

# WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING & Teleconference for one or more of the Council Members



WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

Tuesday, April 16, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Eldridge called the Town of Windham Regular Town Council meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge, Charles Krich, Tony Fantoli, Tom DeVivo, N. Joseph Underwood, Kevin Donohue, Arnaldo Rivera, Mark Doyle and Dawn Niles.

Lorraine McDevitt and Christel Donahue were present via teleconference.

Town Manager Neal Beets was also in attendance.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Eldridge led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Citizens and Delegations: Public Comment**

James Flores, Willimantic, questioned why an Affirmative Action Plan was not in place and shared his thoughts on a newspaper article regarding minority hiring in Windham.

Jeff Viens, taxpayer, spoke about the difficulties of doing business in Windham and the need for tax relief.

Charlie Kratt, Windham taxpayer, expressed his concerns regarding the audit report and the performance of the Town Manager and the finance department. He also stated people from Puerto Rico are in their own Country and are citizens by birth. In addition he noted he agreed with the comments made by Jeff Viens.

Doug Lary, Summit Street, Willimantic, thanked the Council for the nomination to the Charter Revision Commission and noted he had previously worked with many of the people who are on the list for appointment to the Commission.

Pam Viens, Columbia resident and Windham taxpayer, noted her concerns on investing and doing business in Windham.

Priscilla Root, Windham, introduced herself to the Council and thanked them for bringing her name forward for appointment to the Charter Revision Commission. She noted the various Boards and Commissions she had served on and explained her reasons for wanting to serve on the Charter Revision Commission.

**4. Town Council Comment**

Tom DeVivo responded to comments made by James Flores and noted he sits at all the meetings and he has never heard a Council member tell someone if they want a job they should go home. He felt it was a pretty harsh statement and he doesn't believe any elected official would make such a derogatory statement. He stated he hoped that didn't happen.

Mayor Eldridge agreed with Tom DeVivo and doesn't believe anyone at the table would say that.

Dawn Niles stated she had spoken to Gian Carl-Costa from OPM regarding the Main Street Investment Fund and noted the Commission is reviewing applications this month. She also noted on May 1<sup>st</sup> they are working on having the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class from North Windham School go to the State Legislature to be recognized. She explained the details and stated donations for the bus and pizza would be greatly appreciated. (Tom DeVivo, Mayor Eldridge and Lorraine McDevitt offered to donate). In addition, Ms. Niles suggested asking the attorney on the Council to review the Affirmative Action Plan. She also noted she was extremely impressed and commended Neida Rosado for the work she had done on the plan. Ms. Niles stated Ms. Rosado is not trained in this area and went above and beyond and hopes that it is recognized. Ms. Niles also spoke with regards to the Incentive Housing Zone and stated she is not aware of any tax breaks. She also noted the Town of Windham has become more business friendly over the last few years and stated it is mainly due to the hard work of Paula Stahl on the Planning & Zoning Commission.

**5. Adoption of Minutes**

**a. Discussion and possible action to adopt the minutes for the April 2, 2013, Town Council Meeting.**

DeVivo MOVED, Doyle seconded, to adopt the minutes for the April 2, 2013, Town Council Meeting. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**6. Resignations.** Receive the resignation of:

**a.** None.

**7. Appointments.** Discussion and possible action to appoint the following persons as regular members of the Charter Revision Commission with a term ending June 30, 2014, or when the Commission finishes its work, whichever comes first:

- a.** Dennis O'Brien
- b.** Erika Haynes
- c.** Barbara McGrath
- d.** Jan-Maya Schold
- e.** Donna Nicolino
- f.** Douglas Lary
- g.** Priscilla Root

Niles MOVED, Underwood seconded, to take Items 7a through 7g as one item.

All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Niles MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to appoint the following individuals to serve as regular members of the Charter Revision Commission; Dennis O'Brien, Erika Haynes, Barbara McGrath, Jan-Maya Schold, Donna Nicolino, Douglas Lary and Priscilla Root. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**8. Presentations & Special Reports**

**a. Presentation by Water Commission Chair Michael Callahan about the water study conducted by UCONN and Mansfield regarding their water needs and the potential impact on Windham. (No action item.)**

Water Commission Chair Michael Callahan gave a brief presentation on the status of the study conducted by UCONN and Mansfield regarding their water needs and the potential impact on Windham. He stated a number of discussions have taken place and he believes there is a positive working relationship with the parties involved. He noted the Water Commission's primary objective is to represent the Town of Windham rate payer's interest. Mr. Callahan answered questions from the Council. A meeting of the Windham Town Council Public Safety, Public Works, Culture, and Recreation Subcommittee and the Water Commission will be scheduled to further discuss this matter.

**b. Presentation by WINCOG Planner Jana Butts Roberson and P&Z Chair Paula Stahl about an Incentive Housing Zone. (Action item =Resolution 12.a, below.)**

WINCOG Senior Planner & GIS Coordinator Jana Butts Roberson gave a brief presentation on the Incentive Housing Zone. She explained the Incentive Housing Zone is a project to promote housing, economic development and urban revitalization and the goals are to provide housing opportunities that promote economic development and growth to the community. She asked for the Council to authorize a Zone adoption application to the State.

**c. Presentation by Human Services Director Mary DeMarco, ACCESS President Peter DeBiasi, and CLICK President Phoebe Godfrey about a grant application to the State of Connecticut to purchase and renovate a community/senior center. (Action item = Motion, 14.a, below.)**

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco, ACCESS President Peter DeBiasi, and CLICK President Phoebe Godfrey gave a brief presentation on a grant application to the State of Connecticut to purchase and renovate a community/senior center.

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco gave an overview of the services currently provided and explained the benefits the new location has for the center.

ACCESS President Peter DeBiasi explained the grant process and what is needed from the Town to meet the requirements of the grant application.

CLICK President Phoebe Godfrey explained the CLICK program and its benefits to the community.

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco, ACCESS President Peter DeBiasi and CLICK President Phoebe Godfrey answered questions from the Council.

**MOTION:** DeVivo MOVED, Underwood seconded, to move Item 12a up on the agenda to follow Item 8c & to move Item 14a up on the agenda to then follow Item 12a. All were in favor except Niles who opposed. MOTION PASSED.

**12. Resolutions and Ordinances**

**a. Discuss and possibly move to approve a Resolution relating to an Incentive Housing Zone. (See Presentation item #8.b.)**

K. Donohue read the Resolution and moved for its adoption.

K. Donohue MOVED, Underwood seconded, to approve Resolution #2599 relating to an Incentive Housing Zone. All were in favor except DeVivo who abstained.

**BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council THAT**

- (1) *authorizes submission of the Incentive Housing Zone adoption application under the Housing for Economic Growth Program referenced in Section 8-13(m-x) of CGS; and*
- (2) *Identifies Neal J. Beets as the individual authorized to sign the zone adoption application and administer the project. Such application is attached to and made a part of this record.*

**MOTION PASSED**

**14. a. Discuss and possibly move to approve a grant application for state funds to purchase and renovate a community/senior center at the ACCESS Agency, as recommended by the Town Council's Subcommittee on Administration, Finance, and Human Services.**

K. Donohue MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to approve a grant application for state funds to purchase and renovate a community/senior center at the ACCESS Agency, as recommended by the Town Council's Subcommittee on Administration, Finance, and Human Services. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**9. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Eldridge reported he had attended the following events and he gave a brief overview of each event: Project Genesis and Storytelling Slam at ECSU.

Mayor Eldridge noted the following upcoming events and he gave a brief overview of each event: Cedarwoods Apartments ribbon cutting ceremony at 12:00 P.M. on Thursday, a Poster Expo at ECSU from 2:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Thursday, Earth Day at QVCC on Monday April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and Guest Speaker Norma Boujouen, co-author of "The Puerto Rican Experience in Willimantic" at the Windham Textile Museum on Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.

Mayor Eldridge also acknowledged Mary Josephs a former longtime employee of the Town. He noted while at the hospital for a meeting he had been told Mary was a patient

there. Mayor Eldridge stated he had stopped to see her on behalf of the Town however her condition was very poor. He shared a few stories about Mary's time as the First Selectman's secretary and the record keeping notes she kept on the plowing of the roads, the temperature and weather conditions and the times of the meetings. He also noted she was Cupid in 1985 and had worked for many First Selectman and Mayors.

**10. Town Manager's Report**

Town Manager Beets reported the Town Meeting received approval for the \$3,900,000 Road and Sidewalk Bond as recommended by the Town Council and Board of Finance. He noted the project would improve 8 miles of roads and 3 miles of sidewalks and thanked everyone for their support for the project.

Town Manager Beets also reported the Renter's Rebate Program had begun April 1<sup>st</sup> and will continue through October 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated if anyone would like to apply for the program they should contact the Town Hall at 860-465-3004 to schedule an appointment.

**11. Discussion and Review of Communications**

None

**12. Resolutions and Ordinances**

- a. **Discuss and possibly move to approve a Resolution relating to an Incentive Housing Zone. (See Presentation item #8.b.)**

**Item 12a moved up on the agenda to follow 8c.**

**13. Reports of Committees, Boards and Commissions**

- a. **Administration, Finance, Health, and Human Services Subcommittee**  
K. Donohue reported the Committee is very focused on the fiscal situation and the evaluation of the Finance Office.
- b. **Public Safety, Public Works, Culture, and Recreation Subcommittee**  
Krich reported the next regular meeting of the Committee is next Wednesday.
- c. **Magnet School and Natchaug School Roof Building Committee**  
DeVivo reported the public neighborhood meeting to meet the Principal and some of the staff members will be held at the 1<sup>st</sup> Taxing District meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the North Windham Fire House.

DeVivo reported the Magnet School is on schedule and stated furniture was being purchased, street lights and traffic control systems would be up and running by the end of May and the fields were looking nice. He noted however he had no report on the lottery as that is done by the School Board.

In addition, DeVivo reported the Natchaug School Roof project had been denied emergency status by the State. He explained how that will impact the project, the process required for the project and the schedule the Committee would be looking at for the project. He also explained the status of an invoice arising from a preliminary study done by Gale & Associates

**14. Old Business**

- a. Discuss and possibly move to approve a grant application for state funds to purchase and renovate a community/senior center at the ACCESS Agency, as recommended by the Town Council's Subcommittee on Administration, Finance, and Human Services.**

**Item 14 a moved up on the agenda to follow 12a.**

- b. Discuss and possibly move to go into Executive Session with the Personnel Director and the Town Manager to discuss the performance of the Controller and the Town Manager in light of the report of Blum Shapiro about the Finance Office.**

K. Donohue MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to go into Executive Session at 8:15 P.M. with the Town Manager to discuss the performance of the Controller and the Town Manager in light of the report of Blum Shapiro about the Finance Office. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

DeVivo MOVED, Rivera seconded, to come out of Executive Session at 9:14 P.M. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- c. Discuss and possibly take action arising out of the preceding Executive Session regarding the Blum Shapiro Report about the Finance Office.**

No Action Taken.

- d. Discuss and possibly move to approve an RFP for Animal Control Services.**

DeVivo MOVED, Rivera seconded, to postpone the approval of an RFP for Animal Control Services until the next regular meeting of the Town Council. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**15. New Business**

- a. None.**

**16. Future Agenda Items**

- a. None**

**17. Adjournment**

K. Donohue MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to adjourn the Town of Windham Town Council Meeting at 9:40 P.M. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Submitted By:**

**Barbara J. McKinney**  
Clerk of the Town Council