



John L. Salomone  
Town Manager

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

**MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT**

## MINUTES

### NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

July 14, 2009

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

#### I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

#### II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

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

Staff Present

Town Manager Salomone  
Ann Harter, Director of Finance  
Ed Meehan, Town Planner  
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Asst.

#### III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Cathy Hall, 26 Kowal Court, Town Plan and Zoning (TPZ) Chairperson: Mrs. Hall indicated that she is speaking to the Council as a result of the issue with the proposed internally-illuminated sign at Newington High School. She explained that in April 2009 the Board of Education proposed a digital sign, which Town policy has not allowed to this point. She noted that the issue was discussed during the June 10, 2009 TPZ meeting and at that time TPZ members reached a consensus against allowing the sign as it would be a distraction and goes against Administrative Letter No. 35 (September 2004) which specifically outlines how signs are to be created. Mrs. Hall stated that on June 19, 2009 Town Manager Salomone sent a letter to Board of Education Superintendent Dr. Perlini with permission for NHS to have the sign installed – a one time exception to Administrative Letter No. 35. She indicated that she sent a letter dated June 2, 2009 regarding the TPZ's concerns with his decision and on July 10, 2009 she received a letter back from the Town Manager dated July 2, 2009. She stated that she has met with the Town Manager regarding the sign and remarked that while she is aware of his reasons for wanting to allow the sign she indicated that the TPZ is against allowing the sign. Mrs. Hall questioned as to why the TPZ is even in existence if a letter can overrule policy and requested to have the Town Council discuss the item. She again noted that an internally-lit sign goes against Town policy and inquired whether it will affect traffic and the residents living in the area. She remarked that this is a big issue and that the TPZ feels that it has been undermined. Mrs. Hall again asked the Council to consider the issue and to send a memo to the TPZ with a policy and/or a plan.

Steve Woods, 94 New Britain Avenue, Board of Education Member: Mr. Woods agreed that the proposed internally-illuminated sign does not fit in with existing zoning regulations but indicated that the goal of having the sign is to get rid of all of the various sandwich board signs scattered across the lawn at NHS. He stated that the proposed sign will meet all other zoning regulations and will enhance the High School's property. Mr. Woods noted that the Town Manager has the ability to make exceptions when the time is right, and he stated that he supports this particular exception. He stated that the sign will be installed in an approved location and the LED panel will display a fixed message for a set period of several minutes, rather than a scrolling message. He stated that the proposed sign is an improvement and will increase safety and sightlines due to the elimination of the sandwich board signs. He explained that the display will be controlled by the NHS Principal and can be used to alert residents in the case of an emergency. Mr. Woods stated that while he understands the TPZ's position he indicated that the Town Manager does have the discretion to make exceptions and to decide what is best for the Town.

John Gubbins, 241 John Street: Mr. Gubbins indicated that when he moved to Newington 50 years ago he built his home on John Street for \$14,500. He noted that he has been retired for 27 years and noted the changes in his tax bill since that time. He implored the Council to please consider its older residents and to give them a break on property taxes. Mr. Gubbins noted that he is a Navy veteran of World War II and recalled how he and his fellow soldiers had to help each other during the Invasion of France. He also noted that he served on the Board of Fire Commissioners for 15 years and helped build Fire Companies Two and Three in 1976. He stated that he would be very appreciative of any way the Town can give a break to seniors.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: Mrs. Kenny stated that while she is not aware of the details surrounding the proposed sign at the High School and does not have an opinion either way regarding the sign, she has concerns that the TPZ set a precedent, and to have their decision overruled by a letter and without public discussion sets a bad precedent.

#### **IV CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS**

##### **A Property Conveyance from Newington Housing Authority**

Councilor Bottalico moved the following:

**WHEREAS, the Newington Housing Authority by letter dated May 15, 2009, has agreed to deed back to the Town 25,216 square feet of land to facilitate the development of New Meadow Phase II age-restricted affordable housing; and**

**WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development by letter dated June 30, 2009, has approved the transfer of this property to the Town; and**

**WHEREAS, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission's 8-24 Referral report finds the acceptance of this property consistent with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development's housing component; now**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Manager is authorized to accept this property conveyance as shown on a map entitled, "Property to be conveyed by Deedand Easement granted to the Town of Newington from the Newington Housing Authority – New Meadow Phase I," prepared by BGI and Surveyors, scale 1" = 40', Dated 4-2-2009, Sheet 1 of 1,**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Council commends and extend its appreciation to the Newington Housing Authority for its positive collaboration in helping provide this much-needed housing.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Bowen. Motion passed 9-0.

##### **B Public Easement: New Meadow Site from Newington Housing Authority**

Councilor Bottalico moved the following:

**WHEREAS, the Newington Housing Authority by letter dated May 15, 2009, has agreed to grant a 12,850 square foot easement across their parking area in front of the New Meadow Phase I for access to the Town leased 2.2 acre parcel to the New Samaritan Corporation; and**

**WHEREAS, the Newington Town Plan and Zoning Commission has approved special exception and site development plans for the construction of 32 affordable age-**

restricted apartments on the Town leased parcel by the New Samaritan Corporation;  
and

**WHEREAS, the Newington Town Plan and Zoning Commission's 8-24 Referral report to the Town Council found the acceptance of this easement consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development's housing component; now**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Manager is authorized to accept the 12,850 square foot easement as shown on a map entitled, "Property to be conveyed by Deed and Easement granted to the Town of Newington from the Newington Housing Authority – New Meadow Phase I," prepared by BGI Land Surveyors, Scale 1" = 40', Dated 4-2- 2009, Sheet 1 of 1.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Nagel. Motion passed 9-0.

C Land Lease to New Samaritan

Deputy Mayor Lenares moved the following:

**WHEREAS, the Newington Town Council recognizes the need to expand the supply of safe, affordable housing for the community's elderly population; and**

**WHEREAS, the Town Council has selected the New Samaritan Corporation as the Town's preferred developer for the Phase II New Meadow age-restricted housing project; and**

**WHEREAS, the Newington Housing Authority has cooperatively partnered with the Town to provide land and a public access easements to facilitate the development of New Meadow Phase II; and**

**WHEREAS, the Newington Town Plan and Zoning Commission's 8-24 Referral report endorses the land lease of New Meadow Phase II finding this project is consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development; now**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon New Samaritan Corporation's confirmation to the Town Manager that it has received a firm financial commitment from HUD for the construction of the New Meadow Phase II age-restricted housing, the Town Manager is authorized to execute a seventy-five (75) year lease with the New Samaritan Corporation for the 2.2 acre area shown on a map entitled, "Boundary and Topographic Survey" prepared by BGI Land Surveyors, scale 1" = 20', dated 3-17-2009, sheet 1 of 1.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Bowen.

Councilor Cohen commented that she is pleased to see the project finally moving forward after so many years and stated that it is now up to the Town to see that the project moves forward in a timely manner and that the NCTV move is completed on time. Councilor Bowen agreed with Councilor Cohen and noted that renovation work has begun at the Town Hall to accommodate NCTV. Councilor Boni remarked that it is great that this Council has been able to get the project done. Councilor Nasinnyk stated that she is pleased to see the project moving forward. She noted that the project has gone through many variations and the benefit of the project taking a long period of time is that it makes for the best possible project. Councilor Nagel stated that he is happy to see the project come to fruition, as it is one of the first project building committees he was assigned to as a Councilor. Councilor Cohen thanked Town Manager Salomone for finding the right developer for the project. Mayor Wright stated that this is a great project and he is excited to see it move forward. He noted the sense of urgency with the project and indicated that it is possible to see groundbreaking as early as October.

Motion passed 9-0.

D Municipal Parking Lot Status Report

Mayor Wright invited Economic Development Commission (EDC) and Downtown Revitalization Committee (DTRC) Chair P. Joseph Harpie, Town Planner Ed Meehan, Economic Development Commission member Mark Pappa, and staff members from BL Company, the project engineer, to the table to give a status update on the project. He indicated that the EDC and DTRC had met jointly the previous Thursday.

Chairperson Harpie stated that the two Committees have been very busy with the project over the past year. He distributed materials from the DTRC, including the Committee's goals, objectives and a comprehensive plan that is consistent with the Committee's charge and in line with the comprehensive

plan of development that has been worked on over the years by various TPZ Commissions and Town Councils. He stated that one focus of the status report is in the area of property assemblage, which has been a very slow, fifty-year process. He stated that the EDC and the DTRC met jointly on July 9 and made several recommendations to the Council on how the Town should proceed to bid this process.

Town Planner Ed Meehan introduced BL Companies representatives Derek Kohl, Greg Bradwell and Jim Fielding (sp?). He noted that the Committee has created five bid options for the Council's consideration:

- Full build out of entire parking lot
- Full build out of west side
- Partial build out of west side
- Full build out of east side
- Partial build out of east side

He stated that the Committee has a tentative schedule that would have the project go to bid by early August. He stated that the next steps are to work together with the Town Engineer and the project engineer to create the bid manual and asked the Council for any suggestions or value-engineering ideas for the plan. He noted that part of the schedule will include 10-14 days to have the funding agency review the bid package and cost estimates, which must be done prior to the project going to bid. Chairperson Harpie noted that on July 9 the Committee made a request for the Council to consider the full build out including options A & B at an estimated cost of \$1,229,885 dollars and noted that there is about \$600,000 net available after the acquisition of the Bonelli property as well as soft costs related to appraisals, BL Company's work and other items. He noted that the Committee is recommending that the Council consider reprogramming STEAP funding in order to increase funding to the parking lot project.

Greg Bradwell, Project Manager at BL Company, presented the site plan to the Council. (Site map attached).

- The lot will be behind Main and Cedar Streets and Market Square
- The lot will consist of about 400 parking spaces
- The lot will be about five acres in size
- The proposal is to redevelop the area to create a consistent parking field with a green feature in the middle
- The proposed plan will link East Cedar, Main and Constance Leigh Drive with access ways and sidewalks, and will include safe handicap accessibility.
- Trash receptacles will be relocated
- Utilities will include a water connection from the MDC water main, to be used for potential irrigation to the area
- The Bonelli piece will be used to create a parking field and will create a link between the existing areas.

Councilor Bowen requested that Mr. Bradwell go through some of the changes to the plans, including wiring, green space, parking changes, etc. Mr. Bradwell explained several cost engineering changes to the plan from the original ideas to the current plan including:

- Remove granite curbing and use uniform concrete curbing in all areas except around the green
- Use painted crosswalks in several areas rather than paver bands with stamped asphalt
- Reduce the use of decorative lighting, limiting it only to the green area while using standard box lighting throughout the parking field.

Councilor Bowen clarified that his question was to explain how the \$1.2 - \$1.3 million dollars is going to be spent on the project. Mr. Bradwell stated that the cost of the project is in the items seen on the plan, including the Bonelli property, the green feature, the driveway system, etc. Councilor Bowen noted that the idea behind taking the Bonelli area was to create more parking spaces and inquired how many parking spaces would be included in the new plan. He noted that the Bonelli property cost the Town about \$300,000 and noted that the lot currently has about 400 parking spaces. Mr. Bradwell replied that the plan calls for about 400 parking spaces. Mr. Meehan stated that the number of parking spaces is net of the green space. (Several people speak at once). Mr. Meehan stated that there are currently 390 parking spaces in the lot. Councilor Bowen inquired how much the green space increase with this plan. Mr. Bidwell replied that the area of green space would stay about the same. Councilor Bowen inquired about plans to move overhead wiring underground. Mr. Bidwell pointed out the areas to be placed underground on the map, including telephone lines. Councilor Bowen stated whether there is already power underground. Mr. Bidwell replied in the affirmative and outlined areas that already contain

underground power on the map. Councilor Bowen inquired whether the plan map is drawn to scale. Mr. Bidwell replied in the affirmative.

Councilor Nagel inquired about reasons for the reconfiguration and noted that as he understood the reconfiguration and the green area would drastically improve drainage. Mr. Bidwell stated that the existing underground catch system will be utilized as much as possible and explained that the green area on the plan will facilitate drainage as it will be raised slightly to allow for water to sheet off the paved area to the catch basins. Councilor Nasinnyk inquired whether the drainage problems would not be fixed without the proposed green space. Mr. Bidwell replied that there would continue to be a low point in that area of the lot without the construction of the green. Councilor Nasinnyk inquired whether drainage improvements could be accomplished without the green area. Mr. Bidwell replied that there does not need to be a green area constructed to do so, but noted that in order to alleviate drainage problems another hard-surface solution would need to be created. He noted that the green surface on the proposed plan is roughly the same size as the existing green surface. Councilor Cohen inquired whether the proposed green space is necessary due to the elimination of the green space in the Bonelli area. Mr. Bidwell replied that it is needed to address drainage in a cost-effective manner. Councilor Bowen noted that there is a system available to remove water even without a green space. Mr. Bidwell stated that such a plan is a concept plan only and has not been through engineering exercises. Councilor Bowen inquired whether the drainage issues could have been addressed using the current green space in the Bonelli area. Mr. Bidwell stated that that idea was never considered. Mr. Meehan stated that the proposed green space serves the functional purpose of replacing an existing green space and will be in the correct location for proper drainage capacity. He stated that the green area will also serve the purpose of being a public event area, linked with sidewalks, which can be utilized for car shows, farmers' markets and more. Mayor Wright stated that this idea goes back many years and through several studies.

Derrick Kohl, BL Company Director of Engineering provided a background as to how BL arrived at the current plan:

- BL met with the Committee several times
- The project goal was to take a comprehensive approach to the entire block with the goal of revitalization, safety, development, and creating a focal point for area residents and businesses.
- That goal brought about the plan for the green area, incorporation of pedestrian walkways, and reorganizing the parking throughout the area.

Councilor Bottalico noted that the green would likely be cheaper to construct than asphalt, due to the high price of asphalt. He stated that he is in favor of creating a green. Mr. Kohl agreed that asphalt is a very costly item and stated that it will likely be less expensive to construct a green. He stated that the lot currently has 390 parking spaces and the proposed plan calls for 400 spaces, a number that was derived after extensive study and analysis. He stated that 400 spaces will provide ample parking for existing business and future expansion due to economic development.

Councilor Bowen noted that there is an existing green that is being removed in favor of asphalt, so there will be no net savings in asphalt by removing a green and constructing one elsewhere in the lot. He noted that Mill Pond park is only a quarter-mile away – a green space where people like to congregate. He stated that repaving is important as is addressing drainage issues, but remarked that for nearly \$2 million dollars the Town is getting aesthetics and wondered what the cost would have been just to repair the paving and drainage.

Mayor Wright inquired about the funding amount for STEAP phase I, a grant that the Town utilized for downtown revitalization a few years ago. Mr. Meehan replied that the STEAP grant was for about \$400,000 and in addition the Council added about \$250,000 in CIP funding for Phase I. Mayor Wright inquired about phases II and III. Mr. Meehan replied that phase II was about \$180,000 and phase III was about \$280,000. Mayor Wright noted that the Town spent about \$1.1 million dollars in the first three phases of STEAP and inquired about how many parking spaces were created as a result of the project. Mr. Meehan replied that there was no net gain in parking as a result of the project. Councilor Bowen stated that parking space increases were not the intention of the STEAP project. Mayor Wright inquired about the intent of the STEAP projects. Mr. Meehan replied that the intent of the project was to improve aesthetics, sidewalks, lighting, uniform design and safety. Mayor Wright inquired whether the parking lot project is consistent with the STEAP projects. Mr. Meehan stated that this project is actually a departure because it is creating parking in addition to adding aesthetic and public use components. He stated that the streetscape project was more narrowly defined than this current project. Councilor Cohen remarked that aesthetics in a parking lot cannot be compared to aesthetics on a visible street and she commented

that it is more valuable to focus aesthetics on a street front rather than into a parking lot. Deputy Mayor Lenares pointed out that many of the area businesses are accessed from that parking lot rather than from the street side. He inquired whether the area next to Goldburgers and behind Cuginos is currently parking right up to the back of the building. Mr. Meehan replied that the area needs to be studied and stated that the objective is to provide a usable, defined parking area rather than the existing less organized area.

Mr. Fielding outlined the five possible bid options as previously mentioned and outlined the area of each option on the project plan:

- Full build out of entire parking lot - \$1,229,855
- Full build out of west side - \$826,966
- Partial build out of west side - \$640,640
- Full build out of east side - \$499,669
- Partial build out of east side - \$287,553

Deputy Mayor Lenares noted that there is about a \$96,000 difference to do the west and east side separately rather than to do the entire build at once. Mr. Fielding elaborated that with either scheme for west and east there is an overlap to meet the existing configuration, thus making the two sides more expensive when built separately rather than as one build. He also noted that there are cost efficiencies to doing one large project rather than two smaller projects. Councilor Bowen inquired whether a partial build out of the west side and a partial build out of the east side would take care of the drainage problems. Mr. Kohl replied that doing so would likely not take care of drainage as it would eliminate green space (several people speak at once). Mr. Fielding stated that the partial build outs are concept plans only and have not been through engineering exercises. Councilor Bowen stated that two things must be accomplished with this project: repair the pavement and repair the drainage and expressed concerns that the Council will not be able to make a choice if it is unknown what the partial build out will accomplish. Mr. Kohl stated that the full build out has been through all engineering exercises. Chairperson Harpie noted that the Committee has identified the drainage cost improvement costs with each plan. Councilor Bowen inquired whether the partial build out will include some drainage improvement. Chairperson Harpie replied in the affirmative but explained that the figures are educated estimates in the partial build plans versus specific costs applied to the full build out plan.

Mayor Wright thanked all involved for their hard work. He stated that this project will bring the pieces a puzzle that started over fifty years ago together. He noted that 13 studies have been completed on the area over the past 33 years. He stated that the project will help to set the future for economic development in the downtown area and remarked that the project plan is a very good plan that incorporates the vision of the Committee and uses several of the concepts derived from the past studies. He stated that this is an excellent project and it would be a terrible mistake to back off of the project and only repave the lot. Mayor Wright remarked that it is time for the Council to show leadership and to move the project forward. He indicated that the center green will serve many purposes including:

- Traffic calming
- Pivot point for sidewalks and handicapped accessibility
- Provides aesthetics

He noted that the plan was never to greatly increase the number of parking spaces, as there is not the land available to do so and stated just as the STEAP grants were used to make the downtown area more attractive so will this project. Mayor Wright commented that if the Town wants people to go downtown and wants businesses to invest in Newington, then the Town has to clean up and set the table for future economic development. He stated that the current plan is the correct way to go and stated that it is time to follow the Committee's recommendation and begin to prepare the bid documents. Councilor Bowen inquired whether there is a resolution regarding bringing the project to bid. Town Manager Salomone replied in the negative but stated that the Council has the recommendations of the Committee.

Mayor Wright read a portion of a memo dated July 10, 2009 from Mr. Meehan to Town Manager Salomone regarding the Committee's recommendation:

After discussion of each option's benefits and cost implications, the Economic Development Commission and Downtown Revitalization Committee jointly and unanimously voted to recommend that the Town Council consider a project bidding strategy comprised of three (3) pricing components:

1. Request bids for the full build of the entire parking lot Options A & B, probable cost estimate \$1,229,855.

2. Request bids for full build of west side Option A, probable cost estimate \$826,966.
3. Request bids for full build of east side Option B, probable cost estimate \$499,669.

Second, the Economic Development Commission and Downtown Revitalization Committee approved, with one abstention, the recommendation that the Town Council request the Office of Policy and Management to reprogram the \$145,000 uncommitted balance of Phase III STEAP Main Street Improvement grant to the Municipal Parking Lot Improvement project.

Mr. Joseph Harpie, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission and Downtown Revitalization Committee and BL Companies project manager will be present at the Town Council's July 14, 2009 meeting to answer questions.

Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the Council can make a motion at the current meeting. Town Manager Salomone replied that there was no resolution planned for the current meeting, but the Council can make a motion if desired. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the motion can be based on the Committee's recommendation. Mayor Wright replied in the affirmative.

Deputy Mayor Lenares moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council accept the July 9,2009, recommendation from the Economic Development Commission and the Downtown Revitalization Committee and authorizes the Town Manager to move forward with a project bidding strategy and the public bid advertisement for the Downtown Municipal Parking Lot project.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Boni.

Councilor Cohen inquired as to who is handling the project and noted that the Committee is a steering committee rather than a building committee. Mayor Wright countered that per recommendation of the Town Manager, building committees are required with the exception of projects involving the municipal parking lot. Councilor Cohen remarked that it is not a parking lot anymore, noting that the Mayor has labeled it as a revitalization project. Mayor Wright stated that it is still a parking lot. Town Manager Salomone concurred with the Mayor and stated that even with the landscaping and other improvements it is still considered a parking lot.

Councilor Bowen noted that the memo referred to by the Mayor came from a department head (Ed Meehan) rather than from the Committee and stated that recommendations generally come directly from a committee rather than from a general recollection by a staff member. He also noted that the memo was addressed to the Town Manager rather than the Council. He stated that the Council never received a formal recommendation from the Committee. He stated concern over the cost of the project, especially as the Town is attempting to be fiscally conservative during these tough economic times. He noted that there is a proposal for a lower cost build out which appears to have the necessary components and requested a site plan for the lower cost build out. He inquired whether the partial build out, excluding the green, will provide similar functionality. Mr. Meehan replied that the partial plan will have functionality and drainage improvements but will not include the extensive sidewalks, traffic calming features and the green area. Councilor Bowen requested a good conceptual plan of the partial build outs and noted that the Council is being asked to give the go-ahead on a project with plans available for only one of the options – the option that is \$630,000 over budget.

Deputy Mayor Lenares noted that the motion before the Council is simply to move forward to the bidding process. He noted that the costs could actually come in much lower than estimates, as has happened with several recent projects. Mayor Wright stated that the motion would allow Town staff to move forward with bid documents. Councilor Bottalico agreed and stated that the Council is simply going to find out how much the options cost, it is not to approve the costs at this time. Mayor Wright noted that the Town has not spent any Town money on the project at this point thanks to the \$1 million dollar State grant. Deputy Mayor Lenares inquired whether the project can go back to the Committee for adjustments to the project plan in the event that the bids do not come back in the Town's favor. Mr. Kohl explained the BL's cost estimates are detailed estimates based on BL's project experience and are created item-by-item using unit prices. He stated that actual prices are highly dependant upon the bid environment but remarked that recent bids for various projects have been very competitive. He stated that BL can build a base bid package for the full build out and can include as many bid alternates as desired. Councilor Banach inquired whether all five probable cost estimates listed can be put to bid. Mr. Kohl replied that

while it can be done, they would have to be designed as construction options in order to be bid-ready documents, resulting in additional engineering and design costs. Councilor Banach inquired about the extent of the additional engineering and design costs. Mr. Kohl stated that it would be difficult to provide a cost without details of what would be needed to create the additional bid documents but estimated that the costs could be in excess of \$5000.

Councilor Cohen inquired whether the bid documents are required to go to the State prior to being sent to bid. Mr. Meehan replied that staff will work with BL to put the draft bid specifications together, which will then be sent to DECD; DECD will require two weeks to review the documents which will correspond with the time needed for the Town to publish legal ads. He stated that no bids can be awarded without a report from DECD. Councilor Cohen inquired whether the State will want to know where the rest of the funding is coming from in the event that the cost estimates are higher than the State grant amount. Mr. Meehan explained that the State will want to see professional estimates as part of the bid documents and may raise questions as to whether the Town has the funding to cover the additional costs. He noted that the Town would wait until it receives bid amounts before making any decisions. Councilor Boni stated that the purpose of going to bid is to get an idea of the project's costs. Councilor Banach noted that there is a \$1 million grant with \$600,000 left to spend and yet the Council is considering the idea of spending more than available in the grant. Councilor Boni noted that the Town will not know until it gets the pricing. (Several people speak at once.) Councilor Banach stated that it is important for the Council to keep in mind what it had available to spend. Mayor Wright stated that it was never the intent of the project just to repave the existing lot and stated that it is about revitalization and making the investment in the downtown area so that tax rolls can grow and jobs can be created. He stated that it is time to move forward.

Councilor Nasinnyk noted that she attended the joint committee meeting on July 9 and stated that she was surprised at the number of high-end amenities included in the plan. She stated that she is trying to get to the point of being able to explain the project to residents and remarked that she does not see the point of the green when Mill Pond Park is nearby. She expressed concern that the added costs will cripple the Town and noted that while many people are passionate about this project there are people in Town who are inquiring about what is going on with the project. Councilor Nasinnyk indicated that the Town used eminent domain to obtain the Bonelli property with the purpose of gaining parking spaces when in actuality no parking will be gained. She stated that she is in favor of spending the remaining \$600,000 to get the project off the ground.

Deputy Mayor Lenares stated that the Bonelli area is not actually a green; rather it is just a patch of grass. He moved to end discussion and call the vote on the item. Mayor Wright inquired about the process of making a motion to call a vote. Town Manager Salomone replied that any Councilor could move to call a vote and cut off debate with a majority vote. Councilor Bowen inquired whether a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required. Councilor Bowen noted that while the bids may come in lower, BL has expressed confidence that their estimates are very close. He also commented that it is very unusual for the Council to authorize a project to go to bid without knowing how it will be funded. He stated that he is supportive of moving forward with the paving and repair of the lot and remarked that the disagreement lies in the conceptual plan. He stated that if it were up to him he would have used the funding to finish the STEAP project at Markey Square and agreed with Councilor Cohen's previous comments that streetscape aesthetics are more important than parking lot aesthetics.

Town Manager Salomone stated that a two-thirds vote is needed to end discussion and call a vote on an item. Deputy Mayor Lenares withdrew his motion to call the vote. Seeing no further discussion Mayor Wright requested a roll call vote.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilor Banach - Yes  
Councilor Boni - Yes  
Councilor Bottalico - Yes  
Councilor Bowen - Yes  
Councilor Cohen - Yes  
Councilor Lenares - Yes  
Councilor Nagel - Yes  
Councilor Nasinnyk - Yes  
Mayor Wright – Yes

Motion passed 9-0.

## V CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

### A. Status and Next Steps: Town Hall Renovations

Town Manager Salomone presented a status report to the Council regarding the status of the Town Hall renovations project. He noted that the report was given to the Town Hall Renovations Project Building Committee two weeks ago and discussed a tentative schedule should the Council decide to move ahead with the project as a total renovation project at a cost of approximately \$10 million dollars. He explained that this project would totally renovate the Town Hall. He noted that the Councilors have received materials showing the sequence of events necessary should the Town decide to move ahead with the project leading to a referendum on November 3, 2009. He also indicated that the Council has received two options for a referendum timeline as discussed at the Committee meeting. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the Committee has discussed how the \$10 million project will affect the Town's CIP and budget and debt service and what will be accomplished for the \$10 million dollars. He stated that while the timeline is tight for bonding and referendum it can be done if the Council desires to move in that direction. He stated that the Committee has authorized the architect to come back to the Committee this week with an idea of whether the \$10 million dollar estimate is sufficient to accomplish the Committee's goals. He stated that designs will not be finalized and bids will not be requested unless the referendum is successful.

Town Manager Salomone noted that the Council has received a document outlining the Town's projected debt capacity for next year and the next five years. Finance Director Ann Harter spoke about the Town's debt capacity and how it interrelates to the Town's CIP. Mrs. Harter stated that the Town will anticipate a bond issue of \$10 million dollars in 2009-2010, which would bring the Town's total bonded debt to \$25 million dollars, and in the following year there would be an additional debt service of \$1 million dollars, making the debt service in 2010-2011 \$3,383,840. She explained that the project debt capacity shows three ratios, none of which will be exceeded by the \$10 million project:

- The percentage of net debt to service to the budget, which will not exceed a 6% threshold
- The outstanding debt to the Grand List, which will not exceed a 2% threshold
- The outstanding balance per capita, which will not exceed a \$1000 per capita threshold until 2012-2013

Mrs. Harter stated that the Town has built into its budget and the CIP Committee has built in a threshold of \$6.3 million dollars and with the proposed pay-as-you-go of about \$3.4 million and the projected debt service of \$3.38 million there would be a grand total of \$6.8 million, therefore the Town would need to find \$500,000 by scaling back the pay-as-you-go project list. Town Manager Salomone explained that there is intended to be an interplay between pay-as-you-go financing and debt service. He stated that the \$6.3 million dollar figure considers the Town's debt capacities and maintains a reasonable ratio of debt services. Town Manager Salomone noted that the \$10 million dollar estimate has been scaled back from a previous \$17 million dollar estimate and indicated that the Committee and staff feel that this is a modest approach to fix the building's infrastructure, roofing and code updates. He stated that while the Town Hall is grandfathered in at this point it does not actually meet all State code requirements. He noted that once the substantial improvements begin the Town will be required to bring the building up to code, including sprinklers and fire-rated walls. He stated that there are several areas of the roof that have been repaired numerous times and will need to be replaced. He noted that the \$10 million estimate does not include a small State reimbursement for improvements to the third floor and indicated that the Committee is scheduled to meet again on Thursday, July 16.

Mayor Wright inquired whether the \$5 million dollar bonding for 2010-2011 is earmarked for the Board of Education or for the Town Hall. Mrs. Harter replied that the bonding for 2011-2013 is for education facilities and for Parks and Recreations improvements. Mayor Wright stated that he was under the impression that the next round of bonding would be for the Board. Mrs. Harter replied that according to the CIP Table 7 the Town has \$5 million and in future years the funding is split between school buildings and Town facilities.

#### **The following minutes are verbatim until otherwise indicated:**

Mayor Wright: I think this is a great exercise for the Committee to look at this pricing and everything else because the cost of all construction right now is very good, but from my perspective I don't think this is the

time to do the Town Hall project. I mean, if we're going to start talking about bonding and things like that I think we need to have those discussions with the Town Council and not just in a microcosm of say, spending \$10 million dollars on the Town Hall. I think we have to look at the needs of our education – because I've had discussions and CIP Committee has talked about it. I know the ballpark number that... needs for the Board of Education through conversations I've had with the Chairman and Dr. Perlini and it's in the neighborhood of \$42 million dollars roughly. And, you know, there is a lot of desire from people to get an expansion of the Library, and there is a number out there. I think before we jump ahead and run to say "let's go ask the people for \$10 million dollars in bonding right now", and granted, we can do a lot of bonding if we want to – fit it into our CIP budget and not raise taxes as a result of that, but I think that before we run ahead with this project I think we need to have a discussion about what's most desired and needed from the perspective of this Council, and I do not feel comfortable moving forward at all with even requesting or asking the people of Newington to bond \$10 million dollars for the Town Hall. We've done two successful... hopefully by September we'll finish the second phase of successful renovations at Town Hall. We've dealt with and addressed the major and pressing issues. There's no pressing issue right now that has to be done, and there's not an economic development benefit to this, that's for sure. It's a Town Hall. From my perspective I don't think we should even ask the people to spend \$10 million dollars on Town Hall right now and if we are going to go into a discussion about potential bonding in the future, and I don't think there's enough time right now, I think we need to decide what's more important if we go to bonding. From my perspective, I think Town Hall, in my opinion, is a distant third. I think there are a lot of needs we need to do bonding for... (tape switch) ...so if we tackle the whole list from the Board of Education there would still only be an approximate bonding of \$20 million dollars for the Town. I think an expansion of the Library and creating a campus with parking - I think is potentially in the neighborhood of \$5 or \$5.5 million dollars – has a far greater benefit to the people of Newington use-wise. To me, a Town Hall... to spend \$10 million dollars on this place is a distant, distant third. So, that's my perspective on where we are in this process. And I applaud all the work that the Town Hall Renovations Committee has done. You guys have done yeomen's work in coming in under budget significantly in the last few projects.

Councilor Cohen: If you recall during budget time, I said: if we are going to approve a five-year CIP it would be nice if the Council at least glanced through that plan at that time to see if we had any problem with the concept. You're talking now about actually disagreeing with an awful lot of stuff... or how we phase in, or the priorities, and this is something that should have been discussed not at the last minute. It should have been discussed way back when we approved the particular plan, we should have decided then where are priorities are. (Not audible) Don't say that this building doesn't need anything. Are there sprinklers in this room? If someone is in the TPZ room and they need a handicapped accessible bathroom, how the heck are they going to get there? There are a lot of things that need to be fixed in this building. This is not something that you say "throw it away" like it can be done "who cares, whenever". I'm not saying to go forward with this now, but don't say that this building doesn't need to be renovated. It's falling apart.

Mayor Wright: It's not on my priority list right now, Councilor, that's what I'm saying. And by the way, to your point with the long-term CIP, spending the \$10 million dollars to get the whole Town Hall done is a number of years off anyway. So this is out of order with that also. Councilor Bowen: Just for the heck of it, you did vote on a resolution creating a Committee to be the oversight function of renovating the entire Town Hall. That was back on October 28, 2008. Pretty much, it's very rare that the rest of your Party will vote against anything you want, but you did have a Committee which the Republicans chaired and the Republicans were the majority Party who have pushed the project along. I am assuming that they were in communication with you the whole time. We pushed this along; we have spent money with an architect that was approved by this Committee, which again is chaired and is majority Republicans. We pushed all this through. We had staff preparing bid documents because the people on the Committee thought that this was the direction that the Council had sent them in, and now you have decided that this is not the direction of the Council. I know, again, this goes along the lines of that's the way things are now, but please don't make it sound as if there was no thought that went into what we were trying to accomplish here, because as I said you helped to create this Committee, Jay (Bottalico) chaired this Committee, we've had a lot of discussions with the architect, and gotten a lot of work done. We actually just commissioned the architect for like \$17,000. Mayor Wright: We did? That didn't come to the Council. Councilor Bowen: We put bid documents together. (Not audible) Of course it would have because we do things correctly. So we sent out for bid documents and now for the first time I'm all of a sudden hearing that this is not what we want to do. Mayor Wright: I said that last week, Tom. Councilor Bowen: I'm sorry... Mayor Wright: In the agenda meeting I told you that I don't think it's a good idea, but you wanted to put it on the agenda, that's fine. Councilor Bowen: Wait, wait, wait... we talked a lot... someone tried to tell me that this wasn't the responsibility of this Committee, which is ludicrous. So, as

proved by an 8-0 vote that was brought by the Majority Leader...the motion was brought by the Majority Leader. I mean, a lot of things are said in the agenda meeting that just because you say it doesn't make it so, but the point is that this is the first time the Council has heard a voice saying that "well, I decided that the Town Hall is not our priority anymore, so therefore it's not going to happen." Now, there are a lot of really, really good reasons to bring this forward now, and I guarantee you if I ask Jay (Bottalico) or Mike (Lenares) to enumerate those issues they could do it very simply. Now, if you're saying that it is a good time to ask the taxpayers to pay for it I think that is a very worthy debate to have in this room, either now or at the next meeting. Is this now the time to be spending money on any large project? But I laugh, because we want to spend a lot of money on that project, which is a fantastic idea, but in the infrastructure of the Town, which is our responsibility – it doesn't always get you votes and it doesn't always make you popular, but being in charge of our community we are in charge of our infrastructure. This is part of the infrastructure and this Town Hall will eventually need work, and you can keep pushing it off and pushing it off on someone else because it may not be a popular thing to do, but the maturity and the responsibility of the Council... this is our charge and you were part of the people who charged us to do this. Now with the flip of a hand, saying "Well, I just decided that this is way back in the priorities" I don't think that's fair to the Committee and I don't think that's fair to the rest of the Council. I don't think you can dismiss... I would much rather spend money on fixing something that needed to be fixed rather than building another green in a parking lot, but then again we can discuss priorities all day. If you're saying right now, and we've got to take a vote on this, then I think may as well just disband this Committee. I mean, we'll oversee the finishing of Channel 14 and conference rooms and readying up the back part of the building and taking care of some of the computer infrastructure that was already in the budget. If that's the direction you want to take then if I were you I would bring a motion to disband the Committee once we've finished the basement and maybe we can get our \$17,000 back that we felt pretty confident in spending, because all of a sudden this Council (not audible) taking the direction that I did not see coming at all.

Mayor Wright: Further discussion? (Seeing none) Well, as it relates the... yeah, we set up a Town Hall Renovation Committee, but that doesn't mean that we've authorized it to spend the whole thing. Anyway, we just don't agree on this issue, Tom (Bowen). This is not new; it's not a problem. Anyway, moving along to next New Business...

**End of verbatim minutes.**

B. STEAP Phase III Balance Discussion

Mayor Wright stated that it would be a great idea to reprogram the STEAP fund phase III balance of \$145,894 for the downtown parking lot revitalization project. He stated that the funds exist but they would not go very far towards improvements to the Market Square area. He stated that because the item is under New Business it would not need to be voted on at the current meeting.

Councilor Bowen remarked that he wishes that the Town had spent the funds on Market Square and remarked that it would have been a better use of money than putting a park in a parking lot. Mayor Wright inquired about the rough estimates for the next phase of the Market Square project. Mr. Meehan replied that there is a pending STEAP application for \$500,000 for the Market Square improvements, which is the maximum that the Town can request. Mayor Wright inquired about the approximate cost of the project. Mr. Meehan replied that there is no number available but in the past the Town has gone to the maximum with STEAP grants. Councilor Bowen inquired as to when the Town will hear back regarding the application. Mr. Meehan replied that the application has been pending since early 2009. Town Manager Salomone stated belief that with the current situation with the State budget he does not feel that the State will move forward with STEAP grants at this point, a situation which might change as the budget situation improves. Mayor Wright indicated that the Town is in a good position with the STEAP phase IV application but stated that the State has not held a Bond Commission and there is no telling when one will be held. Councilor Bowen recommended that the Town should wait to see whether the grant application goes through prior to taking action on this item. Mayor Wright stated that the Town must act on the money by December 2010 and noted that the Town has an active project in the works right now. He remarked that the future of bonding does not look good at this time.

**VI RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS**

- A Board of Fire Commissioners
  - 1 Acknowledge Resignation of Thomas Jascowski

Councilor Bowen moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Thomas Jascowski from the Board of Fire Commissioners effective June 30, 2009 in accordance with a communication dated June 28, 2009.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen. Motion passed 9-0.

2 Appoint a Replacement

Councilor Bowen moved the following:

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Newington Town Council hereby makes the following appointment:**

**Board of Fire Commissioners**

**3 members, 4 year term  
Party Max: 2  
Remaining members: 0 Dem., 2 Rep.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Replaces</b>
<b>Michael J. Fox</b>	<b>1901 Main Street</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>ASAP - 11-10-09</b>	<b>Tom Jascowski. (res. 6-30-09)</b>

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

**VII WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER, OTHER TOWN AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS, OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC**

(None)

**X COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(None – see Councilor Nagel’s report on NCTV under Remarks by Councilors below.)

**IX PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL**

Cathy Hall, 26 Kowal Court, Town Plan and Zoning (TPZ) Chairperson: Mrs. Hall requested that the Council discuss the NHS sign issue at the current meeting but stated that she would like the Council to go one step further and have a full discussion and presentation of the sign plan at the next meeting so that the Council could be aware of the specifics of the sign and she requested that the same presentation be made to the TPZ. She noted that there has been no public input on the issue and remarked that this is important as well.

**X REMARKS BY COUNCILORS**

Mayor Wright requested a presentation of the proposed NHS sign at the next Town Council meeting.

Town Manager Salomone discussed the process of the sign issue so far. He stated that the TPZ discussed the item on June 10 because he had already informally discussed with staff prior to June 10 that he had received the request from the Board of Education. He stated that his intent was to look more closely at amending the rules for this one sign. He stated that he was asked to make these administrative amendments well before the June meeting and also pointed out that the TPZ received a full presentation regarding the sign in April. He indicated that he was given an opportunity to assist the Board of Education in what they felt was a need and in looking at the balance between the Board’s needs and the TPZ he decided that this one-time allowance for the sign is appropriate. Town Manager Salomone noted the existing sandwich board signs on the high school lawn and challenged whether they are safe and whether they are in violation of current code. He commented that he does not agree that the Town Manager does not have the purview to overrule an Administrative Letter and stated that he does not have

a problem making a one-time exception to the Letter in this instance. He noted that the TPZ still has the right to refuse any future requests regarding signage. He explained that he respectfully disagrees with the TPZ's opinion and is trying to work with the Board to come up with the best possible solution. He stated belief that the sign is in the best interest of the Town and indicated that he is willing to take responsibility for the TPZ's displeasure over the situation. Mayor Wright inquired whether the sign has been built. Town Manager Salomone replied that he cannot speak for the Board on the progress of the project. Mayor Wright stated that the sign has not been installed at NHS and inquired whether this can be an item for discussion by the Council with public input. Town Manager Salomone replied that if the Council wishes he can send a letter to the Board asking them to place a moratorium on the project pending further discussion. Mayor Wright requested to have the item added to the next meeting agenda. Councilor Bowen expressed concern over usurping the Town Manager's responsibility and stated that if it is under the Town Manager's purview then there is no reason for the Council to address the issue. He recommended that the involved parties sit down and look at the precedent of whether or not the Town Manager has the purview to make this decision. Mayor Wright stated that this is not an easy issue but remarked that he sees a great amount of passion over the issue and also stated that policy decisions should be made by the Council. Councilor Nasinnyk noted that this is a hot-button issue and urged all parties to come to a consensus and find a workable solution.

Town Manager Salomone stated that he does not have the same amount of "passion" over the issue as does the TPZ and he stated that while he respects the TPZ he is making this decision in order to accommodate the Board of Education. He stated that this is not a power-play; rather it is a business decision. Councilor Nagel noted that the Council did not receive any info on the sign and requested specifications. Councilor Cohen stated that the problem is with communication and stated that the issue should have been resolved before the final decision was made. Councilor Bottalico inquired whether former Town Manager Fetherston brought forth the Administrative Letter and whether it went to the Council for approval at that time. Town Manager Salomone replied that it was an Administrative Letter, not a Council action.

Councilor Cohen inquired about the status of the Bonelli property. Town Manager Salomone explained that the property is now owned by the Town. Councilor Cohen inquired whether Mr. Bonelli can appeal the acquisition. Town Manager Salomone replied that Mr. Bonelli has a certain amount of time to object to the final price but has not done so. He stated that he will ask the Town Attorney to update the Council on the situation.

Councilor Nagel updated the Council regarding a recent NCTV meeting:

- NCTV members elected officers
- NCTV received a payment in the amount of \$14,000 from Cox Communications
- Members held a lengthy discussion regarding its roles and responsibilities for the upcoming election season.
- Councilor Nagel reassured the members and updated them on the progress of the Town Hall renovations.

Councilor Nagel noted that with the summer season comes more driving and more distracted drivers on the road. He noted traffic in the Town, both by residents within the Town and others driving through Town on the way to and from work. He stated that there are several problem areas throughout the Town – specifically in the bus garage area of Garfield Street. He stated that he has received several complaints about that area and indicated that his wife experienced a near-collision in the area as well. He implored drivers to drive carefully and defensively at all times and to always be aware of their surroundings, especially in the area where school busses are backing onto Garfield Street.

Councilor Boni noted residents' concerns near Mill Pond Park with kids cutting through their yards, making noise, etc. He suggested that the area residents start a block watch. Town Manager Salomone indicated that he and members of the Police Department recently met with a resident of the same area to gather ideas about solutions to the problem.

Mayor Wright noted that it is Extravaganza Week in Town, with a movie night, bowling night and concert night all leading up to the traditional Extravaganza and fireworks on Saturday, July 17.

**XIV EXECUTIVE SESSION RE: PERSONNEL/COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Councilor Bowen moved to go into Executive Session at 10:01pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Boni. Motion passed 9-0. Mayor Wright, all Councilors, Town Manager Salomone and Attorney Ken Plumb were present.

Councilor Bowen moved to adjourn from Executive Session at 10:35 pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Boni. Motion passed 9-0.

**XV ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Bowen moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Boni. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan  
Clerk of the Council