



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
7:00 P.M.**

November 22, 2011

Mayor Woods called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

Councilor Borjeson

Councilor Bottalico

Councilor Castelle

Councilor Cohen

Councilor DelBuono

Councilor McBride

Councilor Nagel

Mayor Woods

■ Councilor Klett- absent

Staff Present

Paul Boutot, Director Information Technology (Temporary Acting Town Manager)

Ann Harter – Finance Director

Steve Juda – Assessor

Jaime Trevethan – Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

Linda Irish-Simpson – Clerk of the Council

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Rose Lyons – 46 Elton Drive: She expressed concern that the directions to the Town Hall and Library specifically state that if you are using Mapquest not to use the Mill Street address since that entrance is no longer available. Mrs. Lyons requested that someone look into getting the directions corrected so there is no confusion.

IV CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Set Public Hearing Date: Barkledge Drive and Sterling Drive Street Acceptance

Councilor McBride moved the following:

RESOLVED: That the Newington Town Council will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, December 13, 2011, at 6:55 p.m. regarding the acceptance of Barkledge Drive and Sterling Drive as Town roads.

Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen. Motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Klett absent)

V CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Regional Grant Request: Mid-State Regional Major Crime Squad

The Mayor asked Paul Boutot to review the grant since there was a scheduling conflict with the Police Department. Mr. Boutot gave an explanation of the grant involving the Towns of Newington, Berlin, Cromwell, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield. The current grant would create a Regional Mid-State Major Crime Squad which would take members from each community and assemble into a task force to investigate crimes in the area. He reviewed the costs of handling this function individually, which would be approximately \$300,000 per town for the training and equipment needed. Mr. Boutot explained that the cost would be approximately \$350,546 to regionalize this task force per town with a saving of approximately \$230,500 per town. The Police Department would have someone attend the next Council meeting to review each item in detail and give the Council members time to review the application.

Councilor Borjeson asked for an explanation of the cost difference of the Field Processing Unit which on page 6 of the packet indicated it to be \$250,546 and on page 10 \$299,950. He also asked about the housing of the Field Unit and maintenance of it. Mr. Boutot stated that he would request answers from the Police Department and have the Chief get back to the Council. Councilor Borjeson asked if the software would be housed in the unit or accessed through the internet. Mr. Boutot replied that usually there is laser equipment that is tied to a laptop to provide measurements, 3D features, etc.

Councilor Nagel stated that the Town has previously done other cost savings which have proved effective with these towns. He asked what the urgency for passing this grant is. Mr. Boutot explained that the grant is a competitive one and other police departments would be applying for the same grant. He stated that there is a requirement that the Town Council pass a resolution in order to apply for the grant and this was a first step in applying for a grant.

Mayor Woods asked that the Regional Grant be added to the December 13 Council agenda.

B. Discussion: 2011 Revaluation

The revaluation was reviewed and explained by Steve Juda, Assessor and Ann Harter, Finance Director. Mr. Juda reviewed the documents that were given to Council members and explained the form letters that were sent out to residents along with copies of the Councilors assessments as examples. He reviewed RFP that was prepared in 2010 with three scopes of work to be done and price ranged from \$230,000 to \$700,000. The option of \$230,000 was chosen by the Town, which was a less intensive evaluation. The State mandates each Town to do revaluations every five years; however, there was special legislation passed that allowed a Town to defer the revaluation, which is what the Town of Newington chose to do. The last evaluation was done in 2005 which explained why the Town evaluation was six years in a five year cycle. Mr. Juda explained that the scope was to cover all taxable real estate, all tax exempt real estate and all public utility real estate. He stated that to accomplish the revaluation the Town integrated a new CAMA system from Vision Appraisal while Tyler Technologies did the actual revaluation. The state requires a full inspection revaluation every ten years and to accomplish this the Town did a drive-by of each property to satisfy the new State requirement. Digital photos of each property were taken, data mailers were mailed in the spring, sales verification was done, income and expense statements were reviewed for all commercial and rental properties, the Town reviewed internet realty sites and inspected over 2,000 condos that needed to be listed and sketched for the CAMA system.

Councilor Bottalico requested an explanation as to why some properties went down and some properties went up since the last evaluation. Mr. Juda explained that 20% of the properties went up due to additions done without permits, some neighbors inform the Assessor's office of changes, changes done by residents who have taken out permits and upgrading a property after visual inspection.

Mr. Juda explained that the revaluation was completed on time and no extension would be required by the Assessor's office. He further stated that the grand list is down by \$104,000,000 and at the current spending levels would require a projected mil rate increase from 30.02 to 31.62 or 1.6 mils to accept the negative change in the grand list.

Mr. Juda went on to explain the chart entitled Comparison of 2011 Newington Revaluation which reviewed the current 2010 grand list assessments by category versus the 2011 grand list assessments with the percent of changes as they stand now before the appeal process.

Mr. Juda explained the chart entitled Impact of Revaluation on Mill Rate, which detailed the Net Grand List with possible reductions due to appeals, the adjusted collection rate of 98.5% for the projected Estimated Mill Rate of 31.62. He reviewed the final chart which showed the impact on the Councilors homes if the mil rate were to increase to the projected 31.52 rate.

Councilor Bottalico asked Mr. Juda when the new rate increase would become effective. Mr. Juda stated that it would be billed in July 2012 and the second installment would be due in January 2013.

Councilor Borjeson complimented Mr. Juda on his clear, concise and easily understood presentation. Councilor DelBuono asked for clarification as to the appeals process for residents. Mr. Juda explained there were several avenues to be followed. The first is calling the Tyler Technologies directly who will then schedule a hearing on the value and not if the taxes are going up. A resident must demonstrate that there is something that was missed which would cause the property to be valued lower. Residents can also discuss their property with the Assessor's office but all must be done by January 31, 2012, when Mr. Juda will sign the grand list at which point he cannot make changes to the list. The last venue is to appeal by January 20, 2012 to the Board of Assessment Appeals. Mr. Juda explained that the 3 member Board is appointed by the Council and the Board will schedule meetings in March per State statute. He stated that the final alternative is court and that action can extend the process until September 30.

Councilor DelBuono asked if Tyler Technologies would have a printout of how each property assessment was reached. Mr. Juda replied that Tyler Technologies worked closely with the Assessor's office and would have print outs of each property and how each assessment was determined. Councilor Castelle asked why the commercial properties on average have gone up as opposed to residential properties. Mr. Juda explained that the commercial properties along the Berlin Turnpike are still considered a hot market versus the residential properties. Councilor Bottalico commended Steve and Ann on picking this process and saving the Town \$500,000.

Mayor Woods stated that property owners will question the Assessor's office when the property value has gone down but the taxes to be paid go up. He explained that it was too early to be talking values and dollars but thanked Mr. Juda for his work. Mr. Juda replied to the Mayor that there is statistical analysis that goes into the revaluation as required by State statute and the Town must meet certain standards. The standards are based on the sales that occur in portfolio sales, which dictate the value. He stated the Town must determine how far apart the standards are since in some instances the same house would sell for \$225,000, \$250,000 and \$289,000 in a three month period. It is then up to the Assessor to determine what the correct standard would be. Mayor Woods wanted it made clear to all residents that taxes must still be paid during an ongoing dispute and if the resident prevails in the appeal, a refund would be issued. Mr. Juda agreed with the Mayor and stated that all disputes will be resolved, unless they go to court, by April budget time.

Mayor Woods asked Mr. Juda to explain the car assessment figures and if they can be expected to go down. Mr. Juda stated that the figure will not go down since used cars tend to be valued higher. He explained that car taxes normally save people money but that won't happen in 2012.

Ann Harter wanted to commend Steve Juda for an excellent job with the process, gave the Town a great product and wanted to mention that many houses in Newington held their value which indicated Newington was a great place to live.

VI RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS

Councilor McBride moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby makes the following appointments: (note – all are for Newington Town Council Terms):

Affordable Age-Restricted Housing Study Committee:

Scott McBride, 211 Beacon Street – Party D

Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue – Party D

Balf-Town Committee

Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue – Party D

Board of Education Roof Replacement PBC
 Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane – Party D
 Capitol Region Council of Governments
 Mayor Stephen Woods – 92 New Britain Avenue – Party D
 Terry Borjeson – 45 Glenview Drive – Party D
 CIP Committee
 Terry Borjeson, 45 Glenview Drive – Party D
 Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive – Party D
 Clem Lemire Artificial Turf PBC
 Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive – Party D
 Downtown Revitalization Committee
 Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue – Party D
 Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane – Party D
 Scott McBride, 211 Beacon Street – Party D
 Employee Insurance and Pension Benefits Committee
 Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue – Party D
 School Code Compliance Committee
 Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane – Party D
 Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive – Party D
 Standing Insurance Committee
 Clark Castelle, 167 Connecticut Avenue – Party D
 Town Hall Renovation Project Building Committee
 Scott McBride, 211 Beacon Street – Party D
 Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane – Party D
 West Meadow Cemetery Expansion Project Building Committee
 Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane – Party D

Motion seconded by Councilor Borjeson. Motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Klett – absent)

Councilor Nagel moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby makes the following appointments: *(note – all are for Newington Town Council Terms):*

Affordable Age-Restricted Housing Study Committee:
 Dave Nagel, 1175 Willard Avenue – Party R
 Balf-Town Committee
 Beth DelBuono, 327 Walsh Avenue – Party R
 Board of Education Roof Replacement PBC
 Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – Party R
 CIP Committee
 Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – Party R
 Clem Lemire Artificial Turf PBC
 Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – Party R
 Downtown Revitalization Committee
 Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – Party R
 Employee Insurance and Pension Benefits Committee
 Beth DelBuono, 327 Walsh Avenue – Party R
 Open Space Committee
 David Nagel, 1175 Willard Avenue – Party R
 School Code Compliance Committee
 David Nagel, 1175 Willard Avenue – Party R
 Standing Insurance Committee
 David Nagel, 1175 Willard Avenue – Party R
 Town Hall Renovation Project Building Committee
 Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – Party R
 West Meadow Cemetery Expansion Project Building Committee
 David Nagel, 1175 Willard Avenue – Party R

Motion seconded by Councilor Bottalico. Motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Klett-absent)

VII TAX REFUNDS

Councilor Nagel moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That property tax refunds in the amount of \$4,047 .89 are hereby approved in the individual amounts and for those named on the "Requests for Refund of an Overpayment of Taxes," certified by the Revenue Collector, a list of which is attached to this resolution.

Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen. Motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Klett-absent)

VIII WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER, OTHER TOWN AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC (Tabled)

IX COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor McBride gave an update on the Downtown Revitalization Committee which all agreed was going well although they were somewhat behind schedule. The businesses were pleased with the amount of communication between them and the contractors.

X PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Stated that she was disappointed with the lack of public participation regarding the Blight Ordinance and wanted people listening and watching the Council meeting to get involved and to contact the Council with their concerns. Mrs. Lyons remarked on the short amount of time residents have to appeal to Tyler Technologies. The informal review must be requested by December 2.

XI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Bottalico remarked on his recent visit to the Food Bank at the Teen Center and how impressed he was with the quantity and variety of food available. He wanted to thank Ken Freidenberg, the volunteers, stores and individuals who donated food. Councilor Bottalico wanted to remind everyone about the Stuff the Cruiser toy collection on December 3, 10 a.m. at Walmart. He wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Councilor Cohen wanted to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving as well.

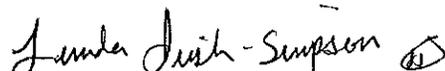
Councilor McBride remarked on the leaf collection that will be happening starting on Monday and because of the storm time will allow for only one pass through town. He urged residents to get their leaves out as soon as possible. He also wanted to welcome to Newington his grandparents, Sam and Yvette, and to wish all residents a Happy Thanksgiving.

Mayor Woods wanted to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and to let residents know that the Jen Win-Johnson was sponsoring a walk Thanksgiving morning at 9 a.m. on Forest Drive. It will be a two mile walk and everyone is asked to bring a monetary or food donation.

XII ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Bottalico moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilor DeIBuono. Motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Klett-absent)

Respectfully Submitted,



Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council