

# WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

## WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

Tuesday, November 1, 2011 - 7:00 P.M.



### 1. Call to Order

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

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge, Charles Krich, Mike Lessard, Lorraine McDevitt, N. Joseph Underwood, Erika Haynes, Christel Donahue and Jerry Iazzetta

Town Council members excused: Kevin Donohue, Arnaldo Rivera and Teresa Santucci

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

George Buch, 208 Summit Street, Willimantic, stated he is a member of the Garden Club and noted the club was coming up on their 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He stated he is very concerned with the problems that are taking place on the Garden on the Bridge and would like the Town to put more focus on resolving the problems and possibly install more lights.

Dennis O'Brien, 120 Bolivia Street, Willimantic, thanked Mayor Eldridge and Town Manager Beets for their role in the restoration of power to the City and he thanked Mr. Beets for meeting with the McSweeney Center Board of Directors. Mr. O'Brien also noted he is interested in applying for a position on the next Charter Revision Commission and stated he is very knowledgeable of the process.

Erika Haynes, Willimantic, gave the Council an update regarding SIFT and the work that had been done with respect to education funding over the past year. She noted the Governor has formed an ECS task force and stated on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, she and 3 other representatives from Windham attended the task force meeting to give their perspective on education.

Dawn Niles, North Windham, stated she was dismayed that the agenda was not on the website and asked that it not happen again. She also addressed a news article that questioned how volunteer fire fighters are chosen. She noted WCFD goes through a criminal background check for everyone and has been doing so for years. Ms. Niles also stated she has a major problem with Windham using other Towns as a shelter for our residents and she would like the Mayor and Town Manager to let residents know what the plan of action is in the event of another disaster. She also noted transportation and bedding must be provided if a resident requests such. In addition, Ms. Niles noted she is interested in a position on the next Charter Revision Commission and believes no Council member should be appointed to the Commission.

Peter Quercia, 300 Walnut Street, Willimantic, stated there have been serious violations in the Town which are costing the taxpayers 1,000's of dollars. He noted he has been setting up the Town for 18 months and as a freelance reporter it is the hardest thing he has ever done however his work is finally complete.

Mary Lou DeVivo, Ash Street, Willimantic, noted she had lived in ArtSpace and approximately 500 people a day use the Garden on the Bridge to get back and forth to work and such. She stated her windows had been broken as well as other things and feels camera's on the fourth floor may help with the issues on the bridge.

David Foster, Hampton, presented a check for \$10,000 from the Foster Foundation to help the McSweeney Senior Center with their financial struggles. He feels the seniors have carried the Town for many years and thinks the Town should include in its budget, funds for a new center. He noted he would like to pledge a certain amount every year and maybe find other foundations to do the same by matching the pledge as well as partnering with the Town to alleviate the financial challenges.

**4. Adoption of Minutes**

**a. Discussion and possible action to adopt the October 4, 2011 meeting minutes**

Underwood MOVED, McDevitt seconded, to adopt the October 4, 2011 meeting minutes. All were in favor except Haynes and Krich who abstained. MOTION PASSED.

**5. Resignations**

NONE

**6. Appointments**

NONE

**7. Presentations & Special Reports**

NONE

**8. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Eldridge thanked everyone who has served on the Council and wished them much success.

Mayor Eldridge also reported that all the Halloween activities taking place in Town had been a huge success and thanked all who were involved including Tara Risley-Recreation Director, Charlie Olbrias-Program Director and Lynn Duval-Business Owner.

In addition, Mayor Eldridge believes the Garden on the Bridge should be fenced and gated at night. He feels it is constantly being destroyed however it is extremely hard to identify anyone from cameras alone.

Mayor Eldridge also stated he would address Ms. Niles concerns regarding the agenda.

**9. Town Manager's Report**

Mr. Beets explained, with regards to the power outages, the distribution system in Windham had been energized however some people were still without power due to lines being down from the poles to their house. He noted CL&P would not be addressing those issues for approximately 3 days and he asked that we all be neighborly and help those in need. Mr. Beets also noted other problems that need to be looked at are the traffic light on Rte 203, the Card Street sub-station, and the way power is delivered to Insalaco Drive and Jerusalem Road.

Mr. Beets also reported on the roof leak at Natchaug School and the steps being taken to address the problem. He noted a contractor would be on site in the morning to access the site however the school would remain closed until test results were complete and it was safe to reopen.

In addition, Mr. Beets addressed questions from the Council regarding the shelter location used for the storm.

**10. Discussion and Review of Communications**

Letter received from Peter Quercia

**11. Resolutions and Ordinances**

**a. Discussion and possible action regarding Charter Review.**

No Action Taken

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

**a. Administration & Finance, Health and Human Services Sub Committee**

No Report

**b. Public Safety, Recreation and Public Works Sub Committee**

Mr. Iazzetta reported the Sub-Committee did not meet in October however there were several items still being reviewed. In addition, he stated an RFQ for the Dispatch Center had been sent out. He noted WINCOG had said they would give the Town a proposal to help them look at the dispatch center. Mr. Iazzetta feels this should not have been taken out of the sub-committee's hands and he is frustrated with the lack of information being given. He thinks decisions should be made by the Council.

**c. Tri-Board**

Mrs. McDevitt reported the Tri Board would be meeting November 29<sup>th</sup> with the Superintendent of Schools and the Financial Director of the School to discuss the Tri Boards thoughts on consolidating certain departments between the Town and School.

**13. Old Business**

**a. Discussion regarding Senior Center financial status**

Mr. Beets noted the extraordinary gift given by the Foster Foundation and stated in light of this he would not be asking the Council to take any action. He did note however the McSweeney Center was having financial difficulties and explained the challenges they continue to face due to the lack of resources available. Mr. Beets also noted structural issues were a problem with the Center and stated he would be asking for the guidance and assistance of the newly appointed Council on this matter.

**14. New Business**

**a. Discussion and possible action to allow the Windham Textile and History Museum to serve alcohol during the Snow Ball on Saturday, January 21, 2012 in the Town Hall auditorium.**

Underwood MOVED, McDevitt seconded, to allow the Windham Textile and History Museum to serve alcohol during the Snow Ball on Saturday, March 3, 2012 in the Town Hall Auditorium. All were in favor except Haynes who abstained. MOTION PASSED.

**15. Future Agenda Items**

NONE

**16. Citizens and Delegations**

Dawn Niles, North Windham, explained a jobs bill that recently passed included a section about Main Street renovations and initiatives. She stated a matching grant was available and should be applied for. Ms. Niles noted State Representative Susan Johnson had changed the language in the bill which made it possible for Windham to apply for the grant. Ms. Niles also agrees with Mr. Iazzetta and feels if sub-committees are in place we must use them. She doesn't want to supercede

the authority of the Council. Ms. Niles also stated fundraisers could be held to raise money for the Senior Center.

Rose Kurcinik, Willimantic, Vice President of the McSweeney Regional Center, stated they too are looking at whether McSweeney Center should stay a regional center and noted the Towns that do participate, pay for the dental program. Ms. Kurcunik explained the dental program does make a profit however it is not enough to sustain the Center. She also expressed the need for the Center and the many services it provides to our seniors. She asked the Council to revisit the allocation given for \$40,000 which was earmarked strictly for dental. She noted several grants are given for dental and if the \$40,000 was not earmarked it could be used for other expenses. She expressed her appreciation for the gift given by Mr. Foster and thanked the Council.

Dennis O'Brien, 120 Bolivia Street, Willimantic, thanked the following people; Mike Lessard for serving on the Council and the great job he has done, Terri Santucci for serving on the Council and her support of the Magnet School and the Noise Ordinance, Mary DeMarco and Tara Risley who will be providing service to the McSweeney Center, David Foster for his generous contribution to the McSweeney Center and Neal Beets for taking the initiative concerning the McSweeney Center. He also believes the senior center should be a Windham Senior Center and stated we will make this happen.

Mike Lessard, 190 South Windham Road, thanked Dennis O'Brien for thanking him and hopes he made our citizens proud. He also thanked the Council, Mayor Eldridge and Mr. Beets and stated it has been a great experience and he has learned a lot from working with them. He thanked the community for supporting him. He hopes for similar situations on the Board of Finance.

Doug Lary, 183 Summit Street, stated he was one of the four who attended and spoke at the ECS task force meeting and he shared his thoughts. He noted Murphy Sewall, Chris Breslin, and Erika Haynes also attended and spoke at the meeting. In addition, he explained how property assessments affect the ECS formula.

**17. Adjournment**

McDevitt MOVED, Underwood seconded, to adjourn the Town of Windham Town Council meeting at 8:15 p.m. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Submitted By:**

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