

**TOWN OF WINDHAM
TOWN COUNCIL**

WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

JANUARY 13, 2010

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Underwood called the Town of Windham Town Council Special Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge (7:25 p.m.), Christel Donahue, Kevin Donohue, Erika Haynes, David Howe Sr., Jerry Iazzetta, Mike Lessard, Lorraine McDevitt, Teresa Santucci, N. Joseph Underwood

Town Council members absent: Arnaldo Rivera

Staff Present: Neal J. Beets, Town Manager; Tom Pesce, Comptroller; Barbara McGrath, Chairman, Board of Finance

2. Citizens and Delegations

Jeffrey Viens, requested the Town Council re-open the issue regarding access at the dump to help landlords fight blight from multi-families. He asked that they also consider how their vote on issues will affect all residents of Windham.

Leo Santucci, Willimantic, expressed his pleasure that the Town Council is discussing their priorities and goals, but felt it should have been better publicized.

Jan-Maya Shold, thanked the Town Council for this goals and objectives meeting and encouraged that the Service District also do it.

3. Discussion and Possible action regarding goals and objectives for the Town of Windham

Purpose, Process for this Goal-Setting Session:

Beets discussed the purpose of the goal setting session, which includes being able to provide the staff, Council and community with good policy guidance, benchmarking to enable future measurement of progress, and guideposts for the Town budget.

I. Projects overview:

A. Major projects:

Beets reviewed the current major projects which include: Sewer Plant Expansion (\$20M); Magnet School Project-\$40M; ARRA/Stimulus Projects-(repave High, Valley, Jackson Streets-\$600k and energy education and conservation projects-\$100k);Downtown Parking Garage design- \$500k; PW Roof \$250k; Library Roof \$160k; Park Improvements-\$200k; Garbage and Recycling Contract; Celtic Energy Conservation contract \$25k contract expected to result in recommendations for energy conservation measures costing \$2M-\$5M and financed through the energy savings achieved.

B. Other Major Activities, by Department

Beets reviewed the departments and their staff, activities and workloads.

II. SWOTT:

Beets explained the SWOTT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Trends) and asked Town Councilmembers to identify items that they would like to add to each category, noting that he started each list with a few items that have already been identified. The following are notes based on Councilmembers discussion:

A. STRENGTHS:

Universities, hospital, mixture of rural and urban environment, festivals, celebrations, affordable housing.

Donohue: available buildings for commercial economic development opportunities, we are the regional city in the area.

McDevitt: river, trail-ways, music & theatre groups.

Lessard: strong youth and adult athletic programs.

Santucci: museums and galleries.

Eldridge: community involvement, volunteerism

Haynes: active non-profit community

Iazzetta: available diverse workforce

Donahue: housing stock (Victorians)

B. WEAKNESSES:

high poverty, less educated & less skilled workforce, lack of high speed rail lines and roads, poor image.

Santucci: poor self image, state “dumping ground” of citizens coming out of rehab facilities, half-way houses contribute to the poverty.

Eldridge: need something to draw people in to the area and then get a railway.

Iazzetta: Community is not united- Windham/Willimantic separation; state route running down the center of our downtown.

Donohue: need to look honestly at our weaknesses and recognize them. Lowest school test scores in state.

Donahue: number of non-profits take away from tax base; regionalism.

C. OPPORTUNITIES:

downtown re-development, regional center, improve service without spending more money.

Donohue: university, growth center

D. TRENDS:

poor national and state economies; long decline in local economy since mills left Town; lean employment/staffing, no reinvestment.

E. THREATS:

continued decline in local economy, continued weakness in state, national and global economy, poor participation in new Census Count.

Donohue: questioned where the tipping point is?

III. Financial Overview: What Is Our General Financial Condition?

A. Major Components of Town General Government Budget

Tom Pesce, Comptroller, reviewed the major components of the town general budget, adding that the Town Budget is \$12m, the Board of Education budget is \$41m and the Service District budget is \$8.5m. He added that ½ of our budget is dependent on State revenue and explained the difficulty of setting a budget when there is on-going uncertainty of how much we will be receiving from the State.

B. Education Budget and Big Picture

Barbara McGrath, Chairman, Board of Finance, discussed the capital improvement committee plan and how communication between the BOF and Town Council are important while working on the budget.

IV. Develop Master List of Potential Town Projects and/or Goals

By unanimous consent, the Town Council said that Economic Development was their #1 priority goal. The Town Council developed four pages of bullets under the goal of Economic Development. Those Economic Development bullets included:

- Support for redevelopment of the three sites that the State of Connecticut is selling:
Nathan Hale, Windham House, YMCA;
- Help Create Jobs, especially Head of Household Jobs.
- Support Job Training Programs.
- Stimulate appropriate development along the Route 6, Windham Airport Corridor.
- Enable Small Entrepreneurs.
 - E.g., Cafemantic, Main Street Cafe.
 - Get out of their way, when appropriate.
- Stay on top of Town Infrastructure: roads, water, sewer.
- Be a Business-Friendly Town Council and Town Staff.
 - Business Ombudsman: first point of contact and follow through.
 - Collaborate with Business Advocacy groups, such as the Windham Chamber, Thread City Development.
- Develop a Downtown Parking Garage.

The Town Council agreed that the Mayor and Town Manager should inform the new Economic Development Commission that the Town Council wants the Commission to work on these projects and goals.

In addition to the Economic Development Goal, Councilmembers identified other potential goals that they assigned for further study at the Council Sub-Committee level. These other goals that the Council identified were organized into these areas:

1. Improve K-12 education (grades, scores, retention of teachers)
2. Quality of Life
3. Image
4. Quality of Town Services

These other Goals were further described as follows. Items identified with an (A) means it is an idea that the Town Council is sending to the Town Council's Administration &

Finance Subcommittee to work on, and a (PW) means it is an idea that the Town Council is sending to the Public Works, Public Safety, and Recreation Subcommittee to work on:

- Job development/training (A)
- New Business Ombudsman at Town Hall (A)
- Expand venues and events such on 3rd Thursday (PW)
- Charter School (A)
- Attract/Retain good teachers (A)
- State advocacy for Education Improvement (A)
- Quality of Life (housing, noise, graffiti, beautification) (PW)
- Shared services -- finance, I.T., regionalization of services (A)
- Shared services – Police (PW)
- Equalize the tax base (A)
- Reduce government costs (A)
- Sustain infrastructure (PW)
- All American City (using Town volunteers) (PW)

4. Adjournment

Iazzetta MOVED, Underwood seconded, to adjourn the Town of Windham Town Council at 9:27 p.m. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Submitted By:

Jessie L. Shea
Clerk of the Town Council