

MINUTES FOR THE WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING



**Windham Town Hall, Bellingham Auditorium
Tuesday, February 10, 2015 - 7:00 P.M.**

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Eldridge called the Town of Windham Town Council Work Session Meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. Mayor Eldridge led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge, Lorraine McDevitt (arrived at 8:10 PM), Tony Fantoli, Mark Doyle (arrived at 7:30 PM), Tom DeVivo, Joseph Underwood, Michael Lessard and James Flores

Charles Krich, Christel Donahue and Charlotte Patros were absent

Town Manager Neal Beets was also in attendance.

2. Citizens and Delegations: Public Comment.

None

3. Town Council Comment.

James Flores stated Department Heads need to do a better job in the hiring process and believes some have a white only policy. He also stated the Town Manager and Mayor report to the Chronicle better than they report to the Town Council. He made reference of an article regarding WRTD.

4. Briefings, Presentations, Discussions, Interaction, and Possible Direction to Staff about Specified Policy Issues:

a. Discuss the accomplishments and goals of the Water Commission with Chair Michael Callahan, and of the Water Pollution Control Authority with WPCA Chair Rene Goss, and possibly give the Town Manager direction.

Chair of the Water Commission Michael Callahan briefed the Town Council on the Water Commission. He explained the makeup of the Commission and Water Department and noted the excellent relationship between the two. He reviewed the past accomplishments of the Commission and the Department, how they are governed and their future goals and objectives moving forward. Mr. Callahan also answered questions from the Town Council including the possibility of a rate increase. Superintendent of the Water Department Jim Hooper also answered questions from the Town Council.



Chair of the Water Pollution Control Authority Rene Goss gave a brief overview of the Water Pollution Control Authority including the accomplishments, past projects and future goals of the Commission and the Department. He also answered questions from the Town Council including the possibility of a rate increase in the near future. Superintendent Dave Garand also answered questions from the Town Council.

b. Discuss the Certified Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and audit results with the Unified Finance Director Chris Johnson and the Comptroller Tom Pesce, discuss the 2014 Grand List Report with Town Assessor Joan Paskewich, and possibly give the Town Manager direction.

Unified Finance Director Chris Johnson and the Comptroller Tom Pesce gave a brief synopsis of the 20104 Grand List and noted there was a 2% increase across the 2 Districts, which is equal to an increase of \$676,000. They also discussed the possibility of moving to self insuring for Workers Compensation due to the rising costs and briefly explained what it involves and the time frame for doing so. Unified Finance Director Chris Johnson also noted there is a combined \$1.5 million surplus between the Willimantic Service District and the Town and believes this is a good cushion to have if an emergency arises. In addition, he noted there is an increase in self insurance for health benefits. Unified Finance Director Chris Johnson also answered questions from the Town Council regarding the Dispatch Center and the problems with them being billed, questions on why the audit is late again, the Town's surplus over the past three years and why the Town Council has not been given monthly reports as requested. He also explained the conversions that are being done and the issues with the new MUNIS system.

MOTION: Lessard MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to direct the Town Manager to research an alternative model for workers compensation that will be more financially beneficial to the Town. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

c. Discuss the Town of Windham Grant Program for Non-Profit Agencies with Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Recreation Director Tara Risley, and possibly give the Town Manager direction.

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Recreation Director Tara Risley provided the Town Council with the Outside Agency requests which includes the 2016 requests made by the agencies, the 2015 approved budget and the suggested funding for the agencies. They reviewed the requests and explained how the decisions were made to fund the agencies. They also recommended the larger agencies such as WRTD and WRCC that are requesting funds come before the Town Council to explain their needs given the large amount of funding requested. Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Recreation Director Tara Risley also answered questions from the Town Council including the number of agencies that applied, the application process and the criteria needed to receive funding. They also discussed the TVCCA program.

- d. Discuss the Town of Windham Small Cities CDBG Program with Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Consultant Peter Huckins, and possibly give the Town Manager direction.**

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco noted the request from the Willimantic Housing Authority for the CDBG grant to rehabilitate the Jonathan Trumbull housing had been withdrawn and she explained the reasons surrounding the withdrawal of the request.

Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Small Cities CDBG Consultant Peter Huckins explained the Small Cities CDBG Program and the criteria needed to qualify for the grant. Mr. Huckins noted there are basically only 5 categories to be eligible for funding. In addition, Human Services Director Mary DeMarco and Small Cities CDBG Consultant Peter Huckins answered questions from the Town Council including the timeframe to apply for the grant and the different types of projects the grant can be used for.

Town Manager Beets recommended the Town finish what we have and wait until next year to apply for the grant. He suggested in the meantime we advertise and try to compile a list of eligible candidates for the next round.

- e. Discuss a selection process for the CUPID with Recreation Director Tara Risley and Assistant Director Charlie Olbrias. Town Council may also convene an executive session with these individuals to make the actual selection for 2015.**

DeVivo MOVED, McDevitt seconded, to convene an executive session at 9:28 P.M. to make the actual selection for the 2015 CUPID. (Tom DeVivo did not attend the executive session). All were in favor except Flores who opposed. MOTION PASSED.

McDevitt MOVED, DeVivo seconded, to come out of executive session at 9:42 P.M. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

- f. Discuss whether the Town should paint stripes identifying parking spaces and no parking areas (e.g., fire hydrants) downtown, and possibly give the Town Manager direction. [Requested by Mayor Ernie Eldridge].**

A short discussion took place on painting lines to identify parking spaces, fire hydrants and the length from the corner of an intersection in the downtown area. Several suggestions were discussed.

- g. Discuss what type of school speed zone study the Town Council wants the state DOT to perform, and possibly give the Town Manager direction.**

Town Manager Beets explained the State Department of Transportation had done a speed study along Route 203 and no recommendations for speed changes had been made. He noted he then asked the DOT to do a school zone speed study however after two months was asked which type of study and was informed there are four different kinds of studies. Town Manager Beets is concerned that there is no actual study done and explained the DOT basically wants to know what kind of signage is requested by the Town other than what is currently there and they will put it up. He also noted the DOT will decide what the speed limit will be.

MOTION: DeVivo MOVED, McDevitt seconded, to request at the next Town Council meeting a vote on Item 1- School Zone Ahead Fines Doubled Zone. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Discussion about Items on the Agenda for action at a future, regular Council Meeting.

- a. Discuss a draft RFP (Request for Proposals) pertaining to the Tin Tsin lot, a/k/a Chapman Block, at 804-806 Main Street, and possibly give the Town Manager direction. (For Council action at your February 17 regular Council Meeting.)**

Town Manager Beets explained what the RFP will include, the process that will be followed, the advertising venues the Town will use and the deadline of May 1st to submit proposals. The Town Council also shared their thoughts on whether or not incentives should be offered to prospective buyers and questioned when it was decided that the property would not be used as a parking lot.

- b. Discuss a draft policy concerning Council tablets or laptop computers, and for the distribution of Council agendas and packets, and possibly give the Town Manager direction. (For Council action at your February 17 regular Council Meeting.)**

Mayor Eldridge explained the policy and cost for the laptop computers was included in the Town Council packet. A short discussion ensued regarding the training that will be given to the Town Council and the point of contact if and when a problem arises. The Town Manager assured everyone that proper training will be given through the IT Department and the date for distribution is April 1st with a training session scheduled for April 9th if approved by the Town Council on February 17th.

6. Citizens and Delegations: Public Comment.

James Flores spoke about the article in the paper that he had mentioned earlier. He also spoke about the ongoing issues concerning bathrooms at the parks and the complaints made by his brother in law on the issue. He noted many other people have also complained to the Recreation Director about this. Mr. Flores asked that his brother in law be given the respect that he deserves as a Vietnam Veteran.

7. Adjournment

DeVivo MOVED, McDevitt seconded, to adjourn the Windham Town Council Work Session Meeting at 10:11 P.M. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Submitted By:

Barbara J. McKinney
Clerk of the Town Council