

REGULAR MEETING-MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
December 8, 2008

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the regular meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Audrey P. Beck Building.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Blair, Clouette, Duffy, Haddad, Koehn, Nesbitt, Paterson, Paulhus, Schaefer

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Blair moved and Mr. Clouette seconded to approve the minutes of the regular and special meetings on November 24, 2008 as presented. Motion passed unanimously with the exception of Mr. Haddad who abstained.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Mike Siskoski, Wildwood Road, reminded members that according to the Town Council Rules of Procedures the public hearing should be the first item of business. By consensus the Council agreed.

Public comment continued after the public hearing.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, stated that the Registrars of Voters should get the same 3-½ % raise as everyone else in the Town Hall. Mr. Hossack also spoke against the proposed Freedom of Information Policy noting that there are a few people in Town who are interested in getting the information and if the Town Council and Town government did a better job of getting the information out F.O. I. requests would be minimal.

Mike Sikoski, Wildwood Road, Chair of the Ethics Board, but speaking as a citizen, stated the personnel rules for the use of telephones, e-mails and the internet are appalling and unethical.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, supported increasing the Registrars of Voters pay by 3- ½ % and disagrees with the proposed F.O.I. policy. She suggested that all Town documents including collective bargaining agreements, policies and procedures, salaries including benefits, agreements, teachers' salaries, etc. be available in the Town Clerk's office and the Library. Ms. Wassmundt expressed disappointment that the information she asks for is often not in the form she wants and questioned the description of an F.O.I request.

IV. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Attached

V. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Open Space Acquisitions

Mayor Paterson called the public hearing to order and the Town Clerk read the legal notice.

Jennifer Kaufman, Parks Coordinator, summarized the details and values of the three properties under consideration.

Warren Church, President of Joshua's Trust, commented on the mutually beneficial long-term relationship between the Trust and the Town and noted that the Luce property will provide access to Coney Rock from Mulberry Road.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, spoke in support of the Luce property and in opposition to the Dorwart and Moss properties because of the Dorwart property's potential for development and the Moss property's increased liability for the Town. Statement attached.

Isabelle Atwood, Wormwood Hill Road, spoke in favor of the Dorwart property noting it is a haven for wild animals and a beautiful piece of land.

Charlotte Pyle, Cod Fish Falls Road, a resident and forester commented that Mansfield still has choices and the values provided by open space are still available to the Town. She noted forest fragmentation is one of the biggest concerns for foresters.

Damon Hearn, representing the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, spoke to the Association's history and the development of this project. The Town will hold title to the land and the CFPA will maintain the development rights assuring there will never be development in the Sanctuary.

Betty Robinson, Glen Ridge, spoke in favor of acquiring the Moss Sanctuary noting that the desire to preserve the area has been a long-term endeavor.

Madge Manfred, Puddin Lane, spoke in favor of purchasing all three properties. She stated the cost to the Town is worth it to protect the quality of life we enjoy and the value of our property.

Mike Sikoski, Wildwood Road, questioned the use of Executive Session concerning open space acquisition since there is tax money involved. He is also concerned with the amount of money proposed to be spent.

Robert Coughlin, 49 Storrs Heights Road, spoke in favor of the acquisitions. He commented on the need for open space in a central location in Town, which will become even more valuable when the downtown area is developed.

Bill Thorne, Mansfield Hollow Road, is on staff at E.O. Smith High School and uses the Moss Sanctuary as a valuable teaching aid and learning experience. He suggested that the access road from South Eagleville Road be maintained and that access from Birchwood Heights Road be reviewed. Mr. Thorne also encouraged the establishment of central receptacle system to collect data from the Moss Sanctuary from students and citizens who use the area.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, expressed her concerns about the Executive Session held prior to this meeting. She suggested that any acceptance of the Moss Sanctuary should be conditioned on the receipt of grant money for the entire expense of fixing the dam and urged no improvements be made to any of the properties until economic conditions improved.

Jim Morrow, Chair of the Open Space Committee, stated that the money being used for these purchases is not part of the bonded open space money and therefore has no restrictions on its use.

Rudy Favretti, Middle Turnpike Road, commented that Professor Albert Moss used the area as a laboratory and as a result the parcel was named after him.

Quentin Kessel, Codfish Falls Road, stated that he and his wife Margaret were in support of the proposed acquisitions for the benefit of the Town and that both residents and government must make the effort to preserve open space in Mansfield.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, spoke in favor of open space and transparent government and urged the Council to continue the public hearing until the legality of the Executive Session can be established.

Mike Sikoski, Wildwood Road, commented that other money has been transferred from fund-to-fund and asked why the open space money could not be used for other purposes.

Evangeline Abbott, Hillcrest Drive and member of the Open Space Preservation Committee, spoke in support of the properties. She noted that the ability to walk out doors and enjoy the trails was worth the cost.

David Freudmann, Eastwood Road, spoke against the purchase of the Moss Sanctuary. He feels that if UConn thought the area was suitable for development they would not be willing to sell it.

The hearing was closed at 8:30 p.m.

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- VI. OLD BUSINESS
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2. Open Space Preservation - Luce

Mr. Schaefer moved and Mr. Paulhus seconded, effective December 8, 2008, to authorize the payment of \$12,5000 from the Open Space Acquisition Fund to Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, as the Town's 50-percent contribution to the Trust's purchase of the 5.9 acre Luce property on Mulberry Road.

In response to questions raised, Director of Finance Jeff Smith reviewed the open space fund established by Council and approved at Town meetings.

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

3. Open Space Preservation - Dorwart

Mr. Haddad moved and Ms. Koehn seconded, effective December 8, 2008, to authorize the Town Manager to finalize and to execute the purchase of the 55.2 acres Dorwart Property from The Reinhold A. Dorwart and Juanita M. Dorwart Family Trust.

Motion to approve passed with all in favor except for Mr. Paulhus who was opposed.

4. Open Space Preservation – Moss Sanctuary

Mr. Schaefer moved and Ms. Blair seconded, effective December 8, 2008, to authorize the Town Manager to finalize and to execute the purchase of the 135-acre Moss Sanctuary from the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association.

Council members discussed the value of the Moss sanctuary to UConn, possible uses of the land by UConn and the potential liability of the existing dam.

Mr. Nesbitt moved to amend the motion to include the following: no maintenance will be initiated unless funded by grants. Seconded by Mr. Paulhus the amendment failed. The original motion passed with all in favor excepting Mr. Nesbitt and Mr. Paulhus.

5. Community/Campus Relations

Town Manager Matt Hart reported the Board of Trustees is continuing to review Spring Weekend and that he is planning to contact Central Connecticut State University and the New Britain Police Department to discuss how they deal with students in the neighborhoods. Mr. Hart reported a presentation of housing code programs will be made at the upcoming Community Quality of Life Committee's meeting.

Mr. Clouette asked if the possible parking enforcements changes for Spring Weekend will leave students stranded. He will bring up the issue at Tuesday's Town Gown meeting.

6. Community Water Wastewater Issues

Town Manager Matt Hart announced the inaugural meeting of the Four Corner Sewer Advisory Committee took place and will soon be meeting with representatives of Connecticut Water.

Ms. Duffy moved and Mr. Paulhus seconded to move Item 8, Programs in Mansfield for Eligible Taxpayers, as the next item on the agenda. Motion passed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

7. Presentation – Fiscal Impact Analysis

Director of Finance Jeff Smith reviewed his analysis of the fiscal impact the University of Connecticut has on Mansfield's municipal services. The data in the report belies the perception that the Town is more than adequately reimbursed by having UConn in Town. Mr. Smith will review the impact Holinko Estates has on the Town.

8. Presentation – Programs in Mansfield for Eligible Taxpayers

Assessor Irene LaPointe reviewed all tax programs available to Mansfield citizens. Ms. LaPointe will forward the annual cost of these programs to the Town to the Council

Mr. Paulhus left at 10:30 p.m.

9. Financial Statements Dated September 30, 2009

Mr. Clouette moved, to accept the Financial Statements dated September 30, 2008, as prepared by town staff and endorsed by the Finance Committee. Finance Chair Carl Schaefer presented a statement (attached) with the approval of Finance Committee member Alison Blair. Mr. Schaefer reported that the 2nd Quarter statement would be available prior to the budget retreat in February. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

10. Registrar and Deputy Registrar Compensation

Personnel Committee Chair Gregory Haddad moved, effective January 1, 2009, to set the pay rate for the Registrars at \$20.42 per hour and the pay rate for the Deputy Registrars at \$15.32 per hour.

Motion passed unanimously.

11. Town Manager's Goals for FY 2008/09

Mr. Haddad moved and Mr. Schaefer seconded, effective December 8, 2008, to endorse the Town Manager's Goals and Objectives for FY 2008/09.

Motion passed unanimously.

12. Cancellation of December 22, 2008 Town Council Meeting

Mr. Schaefer moved and Ms. Blair seconded, effective December 8, 2008, to cancel the December 22, 2008 regular meeting of the Mansfield Town Council.

Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. DEPARTMENTAL AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

IX. REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Mr. Nesbitt, Chair of the Four Corners Sewer Advisory Committee, announced there will be a public information meeting aimed at property owners in January and a public meeting for all residents later in the year.

Ms. Duffy, Chair of the Committee on Committees offered the following nominations to the Council on Aging:

Kenneth Doeg
Tim Quinn
MaryThatcher
Sam Gordon

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

X. REPORTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Schaefer and Mr. Paulhus attended the tree lighting event at the Mansfield Center Congregational Church.

Mayor Paterson attended the end of the semester party hosted by the Youth Service Bureau and was thrilled to see members of the UConn Baseball team talking to the children about respect and teamwork. The Mayor noted many students do good work in the community. Ms. Blair commented that many of these students who work with resident children stay in touch with them.

Ms. Duffy reported the E.O. Smith chorus is still in the running to attend the Presidential inauguration. Mayor Paterson noted the UConn marching band is also in contention.

Mr. Haddad acknowledged the letter from PZC Chair Rudy Favretti expressing the PZC's concerns with the additions to the workload of the Planning office.

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XI. PETITIONS, REQUEST AND COMMUNICATIONS

13. Chronicle, "Council to Review Progress" - 11-22-08
14. Chronicle, "Council Updated on Storrs Center Plan" - 11-25-08
15. Chronicle, "Editorial: We Offer These Threads, Needles" - 11-24-08
16. Chronicle, "Mansfield Eyes Buying \$450,000 in Open Space" - 11-29-08
17. Chronicle, "Ponde Place Plan to Go for Environmental Review" - 11-21-08
18. Chronicle, "Trustees Seek to Calm Down Spring Weekend" - 11-20-08
19. CCM re: CCM Efforts Sustain Critical Local Revenues
20. CCM re: CCM Member Dues for FY 2009-10
21. CL&P Interstate Reliability Project
22. Connecticut Council of Small Towns
23. R. Favretti re: Director of Planning
24. Freedom of Information Policy

25. Government Finance Officers Association - 2007 Program Results
26. A. Kouatly re: Mansfield Community Center
27. G. McGann re: Four Schools Renovation Project
28. Mansfield Today, "The 'Downtown' Storrs Center Project Now Has Two Crucial Wetlands Permits - 11-24-08
29. Mansfield Today, "Developers Announce New Strategies to Make Storrs Center Marketable" - 11-25-08
30. Mansfield Today, "Dollars and Sense: Council Calls Meeting on Fiscal Impact of Storrs Center Project - 11-14-08
31. Mansfield Today, "Q&A: Responses to Questions About the Four School Renovation Project" - 11-18-08
32. Mansfield Today, "Town Council Officially Opposes CL&P Expansion Plan" - 11-30-08
33. State of Connecticut Department of Correction re: Bergin Correctional Institution
34. State of Connecticut re: Wyman Says Budget Deficit Triples to \$338 Million

XII. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Zachary Janowski, reporter from the Chronicle, announced that this was his last meeting and that he has accepted a position as editor of the Southington Citizen. Council members wished him well.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, expressed his disappointment with the vote on the purchase of open space and the use of executive sessions. He asked Council members to lower his taxes.

XIII. FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Koehn requested a discussion of the Freedom of Information Policy within the context of whether it is a Town Council Policy or a Management Policy and a discussion on the kind of information posted on the Town website.

Mr. Nesbitt requested a discussion of the operation of the garages since the operational projections of the second garage are dependent upon the first garage's operation. The information is needed before any agreements are finalized.

Mr. Clouette requested information on the possibility of banning plastic bags and regulating drive thru windows. The Town Manager will forward information regarding plastic bags from the Solid Waste Advisory Committee and talk to staff regarding regulations regarding drive thru's.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Blair moved and Mr. Clouette seconded to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Town Clerk

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk