



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

March 10, 2009

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:05 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

Town Manager John Salomone
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Other Department Heads and Staff as indicated throughout

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Sandy Lallier, 27 Elton Drive: Mrs. Lallier thanked the Council for its hard work in the budget process so far and wished the Councilors luck in completing the process. She urged the Council to consider the Town's needs for the present and future of Newington.

IV CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Bottalico moved to add an item to the agenda under New Business: elected officials on boards and commissions in regards to section 415 of the Charter. Motion seconded by Councilor Boni.

Councilor Bottalico stated that he would like to discuss the item and get an opinion from the Town attorney as to whether the current situation with elected officials serving on boards and commissions is in violation of the Charter. Councilor Banach requested a clarification of the request. Councilor Bottalico replied that he is unsure that he understands the language of the section. Councilor Bowen inquired whether Councilor Bottalico has spoken to the Town Attorney about the item. Councilor Bottalico replied in the negative. Councilor Bowen inquired why this should be an agenda item rather than just a question to the Town Attorney. Councilor Bottalico remarked that he feels that the Town may be in violation of the Charter with its current situation of elected officials serving on boards and commissions. Councilor Banach inquired whether there is any urgency to the item. Councilor Bottalico replied in the negative, but recommended that the Council discuss the item at the current meeting and then have the Town Attorney at the following meeting to answer questions.

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Motion passed 9-0.

- A. Amendment to Classification and Pay Plan (Revised Job Descriptions for Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Executive Secretary to the Board of Education)

Deputy Mayor Lenares moved the following:

RESOLVED:

The Newington Town Council hereby approves of amendments to the “Classification and Pay Plan” by approving revised job/position descriptions for Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Executive Secretary to the Board of Education (A-5) as recommended by the Town Manager in his capacity as Personnel Director in his memorandum of February 13, 2009.

Motion seconded by Councilor Bottalico.

Councilor Bowen requested to table the item until representatives from the Board of Education are present to discuss the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Executive Secretary to the Board of Education position. Councilor Nasinnyk noted a typo in the job descriptions, and indicated that the wording should read “ability to sit/stand” rather than “sit/remain/stand”.

Deputy Mayor Lenares withdrew his motion, Councilor Bottalico withdrew his second, and the item was tabled until the next meeting.

- B. West Meadow Cemetery Expansion Project Bid Award

Councilor Cohen moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council, pursuant to Chapter 8, Article X, Project Building Committees, of the Newington Code of Ordinances,

(1) accepts the bid of Paramount Construction of Newington, CT for construction work for the expansion of West Meadow Cemetery in the amount of \$425,500;

(2) authorizes the Town Manager to enter into contract with Paramount for the amount indicated in accordance with the Final Project Budget, and

(3) accepts the Final Project Budget as submitted.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk.

Councilor Cohen indicated that the Committee sent out the bid requests with three alternates. She noted that there was one bidder who had made a mistake, but could not revise the bid because the bids had already been open. She stated that the accepted includes the base bid plus alternates one and two. She stated that a small amount of the project’s funding will come from the cemetery’s contingency budget, but the Committee is comfortable with that number. Councilor Cohen explained that alternate three, not included in the bid, is for the veterans’ monument, but noted that veterans groups will perform fundraising for the monument.

Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the bids came in higher or lower than the initial estimates. Councilor Cohen replied that the bids were not too much higher than estimated, but again indicated that a slight amount of funds will be moved from the contingency. Councilor Nasinnyk indicated that the Committee is pleased that the bid will allow two of the alternates to be included in the project. Councilor Bowen inquired about the erroneous bid and whether it would have been significantly lower than the winning bid. Councilor Cohen replied that the erroneous bid was only a couple thousand dollars lower than the ultimate winning bid.

Motion passed 9-0.

V CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

- A. Proposed Blighted Property List – 2009

Town Manager Salomone explained that items are added to the Town's blighted list once per year. He stated that some of the items on the list are being followed up on from last year and indicated that there are some new items on the list as well. He noted that there are some items on last year's list that still have not been cleaned up, such as the Fenn Road gas station. He noted that the Town is hoping to redevelop the National Welding site. Town Manager Salomone stated that after a period of time the Town fines owners who do not make any effort to rectify the situation - the goal of the fines is to motivate owners to do so. He indicated that in order to be considered blighted the property must be a vacant parcel or structure; substandard housing that is occupied would fall under nuisance ordinances rather than blight. He stated that while the blighted list is a good tool, it is not the end-all to having all substandard properties occupied.

Town Manager Salomone stated that the Council will receive a presentation of each property's case history at the next meeting. He remarked that he is not satisfied with the blight ordinance as written because there are several properties on the list that have not been paying the fines and are not being rectified. He stated that he has asked the Town Attorney for his opinion about what kind of action can be taken on those properties.

Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the Town is doing any work to maintain the safety of the properties on the blighted list. Town Manager Salomone replied that by ordinance the Town cannot do so, but stated that he would like to have the ability to make sure that blighted properties are secured and safe. He did state, however, that the Town can enter a property if it presents an imminent danger.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about who is responsible for the dumpsters on the municipal parking lot. Town Manager Salomone stated that the dumpsters are privately owned, and it is the owner's responsibility to keep the dumpsters clean. He stated that the Health Department gets involved as necessary. Councilor Bottalico noted that he had been over there recently and it was a terrible mess. He stated that he doesn't think that the owners of the dumpsters should be held responsible for people leaving garbage outside of the dumpster. Town Manager Salomone stated that the business that uses the dumpster is responsible for policing the area around the dumpster. Councilor Bottalico indicated that people who get caught dumping may be fined.

Councilor Nagel inquired about the property at 80 Fenn Road. Town Manager Salomone replied that it is an unoccupied commercial property that is used as a dumping ground.

Councilor Boni inquired about the fines to blighted property owners. Town Manager Salomone replied that the fine is \$100.00 per day. Councilor Boni inquired whether property owners are billed for the fines and stated that doing so might shock the owners into attention. He inquired about how long the Town waits to take action on a property owner once a property appears on the list. Town Manager Salomone gave the example of the Fenn Road gas station, in which the owner took some action last spring but then after about three months the property fell back into disrepair and by late fall it was apparent that there wasn't any good faith by the property owner to complete the repairs. He indicated that he has asked the Town Attorney to take the next steps. Town Manager Salomone stated that the Town does not want to own that property, but the item will be taken to court for enforcement. He stated that the Town is in contact with blighted property owners. Councilor Bottalico inquired whether there are any health threats posed by the Culver Street property, a burned barn that contained fertilizers. Town Manager Salomone stated that he doesn't believe that the building poses a threat but stated that he will check into it.

B. Insurance Agent of Record

Councilor Bottalico stated that the Committee met last week but did not have a quorum and stated that the next meeting is on March 31. He stated that the Committee has received four bids, but needs a quorum to discuss the bids.

C. Budget Review: Senior and Disabled Center Services

Dianne Stone, Director of Senior & Disabled Center Services, addressed the Council regarding the Senior and Disabled Center Services budget.

Town Manager Salomone stated that he had originally recommended that the Senior & Disabled Center be closed in the evenings. He stated that it was recommended reluctantly, but doing so would not affect the seniors and the disabled directly as the majority of the Center's programs are held during the day. He explained that the evening uses of the Center are more community oriented, used by groups such as the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and other organizations. He stated that he had felt that closing the Center in the evening would have

the least amount of impact and stated that doing so would eliminate one custodian position and would present some cost savings. Town Manager Salomone noted, however, that there have been some discussions with AFSCME regarding a pay freeze, and stated that AFSCME has concerns about taking a pay freeze and still losing a position. He stated that although nothing has been finalized by AFSCME, if they are good enough to come to the table and take a zero-increase for the next year then the custodian position will not be laid-off and the Center can remain open in the evenings. He stated that the Center is one of the better spaces in Town for running recreational programs. Town Manager Salomone noted that the budget documents had been printed prior to the proposal, and indicated that if AFSCME accepts the pay freeze he will ask the Council to reinstate the custodian position and the Center will remain open in the evenings. He stated that with the custodian position reinstated that budget increase will still remain just slightly above zero-percent increase.

Ms. Stone stated that the Center received notice that it as been officially reaccredited by the National Institute of Senior Centers. She noted that the Center was the first to be accredited in the State and is the first to be reaccredited in the State as well. She indicated that the Center staff looked very closely at the budget and made as many cuts as possible. She stated that the staff is very comfortable with the budget as presented. Councilor Cohen inquired whether there is a list of groups that use the building in the evening. Ms. Stone replied that there are thirty-six groups that use the building, of which six are condo associations and six are variations of twelve-step programs. Councilor Cohen inquired whether the list includes the Commission on Aging. Ms. Stone replied in the negative, and stated that in the event the Center closes at night those types of meetings can continue since there will be Town staff present regardless. Councilor Boni inquired whether private organizations pay a fee to use the building. Ms. Stone replied in the affirmative, and stated that only not-for-profit organizations are allowed to use the building and noted that Town groups are not included on the list of the thirty-six organizations that use the building. Councilor Bottalico inquired why volunteer organizations are charged a fee to use Town facilities. Ms. Stone replied that the fees came into place several years ago due to the fact that the Center has had problems regulating the building's use in the past and therefore came up with a formal rental policy, approved by the Council, which includes a small rental fee. She stated that it does cost money to keep the building open. Councilor Bottalico stated that he is unsure whether volunteer groups should get charged to use Town space. Mayor Wright inquired how much the Town collects in rental fees in a year. Ms. Stone replied that the rental fees for the Center total about \$3800 in a year. She stated that not all groups, such as condo associations, are volunteer groups that serve the greater community. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the fees can be waived in the event of a hardship for a particular group.

Councilor Nagel inquired about the decrease in the Sunday Dial-A-Ride program funding. Ms. Stone stated that the Sunday Dial-A-Ride program transports an average of six to eight people on Sundays and requires a full-time driver to be paid double time for four hours in order to take these six to eight people to church. She stated that none of the people being transported require a wheelchair lift, so the goal is to work with the church communities to get the people to church, which may be done more efficiently if the Town is not providing the service.

Councilor Banach inquired whether the Parks and Recreations Department as well as the Police Department have been able to accomplish the goal of establishing satellite offices at the Center. Ms. Stone stated that with recent transitions the Parks and Recreations Department has not been at the Center as often as desired and indicated that the Center is still working with the Police Department to establish regular on-location hours. Councilor Banach inquired why either department would require a satellite office at the Senior Center when the Town Hall is right across the street. Ms. Stone replied that the Center works closely with the Parks and Recreations Department to run programs for all ages, and wants to have someone in the building in order to get the Parks and Recs more integrated into working with older adults while giving older adults more access to the programs and services offered. She stated that the goal with the Police Department is to have someone accessible to talk to older adults about concerns that they may not feel comfortable calling the police about, such as neighborhood concerns. Councilor Banach inquired whether the Police Department will hold regular hours at the Center or whether there will be officers available on an as-needed basis. Ms. Stone replied that Parks and Recreations would be available on a regular basis, but most likely the Police Department would be available on an as-needed basis.

Councilor Cohen inquired about whether the out-of-town medical transportation program will be cut. Ms. Stone replied that it is up in the air, and stated it depends on the State budget. She explained that there may be enough carry-forward money to fund the program's grant for the first year of the State's biannual budget, but there will not be funding for the second year and stated that there is a lobby to try to secure the money for the entire budget as it is an important service.

Councilor Bowen inquired about the facilities maintenance item found in most of the departments' budgets. Town Manager Salomone replied that most budgets include a very small line item for consumable types of maintenance items, such as batteries and light bulbs.

D. Budget Review: Library

Library Director Marion Amodeo and several members of the Library Board addressed the Council regarding the Library budget.

Town Manager Salomone stated that the proposed budget is at zero-growth while maintaining the quality services that the Library has to offer.

Ms. Amodeo provided an overview of the Library's operations and services:

- The Library is used by close to 300,000 people per year
- Approximately 60,000 people use the Library's website
- It a place for everyone: parents and their babies, preschoolers, students, teens, adults, special needs people, business people, seniors and more.
- The Library staff is asked 65,000 questions per year
- Over 420,000 items are borrowed per year
- There are over 700 programs per year
- The staff sees to it that the Library continues to change and grow as the community changes and grows.
- New services are always added as appropriate and allowable.
- The Library is a vibrant physical location as well as an indispensable online resource.

Mayor Wright expressed appreciation for the Library and the hard work of all that make it happen.

Town Manager Salomone provided an overview of the Library's budget:

Code 711 – Library Administration:

Town Manager Salomone stated that the changes in the fulltime salary reflect change in personnel with a slightly lower entry salary and do not reflect a cut in personnel. He indicated that there is a reduction in centralized sharing services used by the library

Councilor Bottalico inquired whether there is a charge for organizations to use the Library's meeting rooms. Ms. Amodeo replied in the negative but explained that the Library is open during evening hours. She stated, however, that there are rules about who can use the rooms and how many times per year a group can use a room. She stated that the rooms are always in use. Councilor Banach inquired about the long-range building needs assessment over the next twenty years. Ms. Amodeo replied that the State Library assists with the assessment by providing a template that calculates the space needs over the next twenty years. Councilor Banach inquired whether Library usage has increased, decreased or remained stable over the past several years. Ms. Amodeo replied that usage had remained stable over the past two to three years; however, there has been a jump in usage over the past three to six months, including an increase in program attendance and an increase in reference questions, children's programs, teen material circulation, job search assistance and resume writing. Town Manager Salomone noted that the Library may be the only source for job searchers to use the internet to look for jobs. MS. Amodeo stated that the Library is looking for ways to add more public use computers. Mayor Wright inquired whether the opening of the new Wethersfield Library has caused a decrease in usage at the Newington Library. Ms. Amodeo replied that there has been a slight decrease in the Town Library's traffic in February due to the opening.

Code 712 – Children's Services (no discussion)

Code 713 – Reference and Community Service

Ms. Amodeo noted that there is a five-percent decrease across the board for book and online materials as recommended by the Town Manager. Councilor Cohen inquired whether reduced hours are being contemplated in this proposed budget. Ms. Amodeo replied in the negative.

Code 714 – Library Building

Town Manager Salomone stated that this item references a pared-down facilities maintenance budget, which is intended to give the Library a small amount of money for expendable supplies. Ms. Amodeo stated that the Facilities staff has been wonderful to work with and has done a great job. Councilor Bowen inquired about the part-time salary included in code 714. Ms. Amodeo replied that the salary is for a part-time maintenance technician who works three-hours per day to help open the building, set up rooms for programs and perform minor repairs. Councilor Bowen inquired whether this should be part of the facilities budget or the building budget. Ms. Amodeo stated that Library Monitors are also included in this line item.

Code 715 – Collection Management

Councilor Nasinyk inquired whether the Library anticipates an increase of usage given the current situation with the economy, and if so whether it is considering any changes to overdue fines. Ms. Amodeo replied that there is expected to be an increase in circulation, which is why there is a concern about the decrease in the budget to purchase materials. She remarked, however, that the Library will make the budget work. She stated that the current overdue fine amounts are in line with other area libraries and raising fines may result in fewer materials being returned. She indicated that the fine money goes into the Town's general fund. Mayor Wright inquired about the amount of money that goes into the general fund as a result of overdue fines. Mrs. Harter replied that about \$33,000 per year is raised by overdue fines. Mayor Wright inquired whether there is a way to allow the Library to keep the overdue fine revenues for materials purchase. Town Manager Salomone stated that the Town pays most of the Library's budget, so in essence any revenue from the Library offsets its costs.

Councilor Banach inquired about the list of museum and attraction passes available to the public through the Library. Ms. Amodeo replied that there are passes for about twenty different attractions such as the Science Museum in West Hartford, Mystic Aquarium and Seaport, Kid City, and the Wadsworth Athenaeum among many others. She remarked that it is a fine service underwritten by the Friends of the Library and allows residents to use passes to obtain free or reduced cost admission to the attractions. She stated that the passes may be reserved online.

Code 716 – Circulation (No Discussion)

Code 730 – Hubbard Book Fund

Town Manager Salomone indicated that this is an allocation of an endowment; unfortunately, the Town does not know the history of the endowment.

E. Budget Review: Public Works (Engineering, Highway, Sanitation)

Tom Malloy, Highway Superintendent, addressed the Council regarding the Engineering, Highway and Sanitation budget.

Code 310 – Engineering

Town Manager Salomone indicated that the Director of Public Works position was abolished a couple years ago and the department was streamlined so that the non-engineering duties become the responsibility of the Superintendent of Highways and the Highway Department. He stated that the proposed budget is status quo.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the difference between treated and untreated salt. Town Manager Salomone replied that treated salt has a lower melting point than untreated salt and is more effective in melting snow and ice, especially in lower temperatures. Councilor Bottalico inquired whether the treated salt is more expensive than untreated salt. Mr. Malloy replied that the treated salt costs about \$3.00 - \$4.00 more per ton than untreated salt.

Code 321 – Highway Administration

Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the position posted for Assistant Highway Superintendent is vacant, and if so whether the Town is looking to fill it. Town Manager Salomone replied that it is vacant and he is looking to fill the position. He stated that many of the functions of the Director of Public Works position were moved to the Highway Department when the Director of Public Works position was eliminated. He stated that adding the Assistant Highway Superintendent in exchange for the Director of Public Works will be a salary savings of about \$35,000 per year.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the line items for uniform rental and cleaning and clothing allowance. Town Manager Salomone replied that the uniform rentals are provided to employees per their contract and some departments use uniform rental companies. He remarked that he has not been satisfied with the uniform rental companies and would eventually like to move uniform management in-house. He stated that the clothing allowance line item is to cover the cost of the safety shoes program.

Code 322 – Highway Operations

Town Manager Salomone stated that this section covers the bulk of the salaries in the department and covers the road resurfacing repairs, etc. He stated that contractual services have been reduced due to the new salt program resulting in fewer catch basin cleanings. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired as to why catch basin cleaning is contracted out if the Town owns the machinery to do so. Mr. Malloy replied that there are not enough people available to operate the machine on a regular basis. He stated that there are over 6,000 basins in Town and there are not enough employees to operate the machinery year round. Deputy Mayor Lenares recommended selling the truck. Mr. Malloy stated that the truck is used for other purposes. Town Manager Salomone stated that the contractual basin cleaning is being phased out over the next several years due to a decreased need with the new salt program. He stated that the Town cannot get to all of the catch basins throughout the year.

Councilor Banach inquired about the average number of miles of roads repaved per year and inquired whether it is possible to capitalize on the price of asphalt if it is down due to lower fuel costs. Mr. Molloy replied that the Town repaved about five miles of roads this year, which represents about five-percent of the Town's roads. He stated that while this is a good number he would be in favor of a more aggressive schedule if possible over the next several years. He explained that liquid asphalt drives up the price and although the price has come down considerably this year it is an item that goes out to bid. Councilor Banach inquired how the Town determines which roads are to be repaved each year. Mr. Molloy replied that the Engineering Department utilizes a road management software program to determine the needs, along with observations from the Highway Department. Mayor Wright noted that the Town relies on State bids for asphalt pricing and inquired whether the Town can go out to bid on its own to see if it can get a better number. Mr. Molloy replied in the affirmative and stated that it would be advisable to do so as long as the Town included a clause that the vendor will lower the price if the State contract comes out lower. Town Manager Salomone agreed and stated that more road repairs may be necessary than usual this year due to the severe winter.

Town Manager Salomone stated that the contractual services also pay for State statutory requirements that any items left on the curbside after an eviction are the responsibility of the Town. He stated that a lot of these items are placed into storage, and the Town incurs the cost of the removal and storage of these items. He explained that the property owners have a certain amount of time to claim their property and if they don't then the property can be auctioned off.

Code 324 – Snow and Ice Control

Town Manager Salomone stated that the overtime costs for the current year will be slightly over budget due to the severe winter. He stated that there are enough materials in stockpile for the remainder of the year. He explained that snow and ice control budgets are based on an average winter. Mr. Malloy stated that the budget was for about 2500 tons of material; the Town ordered 2750 tons and have about 500 tons remaining. Councilor Bottalico inquired how the two drivers from the Parks and Recreations Department work in regards to snow removal. Mr. Molloy replied that there are fourteen routes throughout the Town and in a severe winter storm the Highway Department utilizes two employees from the Parks and Recreations Department to fill the fourteen routes. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired about the consultants/special contractor line item in the budget. Mr. Molloy replied that the item is for weather forecast services which provide more of a heads up and more accurate forecasting for upcoming storms. Councilor Bottalico inquired whether the Police Department makes the call to send out plows during storms. Mr. Molloy replied that the Police Department can make the call if the storm is in the middle of the night or the weather conditions are unexpected.

Code 325 – Traffic

Town Manager Salomone stated that this item is mostly for consumable items and utilities. He explained that the utilities amount is for electricity to run the Town's traffic signals. Councilor Bottalico remarked that according to a State report the Town only owns four of its traffic signals. Mr. Molloy replied that he is looking into that report.

Councilor Banach noted traffic problems and a dangerous traffic situation going in and out of the High School and requested that the Town and State give some attention to the situation. Mr. Molloy stated that some turn lane changes and traffic signal timing issues have caused the problems and that the Town Engineer and the State are looking at the problem.

Mayor Wright inquired whether the Town has been able to sell its leftover sand/salt mixture. Mr. Molloy replied in the negative and explained that most area municipalities are on the same salt program as the Town and are not interested in purchasing the mixture.

Code 327 – Vehicles and Equipment

Town Manager Salomone stated that this item is for centralized maintenance for all Town vehicles and equipment, including fire apparatus. He stated that the motor fuel and lubricant line items have decreased about thirty-percent due to bids and lower costs. Councilor Bottalico inquired about the equipment parts line item. Mr. Molloy replied that the line item is for repair and maintenance parts, tires, vehicles batteries, etc. for all departments. Mayor Wright inquired whether there is ever a surplus in this category. Mr. Molloy replied that there have been surpluses in the past but the line item generally runs fairly close to budget.

Code 328 – Leaf Collection

Mr. Molloy stated that the leaf collections went very well this past year and overtime costs were about \$10,000 below budget. Councilor Bottalico noted that the Town of Wethersfield uses a leaf collection system that only calls for two-person crews per truck to collect leaves and inquired whether the Town has looked into a similar system. Mr. Molloy replied that the Town's system consists of two drivers and four people running the machine, two of whom are part-time. He stated that one full-time employee runs the tube and the other is a foreman. He stated that with smaller crews the collection will take longer and remarked that the current method has proven to be effective over the years. Town Manager Salomone stated that it would be difficult to cut back in that area because the weather usually requires more than one collection every year and agreed with Mr. Molloy that it is an effective program as it is currently run. Councilor Banach noted that the Town often makes three pickups throughout the year and commented that this is due to the current system's efficiency. Deputy Mayor Lenares noted that the figures in the budget are only to pick up the leaves and indicated that there is a cost to have someone haul the leaves out of Town. He inquired whether the Town has a contract with a vendor to do so or if other contractors/people can offer to haul the leaves. Mr. Molloy stated that the Town is under a contract to use a particular vendor to haul. Deputy Mayor Lenares stated that he has heard from contractors that are willing to pick up some of the leaves for free. Mayor Wright inquired if the Town has looked into automated leaf collection trucks. Mr. Molloy replied in the negative but stated that while the automated equipment is very expensive he could look into such a program.

Code 329 – Town Garage

Town Manager Salomone stated that the salary in this item is for a part-time hourly facilities maintenance person.

Codes 351 through 353 – Solid Waste Services

Town Manager Salomone stated that the Town is entering the final year of its three-year contract and indicated that the items under code 351 are the cost of curbside collection. He stated that the item will be put back to bid starting in January 2010. He stated that the Town has been notified that the per-ton fee has been reduced from \$72.00 to \$69.00 per ton.

Mayor Wright inquired where the \$10.00 per household credit received for recycling is listed in the budget. Town Manager Salomone replied that it is a revenue item, and explained that the credit will be phased out due to the poor market for recycling. Mayor Wright stated that even without credit the Town is still saving potentially \$69.00 per ton on recycling due to the single stream recycling program.

Councilor Bottalico inquired whether the Town is looking into purchasing a bucket truck. Mr. Molloy replied in the affirmative. He stated that new equipment costs about \$50,000 but stated that the Highway Department has considered the cost of new and used equipment. Councilor Bottalico requested that the Highway Department look into it further.

- F. Budget Review: Community Development & Improvements (Town Planner, TPZ, ZBA, Building Dept., Conservation Comm., Economic Development)

Ed Meehan, Town Planner, addressed the Council regarding the Community Development & Improvements budget.

Code 420 – Planning and Development

Town Manager Salomone stated that this item is mainly comprised of salaries and is a zero-growth budget.

Code 430 – Town Plan and Zoning Commission

Town Manager Salomone indicated that the line item for a part-time salary is for the clerk who transcribes the minutes for the TPZ meetings. He indicated that the TPZ has always used verbatim minutes, which are very expensive and he indicated that some time in the future he would like the TPZ to consider going to non-verbatim minutes with a tape recording for backup to use in the event of a legal challenge. Town Manager Salomone stated that the Town Council does not require verbatim minutes. Councilor Bowen inquired how much the savings would be if the TPZ did not require verbatim minutes. Mr. Meehan replied that it depends on the length of the meetings. Councilor Bowen stated that it would not be wise to make a decision without knowing if the savings would justify going to non-verbatim minutes. Mayor Wright inquired about the cost of the Town Council's minutes. Town Manager Salomone replied that the total cost is about \$3000 per year, or about one-third of the cost of the TPZ's verbatim minutes. He stated that verbatim minutes take a very long time to transcribe. Councilor Cohen remarked that the TPZ gets into very technical and specific discussions that would be very difficult to summarize into non-verbatim minutes. Mayor Wright inquired whether audio clips of meetings could be posted on the website to use in conjunction with non-verbatim minutes. Town Manager Salomone stated that it is something to consider in the future.

Code 440 – Zoning Boards of Appeals (no discussion)

Code 450 – Building Department

Town Manager Salomone noted that the \$40,000 reduction is due to the two Assistant Building Officials going to a four-day work week. Mayor Wright inquired whether these employees are still being paid benefits with the reduced hours. Town Manager Salomone replied in the affirmative and stated that both individuals have decided to receive the stipend in lieu of health insurance and their vacation and other benefits may be prorated. Councilor Cohen inquired whether an employee who declines health insurance still receives the stipend even if they are covered by their spouse's benefits. Town Manager Salomone replied in the affirmative but remarked that the Town's benefits tend to be better than benefits offered in the private sector.

Councilor Banach inquired about the estimated Sam's Club opening date. Mr. Meehan replied that Sam's Club is scheduled to be open in late July. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the delay in the project was due to the Town or problems with the contractors. Mr. Meehan replied that the delays were due to the developer and the property owner's contractors and due to quality requirements from the developer regarding certain parts of the building.

Code 460 – Conservation Commission (no discussion)

Code 472 – Development Commission

Town Manager Salomone stated that the line items in this section are for the part-time clerk to transcribe the minutes and for public notifications and marketing contractual services.

(Note: The following section's minutes are verbatim until otherwise indicated)

Councilor Bowen: John (Salomone), a couple of years ago you did away with our Economic Development Officer and that was something that you and Ed (Meehan) were going to (not audible)... How do you think that's working? Are we proactively helping to develop those sites or do we just rely on the owner to develop the sites?

Mr. Meehan: I'm in contact with sub-commercial realtors and I have a list of buildings that are available that I can help provide general information about. It's usually between the broker and a prospective tenant to work the deals. Through staffing and the Development Commission we've divided the Town into business call districts, which had been around for some time. Each Commission member has taken a district and try to make their calls. They've been working on the Town Center, they have a couple of good (tape switch)... Mr. Meehan continued: ...get them into the right departments and steer them in the right direction to find a property that could make them successful. Councilor Bowen: I had a concern with it last time and I still have the same concerns in that when you have a Town that's pretty much filled it is vitally important for us to make sure we're utilizing our space as much as we possibly can and as you described, what we are doing is... I'm not saying it's negative but it is reactive. I'm curious how effective it would be to actually hire a professional, that this is what

their full-time job is – to go out and first work to fill the see-through that we have throughout Town. I keep thinking of the Food-Mart Plaza and maybe working with the guy to help develop that property more. It's just that we need to squeeze every drop of blood. Mr. Meehan: We're not like an East Hartford or a Manchester or other entitlement cities. We don't have the same bag of tools that they have because of their community development block status. We don't have a wide variety of tax tools to offer like a Food-Mart Plaza. We can offer them tax deferrals, working through the Council and the Assessor's office, but we're not what you call a "pit (?) community", we don't meet those socioeconomic criteria. (Several people speak at once.) Councilor Bowen: We have one of the best strips in New England, it's called the Berlin Turnpike, and that's what we have to sell. What we have to sell is what we have. We need to have someone go out there and explain to people what the advantages are to moving to our community. That's more what I was thinking. Mayor Wright: Councilor Bowen, if I may; I know the... as mentioned a minute ago, many of the Commissioners are actively going out and making calls to the different business. I, on a regular basis, meet with different business owners in the community. We've had, between John (Salomone), Ed (Meehan) and myself... I don't know, a couple of dozen planning meetings about different parcels with key components or parties with that. I mean, we all have a great deal of frustration with the Lowery Plaza or as we all still want to call it the "Food-Mart Plaza" but the gentleman who controls that was in the hospital for a long time. We had a luncheon scheduled; we were going down to meet him - he lives in Easton. We have on a quite a frequent basis... and in addition to that we had a – and I hear what you're saying; I think that economic development is key like you do. I know how hard Ed (Meehan) works and everything else. I think we're doing a lot in that category and in working with the Department of Transportation... and we've had many, many meetings on key zones that have been identified by the Economic Development and the TPZ and we're working on a lot of those projects right now. Councilor Bowen: Well I guess... there is no doubt in my mind that there are a lot of people who are working very, very hard but none of them are professionals in that area, and just as you go to a professional to finish planning and I go to almost any other career that anyone has.... I have an economics background, I've taken marketing but I don't think I do a great job selling and really marketing products and marketing the Town. That's more of what I was thinking of, not meeting with our current people or having... I mean, the people on the Development Commission I'm sure are great people and are professionals at what they do, but I'm really talking about a Town marketing professional. I don't know if that cost would be \$25,000 per year or \$250,000 per year. If it was \$250,000 per year you probably can't justify that, but as we go along I've always felt that it is important to have someone who that is their full-time job, that is what they get paid to do, not at 7:00 at night come to a meeting and be told you have to make phone calls and when you get a chance try to fit in and do it. Now you know if you're doing it correctly. That was my thought; and this isn't new, Ed (Meehan) and I have talked about this before. Mr. Meehan: I think, my observation is having done this for a long time, is that the economic development side for a community like Newington, the most important part is the land use side. The decisions that are made by your land use people, your volunteer commission members; they give value to a piece of property. I'll give you an example in the (not audible) piece up on Cedar Mountain. That was in an industrial zone, it sat there for the last fifty years in an industrial zone. If the Commission did not want to put that into the Berlin Turnpike business zone and work with the developer to change the zone designation in the height of motels and hotels, the property would still be in an industrial zone. The same thing on Fenn Road, with the Hays Kauffman piece, the same when they were working with Target on Richard Court. You can have all of the economic development professionals in the world, but if your land use people are not going to change the zone to give value to the property in its right location, you're not going to get economic development. Newington doesn't have any land left. One of the most important things we're seeing in our plan of development is to pick out strategic sites: along the busway and the transit corridor, where we can do more intensive development, redevelopment and reuse of old, obsolete sites. It's going to take, I believe, some real hard policy discussions: do you want to increase density? Do you want to increase intensity of those properties? That brings with it traffic; it brings with it added value and it brings economic development but given the supply and our geography. I think it's the land use decisions that drive economic development in a Town like Newington, more than a marketing professional. If he doesn't have any thing to market... Councilor Bowen: And I think that's part of it. One last question, I'm sorry I'm dominating and I apologize. In the Lowes Manufacturing, which came first: the interest in the property to change the zone or to change the zone and then the interest in the property? Mr. Meehan: The interest in the property came first, because of its location. Councilor Bowen: So therefore, what you're saying is that what happened is that someone took an interest in the property and it was not zoned for what they wanted to use it for and then they came to you with an idea, a concept, and we changed the zone to meet their needs. So theoretically, if that property had never been marketed to that person it would still be manufacturing and industrial. Mr. Meehan: I can get into the details of how that evolved, but I'm not sure this is the right forum. Councilor Bowen: Okay, I agree. Mr. Meehan: The developer doesn't just come in and take a piece of property, he sits down and looks at all kinds of advantages to himself, thinking that if he gets it changed, then the value goes... Councilor Bowen: But it's his idea to change it, he came in and requested the change. It wasn't that that Land Use Commission... Mr. Meehan: The idea is was in the plan of Conservation and

Development to treat it and identify it as a gateway zone for non-industrial uses. That's where the idea came from. Councilor Bowen: Ok, thank you. Councilor Cohen: Not to be critical of the Development Commission, but they are just volunteers and from what I'm hearing they have the Town divided up into districts. I don't know if they are really covering it as well as a professional would, or even covering it at all because they work full time and they are just volunteers. From what I'm hearing they are not actually covering the whole Town as they are supposed to be doing. Now, we used to have a part-time individual, who retired, and I don't know specifically if that hole was ever filled or if it just got turned over to you and got meshed in with everything else you do. Mr. Meehan: You're correct - there are volunteers, and we have a two-tiered call list, and we've divided the Town into seven or eight calling districts and each person on the Development Commission has a list of people to call. The Manager, the Mayor and myself have what we call the "first tier". These are some of the top taxpayers and larger employers. Those are the ones that we want to target. So, how many of those volunteers can get out and knock on doors? It came up in the last Development Commission meeting and we talked about it again. We provided them with call letters, questionnaires and checklists that we modeled from other communities but as volunteers you get what you pay for. Town Manager Salomone: In some ways I don't disagree with Tom (Bowen) and if I thought that if we could make a good job description and do it on a consultant basis that might not (sic?) be a good idea and I wonder about it because I think about marketing us and that type of thing, I'll give you an example: Circuit City just vacated, just went out of business and I just read an article the other day that 6th Avenue Electronics is making inroads into wanting to come into Connecticut, so I'm thinking to myself do I want to give a call into 6th Avenue Electronics to say "this is a great spot which was vacated by Circuit City and is across from Best Buy" or are the commercial brokers already on that like peanut butter on jelly? So, my idea is that most of the commercial brokers or the people that own that property are all over that much better than I am because it's in their economic best interest, so I say no, probably not - they are already doing that. I am aware of that and certainly I would do that, but I see it that most of the people that own property on the Berlin Turnpike are very sophisticated about marketing their sites, or redeveloping them and pushing them actually to the limit beyond what we want to market them sometimes - examples like the where the golf driving range was, but they actually want to push the envelope more than we are willing to do. When we had the part-time director, he was marketing our industrial sites at that point, and that was something where at that point there was no owner of those other than us, so he was doing the direct marketing of that. Once those were built out his role changed and never really evolved into something else like marketing reuse of property because the owners are already marketing. Mr. Meehan: I think that the position requires an ombudsman, like when we knew that Stew Leonard's was interested again in the Berlin Turnpike the trip was made down to their Brookfield store and we got the tour of the store. They had already identified the site; they didn't have any money on the table, they just wanted it to be in Newington. They wanted to know from the staff what they had to do to get onto that site; how we were going to help them and we were going to sit down with Stew Leonard's Vice President of Development, (not audible) and work with their project engineers to do a lot of replanning and redevelopment of that site, from a traffic point of view, from an environmental point of view. Stew Leonard's knew we were going to advocate for them. We lost Caldor and the fourteen acres in the back was vacant, and there was a master plan for that site going back to the mid-nineties that no one had really pushed...no one had the deep pockets until Stew Leonard's and Wal-Mart/Sam's came along. If they'd gotten the cold shoulder they would have gone someplace else. Same for Lowes. When Lowes came in and Konover came knocking on our door the theaters were still there. If they knew the Town wasn't going to help them they would have gone somewhere else. I'm not sure I'm convinced that an economic marketer is needed when the answer is a little bit more micro: are you going to help this business come to Newington? Are you going to help Volvo Aero on Lewis Street figure out how to make a site plan work? That's what they want to know - they've already made their decision that they've got to expand their business and they already know what it's going to cost. They want to know if they are going to get to the permitting process. Mayor Wright: Ed (Meehan), the call program you speak of in Economic Development, those volunteers go and physically visit businesses, correct? Mr. Meehan: Yeah, we've provided the list that we developed when we had our open house at Indian Hill County Club almost a year ago, that was a very helpful mailing list of who to call, what the name of the business is... and Mrs. Cohen's right, not everybody has done it, they just haven't had the time... but those who have done it, it gives us feedback. It's like why can't I do a certain type of signage? What signage can I do? Help in the Maple Hill area with traffic issues. A simple thing like what happened to the right turn on red sign? You know, things like that where it gets fed back to me and I can do some of the legwork. We need that throughout the Town. Mayor Wright: How long has the Economic Development Commission been doing the call program? Mr. Meehan: I think the Commission members used to partner with Jack Burke, probably going back six-seven years, but it hasn't been consistent. It depends on the member on the Commission what they want to give to it and how comfortable they are going out and talking to a business. In some respects it is risky to have a volunteer go out to a business and start promising things that they can't deliver. I think that's a risk. If it's general information or a concern about traffic or signage or litter pickup, that's fine, but beyond that it can sometimes get a little risky. They recognize that and the questionnaires that they have are limited to that. Mayor Wright: Absolutely. Ed (Meehan), thank you

for all your hard work and everything else. We appreciate you being here at this late hour tonight and be safe driving home tonight.

(End of verbatim minutes)

G Discussion: Elected Officials on Boards and Commissions per Section 415 of the Charter
(Added to the agenda)

Councilor Bottalico noted that there was a lot of controversy during the Charter revision process and he requested the Town Attorney's opinion as to what exactly Charter section 415 means in terms of elected officials serving on boards and commissions. He inquired, for example, whether the CIP is considered a commission, noting that five Councilors sit on the CIP. Mayor Wright read section 415 of the Charter:

No member of the council shall hold any employment or elective or appointive office in or under the town government except the office of justice of the peace. This section shall not be construed to prevent members of the council from representing the town as members of intertown or regional bodies or agencies.

Mayor Wright stated that according to the Town Clerk there are sixty-four positions on boards and commissions that are held by elected officials. He remarked that it is not a Republican or Democratic issue and noted that all Councilors at the table have served on at least one board or commission. He stated that it was debated during the Charter revision process and he stated that the Town Attorney should make a ruling of whether the Town is in violation of this section of the Charter. He remarked that this has been going on for a long time and stated that there are certain boards and commissions of obvious concern, such as the TPZ and the Conservation Commission. He stated, however, that there are groups such as building committees and the CIP and overall it is a very interesting question that needs to be clarified. He noted that he had asked the Town Clerk for a list of elected officials and realized that Constable Dave Pruett has served on the TPZ for many years. He stated that the CIP is made up entirely of elected officials.

Councilor Bowen noted that the CIP is a committee rather than a board or commission and noted that many of the groups that elected officials sit on are called "committees" rather than "boards" or "commissions". He stated that the question is how to define "committee" and how to define "board" or "commission". He stated that he doesn't believe that he sits on any boards or commissions, only committees. Councilor Bowen stated that it's important to get the Town Attorney's opinion because it is a fair question. He questioned whether the Charter revision group was a committee, board or commission. Mayor Wright replied that it was the Charter Revision Commission, set up in accordance with State statutes. He stated that it is an excellent thing for the Town Attorney to look into and also requested the Town Attorney's definition of boards, committees and commissions as well. He stated that to his knowledge, Council members are only appointed to committees. Councilor Bottalico agreed that he is unsure of what constitutes a committee versus what constitutes a commission.

Councilor Cohen inquired how the Town would address the issue if the Town Attorney determines that the current situation is in violation of the Charter. Mayor Wright stated that the bottom line is that the Council must do what is right. He noted that, based on the Town Clerk's data, Councilor Cohen sits on six committees, Councilor Bottalico sits on six, Deputy Mayor Lenares sits on seven, Councilor Bowen sits on nine, Councilor Banach sits on four, Councilor Nagel sits on three, Councilor Nasinnyk sits on three, Councilor Boni sits on one and he sits on one. Councilor Bowen stated that in his experience the Council has always been very comfortable with the difference between groups named as boards or commissions and has not appointed elected officials to those groups, and stated that the Council has felt comfortable appointing elected officials to groups that have been named as committees. He stated that this has worked well until recently and expressed concern that the Town Attorney will issue an opinion that a Councilor cannot sit on a commission when he had earlier had the opinion that it was fine to do so for the Charter Revision Commission. Mayor Wright stated that he would strike that part of the question to the Town Attorney.

Councilor Bottalico stated that he would like the Town Attorney to determine the difference of a board, commission or committee. Councilor Boni inquired who names boards, commissions and committees. Town Manager Salomone replied that the Council names groups it establishes, and explained that many groups are established by State statute or local options created by the Council. Councilor Cohen noted that Article VI of the Charter contains a listing of boards and commissions such as the TPZ and Parks and Recreations, all of which are called commissions or boards, and Article VI also allows the Council to establish other boards and commissions. She noted, however, that the Council does not typically establish boards and commissions. She

stated the language in the Charter section 415 should possibly read "Town Council and Board of Education Members" rather than "elected officials". She noted that a Board of Education member has served on the Commission on Aging, and Mayor Wright noted that a Board member is currently serving on the Economic Development Commission. Councilor Nagel stated that it is merely a matter of clarification, and agreed that the Town Attorney should submit an opinion. Town Manager Salomone inquired whether the Council would like to consider a resolution to inquire about the topic to the Town Attorney. Councilor Bottalico stated that he would contact the Town Attorney.

Councilor Cohen remarked that if the Council finds that members cannot sit on committees such as building committees or pension committees then there will be big trouble. Councilor Banach noted that lack of a quorum on the Standing Insurance Committee. Councilor Bottalico stated that it would be difficult to fill the positions if Councilors cannot sit on committees.

VI MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Regular Meeting, February 10, 2009

Councilor Nagel moved to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting, February 10, 2009 as written. Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

B. Special Meeting, February 23, 2009

Councilor Banach indicated that Mayor Wright's remarks under the Remarks by Councilors portion of the meeting should read "vote regarding the Charter Revision" rather than "vote for the Charter Revision."

Councilor Nasinnyk moved to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting, February 23, 2009 as amended. Motion seconded by Councilor Nagel. Motion passed 9-0.

VII COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Nagel reported on a recent NCTV meeting:

- NCTV is still waiting on a resolution to the problems with AT&T
- A formal letter has been submitted in support of Wethersfield's community television relationship with Cox Communications and what they would like to do regarding AT&T
- There will be meetings concerning the Wethersfield situation later this month, members of the community have been encouraged to write letters in support of allowing AT&T to broadcast community programming.
- There was a modulator outage that has been fixed, and NCTV is in the middle of a complicated process to replace the modulator
- Programming was discussed, including the Council's budget meetings. The Hartford St. Patrick's Day parade will not be covered by NCTV, as it will be covered by Fox 61.

Councilor Cohen reported on a recent Commission on Aging and Disabled meeting:

- The Commission is planning its annual Volunteer Dinner, scheduled for May 21, 2009.
- Carpeting and painting is complete at the Senior and Disabled Center
- The reaccreditation is a big plus for the Town. Councilor Cohen thanked Ms. Stone for being very involved and a wonderful representative of the Town.

Councilor Cohen reported on a recent Youth/Adult Council meeting:

- The Youth/Adult Council will set up a collection bin outside of Shaws to collect food for the Town food bank and will arrange to pick up the donated items several times per week.

Councilor Bottalico reported on a recent Employee Insurance and Benefits Committee meeting:

- Medical insurance costs have skyrocketed \$1,366,000 this year, last year the Board of Education received \$644,000 back and the Town received about \$217,000 back. Councilor Bowen indicated that the Town actually received more than that, and stated that he believes that the Town may have received about \$600,000 while the Board received about \$200,000. Town Manager Salomone stated that the Town has a higher percentage. Councilor Bowen requested to see the numbers. He stated that last year the Town's insurance costs were down about 3% while the Board's was up about 4%, due to excellent negotiations on the Town's side, and remarked that the Town was very fortunate last year.

VIII PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Sharon Braverman, 39 Churchill Way, Board of Education Member: Mrs. Braverman stated that she is proud to be a Newington resident, with a reward-winning Library and an accredited Senior Center. She stated that the Town has great employees and that the Council and Board make it all possible, and all of the efforts make living in the Town worthwhile.

IX REMARKS BY COUNCILORS (none)

X ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Boni moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:10pm. Motion seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenares. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk of the Council