibility deficiencies at the field house formalized

#### Audit Results

- Citations issued for 29 different violations – essentially for ADA accessibility violations
- Work to correct those violations
- Much of the work is eligible for grant funding
- Newington eligible for 54% grant funding
- Funding options for the field house project:
  - Currently only funded from local sources
  - Original project design was approved by the general assembly
  - Original project lapsed, but it may be able to support a new grant request
  - Field house is considered part of NHS by the OCR. Twelve citations were issued in respect to the field house and adjacent athletic areas
  - The scope of the work to the field house was expanded to meet these requirements
  - Estimated cost of the field house portion of the project is about one-third of the total cost of the NHS project
  - Field house project now encompasses code violations
  - Two different sets of education specifications were approved by the Board of Education
  - There are two sets of grants available. One set of grant projects is specific to the field house, which will allow the Town to pursue school construction grant funding for either or both projects.

#### OCR Funding Process

- The Town's CIP budget request for 2008-2009 has a \$110,000 placeholder request for OCR which will cost the Town \$50,000. This will fund architectural work.
- The Town's CIP budget also has an additional \$250,000 request for the field house project
- Funding process – two options:
  - Option 1 – code correction only. Approximately one-third of the project would be eligible
  - Reimbursement would come from the 2008-2009 budget year
  - Option 2 – a grant for the entire project.
  - If approved in December 2008, reimbursement will be available during the 2008-2009 budget year
  - Special legislation is required

#### Option Comparison

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Option One</b><br/>         OCR field house project only<br/>         \$300,000 estimated cost<br/>         \$150,000 potential grant</p> | <p><b>Option Two</b><br/>         100% field house project<br/>         \$900,000 estimated cost<br/>         Potential grant \$450,000</p> |
|---|---|
- The Board of Education recommends option two

Question and answer session and discussion followed about both the Board of Education budget and the OCR audit presentations.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the health benefits surplus of \$645,976 and asked where it will be in June and if there is any chance the amount could go down. Dr. Perlini replied that the presentation had to do with the anticipated budget for next year, which is different from Councilor Bottalico's question about the possible surplus in the current year. He stated that the current projection does call for a surplus of about \$600,000 that may be in this year's budget but the projection can change based on claims made through June. Councilor Bottalico asked if the amount will be used in next year's budget. Dr. Perlini replied in the negative.

Councilor Bottalico asked how the Town's school test results compare with other individual towns currently and ten years ago. Mr. Carson replied that Newington tests extremely well in comparison to similar area towns. Councilor Bottalico noted that the State average is taken over 169 towns – including some cities that would likely bring test result averages down. Mr. Carson replied that there are also some towns which would counter that effect and bring the test result averages up.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the increase in insurance costs. Mr. Carson stated that the increases are out of the Town's control. Councilor Bottalico asked for further information, citing information from the Insurance Committee that the increase will be about \$161,000, a number which did not appear in the presentation. Mayor Wright asked Mr. Carson to obtain more information. Mr. Woods stated that insurance figures are not generated by the Board of Education; they are generated by the Town Manager and the Finance Department and the Board of Education is required to go by those numbers. Dr. Finkelstien read from the budget that the general liability insurance is \$503,725, which represents an increase of \$16,950. Total insurance is \$858,400. He stated confusion about Councilor Bottalico's \$161,000 figure. Councilor Bottalico replied that he is the Chair of the Standing Insurance and Pension Committee and he was told by the insurance company that the Town is going down \$217,000 and the Board of Education is going up \$161,000. Mayor Wright asked whether Councilor Bottalico was referring to health insurance. He asked the Board to check the numbers and confirm the information.

Councilor Boni stated that the sheet he has from the Town Manager's office has a different number for general supplies: \$9,000 reduction as opposed to the \$50,000 reduction presented. Mr. Carson replied that the \$9,000 reduction includes central supplies only, and the \$50,000 reduction is the total reduction for all supplies. Councilor Boni asked whether the 2008-2009 budget is starting from scratch and assumes no money left over from 2007-2008. He also asked where any revenues collected appear in the budget. Mr. Carson replied that any fees collected go into the general fund and come back to the Board of Education, and stated that it is the responsibility of the school system to assure that the use of school facilities is done at a fair and equitable price. Councilor Boni noted the total budgets requested by Dr. Perlini and adjusted by the Board and noted that the cut is about one-percent. Mr. Carson stated that the cut is slightly greater than one percent and that some of the items cut such as textbooks and instructional supplies may need to be addressed by this summer. He stated that it is a prudent budget that can be supported by Town residents. Councilor Boni inquired about the areas in which the Board appropriated more money than requested by Dr. Perlini, including psychological services, transportation, and employee benefits which are of particular concern. Mr. Carson replied that the Agent of Record determines the benefit costs.

Councilor Boni noted that the Martin Kellogg Middle School parking lot, which holds about one-hundred non-visitor cars, used to be about 50-60% full during the school day several years ago whereas it is now almost 100% full daily and inquired about the increase. Mrs. DelBuono replied that as the school's population increases there is an increase in parent volunteerism in the classrooms which explains full parking lots. Councilor Boni commented that the lots are full all day, and expressed doubt that the lots are full just do to volunteers. Mrs. DelBuono asked whether Councilor Boni had a budgetary concern in regards to the parking lots. Councilor Boni replied that he wonders if the increase in cars is do to an increase in employees. Mrs. DelBuono replied that the number of employees at the middle school has not increased enough to fill the parking lot.

Councilor Banach inquired about the special education increase of \$75,000. Mr. Carson stated that the amount could be as much as \$75,000 depending on student needs. Councilor Banach asked if the \$75,000 amount is a typical average year after year. Mr. Carson replied that it is a worst-case scenario and commented that special education is a wild card portion of the budgetary process each year, and that the budget does not allow for any significant impact in the event that any high dollar high dollar needs arise in that area. Councilor Banach asked if there is any indication of how often that has happened in the past several years. Dr. Perlini

replied that it depends on the year, this year to last year the number is lower. He stated that last year the Board asked for a zero increase in special education funding for out of district placements between last year's and this year's budget. He stated that in looking at the budget the Board reviews the placements of the current special education students and try to anticipate where the students will be next year and anticipate the costs. He stated that if additional students come into the system during the next school year it could cost as much as \$75,000. Councilor Banach inquired about the current average cost per student. Dr. Perlini replied that the current average cost is about \$10,500 - \$11,000.

Councilor Cohen inquired about the use of the fourteen vehicles currently reserved for non-student transportation, and inquired whether any of the vehicles are assigned to individuals. Mr. Carson replied that most of the vehicles are rather old and are mostly used for traffic control and to transport supplies between the schools. He added that one of the vehicles sometimes goes home with an on-call mechanic, and one is used by a messenger during the school day. Councilor Cohen asked if a messenger is needed with modern day technology such as fax and email. Mr. Carson stated that there are supplies and sensitive documents that would need to be hand delivered. Councilor Cohen asked whether there is someone available at all hours to act as a messenger. Dr. Perlini explained that there is a person who makes supplies and inter-office mail deliveries on a daily basis. He stated that the delivery duties take about three or four hours per day and are done by a bus driver between morning and afternoon bus routes.

Councilor Bowen explained that Councilor Boni was speaking about was the way the budget was cut by the Board. He stated that other than the health benefits, which were actually cut by the agent, there was actually an increase to the Superintendent's budget. Mr. Carson stated that the budget represents a reality check based on November election results. He stated that there were many items that the Board would have liked to have added to the budget such as textbooks and additional staff and resources, but the fact that the Board has been prudent should not be held against them. Councilor Bowen stated that he was not passing judgment; he was only stating a position of fact that the only thing that cut the Board's budget was the health benefits fund.

Councilor Bowen inquired about the Board's grave concerns with the teacher level and class size of the kindergarten classes and asked whether the Board should consider asking for additional teachers before the budget is finalized. Mr. Carson replied that the Board of Education relies on the administration to advise on appropriate class size levels, and that the Board has the ability to address the highest priority and if the Superintendent suggests that as an area to pursue the Board would do so. He stated that the Board is comfortable at this point with the current staffing levels although it is an area of concern going forward. Mrs. DelBuono commented that unless the class sizes reach a certain point the addition of a teacher would create either uneven class sizes or class sizes below where they should be. Councilor Bowen stated that he is reacting to the Chairman's comments about grave concerns and that if there are such concerns now is the time to make a difference as opposed to later when the budget is finalized and there is not the ability to add teachers.

Councilor Bowen spoke about the prospect of adding school social workers. He stated that the Safety Committee recommended adding social workers based on the needs of the entire Town. He stated that the Board voted against SRO's in favor of school social workers, and commented that if social workers are hired that the Town should try to get the best bang for the buck and consider hiring the social workers in conjunction with the Human Services department so that they can be utilized 365 days per year rather than just during the school year. He stated that by doing so the social workers can have an impact even when the schools are closed. He asked if there is a way that Board can collaborate with the Human Services department on the issue. Mr. Carson replied that he has researched the topic and explained that school social workers are certified by the Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Board of Education has the responsibility to hire, evaluate and supervise State Department of Education certified school social workers. He stated that the primary purpose of a school social worker is to facilitate the educational needs of the child including individual counseling, family counseling, developing intervention plans and if necessary providing referrals to other family agencies to provide assistance. Mr. Carson stated that the school social worker helps students resolve problems related to the school setting and that the primary responsibility of the school social worker is not to provide assistance on housing options, financial guidance, medical services, etc. He stated that this is the function of a Town social worker, and that town social workers generally have not completed an internship in public school environments. He stated that a town social worker is often involved with issues of gerontology and also works with the police department and court system to provide guidance and assistance to adults. Mr. Carson stated that the combination of both functions would diminish the level of existing services based upon broader ranges of experience required. He stated that addressing the educational needs of a student is only one avenue of social work services needed in the community. Mr. Carson stated that it is the Board's position

that both positions are needed in the community, and that it is the Board's priority to provide the required assistance for all youth in order for the children of this community to perform at the highest level in the schools and become contributing members of society. He stated that school social workers will be invited to work during the summer for the Human Services department, but the decision to accept summer employment would not be connected to any regular employment with the Board of Education. Mr. Carson stated that the Board chooses not to relinquish its right of employment of school social workers. Councilor Bowen again inquired, thinking outside the box, if the Board would be willing to consider the issue. Mr. Carson stated that he had already addressed Councilor Bowen's inquiry. Councilor Bowen remarked that he is not trying to be confrontational. He stated that he is addressing youth issues and noticed that the Board had previously implored the Council to look at the issues from a Town approach not just from a school approach. Councilor Bowen stated that such an approach is the reason that the Town's Committee on Community Safety was established. He stated that there are social workers who are certified to work both inside and outside of the school system, and that there would be no problem with working with the Human Services department to locate councilors who could do both. He stated that he would have no problem with the Human Services department devoting the councilors exclusively to child services. Councilor Bowen commented that he does not know the correct answer and asked if there is anyone from the Board who is willing to approach the macro issue rather than the micro issue. Mrs. DelBuono stated that school certified social workers work under school-based supervision. She stated that while the option should be explored, the school social worker would be supervised by the school system. She stated that there is the possibility of working with the Town to see if the social worker can be employed by the Town for the summer, but the social worker would not be able to be directly related to the school district during the summer. Councilor Bowen requested that the Board and the Council sit down to discuss the options for the solution while there is still time. Mr. Carson stated that he will not support having Human Services enter into the schools. He stated that there would be union issues, and that it is a clearly defined responsibility of the Board to employ the social workers at the schools and not to add to the burden of the Human Services department. Councilor Bowen remarked that he has received two different answers. Mrs. DelBuono replied that the Board would be willing to work with the Town if the Town should want to hire the school social workers for the summer, but that it would not be the Board's responsibility or intent in that regard. Councilor Bowen expressed disappointment over the issue. Councilor Cohen noted that the Council does not have any say as to whether the Board puts the social workers in the budget, but in her opinion she would prefer to have social workers in the Human Services department that are available year round and are available for family situations rather than just school situations. Mr. Woods stated that adding school social workers will actually help to lighten the load of the Town social workers, and that feedback from every single school calls for the need for school social workers. Mrs. Casasanta stated that the Board's role is to assist and provide for the needs of the students. She stated that if the Town feels that there are needs on the Town side regarding the issue then the Board would defer those needs to the Council and the Town Manager. Mrs. Raynock agreed with Mr. Carson, Mr. Woods and Mrs. Casasanta. She stated that she has repeatedly heard every school reiterate the need for social workers, and any needs at the Town level should be addressed by the Town. She stated that the schools' concerns have been addressed by the Board and that she would like to see it remain as such. Councilor Bowen stated that as a Councilor he is charged with overseeing macro decisions for the entire Town and reiterated his position on the issue. He remarked that he feels that the Board is not willing to collaborate with the Town on addressing the macro issue. Mr. Carson stated disagreement with Councilor Bowen's statement. Deputy Mayor Lenares asked where the two social workers will be positioned. Mr. Carson replied that the two social workers will be shared between the four elementary schools. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired about the middle schools and the high school. Mrs. Casasanta replied that there are guidance councilors at both middle schools. Mrs. DelBuono stated that due to input from school administrators the priority was to staff the elementary schools with social workers first with a phase in at the middle school level in the future. Deputy Mayor Lenares asked what a social worker does at the elementary school level and also asked whether the social workers would be available for evening hours and if so if it will create an overtime issue. Dr. Perlini stated that social workers would be working with the parents and the teachers in bringing about an improvement in order for a child to be successful in school. He stated that the social worker would work with the teachers and would also be available for home visits. Dr. Perlini stated that the home visits could occur during the evening hours but would not entail overtime.

Councilor Bottalico asked whether the Board of Education be willing to entertain the possibility of combining the Town and the Board of Education sides of computer hardware, software and programming into one department in order to save costs. Mr. Carson replied that the technology is different on the Board of Education side, and the majority of the technology is for classroom and curriculum purposes, whereas most of town's technology is for programs such as police technologies. He stated that the Board is maxed out on the school side in terms of their need to support the technology infrastructure, but due to the differing requirements on the school side and the Town side combining the two may not be the way to go. Councilor Bottalico asked whether the Board

technology is PC-based. Mr. Carson replied in the affirmative. Councilor Bottalico stated that there may be some areas for money to be saved in sharing of software and hardware. Mr. Carson stated that he would look into it. Mayor Wright commented that it has been suggested in the past that a committee be formed between the Town Council and the Board of Education to look items such as these in order to maximize efficiencies.

Councilor Nagel asked which items in the budget, aside from salaries and insurance, are mandates from the State or an accreditation association. Dr. Perlini replied that all of the budgets seem to intertwine together to answer to mandates. He listed specific areas including special education, physical education, arts and music, reading, and health education. He stated that most of the curriculum areas of the budget are based on mandates from the State. He also stated that some things such as heating are not directly mandated by the State but are required to provide a proper learning environment. Councilor Nagel asked how the ESOL program affects expenditures. Mrs. DeIBuono replied that the Board is reallocating existing staff to address the issue. Mr. Carson stated that ESOL is a significant area of challenge as demographics change. He stated that there are currently between 35-40 different languages spoken throughout the school district.

Mayor Wright noted the rising special education costs and asked whether there is anything that can be done to get the costs under control. Mr. Woods replied that the Special Education Administrator does an excellent job of bringing students back into the district and not out-placing anywhere near the number of students as was done in the past. He stated that this has saved the Town tens of thousands of dollars, as the Town does not receive reimbursements until a certain amount of money is spent.

Mayor Wright asked about enrollment projections. Dr. Schumann replied that the projections call for a change of about 100-200 students over the next five years. He stated that a survey has been sent out to all households to get an idea of the number zero to four year olds in Town in order to project future enrollment.

Councilor Boni commented on a State mandate against out of school suspensions and asked whether a position was added to accommodate the mandate. Mr. Carson replied in the affirmative, but noted that a person was reallocated for the position. He added that the only way a student can be taken out of school for a suspension is if the student is determined to be a threat to the school population. Councilor Boni remarked that Councilor Bowen's suggestion regarding social workers is very valid and expressed disappointment that the Board has rejected the idea without further investigation. Mr. Carson replied that the Board's opinion on the subject is a result of research and looking at both sides of the equation.

Councilor Bottalico asked how the Board's Facility Manager works regarding RFPs for maintenance and other issues. Mr. Carson replied that he uses work orders. Dr. Perlini stated that he uses RFPs for projects over \$10,000, and the bids are handled through the business office. Councilor Bottalico asked if the Board uses any set rates or contracts for items such as electricians. Dr. Perlini replied in the affirmative. Councilor Bottalico noted the position change for the Athletic Director at NHS and asked whether the position will be full or part time. Mr. Carson replied that it is a posted position, and considering the scope of the athletics at NHS there is a defined need to fill that position. Mr. Woods replied that it is not a new position, and noted that the person previously in that position remains as a teacher. Councilor Bottalico inquired about the funding for the position. Mrs. Niro stated that the funding will be filled from a retirement of a health teacher position. Mr. Woods commented that the Board often piggybacks on contracts and as mandated contractors are required to offer the same pricing as in other areas.

Mrs. Petronio asked about test score data comparing Newington to other comparable area towns and asked whether the State releases such information. Dr. Perlini replied that the State no longer releases town-to-town comparative data. He stated that the data can be obtained by going to the Hartford Courant website and pulling the data from the individual towns for comparison.

Mayor Wright noted the two funding options for the OCR field house project. Mr. Carson stated that the Board strongly suggests the second option. Mayor Wright asked if there are any downsides to exercising the second option. Mr. Carson stated that option two will require State legislation. Mayor Wright stated that it is a risk/reward situation. Mayor Wright asked about the allocation of any extra funds retained as a result of option two. Mr. Carson replied that the funds will go to the general fund.

Town Manager Salomone noted that the agenda contains an item for possible action in regards to the field house and asked whether the Council wishes to act on the item or to place it on the addenda of the next meeting. Mr. Woods stated that there are two separate components to be approved by the Council; one is to allow the Building Committee to go out to bid for the field house, which has been done. The second is to allow

the Superintendent to apply for a State grant for funding to address the OCR issues. Mayor Wright asked whether there is any downside to voting on the item at next week's meeting. Dr. Perlini replied that the Board cannot submit the grant application until the Council takes action.

Councilor Bottalico moved to waive the rules to vote on the item. Motion seconded by Councilor Nagel. Councilor Nasinnyk started that she would prefer to wait until the next regular Council meeting in one week to vote on the item. Councilor Cohen stated that the Council should vote on the item so that the Board does not have to wait to take action on the item. She also asked whether grant approval will be necessary to go to bid with this project. Mr. Carson answered that it is not necessary. Councilor Banach agreed with Councilor Nasinnyk that the vote should wait. He stated that the rules were waived for last week's vote do to the urgency of the item and he prefers to not get into the routine of waiving the rules as it disenfranchises the public from the process. Councilor Bowen noted that a building committee has not been discussed for the project and stated that he does not yet have enough information available in order to vote. Councilor Bottalico withdrew his motion. Councilor Nagel withdrew his second. Councilor Cohen requested that someone from the Board of Education be in attendance at the next meeting for the discussion of the item. Mayor Wright asked whether the discussion of the topic could occur at the present meeting in order to answer questions. The Council agreed.

Mayor Wright called for a brief break at 9:36pm. Meeting resumed at 9:48pm.

Councilor Cohen moved to waive the rules to vote on agenda item IV-B-2: Handicapped Accessibility Code Correction Project – Newington High School Field House. Motion seconded by Councilor Nagel. Motion passed 9-0.

Councilor Nagel moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby authorizes the Newington Board of Education to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the Expansion, Alteration, and Correction of Code Violations at the Newington High School Field House;**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby amends Resolution No. 2007-94 which revised the charge of the NHS Track Renovation Project Building Committee to include responsibility for the NHS Field House Project. The scope of this project includes the Expansion, Alteration, and correction of Code Violations at the NHS Field House. All other elements of the resolution remain in full force and effect.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the Expansion, Alteration, and Correction of Code Violations at the Newington High School Field House.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen.

Councilor Bowen asked why the item does not fall under old business as it had been previously discussed. Town Manager Salomone explained that the item had been discussed; however the discussion was incomplete pending the current meeting when the Council would be able to utilize Dr. Perlini to answer questions about the item before the vote. Councilor Cohen stated that the project is already in the works, and stated that if the grant is not approved the item will come back for consideration. Mr. Woods stated that the Town will automatically receive the grant for the OCR portion of the work; the only question is whether the grant will be received for the entire project. He stated that the worst case scenario for the grant funding is \$150,000, and the best case scenario is \$450,000. Councilor Bowen stated that the worst case scenario would be that the Town received a 55% reimbursement on the OCR portion of the project and a 22.5% grant on the remaining part of the project. Mayor Wright stated that it sounds like a good project.

Motion passed 9-0.

Mr. Carson presented the results of the CIRMA school security assessment:

#### School Security Assessment

- Comprehensive assessment of all school buildings and grounds
- Adoption of risk management school security assessment
- Self-assessment at each location
- Review by a strategic team that includes district security personnel as well as the Newington Police Department
- Assessment made by CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Association)

#### Timeline

- November 2007 - CIRMA instrument is the foundation for the development of the security assessment
- December 2007 - data collection from various school personnel
- January 2008 – data analysis by the school security officials, the NPD and CIRMA
- February 2008 – determination of findings
- March 2008 – presentations made to the Board of Education

#### General Assessment Areas

- Physical structure of all locations
- Grounds
- Emergency planning
- Response procedures
- Support programs
- Social skill development programs

#### Specific Assessment Areas

- Ability to enter a building
- Ability to place a vehicle close to a door or window
- Ability to drive a vehicle into an entrance area
- Playground safety
- Walking path security
- Access control of door systems
- Intruder detection systems
- Closed-circuit television monitoring
- Areas of seclusion
- Exterior lighting
- Functionality of communication systems
- Establishment of barricades

#### Recommendations

- Public safety access and control in the event of an emergency
- Upgrade existing security cameras to higher resolution cameras
- Door hardware upgrades – electronic locking systems
- Additional access control measures – fobs and card readers
- Completion of high security keying systems
- Additional security cameras
- Traffic pattern reconfigurations
- Enhancement of social skills programs for middle and high school students – including cost/benefit evaluation and future consideration of adding SROs to middle schools
- Walking paths – physical inspections of the pathways
- Instillation of security bollards
- Enhanced dismissal supervision at the elementary schools
- Regular inspections and evaluations of specific physical attributes of Board of Education properties
- Recurrent inventory counts of caustic, toxic or flammable materials stored within school buildings
- Store all flammable liquids in UL listed flammable storage containers
- Enhanced visitor access control
- Assessment of the tree line around each school building

Mr. Carson stated that Newington schools are already among the safest schools in Connecticut and that these recommendations will help make the schools even more secure.

Councilor Bottalico asked if there are any answers to the problem of high school students congregating at the pathway behind St. Mary's. Dr. Perlini stated that there is an attendance policy at Newington High School and that teachers are required to report a student missing from a class. He stated that students missing from class are found and disciplined. He stated that the SRO does patrol the pathway for students during the school day and also the police department responds to reports of students congregating on the pathway when they should be at school. Dr. Perlini noted that most of the difficulty occurs after school hours and with students who receive early dismissals. Councilor Bottalico inquired about cameras at the high schools and also asked whether there are buzzers installed on any of the doors. Dr. Perlini replied that there are about forty cameras installed at the high school and that there are no buzzers on any of the doors.

Councilor Cohen noted that the safety assessment study speaks to the physical aspects the building, but not to the people aspects, such as how to control or assist the students. She stated that there are different types of safety issues. Mrs. DelBuono stated that one of the pieces of the report is a review of the social skills development programs and the purpose is to develop the social skills of students to avoid developing issues and to help students cope with current issues. Councilor Banach stated that the Town is already aware of the costs associated with an SRO program and asked about the benefits that would be measured against the cost. Mr. Carson replied that the item should be referred to the Student Policy Committee for review. Councilor Banach requested that the Committee make the analysis.

Councilor Boni noted a safety concern at Martin Kellogg in which parents drop off and pick up their children on Harding Avenue, which is a safety concern due to the busy nature of the street during drop off and pickup times. He stated that many solutions have been attempted and failed over the years such as placing signs and cones in the area, assigning a monitor to the area and sending notices to parents not to let their children off on Harding Avenue. He suggested a possible solution of the parents circling around to the large rear parking lot to drop off students. Mr. Carson replied that the study does address that problem not only at Martin Kellogg but also at all schools. He stated that there is a need for a command authority to enforce the drop-off/pickup policy. He stated that police involvement is needed during those times. Mr. Woods stated that the issue has been discussed, but it is an enforcement issue that has been addressed several times at each school. Dr. Perlini stated that Councilor Boni's idea is a good one that is already being addressed but again noted that the problem is enforcement with parents. He stated that one item on the capital improvement list for an upcoming year is to expand the area behind the school in order to ease the flow of traffic. Deputy Mayor Lenares noted that the same problem occurs at Wallace and Patterson schools and stated concern that someone is going to get hurt because parents are not paying attention to the rules. Councilor Bottalico remarked that he had heard complaints from parents that school bus drivers are speeding down Harding Avenue and asked Dr. Perlini to look into the situation.

Councilor Nasinnyk noted a letter from the previous Chairman of the Board of Education from June of last year which outlined school security suggestions from the Board. She asked for a comparison between that assessment and the current CIRMA assessment. Mr. Carson replied that one of the charges of the Board was to have an independent review completed. He stated that while the Board is completely satisfied with the quality of the information received by Director of Security, Mr. Klett, but by the same token it does not represent the NPD or CIRMA's input in the assessment. Mr. Carson stated that he has endorsed many of the items in the previous review, but that the CIRMA review is a responsible approach that can be endorsed and addressed in the coming years. Dr. Perlini added that there are certain items in the previous report that the Board did choose to act upon including:

- placement of school social workers
- additional security guard at Newington High School
- additional camera coverage at Newington High School and entrance cameras at all buildings

Dr. Perlini stated that the current report is very extensive and deals with specific needs at specific buildings. He stated that the previous report outlined what the Town thought about safety, the current report outlines what the Town knows about safety.

Mayor Wright asked if CIRMA gave the Town an overall grade on its school safety. Mr. Carson replied that there is no specific grade per se, but overall the response is that Newington Schools are among the safest in the State due to proactive steps taken and lessons learned. Mr. Woods added that Mr. Klett has received

phone calls from area districts that wish to model their safety programs after Newington's safety programs. He stated that no program can keep kids 100% safe, but that the Town does the best it can using the resources it has. He stated that many of the recommendations of the previous study are also included in the current study and some are up for further consideration. Mayor Wright asked about the shelf life of the report. Mr. Carson stated that the budget will determine how and when items are addressed and that priority items will be addressed immediately. He stated that the Newington Police Department has been instrumental in creating the high quality of the assessment. Mayor Wright also recognized Ken Freidenberg and the Human Services department for their efforts. He thanked the Board for its report.

#### D Joint Community on Community Safety Update/Report

Mayor Wright invited Safety Committee members Mitch Page, Chair and Kevin Borrup, Vice Chair to present the Committee's recommendations on community safety.

Mr. Page stated the Joint Community on Community safety has utilized studies of recent school shooting tragedies, Health Department recommendations and community feedback in producing its recommendations in regards to community safety. He stated that some of the points of criticism regarding the Columbine and Virginia Tech tragedies are as follows:

- Lack of resources for mental health services to students
- Over-interpretation of privacy laws which limited communication between departments
- Passivity and inaction due to concerns of overstepping boundaries
- Gaps in services within and between institutions
- Lack of leadership in coordinating services to students

Mr. Page presented the Safety Committee's recommendations:

- Household surveys and focus groups to gather specific data regarding broader safety concerns not just focusing on the schools
- Additional resources for mental health counseling, social workers and police in the school system
- Improve communication between Town government and Newington residents
- More support and education for parents so that parents know how to identify and deal with youth at risk
- Obtain a Town Intervention Council to assure clear communication and to eliminate gaps in communication between Town and school services
- Strengthen mental health services and move to a matrix form of management where information may be more easily shared between departments and issues can be acted on more effectively

Mr. Page stated that the best way to prevent a tragedy from occurring in the schools or anywhere in the Town is to continue to work across existing administrative, political and budgetary town/school boundaries and to continue to learn from tragedies that have already occurred. He stated that the leaders must continue to work together to close gaps and to promote prevention.

Mr. Borrup noted that the CIRMA report concentrates on physical safety and safety against intruders whereas the Safety Committee concentrates on emotional and social safety of children in schools. He stated that issues that begin in the youth carry on and many troubled youth become impaired in the ability to earn a living or have positive relationships as adults. Mr. Borrup stated that the issues of primary and early intervention should be addressed, and stated that he is pleased to see that social workers will be placed at the elementary school level.

Mayor Wright stated that many of the Committee's recommendations have been discussed and taken to heart including the hiring of school social workers and the potential of hiring an additional police officer to focus on youth issues. He stated that one of the recommendations was in regards to the pathway behind St. Mary's and that the recommendation has been acted upon by the Town Manager, Parks and Recreation Department and the Highway Department. He thanked the Committee for its time and effort.

Councilor Bottalico spoke of the incident at NHS last year which came to light because of a You Tube video. He stated that there had been numerous reports to the Police Department during that time about fire arms being discharged in the area of the student's home, but every time the police responded they could not find anything. Councilor Bottalico wondered if the problem was due to response time. He asked whether the Committee was aware of these reports. Mr. Page replied that he had not heard of the reports but noted that the Police Department has done an excellent job in its work with the Committee. He stated that the Town needs to

find ways to continue to collaborate between departments, and that an emphasis in the recommendations has been to continue to look at the space between the various Town departments. Councilor Bottalico commented that the Town needs to get tougher with parents who can't handle their children. Mr. Page replied that the various departments are working actively to increase utilization of mental health services, enforcement and the Juvenile Review Board in order to help overwhelmed families and encourage wraparound services for youth at risk. Councilor Bottalico asked how an incident of a seven year old child beating up his parents would be handled by the police or the Human Services department. Mr. Page responded that he cannot speak for police procedures, but that a social worker would want to move in and work with the family in a supportive manner.

Councilor Banach inquired about the aim of the suggested Town surveys, particularly the youth surveys and asked whether the surveys would sample all youth or certain groups. Mr. Borrup stated that the recommendations call for focus groups and for youth to engage in discussion about how they feel about school and community safety. He stated that all youth, not just honor students or Key Club members would be engaged in these discussions. Councilor Banach asked whether these surveys and focus groups would be done by a professional organization. Mr. Page stated that the Committee has worked to engage the area Health Education Cooperative as well as the University of Connecticut Public Health Program to provide proposals regarding their services in surveys, focus groups and data analysis. He stated that the purpose of the data collection is to provide benchmarks and identify priorities for ongoing safety throughout the Town.

Councilor Bowen thanked the Committee for its work and patience. He asked Mr. Page about his credentials in the area of safety. Mr. Page replied that he is a licensed clinical social worker and a licensed school social worker, board certified with twenty years of experience. Councilor Bowen asked whether there is a way from a macro point of view to bring a Town social worker and a school social worker together, noting the Committee's recommendation of a management matrix. Mr. Page stated that in a perfect world there would be a bridge between the school and the Town and there would be coverage available 365 days per year. He stated that earlier comments about school social workers were all true relative to their roles as school social workers being supervised by school personnel, but stated that a recommendation of the Committee is to look creatively at how to bridge gaps between the school and the Town. He commented that there are times when the Town and the schools do collaborate effectively, but there are times when they do not due to the established institutional matrix and due to privacy and ethical concerns. Mr. Borrup stated that the roles are sometimes viewed very rigidly between the Town and the schools, and that the Town needs to look at a way to connect the roles and decrease the rigidity however the supervision is handled.

Councilor Nasinyk, a member of the Committee since August, thanked Mr. Page and Mr. Borrup as well as Tim Manke and the professionals on the Committee. She stated that she values the enthusiasm and expertise of the Committee. She also thanked Ken Freidenberg for his valuable work and the public for their input. She stated that the Committee has produced very valuable information. Councilor Cohen stated that the Committee has been very effective and has shown dedicated and talented leadership. She stated that there is much for the Committee to do and she would like to see it carry on. Councilor Bowen recognized Dave Tompkins as well for his work on the Committee. Mr. Page recognized the contributions of Janice Joseph and Steve Bafundo. Councilor Bowen recognized the contributions of former Councilor Klett and thanked the entire Committee for their work towards the best welfare of the Town. He stated that there will always be a role for the Committee, even as an advisory committee. Councilor Nagel stated that he has been on the Committee for a short period of time but has been most impressed with the sharing of information between the various departments. Ms. Braverman stated that she is not a member of the Safety Committee, but she plans to bring information presented at the current meeting back to the Board for discussion on ways to integrate Town social workers with school social workers. She stated that it makes sense for the two areas to work together to create a better safety net for everyone. Councilor Nagel stated hope that the Council and Board can work together to create a win-win situation in regards to safety. Mrs. Raynock stated that she is a member of the Safety Committee as a Board representative and she echoed the comments of the Councilors regarding the work of the Committee. She stated that their work has been tireless and recognized the public for their input, and noticed that it has been a collaborative effort that has already produced results at little or no cost by bridging gaps of communication between departments.

Mayor Wright suggested that the surveys, with the input of the various departments, cover various issues within the Town. Mr. Page stated that the Mayor has a good point and stated that safety issues are directly related to quality of life issues, therefore the surveys should also address various quality of life issues. Mr. Borrup stated that he is a member of the Central Connecticut Health District, which has done random community health surveys and stated that there are professional companies that will assist with surveys from question formulation to data collection, and that the services of these companies are generally affordable. Mayor Wright stated that

many of the Committee's ideas do not cost very much money, noting an example of the work done at the St. Mary's pathway which was an improvement that pleased the residents of the neighborhoods at little cost. Mr. Page commented about a grass-roots effort in Town called Walkable Newington which is trying to encourage a culture change towards walking and biking. He stated that there are State grant funds available to improve sidewalks and signage and to create a culture of walking and biking to schools. He encouraged the Council to look into such programs. Mayor Wright asked if some of the recommendations of the Safety Committee can begin to be farmed out to the various boards and commissions for further review and implementation. Mr. Page replied that it would be reasonable and a good idea for the Council to do so at its discretion. Councilor Bottalico requested that the Council meets with Safety Committees again in the future for further discussion and stated that he would like to begin addressing some of the Town's youth organizations. Mayor Wright agreed that the Council should meet again with the Committee, and again thanked the Committee members for their efforts.

## **V PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA**

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons addressed the area known as the New Meadow pathway. She stated that the pathway has been designated as a safe route to school. She stated that she inquired about the Safe Routes to School program with the Board of Education and was told that Board is not responsible for the pathway, but never got an answer about the Board's role in the Safe Routes to School program. Ms. Lyons also noted that there is a sign at the pathway designating it as a bike route. She stated that there are several things going on with the pathway, some good and some bad and she is pleased to see that after contacting the Town Manager and the Council that the area is starting to get cleaned up. She stated, however, that the pathway still needs major work and while the residents are doing their part the Town needs to continue do its part as well. Ms. Lyons asked the Council and the Town Manager to come up with a plan using various departments together to maintain all pathways and park areas on behalf of Newington residents in order to reclaim the areas for safety and enjoyment for many years to come. She requested that the Joint Committee on Community Safety be kept as an active Committee as she has found that residents have found it easy to go to the Committee and have the Committee actually listen to their concerns, which she has found not to be the case with the Parks and Recreations Department. She stated that the Safety Committee has no agenda except for the safety and well being of the Town.

## **VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS – none**

## **VII ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Bowen moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:12pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Nagel.

Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan  
Clerk of the Council