



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

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

July 10, 2011

Mayor Woods called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room in Town Hall.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

Councilor Borjeson
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Castelle
Councilor Cohen
Councilor DelBuono - absent
Councilor Klett
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff in attendance:

Peter Boorman – Town Attorney
Tanya Lane – Town Clerk
John Salomone – Town Manager
Jamie Trevethan – Executive Assistant
Linda Irish-Simpson – Clerk of the Council

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (In Person/Via Telephone)

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She stated that the people from Victory Gardens were supposed to attend a Council meeting and she was wondering when they would be on the agenda.

Madeline Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: She wanted the Council to know how much the senior citizens appreciated the opportunity to swim free at Mill Pond from 1 – 2 p.m.

Jeff Hedberg, 120 Northwood Road: He stated that his property on Garfield Street had a 51% tax increase from last year, and he was unable to raise rents on his tenants because the small businesses were just trying to get by. Mr. Hedberg said that he was unable to put flowers in planters or have the buildings fixed up since the tax increase put him in a negative cash flow situation. He did not mind the 5-6% increase but a 51% increase in one year was too much. He mentioned that if he were to resell the property, the current tax increase decreased the value of his property by \$36,400. Mr. Hedberg missed the final appeal date and though the bill had been paid, he wanted to bring his concern to the Council. He was starting to get ahead with his buildings but felt the tax increase was too much and put too much pressure on small businesses in town.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

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

A. Blight Ordinance Discussion

Attorney Boorman reviewed the changes made and stated that the sub-committee addressed a lot of the concerns that were raised. The sub-committee felt they had a version that would allow for the continuation of the Public Hearing on the topic. He stated that he hoped the Council would take action at the meeting so that the public could have input in the process. Mayor Woods stated he thought it was time to have another Public Hearing on the blight issue since he felt that the document would allow for much more enforcement on certain properties throughout the Town that were not living up to the standards they should. He did not feel it would be punitive to anyone who had legitimate reasons for not being able to maintain their property. The ordinance allowed for plenty of ways through the Town Manager's office that help could be brought to certain individuals so corrective measures could be made without being punitive.

Councilor Cohen stated that she did not get around Town as much as others, but she objected to the inclusion of owner occupied single family homes in the ordinance. She thought it was overkill and did not feel the Town had that big of a problem with blight. The Town had a Health Department, Housing Department, Fire Department, and Police Department to handle these issues. She did not feel that going onto individual homeowners properties to look around was a good idea.

Councilor Bottalico stated he would not support the ordinance since he did not understand why the Town should be exempt from the Blight Ordinance. He said that how could the Town turn around and fine someone when the Town did not have its own house in order. Mayor Woods indicated that the reason the Town would be exempted was because at times the government would take over pieces of property i.e. National Welding, and if the Town were made to clean the property up it would involve spending millions of dollars the Town might not have. He stated that as far as all the public buildings, schools, Fire Department, Police Department and any others should conform to the Blight Ordinance. Mayor Woods said that although the Town was exempted in writing the Town would be held to the same standards as others.

Councilor Klett said the sub-committee included a mechanism to ensure the Town would reach out to the public to provide them information about services available to them. She stated there were instances of people who went out of their way to make it appear they were living in the dwelling when in fact, they were not. They would park unregistered cars with the wrong plate or have mail delivered to the house. For those individuals who did care about their property and took care of it, the Town should make sure there was an ordinance in place that could do something about the blight. The new ordinance was not meant to go after the person who had a shutter that fell but was a cumulative package when someone ignored things that needed to be done.

Councilor Castelle stated the ordinance did give special consideration to the elderly or disabled or residents in difficult financial situations.

Councilor Bottalico asked Attorney Boorman whether or not the Town would be liable for a lawsuit if someone was fined. Attorney Boorman stated that anyone could be sued at any time but in terms of the ordinance he felt that there would be no basis for a lawsuit. He also stated that any individual who wanted to run for Town office and didn't do what needed to be done in terms of managing the public buildings and grounds, would hear about it from the residents of the Town.

Councilor Nagel commented on the assistance available in Town to residents and the opportunities that were available to residents for Social Services help. He said that took away the onus that the Town would force residents to do something when the means or ability were not there. Councilor Nagel stated there would never be a perfect blight ordinance but felt the new ordinance was an improvement over what was currently in place. He stated the document was not final and that an additional public hearing would be held for residents to comment on the issue. Councilor McBride said that this ordinance will make it much more evident to the public that there were services available in Town to help them if needed. He stated it put more onus on the Town to extend a hand to residents.

Mayor Woods stated there would be a Public Hearing on the Blight Ordinance on July 24.

V. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Draft Charter and Charter Revision Commission Report

1. Set Public Hearing Date **(Action Requested)**

Alan Nafis, Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission, Tanya Lane, Town Clerk and Paul Vesella, member of the Charter Revision Commission were in attendance. Mayor Woods thanked the Commission for their work, their finishing the revisions on time and for ensuring that it was not controversial. Mr. Nafis read the charge from the Town Council, gave an overview of their work, reviewed the changes made and thanked the members for their efforts.

Councilor Klett asked Mr. Nafis if they had made the change in the dollar amount (\$975k) before the Council would have to go to referendum on an expenditure, which he indicated they had. She explained she had contacted various surrounding towns to determine how those towns handled the issue and found that some did not name a dollar figure but put in the percentage of 1.5% of the budget, which allowed the towns in a bad year to reduce the amount that could be spent but in a good year it might be more than \$975k. Mr. Nafis commented that the commission had not discussed the 1.5%. He explained the numbers were presented by the Finance Director who used inflation rates over the past few years.

Councilor Cohen commented on sections 408 and 410. She indicated there were three spending levels. The lower level could be done by a simple resolution of the Council. The in-between level was a change from \$375k to \$975k had to be done by ordinance. An ordinance would require a public hearing, more publicity, and more input from the public. Any amount over \$975k would require a referendum. In section 410 she said it gave the public the ability to petition if they did not like an ordinance but it exempted dollar amounts. Councilor Cohen stated the section exempted from the public the ability to petition against the dollar amount between \$375k and \$975k.

Councilor Castelle stated that if a Town was limited to 1.5% of the budget, it was self-adjusting so that in ten or fifteen years the Town would not have to have another charter revision to update the section. Attorney Boorman commented that it was not undesirable to have another charter revision commission and felt that Town should review and update the Charter when needed.

Councilor Klett asked about section 711 Department of Police and changing the title of Manager to Director of the Police. She stated the Town Manager was always the Director of Safety and wanted an explanation for the rationale for the change. John Salomone indicated that the Director of Safety was too broad, and they wanted to be more specific. Councilor Cohen asked if the Manager would be covered under the Heart and Hypertension plan in the Town. It was explained that the Town Manager was not part of the Police Department and would not benefit under the plan. Attorney Boorman indicated he would research the law and get back to Councilor Klett on the specifics. Councilor Cohen said that the change clarified the section and changed nothing since the language had been in the section all along.

Councilor Klett moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby sets a Public Hearing Re: Charter Revision Commission Report, for Tuesday, July 24, 2012 at 6:45p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room (room 113) of Town Hall.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Castelle and the motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor DelBuono-absent).

- B. Job Description Revisions
 - 1. Revenue Clerk
 - 2. Clinical Services Coordinator

John Salomone gave an overview of the job description revisions being made since when individuals leave the descriptions were reviewed and updated to reflect current duties, meeting ADA requirements, etc. One of the jobs was a union job and the union had already agreed to the changes and the other was for a replacement in the Human Services Department with upgraded language.

- C. Job Descriptions – New Positions (Board of Education)

Dr. Christine Carver, Associate Superintendent of Human Capital Development, gave an explanation of the new positions that had changed over time from part time to full time. The jobs were for Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists, which offered mandated services to students over a ten month period.

E Discussion: Consideration of Canceling an Upcoming Council Meeting

Mayor Woods explained the Council would not be recommending to cancel a meeting in August. They would wait to see if a meeting was needed or not and make a final decision later.

VI. RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS (Action May Be Taken)

- A. Human Rights Commission
 - 1. Accept Resignation of Theresa Claffey
- B. Appointments to Boards and Commissions
 - 1. Audit Committee
 - 2. Balf-Town Committee
 - 3. Career/Technical Program Renovation Project Building Committee
 - 4. Newington Commercial Façade Easement Rehabilitation Loan Program Committee
 - 5. Clem Lemire Artificial Turf Project Building Committee
 - 6. Committee on Community Safety
 - 7. Conservation Commission
 - 8. Development Commission
 - 9. Downtown Revitalization Committee
 - 10. Education Facilities Project Building Committee
 - 11. EMS Committee
 - 12. Employee Insurance and Pension Benefits Committee
 - 13. Environmental Quality Commission
 - 14. Board of Ethics
 - 15. Fair Rent Commission
 - 16. Firehouse Expansion Project Building Committee
 - 17. Human Rights Commission
 - 18. NHS Track Renovation Project Building Committee
 - 19. Open Space Committee
 - 20. School Code Compliance Committee
 - 21. Standing Insurance Committee
 - 22. Town Plan and Zoning Commission
 - 23. Vehicle Appeals Board

Councilor McBride moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Theresa Claffey from the Human Rights Commission in accordance with correspondence to the Town Clerk dated June 11, 2012.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Cohen and the motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor DelBuono-absent).

VII. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- A. Regular Meeting, June 26, 2012

Councilor Cohen questioned whether the discussion was completed on page 3 Section E regarding Councilor Bottalico's request for information regarding where returned funds showed up on financial reports. John Salomone indicated that after checking with Ann Harter he found out that the funds go back into the general fund and not CIP. Councilor Borjeson requested that the wording be changed on page 7, Section XII, to read "they did not vote" and not "they."

Councilor Bottalico moved to accept the amended minutes and it was seconded by Councilor Borjeson. The motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor DelBuono-absent).

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

None

IX. COUNCIL LIAISON/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Nagel said he attended the membership annual Newington cable TV meeting. There was an explanation of grants that were being applied for to pay for equipment needed to upgrade the Ambler Room so Council meetings could be held there. He stated that even though the School Code Compliance meeting had no formal meeting he could update the Council on the two sub-contractors working on the High School football field doing the initial placement of steel reinforced bars for bleachers.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (In Person/Via Telephone)

L. Collins, Bloomfield: He spoke about the strike at the HealthBridge facility in Newington. Mr. Collins stated he came to speak on behalf of his colleagues who have been on strike. He would appreciate any support or advise from the Council and invited them to go to Church Street to talk to the workers.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She sympathized with Mr. Hedberg regarding the increase in his taxes. She explained that she kept up the outside of her property and when she got her assessment, it indicated her property went from average to good. Mrs. Lyons stated that during the appeal process meeting, she was told the increase was due to the fact that the outside of the house was well kept, and they assumed the inside was just as well kept. She felt it was important to be considerate of your neighbors and to maintain the outside of your home. She said that if Councilor Cohen wanted to drive with Mrs. Lyons she would be glad to show her properties that were not maintained. Mrs. Lyons indicated that she had gotten three different answers regarding contingency funds and where the money went. She commented there was no reason for clear directions not being given to the Park entrance and some of the contingency money should have been used for that purpose. Mrs. Lyons was appalled at the destruction along the Busway route and want to be sure someone would be giving updates on the progress since noise and traffic would still be concerns. Mrs. Lyons indicated that the new signs in Town Hall were a start but were confusing since the signs indicated Room 101 but all correspondence referred to the room as L101.

XI. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Bottalico stated that he had learned that Newington was providing two officers at the site of the strike. He stated there were five towns on strike and Newington was the only town providing police coverage. John Salomone indicated that it was a unique circumstance since the facility was located in a residential area with a small driveway to get to the facility. They wanted to ensure that the homeowners on the left and right were protected from any overflow. After this week, Mr. Salomone said, the police presence would be lessened since both sides had been cooperating.

Councilor Nagel asked for information from Mr. Salomone regarding average hours per week for Police officers and dispatchers. He mentioned he had noticed on several occasions that invitations Council members should have received were not received. If everyone was invited to some events, all Council members should receive the invitations. Councilor Nagel stated he received several complaints from residents living near the Deming Young Farm of people not cleaning up after their dogs. He suggested that additional signs could be posted in the area to help with the issue. Councilor McBride said he walked there with his dog and did notice that occasionally people did not come with bags for their dogs but encouraged the residents of Newington to walk the grounds of the Farm, which were very beautiful.

Councilor Klett asked Mr. Salomone if there had been any more meetings regarding the Busway in Town, which he answered no, not recently. She mentioned the Council had received an email regarding a neighborhood about open fire pit burning and suggested adding the topic to a future agenda to better understand what other communities do. Her last comment was regarding the recent ALS research event held to honor former Mayor Mazzoccoli. It was a wonderful evening with many of his former classmates attending and the event raised over \$12,000.

Councilor Borjeson wanted to discuss a point raised by Councilor Bottalico at the last meeting regarding the figure of 48% of the taxes stayed the same or less. He stated the 80%/20% figure was dealing with residential and had been told that plus or minus 5%, the 80% figure was still good. Councilor Borjeson said he was talking about residential and not commercial or vehicles. He said that within the past several years vehicles had gone up 20% in value. He said that in order to clarify the point that what they had said all along was that 80% of residential properties either had no change or went down a little bit.

Mayor Woods commented on 1) Police coverage brought up by Councilors Klett and Bottalico: He said that the Town had to pay for any Police coverage at the nursing home and was done on an overtime basis, which was very expensive. He hoped the strike would not be a long one for all involved. 2) Mr. Hedberg's comments regarding his taxes: He said the appeal process started back in the early part of the winter, and it was unfortunate he missed the opportunity. John Salomone commented that he could appeal next year since he missed the window for this year.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Bottalico moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. and seconded by Councilor Cohen. The motion was passed 8 – 0 (Councilor DelBuono-absent).

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Irish-Simpson
Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council