

Draft Meeting Minutes
Town of Windham Town Council Subcommittee -
Public Safety, Recreation and Public Works
Wednesday April 25, 2012 at 7:00 pm
Windham Town Hall Meeting Room
979 Main Street, Willimantic CT

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jerry Iazzetta called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Committee members present: Jerry Iazzetta, Lorraine McDevitt, Arnaldo Rivera, Charles Krich

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Neal Beets, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works Scott Clairmont

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Citizens and Delegations

John Walker is against sidewalks being replaced indiscriminately. He feels that good sidewalks are being torn up and replaced when there are sidewalks in town that have missing sections. He wants sidewalk money to go towards filling in the missing sections instead of ripping up and replacing existing sidewalks.

John Walker explained that he is a landlord and is currently excluded from bringing items to the Transfer Station. Not all of his tenants have the means to transport items to the Transfer Station, and when he brings the items to Willimantic Waste, he gets charged a minimum of \$80. He said he notices more trash at his apartments because he won't pay the \$80 to haul the stuff to Williwaste. John thanked the Council for their work.

Jeffrey Viens would like to be able to bring his tenant's refuse to the Transfer Station. He does not intend on bringing in building materials. He stated that landlords work hard to clean up the town, but are stopped by not being allowed access to the Transfer Station. By allowing access to the Transfer Station he would not only be helping his tenants but also helping by reducing the amount of blight in town.

Richard Dubina stated that he owns 18 units in town and some of his tenants don't have vehicles. He pays \$20,000 in taxes and needs to use the Transfer Station. He does not live in town and does not want to haul the debris to his Transfer Station

Steve Sweeney said that he owns 11 units in town and recently spent \$4,000 on dumpster fees when remodeling one of his apartments. At the end of the job, he only had a little bit of debris left but since he is not allowed to use the Transfer Station he had to spend the same amount at Williwaste on 400lbs of debris as he would have if he had one ton. He is willing to pay the same fees as residents. He feels that allowing access to the Transfer Station it would help keep the town clean.

Heather Meehan has been a landlord for 14 years and her father worked hard for years on the NRZ for the betterment of the community. She said that over the years her taxes

have gone up but the trash service has gone down. There is now only 1 bulky pickup per year, and the Town has had to hire a Code Enforcement officer to deal with all of the trash. She understands the Town is looking in privatizing the Transfer Station, and if that happens she wants landlords to have access and pay the same fees as residents. Don Tedford says he pays \$30,000 in taxes and would like to get something for his taxes. He stated that after tenants move out, he is left with debris that he doesn't know what to do with and some of his tenants can't transport the debris themselves. Pam Viens stated that the biggest issue is that there is trash everywhere. If they rent a dumpster, they need to hide it or fill it and have it removed the same day or it gets filled by debris from other sources. Last year they paid \$56,000 in taxes and over \$12,000 to Williwaste for debris removal. She feels that their taxes should be paying for the waste removal.

4. Town Council Subcommittee Member Comments

None

5. Approval of Minutes from meeting on January 25, 2012

Approval of Minutes from meeting on February 8, 2012

Approval of Minutes from meeting on March 28, 2012

The subcommittee decided to approve all three sets of minutes as one group. A motion was made by Charles Krich to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Arnaldo Rivera. All minutes passed unanimously, with the exception of Lorraine McDevitt abstaining from the vote for the January 25th minutes because she was not present at that meeting.

6. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Dispatch Center

Town Manager Neal Beets gave a presentation updating the subcommittee on the dispatch center. Neal passed out a memo to the subcommittee outlining his presentation. One main concern was item #4 on the outline and what would happen if the Town ever got sued for a dispatcher's mistake. He believes there could be an issue between the Town's insurance company and the Switchboard Association's insurance company. Neal presented the Subcommittee with two possible solutions; the Switchboard Association operates the center truly as an independent contractor, or the Town operates the center with an advisory board of Chiefs from the agencies dispatched.

Lorraine McDevitt asked if the advisory board would be a non-policy making board. Neal said that she was correct; the policy would probably come from the Police and Fire Department Chiefs.

Lorraine mentioned that our town is unique with the different service districts and asked if anybody ever compared our center with other like towns.

Neal said the State did a study and there are a lot of models out there that are similar to this one.

Lorraine wanted to know if this model has been proven to work.

Neal said yes.

Neal also mentioned that the Town of Hebron, which is currently dispatched out of Colchester, is unhappy with their service and put out an RFP for dispatch services. The Switchboard Association responded along with Tolland and Quinebaug Valley.

Neal said there has been a big concentration on costs and does not want to mislead anybody in thinking that one of the two solutions will save the Town a lot of money. The biggest savings to taxpayers would be for the dispatch center to get other towns onboard so the costs are spread out over more departments.

Arnaldo Rivera thanked Neal for his work and the options that were presented. He felt that it is time to make a decision about the dispatch center and he favors the Town running dispatch services. He said that currently, we are running most of it anyway and if the Town takes over, the Town would be better at selling the service to other departments because the Town is a more secure entity to do business with. He is concerned that if the Town currently provides 80% of the funding, where the other 20% would come from if the Town did take over.

Neal mentioned that the Hospital would still pay and as long as Franklin stays, the Town would still be eligible for State funds.

Neal stated that the current staff at the dispatch center has a lot of enthusiasm and expertise that he would not want to see lost if the Town took over.

Charlie Krich would like to see a third option for a solution, the creation of an authority that would run dispatch, much like what is currently done with the Sewer Authority. He does not see the Town being able to take it over and there is already experts running the association now. He believes the service would be easier to market if it was not a Town function. He thinks this is a more realistic proposal and it is his understanding that the Charter Revision Commission is looking into it.

Jerry Iazzetta asked how the current budget is.

Neal answered that they will need approximately \$80,000 to finish the year. They will go to all governing bodies for approval and depending on the final amount, it may be able to be paid out of contingency or it will have to go to a Town meeting.

Jerry wanted to know what this year's requested budget is.

Neal said \$550,000 which includes an administrator that the State says has to be hired.

Jerry wanted to know what the time frame for the changes is.

Neal said there is no real deadline. The center is currently operating under past practices, but they will get to a point where direction is needed.

Jerry needs more information on an authority. Who would control dispatch?

Lorraine asked if the association understands that the direction will come from the Council, and will they accept the Council's recommendations?

Neal said that his sense of it is that while some of the current staff prefers the existing model, some wouldn't mind a change.

Jerry asked if an authority is created, who would handle the payroll.

Neal said the Town

Jerry asked how that is different than now.

Neal explained that the Town would have control over dispatch, and would collectively bargain with and supervise the employees.

Jerry would still like to go over all of the options

Charlie wants to know how many seats the Council would have on the board
Neal said at least two, the Fire Chief and the Police Chief.

Arnaldo said that it is time to give Neal direction. The dispatch center is currently unsure of its future, which does not make it easy to market.

Neal said that the next step is the Town Attorney would look into the options and the Switchboard Association would discuss concern #4 on Neal's memo with their legal Council. The two groups will then sit back down after the lawyers did their work.

Jerry wants the Town Attorney to look at the third option and wondered about a time frame

Neal said a meeting has been set for the third week in May

Jerry said that they need to send the message that the Dispatch Center will stay in Town one way or another in order to get stability

Lorraine mentioned that the current employees do a great job.

7. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Transfer Station Usage by Landlords

Scott Clairmont, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works said that it is Public Works' opinion that the Transfer Station's policy regarding landlords to remain as is; The Transfer Station is for residents only, with no commercial use. There is no way of determining where the trash came from or if it even came from Windham.

Scott explained that they have been working with surrounding towns on the idea of regionalizing/privatizing the Transfer Station. If that happens, it is our intent to allow landlords use of the facility because everybody would be weighed on a scale and charged by the pound with no minimal tonnage charge.

Jerry asked how long until regionalization happens.

Scott said we should know by the end of the year if it will happen or not.

Arnaldo said that the intent was not to allow commercial use of the Transfer Station. A tenant should be allowed use because this is not commercial and it is his opinion that tenants be allowed use of the Transfer Station.

Scott explained that tenants are allowed use of the Transfer Station. It is the landlords that are not allowed use.

Scott said that in regards to curbside pickup, the Town classifies an apartment with six or more units to be commercial, so landlords that own six or more units should also be considered commercial.

Scott gave an example of an elderly resident that had brush could not hire a landscaper to bring the brush into the Transfer Station or a homeowner that had a lot of trash could not hire a contractor to bring debris to the Transfer Station for them. Landlords should not be allowed to haul their tenant's trash for them.

Arnaldo disagreed and thinks we need to relook at how we define commercial.

Charlie wondered can landlord use be regulated by a special permit that allows access

Lorraine would like Scott to look into different permit options.

Jerry believes that some kind of form could be used

Arnaldo said the Town should be landlord friendly and would like other solutions looked into

Jerry asked Scott to look into other solutions and present them at next month's meeting.

Scott agreed

8. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Awarding Three Sidewalk Contracts to the Low Bidders

Jerry mentioned that there is a current plan for sidewalks that has been made by the Town Engineer, Joe Gardner. Any concerns about the sidewalks should be directed towards Joe.

Charlie asked if the sidewalk on Roanoak Ave. would be completed with no gaps.

Lorraine said yes.

Jerry mentioned that it is not always possible to fill in all of the gaps.

Lorraine said that in the future all gaps in the sidewalk should be filled in wherever possible.

A motion was made by Lorraine McDevitt to award contract one, the construction of sidewalks on Mountain Street, to New England Concrete Inc. in the amount of \$205,500.

The motion was seconded by Arnaldo Rivera and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Lorraine McDevitt to award contract two, the construction of sidewalks on Mansfield Avenue, Roanoak Avenue and Quarry Street, to Donahue General Contractors in the amount of \$232,600.

The motion was seconded by Arnaldo Rivera and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Arnaldo Rivera to award contract three, the construction of sidewalks on Bellevue, Hewitt and Oak Streets, to Marois Concrete Service Inc. in the amount of \$196,080.

The motion was seconded by Lorraine McDevitt and passed unanimously.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Lorraine McDevitt to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Arnaldo Rivera and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Submitted By:
Scott Clairmont
Assistant Superintendent
Town of Windham Public Works