



Mike Lenares
Mayor

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 7, 2011

Audio verbatim transcript of meeting available in Town Clerk's Office

Mayor Wright called the Special Meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room, Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

Councilor Banach
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Klett
Councilor Lenares
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright (exited meeting at 7:15 p.m.)

Councilor Bottalico (appointed during meeting)

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Director of Finance
Tanya Lane, Town Clerk
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Bruce Till, Parks and Recreation Superintendent
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

Mayor Wright asked for a moment to speak. He thanked his fellow Councilors, his wife and family, and the Republican Town Committee for their support over the years. He noted that serving on the Council hasn't always been easy but stated that debate is part of the political process. He also thanked Town Manager Salomone and staff for their support over the years. He stated that this has been an excellent opportunity for him to serve the people as Mayor – one of the proudest accomplishments of his life. He indicated that he and his family will be moving to Houston, TX in the near future to take a position with SunLife Insurance. He stated that he is very excited about this opportunity.

Mayor Wright tendered his resignation as the Mayor of Town of Newington, effective immediately, and turned the meeting over to Deputy Mayor Mike Lenares.

Deputy Mayor Lenares thanked the Mayor for his support and the tremendous amount of work he has accomplished for the Town over the past few years. He stated that it has been an honor to work with him.

Councilor Casasanta thanked the Mayor for his dedication and leadership and noted that he has raised the bar for everyone sitting around the table. She noted his promises made and promises kept. She stated that she appreciated his leadership, mentorship and friendship and wished Mayor Wright and his family the best. Councilor Nagel noted Mayor Wright's many accomplishments, including many which he has done selflessly and at no credit to himself. He stated that no amount of thanks can repay the Mayor for his hard work. He noted that Mr. Wright is also a worthy adversary who has a way of getting things done. He remarked that the results of Mayor Wright's work may not be seen for many years to come. He thanked Mayor Wright for his hard work and wished his family the best of luck.

Councilor Nasinnyk noted that Mayor Wright is a very lucky man with a beautiful family. She wished him the best in Texas personally, professionally and politically, and reminded him that he is always welcome to call into the meetings on Tuesday nights. Councilor Cohen wished Mayor Wright and his family the best of luck for success in his future endeavors. Councilor McBride thanked Mayor Wright for always looking out for him and stated that he admired the huge sacrifice that he and his family have made in order for Mayor Wright to serve in politics. He applauded Mayor Wright for making this move and wished him the best.

Councilor Klett shared some "cowboy advice" with Mayor Wright for his move to Texas. She wished Mayor Wright and his family luck, and noted that although they have not always agreed on the issues, this is what democracy is all about – a desire to do what is best for the people of the Town of Newington. She stated that everyone around the table has strengths and weaknesses, but collectively everyone helps each other to be better Councilors. She stated that she respects Mayor Wright's tremendous intelligence and wished him the best. Councilor Banach thanked Mayor Wright for his service and noted that amount of time involved in serving as the Mayor. He thanked Mayor Wright for challenging the Councilors to think twice about their position and to examine whether they can truly defend their position on the various issues. He wished Mayor Wright and his family the best.

Deputy Mayor Lenares asked for public participation on the Mayor's resignation. (No public participation)

III RESIGNATION/APPOINTMENTS: NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

- A. Accept Resignation of Mayor Jeffrey Wright

Councilor Cohen moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Mayor Jeffrey Wright from the Newington Town Council, effective March 7, 2011.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 8-0.

- B. Designate a Replacement

Councilor Cohen moved the following:

**WHEREAS, Jeffrey Wright has resigned from his position as Newington's Mayor; and
WHEREAS, Newington Charter section 204 requires the Council to fill vacancies in elective offices, except in the Board of Education, with a person of the same political party as the former incumbent;
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, than the Newington Town Council hereby appoints Mike Lenares as Newington Mayor.**

Motion seconded by Councilor Klett. Motion passed 8-0.

- C. Designate a Deputy Mayor

Mayor Lenares thanked former Mayor Wright for his service and dedication. He stated that he has always believed in doing what is right for the Town of Newington and indicated that he is proud to serve with each and every Councilor sitting around the table. He noted that choosing a Deputy Mayor was not an easy task, and after much thought has decided to cross party lines and appoint Scott McBride as Deputy Mayor. He stated that Councilor McBride is a competent Councilor and an honorable man.

Town Clerk Tanya Lane administered the Oath of Office to Mayor Lenares.

D. Appoint Member: Town Council

Councilor Klett moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby makes the following appointment:

Newington Town Council

**9 members, 2 year term
Party max.: 5
Remaining Members: 3 Rep., 5 Dem.**

Name	Address	Party	Term
John "Jay" Bottalico	37 Valley View Drive	R	IMMED.-11/15/11

Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen. Motion passed 8-0.

Town Clerk Tanya Lane administered the Oath of Office to Mr. Bottalico. Councilor Bottalico joined the meeting.

IV PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons welcomed Councilor Bottalico back to the Council, and congratulated Mr. Wright and Mayor Lenares. She noted a concern with the Constitution Square parking lot area where the snow has caused some of the concrete around the handicap ramps to be chipped away and also noted bottles, cans and garbage strewn around the lot. She hopes that there is camera surveillance in place and that the Council takes into consideration during the budget process that funds and personnel are needed to maintain these areas as well as all of the parks and pools. She urged the Council to listen to Parks Superintendent Bruce Till's budget recommendations so that these areas can be properly maintained.

V CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A Overview of Budget and Budget Procedures

Town Manager Salomone reviewed the Council's budget meeting schedule. He noted that the first Public Hearing on the proposed budget will be held on Monday, March 14, with the second Public Hearing on the Council proposed budget to be held on April 7. He noted that the budget is scheduled to be adopted at the April 12 meeting. He indicated that the schedule is also posted on the Town website.

Mayor Lenares asked if there could be a work session scheduled to review the various areas of the budget. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the various meetings scheduled over the next month act as work sessions for the various areas of the budget. Town Manager Salomone stated that an item for general budget discussion can be added to an upcoming agenda if the Council wishes and suggested adding it to the agenda for the March 22 Council meeting if needed. Councilor Cohen agreed with adding the item to the next regular meeting agenda. Councilor Casasanta noted the goal setting session held in January last year, and stated that the Council should have held such a session prior to the budget process if wished to do so this year. Mayor Lenares suggested adding the item to the next regular meeting agenda if needed.

Town Manager Salomone gave an overview of his proposed budget:

- The proposed tax increase for 2011-12 is 2.98%
- General Government will have an increase of approximately \$1.3 million
- Board of Education will have an increase of approximately \$1.8 million
- The MDC payment will have an increase of \$250,000
- Debt Service and Capital Improvements will remain approximately the same as the prior year's budget.
- Estimated revenues from non-tax sources will increase approximately \$336,000
- Estimated revenues in State Aid Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) funding will decrease by approximately \$750,000.

- Other revenues, such as the Conveyance Tax, Retail Sales Tax sharing and Hotel Room Occupancy Taxes have been proposed by Governor Molloy to help offset the decrease in PILOT funding.
- There is a one-time carryover revenue from Federal Stimulus funding in the amount of \$738,000.
- The goal of this proposed budget is to maintain services at the current level and to keep up with the demands of services and maintenance.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that the impact of the changes in State aid as well as each departmental budget, the CIP and Board of Education budgets will be discussed in detail during the upcoming meetings.

B Budget Review – Dept. of Parks and Recreation: Bruce Till, Superintendent

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Bruce Till addressed the Council regarding the Parks and Recreation budget. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the budget is divided into three categories: Administration, Recreation, and Grounds Maintenance. He stated that the budget for this department has increased by about 3%, most of which is comprised of contractual wage increases for the second year of the two-year AFSCME union contract, which calls for a 2% salary increase. He indicated that there is also a slight increase in materials and supplies as well as petroleum cost increases and noted that a proposal to add a part-time employee for maintenance of the downtown area was not approved for this budget. Town Manager Salomone noted that the department was careful not to raise the fees for the various programs and services it provides.

Town Manager Salomone gave an overview of the various components of the Parks and Recreation budget:

- Administration: Includes the Director and staff in the administrative office. Very little change to this account other than some changes in seasonal employment.
- Grounds Maintenance: This major account in the Parks and Recreation handles grounds maintenance and snow removal on Town grounds and parking lots. Most of the increase in this account is due to contractual pay increases. Cemeteries are budgeted in this account, but there is revenue that offsets the cemetery expenditures in this account.
- Historic Buildings: The Town Manager has proposed closing the Town's two historic buildings, the Kelsey House and the Kellogg Eddy House, during the winter to save on heating costs and use the savings to make improvements to the two buildings. This will be further discussed during the facilities budget discussion.
- Tree Maintenance: There are many requests for tree service throughout the year. Some services and technical assistance is shared with the Town of Wethersfield.

Mr. Till noted that this will be a difficult budget year. He noted that the Town Manager had requested that he cut \$35,565 from Mr. Till's proposed budget, and outlined some of the cuts that were made:

- The proposed part-time position for maintenance in the center of Town. Priorities will be reconsidered to address the situation and assure that the area is properly maintained.
- Some agricultural supplies including herbicides and pesticides used on the athletic fields, ponds, etc.
- Clothing and uniforms – T-shirts and sweatshirts for staff have been reduced
- Technical equipment – mowers for the new parking lot and a trailer to move equipment throughout Town have been cut.
- Special contractors – a stump grinder will be purchased, therefore reducing the need to contract that task out to a vendor.
- Recreation – seasonal office position reduced, part time position reduced.

Mr. Till remarked that he hopes the Council can work with the various departments, including the Board of Education, to work out the budget so that the Parks and Recreation programs run at the schools can continue.

Councilor Bottalico inquired whether the new computer system for the Department is up and running. Mr. Till explained that a new chart of accounts is now in place – a process which had to be completed before utilizing new software. He stated that he is working with the IT department to determine which software program will work best for the department.

Councilor Casasanta inquired about the role that the Parks Department plays in the Constitution Square parking lot. Mr. Till explained that there is a large area that needs to be mowed, mulched and trimmed – all of which is very labor intensive work due to the layout of the area. This responsibility falls to the Parks Department due to an agreement reached prior to the construction of the lot.

Councilor Nasinnyk inquired about the Capital Outlay item in code 830, which had a department request of \$13,900 and a Town Manager proposed \$6,200. Finance Director Ann Harter explained that \$13,400 was for a trailer, mower and stump grinder, and the remaining \$500 was for improvements to historical buildings.

Councilor Banach inquired about the updates and refurbishments to the four neighborhood parks: Beacon, Beechwood, Candlewood and Starr parks. Mr. Till replied that the improvements to Beacon and Beechwood parks have been completed and the improvements to the remaining two parks are in progress and on schedule according to the master improvement plan. He stated that equipment has been ordered and will be installed in the spring. Councilor Banach inquired about any forthcoming programs at Eddy Farm. Mr. Till replied that he is working with a contact at the farm to coordinate programs.

Councilor McBride inquired about the funding for the stump grinder. Mr. Till stated that normally stump grinding services would be contracted out and purchasing a grinder will be a cost savings over contracting. Mayor Lenares inquired about the \$16,000 budgeted for construction and maintenance materials. Mr. Till explained that the maintenance and repair of various miscellaneous buildings, such as bathhouses, gazebos, dugouts, etc. would fall under that category. He noted that some of the cost of this item is offset by insurance in instances of vandalism.

Councilor Klett inquired whether the proposed budget is discussed with the Board of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Till replied in the affirmative. Councilor Nagel inquired about the reason why the historic buildings are no longer rented out for private use on a regular basis, and also inquired whether the proposed plan to close the buildings in the winter is intended to be a one-year plan or a permanent situation. Mr. Till explained that when the live-in caretaker in the Kellogg Eddy house decided to move on, he and the Town Manager decided not to fill the position at least though the winter months. He stated that there will need to be a caretaker on hand in order to rent the location out on a regular basis. Town Manager Salomone noted that there has been little to no demand to use the buildings over the past few years. Councilor Nagel inquired about the Historical Society offices located in the buildings and expressed concern over temperature sensitive items stored and displayed in the two buildings, as well as the tenant who resides in one of the buildings. Town Manager Salomone stated that this will be discussed in more detail later in the budget process, and the Town will work with the Historical Society to address any concerns. He indicated that heating cost savings will be used towards making improvements to the two buildings.

C Budget Review – Metropolitan District (MDC)

The Town Manager and Council briefly discussed the MDC budget. Town Manager Salomone explained the Town pays a share of the MDC's budget, as per the MDC's Charter, to finance the MDC sewer operations. He noted that the water portion of the service is paid for by the residents through their water bills. He stated that the Town's share for this year is about \$2,894,000 – an increase of 9.39%.

Councilor Bottalico noted that residents in the Dix Ave/Seventh Street neighborhood are not covered by the MDC, rather, they receive water service from the New Britain water company and they pay New Britain for the service, including hydrants. He noted that they are therefore paying twice for hydrants – both to New Britain through their water bills and to Newington through taxes. Councilor Nasinnyk inquired whether the budgeted amount includes the upcoming updates and improvements to the MDC system. Town Manager Salomone replied in the affirmative and explained that as the project is phased in, some of the costs will be included in the budget while another portion of the cost will be included in water bills. He noted that this is a ten-year project.

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Janice Beckner, 61 Patriot Lane – Ms. Beckner stated that the improvements made to Beacon Park were very well done and noted that the new equipment is well-used. She stated that she has not noticed any problems and is glad to see an increased police presence in the evenings. She thanked the Town for its efforts in the park and urged the Town to continue to properly maintain the area.

Sandy Lallier, 27 Elton Drive – Mrs. Lallier congratulated Mayor Lenares and Councilor Bottalico. She stated that it is nice to hear the banter around the table and remarked that the Council has its work cut out for this budget process. She stated that she appreciates hearing as much information as possible about the budget, as the budget document contains such a huge amount of information. She stated that it is important to maintain everything that is good within the Town. She urged the Council to continue to talk and continue to get the information out to the public.

IV REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Nasinnyk noted that this is a historic day in Town, and now that the change in Council membership has happened she hopes that the Council can get down to business. She wished everyone the best of luck.

Councilor Banach requested that the Town Manager forward a letter signed by five Councilors to the Town Attorney, and instruct the Attorney to attach the letter to his brief for the Freedom of Information item in order to make the Councilors' position on the issue clear. He also quoted from a Hartford Courant article dated February 27, 2011 regarding communities, transportation, and the job workforce in Connecticut: "Martin Sanford, President of New Bern, an East Granby company that makes laser equipment, says that making communities into places where perspective workers want to live and providing high speed transportation are keys to attracting skilled workers to Connecticut. He states, 'it can't be busses, it has to be trains. The rail line from the coast to Springfield would be great to build off of'."

Councilor Nagel congratulated Mayor Lenares, Deputy Mayor McBride and welcomed Councilor Bottalico back to the Council. Councilor Casasanta echoed Councilor Nagel's comments and stated that the Council can now move forward with the budget. She stated that it will be a tough budget, with Governor Malloy's budget that will increase and add taxes. She stated that the Town needs to maintain a business-friendly environment and needs to continue to draw businesses to Town. She thanked former Mayor Wright again for his dedication to the Town.

Deputy Mayor McBride welcomed Councilor Bottalico to the Council and thanked Mayor Lenares for appointing him as Deputy Mayor. He recalled observing a few years ago that the general feeling was that the political climate among the Council had deteriorated and while he didn't think he could change that situation he decided to run for office knowing that he wasn't doing anything to contribute by just sitting at home watching. He stated that he had hoped to get elected so he could at least contribute and remarked that he feels that the past year and a half has gone very well. He stated that the Mayor's appointment of Deputy Mayor was a bold move and a great gesture of working together with both parties— hopefully one that people will appreciate.

Mayor Lenares urged the Council to consider tax increases not only to the average-assessed homes but also to the Town's businesses and urged the Council to study the budget line-by-line in order to make sure it has a good understanding of what the budget entails before moving forward. He noted the appointment of Deputy Mayor McBride, and stated that he wanted unity among the Council and wishes to move forward as a whole for the best interest of the Town.

V ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Bottalico moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Trevethan
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

Audio verbatim transcript of meeting available in Town Clerk's Office