

REGULAR MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
March 28, 2016

Mayor Paul M. Shapiro called the regular meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P. Beck Building.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Kegler, Kochenburger, Marcellino, Moran, Raymond, Ryan, Sargent, Shaiken, Shapiro

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ryan moved Ms. Moran seconded to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2016 meeting, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

David Palmer, Juniper Hill Village, addressed the moving of the WRTD bus stop from Route 195 to Wilbur Cross Way and the accessibility challenges the new location poses for residents. (Statement attached)

Will Bigl, town employee, member of the Housing Appeals Board, Hill Pond resident but speaking as the Chair of the Commission on Aging, addressed issues related to transportation for seniors. Mr. Bigl requested that the Council advocate that the planned transportation study be expedited and that they continue to discuss the expansion of transportation options for seniors. (Statement attached)

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, stated he was speaking for the children of Mansfield and questioned the possible change to the location of E.O. Smith. Mr. Sommer asked Councilors to consider the options available to students because of its proximity to the UConn campus and urged the Council to support keeping the school where it is.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, asked the Council to review the bus pass program prior to funding it for the upcoming year. Ms. Wassmundt questioned the efforts of the Economic Development Commission and the ways in which the Downtown Partnership has fulfilled the requirements of its 501-C3 status. (Statement attached)

David Freudmann, Eastwood Road, asked how much longer the Town plans to support the Downtown Partnership and objected to the 7.3% increase in the proposed budget. Mr. Freudmann suggested level funding for the schools.

IV. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

In addition to his written report the Town Manager offered the following comments:

- Mr. Hart and Councilor Marcellino are both members of the WRTD Board and will look into the bus stop change mentioned during public comments.
- Staff is reviewing the special fare bus program and will have information for the Council during the budget discussions.

V. REPORTS AND COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

No comments offered.

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VI. OLD BUSINESS

No items identified

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Transportation for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

Mayor Shapiro stated that although he serves as Chair of the New Samaritan Board of Directors and as a member of the Juniper Hill and Glen Ridge Boards, he will be participating in the general discussion regarding transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities at tonight's meeting. Mr. Shapiro has no financial interest and will recuse himself if any proposed action would benefit the entities with whom he is involved.

Director of Humans Services Pat Schneider reviewed the currently available transportation options, identified gaps to the current services, and potential options. Staff will provide a copy of Ms. Schneider's power point presentation to Councilors.

Members agreed that the Town should take a creative look at the issues and as a next step agreed to invite WRTD to a future meeting to discuss, among other things, the dial a ride program.

2. Accessible Parking at the Mansfield Community Center

Mr. Ryan moved and Mr. Shaiken seconded, effective March 28, 2016, to endorse Proposal #3 as presented by staff as the preferred option to construct additional accessible parking for the Mansfield Community Center.

John Carrington, Director of Public Works, outlined three available options and identified Proposal #3 as the preferred choice of staff.

The Mayor, without objection, suspended the rules to allow Mr. Bigl, Chair of the Commission on Aging, to speak.

Mr. Bigl clarified that the Commission's letter did not endorse a specific plan and that in his opinion Proposal #3 would accomplish the Commission's goals.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. UCONN Students Right to Vote on Municipal Financial Matters

Mr. Kegler moved and Ms. Raymond seconded that the Town Council support the efforts of Mr. Naumec to seek a review of current state laws regarding the possibility of separating votes on financial issues from other issues.

Mr. Ryan offered a friendly amendment to include in the motion the statement as to whether UConn students living on campus should be allowed to vote on financial issues in the Town of Mansfield.

The amendment was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Further discussion regarding the rights of all electors to vote at referenda, clarification of Mr. Naumec's request of the Council, the role of the Council, and whether the motion, as amended, addresses the question ensued.

Mr. Ryan and Mr. Kegler withdrew their motions.

Mr. Kegler moved and Mr. Ryan seconded that the Town Council of the Town of Mansfield support the efforts of Charles R. Naumec through the Connecticut Secretary of the State Office seeking a constitutional review by the Legislation and Elections Administration Division attorney of the voting rights of UConn students living in University housing and paying no taxes related to voting on Town of Mansfield financial issues.

Members discussed voting rights, what the term “support” means, the merits of student involvement, the need to educate the student population, and the Secretary of the State’s opinion as expressed in her letters to Mr. Naumec.

The motion failed with Kegler and Raymond in favor and Kochenburger, Marcellino, Moran, Ryan, Sargent, Shaiken, Shapiro in opposition.

4. Crumbling Foundations in Eastern CT

Town Manager Matt Hart and Councilor Kochenburger reported on an informational session they attended this afternoon sponsored by Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman and Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) Commissioner Jonathan Harris regarding crumbling foundations.

By consensus the Council agreed to hold an informational public forum. Mr. Hart suggested the Town invite representatives of the DCP to the meeting and noted that CROG has been working on a letter to be sent to homeowners whose houses were built from 1983 to 2003. Mr. Kochenburger suggested representatives from the Department of Insurance also be invited.

Staff will report on the median age of homes in Mansfield.

5. Tobacco Free Campus Policy

Ms. Moran, Chair of the Personnel Committee, moved to endorse the Tobacco Free Campus Policy as presented, which shall be effective May 1, 2016.

Members discussed the reasons for the policy, whether public hearing would be needed, the regulation of personal behavior, and the types of behavior regulated by this policy.

The motion failed with Moran, Ryan, Shaiken, Shapiro in favor and Kegler, Kochenburger, Marcellino, Raymond and Sargent in opposition.

VIII. REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

No reports offered.

IX. DEPARTMENTAL AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

No comments offered.

X. PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

6. J. Hanley (03/16/16)

7. Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation (03/14/16)

8. J. Sgro (03/11/16)

9. W. Thorne (03/18/16)

10. M. Hart re: Greenway Projects

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11. D. Malloy re: State Budget

12. Investigation of Statewide Voting Referendum Policies and Practices under the Americans with Disabilities Act - The Mayor reported that CCM has assembled a group of attorneys to respond to this inquiry and our attorney is participating in this endeavor.

XI. FUTURE AGENDAS

The draft Tobacco Free Campus Policy was referred back to the Personnel Committee for further review.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kochenburger moved and Ms. Raymond seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

The motion passed unanimously.

Paul M. Shapiro, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

March 28, 2016

My name is David Palmer and live in Juniper Hill Village. I would like to alert the town council to an accessibility problem that was brought to my attention by one of my neighbors last week. A number of months ago, the Windham Region Transit District (WRTD) changed its bus stops in downtown Storrs from along Route 195 to a block away on Wilbur Cross Way. That means that the new bus stop on the south end that serves the businesses in the Price Chopper shopping lot is now at the foot of a long set of concrete stairs up to the parking lot.

My neighbor has bad knees and cannot make it up the steps and to do her shopping she has to go from the bus stop back down to Charles Smith Way, go up to the parking lot entrance and then through the parking lot (which have no designated walkways) to reach the store. After asking around at Juniper Hill, I discovered that besides people with bad knees, it was a problem for other residents who use walkers and wheelchairs.

Clearly this is not accessible and I have initiated a search for solutions. When I contacted the WRTD about the route change, I was told that the buses could no longer make the turn at the CVS corner to get to the transportation center. Later, it was pointed out to me that the Peter Pan buses make that turn multiple times a day.

I have already contacted the Transportation Coordinator I appreciate the support and suggestions of the Town Council to remedy this issue.

Submitted by

David Palmer

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TOWN OF MANSFIELD
Commission on Aging



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March 28, 2016
Mansfield Town Council
C/O Town of Mansfield
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Re: Senior and Accessible Transportation concerns;

It has come to the attention of the Commission that there are serious issues related to the transportation options that are currently available to our Senior (over age 60) residents. Of critical concern is the fact that the Dial-a-Ride transportation available in our region offers no priority to those in need of medical transportation. Additionally, the service that is provided is often unreliable. We have received numerous reports from seniors of their inability to obtain transportation within the timelines of the schedules as well as the fact that they then must wait long periods of time for return trips.

In researching other Connecticut districts we have been surprised to learn that the Dial-a-Ride region that includes Mansfield is one of the few that does not offer priority for the most vulnerable of our population to access medical care or any other form of transportation. We understand that there are several ongoing studies being implemented that will be looking into this critical issue.

We are very appreciative of the services available through the Volunteer Transportation Program at the Senior Center as it has been a lifeline for many of our frail/at-risk town residents – to be able to remain independent and access vital healthcare is a basic human need. However, that program cannot accommodate the growing numbers of those with mobility issues who have extremely limited means of transportation.

We would ask that the Council consider two specific requests from our Commission. The first is that the Council advocate for the planned studies to be expedited as this issue is so critical and the second is that there be continued conversation and support of the possibility of expanding the transportation services available through our local Senior Center. Of particular importance to this Commission are the medical transport services available to our senior population.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions and for your continued support of our growing population of seniors.

Respectfully


Wilfred T. Bigl; Chairman
Mansfield Commission on Aging

3/28/16

To: Mansfield Town Council

From: Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, Storrs

Recently I was asked to get a bus pass for a resident. This prompted me to ponder the town's subsidy for these free bus passes. This subsidy was instituted to encourage use of the bus; I doubt that's necessary today.

The subsidy, I believe, is \$32,000. I know that's very little relative to your budget but I grew up with the adage: "Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves." So I urge you to consider this expenditure.

Please quantify the need for this subsidy before you vote to continue it.

What data do you have to support this cost?

How many Mansfield people utilize this bus service?

Where do they reside?

How is this \$32,000 paid out to WRTD?

I trust the Town Manager will answer these questions before you include this subsidy in this budget.

Then I went on to think of bus options which led me to think of Uber rides. That led me to think of our Economic Development Commission. I went to read their minutes and learned that often there is not a quorum at meetings. If the appointed members aren't interested in this Commission, the membership should be changed. Also, I saw no suggestions for economic development; I saw development of promotional materials for the town and for existing businesses, which seemed to provide an excuse to hire an intern, but I saw no new ideas. This Commission is supposed to promote business development throughout the region. It should do that or be terminated.

Now back to Uber rides. Over the years I've had need to hire possibly a secretary, receptionist or yard work helper. I would go to the University student population or the Willimantic area and I always found a person wanting to earn some money. There are the Uber drivers. A good Uber service can provide the rides that people seem to be asking for : pick up at your door and drop off at your destination, on your schedule and at a reasonable cost. Maybe you should not be handing an extra \$32,000 to WRTD. I urge you to understand how that money is spent before authorizing it in this budget. And, I urge the Economic Development Commission to look into developing an Uber service in this greater area.

Then I thought of our Downtown Partnership. As a 501- C3 corporation it is "to solicit, receive and administer funds for educational and charitable purposes, etc". (from the Partnership's By-laws). How is The Partnership doing that at this time? Please answer before funding the Partnership in this budget.

Thank you