

REGULAR MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
May 23, 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: Keane, Kochenburger, Marcellino, Moran, Raymond, Ryan, Sargent, Shaiken, Shapiro

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ryan moved and Mr. Sargent seconded to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2016 special meeting as presented. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Moran moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2016 meeting as corrected. Motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Neighborhood Assistance Act Programs

The Mayor called the public hearing to order at 7:05 p.m. The Town Clerk read the legal notice. No comments were offered. Mayor Shapiro closed the public hearing. Without objection the Mayor began the public comment portion of the meeting as it was not yet 7:15 p.m., the noticed time for the second public hearing.

2. Proposed Amendments to Ordinance Regarding Streets and Sidewalks

Mayor Shapiro recessed the public comments and called the public hearing to order at 7:18 p.m. The Town Clerk read the legal notice. No comments were offered. Mayor Shapiro closed the public hearing.

IV. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Amy Gorin, Michele Lane, shared her concerns regarding the way in which the Region 19 school project is moving forward. Ms. Gorin noted that the Keep EO Smith Downtown Facebook page currently has 960 members most of whom want the process slowed down so all impacts can be examined.

Kelly Bourquin, Jonathan Lane, stated that she was surprised how quickly the Region 19 Board pursued the building of a new school on the Depot Campus and is concerned the Town will lose its sense of community without the high school in Storrs Center.

(Statement attached)

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, requested greater transparency in the process and asked Council members to review the comments on the aforementioned Facebook page. (Statement attached)

Charles Naumec, Riverview Road, commented on the physical footprint that is now our Town and currently includes the Town Hall, the Community Center, Region 19 and Storrs Center and how moving Region 19 would break up the Town's footprint and enlarge UConn's.

Mr. Naumec spoke to the process noting that all three towns must approve any change and that if the UConn students were mobilized in Mansfield the referendum could pass.

Carla Kelly, Middle Turnpike, posed a series of questions regarding the referenda process and expressed concern about whether or not the vote would be binding. Ms. Kelly stated the process is happening too quickly.

Karen Malloy, Adeline Road, stated that Mansfield has a vibrant downtown that offers many opportunities for students to explore autonomy in a safe environment.

Celine Demers-Schiffler, Hanks Hill Road, expressed her pleasure in seeing the students in the downtown area and stated that the location of the high school is important. Ms. Demers-Schiffler would like more time for discussion of such an important issue.

Mary Hirsch, Courtyard Lane, spoke to the role of the Council in this process and stated that although it is not a Council decision the Council can express how residents feel about the project. Ms. Hirsch commented that it is in the best interest of the Town to keep the school at its current location.

Jennifer Elshakhs, Bundy Lane, spoke to the benefits of Region 19 being in Storrs Center and expressed surprise at the attitude exhibited by Region 19 Board members. Ms. Elshakhs remarked that the process is moving very quickly and suggested that the Region pick another date for the public discussion as the dates that have been announced are not conducive to wide public participation.

Rebecca Shafer, Echo Road, commented on a phenomenon happening across the world called studentification. Ms. Shafer noted that business are discouraging universities from building on campus housing but instead are encouraging privatization. (Statement attached, referenced articles will appear as communications in the June 13, 2016 meeting packet)

Virginia Gorin, Separatist Road, expressed frustration with trying to get answers from Region 19. Ms. Gorin commented that the process started with repairing the existing building and quickly moved to replacing the decrepit facility. The process is lacking input from parents and teachers.

Esther Soffer Roberts, Hanks Hill Road, described the process outlined by the Region for the June 9, 2016 meeting noting that there are three different aspects of the plan all being discussed at the same time allowing residents to participate in only one subject. The meeting is scheduled for the middle of finals week. Ms. Soffer Roberts does not want the downtown to be an extension of UConn.

John Anderson, Old Turnpike Road and a former EO Smith teacher, remarked that at its current location the high school is in the midst of life in the community and provides a release valve for students. Mr. Anderson stated that the Region has a cultural, as well as educational, responsibility to its students.

V. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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

- Mr. Hart outlined the two votes which would need to pass in each of the member towns for the project to go forward, a vote authorizing funding and a vote amending the existing Regional Plan. The vote is binding.
- Mr. Hart noted a letter from Christina Mailhos, First Selectman of Willington, expressing her concerns regarding the process being undertaken by the Region concerning the building of a new EO Smith High School

VI. REPORTS AND COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Shapiro reported on the Youth Services Thank You Event for Volunteers attended by Ms. Moran, Mr. Ryan, and himself. Mr. Shapiro noted the efforts of the volunteers, mostly UConn students, who are poised, confident and very giving to their charges. The Mayor also reported on his May 10th trip to the White House as part of the UConn Women's Basketball Celebration, calling it a great honor. Mr. Shapiro asked any Councilors who can, to march as a group in the Memorial Day Parade. Mr. Shaiken commented that he, Ms. Moran and Mr. Kochenburger also attended the informational meeting regarding crumbling foundations in Eastern Connecticut. Mr. Shaiken thanked the Mayor for moderating the event and the Town Manager for making himself available to talk to Mansfield residents.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

3. Neighborhood Assistance Act Programs

Ms. Moran moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to approve the following resolution: Resolved, to approve the following projects for submission to the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services for inclusion in the 2016 Neighborhood Assistance Act Program: water harvesting project at the Mansfield Community Center; and development of a new community clinic and support facility for United Services, Inc. Mr. Shaiken recused himself, not because of any financial interest or technical conflict of interest, but because he is employed by the Connecticut Community Non-Profit Alliance of which United Services, Inc. is a member. The motion passed by all voting.

Mr. Sargent moved and Ms. Keane seconded to consider Item 8, Regional School District No. 19 Proposed Building Project, immediately. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Proposed Amendments to Ordinance Regarding Streets and Sidewalks

Ms. Keane moved and Ms. Moran seconded to suspend Rule 6(d) of the Council Rules of Procedures and to proceed with a vote on the proposed amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Moran moved and Mr. Shaiken seconded, to adopt the proposed Amendments to the Ordinance Regarding Streets and Sidewalks, Chapter 166 of the Mansfield Code, which amendments shall be effective 21 days after publication in a newspaper having circulation within the Town of Mansfield. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Community School for the Arts (CSA) Update

Director of Parks and Recreation Curt Vincente reviewed the updated 2014 Community School for the Arts business plan which now includes smaller more manageable program offerings.

Members discussed the bottom line impact on the 260 fund, the reasons UConn's cost were significantly higher, the benefits the program would offer the community, the amount of profit built into the fees, and the need to continue the discussion on the

Town 's contribution to the Parks and Recreation 260 Fund. Mr. Hart will request an updated UConn Income Statement Summary for 2015.

6. Appointment to Town Council Committees

Ms. Keane moved and Mr. Sargent seconded, effective May 23, 2016, to appoint Virginia Raymond to serve as a member of the Ad hoc Committee on Police Services, to fill the vacancy created by Mr. Stephen Kegler's resignation from the Council. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Mill Rate for Fiscal Year 2016/17

Mr. Ryan moved and Mr. Marcellino seconded to approve the following resolution: BE IT RESOLVED: That the Tax Rate for the Town of Mansfield for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 be set at 29.87 mills, and the Collector of Revenue be authorized and directed to prepare and mail to each taxpayer tax bills in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, and that such taxes shall be due and payable July 1, 2016 and January 1, 2017.

The motion passed unanimously.

The disposition of additional state revenues will be discussed at a future meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

8. Regional School District No. 19 Proposed Building Project

Mr. Kochenburger moved and Mr. Ryan seconded, effective May 23, 2016, to endorse Mayor Shapiro's letter to the Regional School District No. 19 Board of Education, conveying the Town Council's concerns regarding the process that the Region 19 Board is using to develop and review its proposed building project, as well as the related land transaction with UCONN.

A revised letter was distributed. Mr. Shapiro addressed the changes in the revised letter which include changing all references to "I" to "we" and a minor adjustment in the third paragraph.

Members discussed their concerns regarding both the project and the process.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Town Manager will copy UConn's Deputy Chief of Staff to the President Michael Kirk on the letter. Mr. Kochenburger requested that the transmittal letter note that the vote was unanimous.

9. WPCA, UConn Sewer Agreement

Ms. Moran moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to schedule a special meeting, at a time to be determined, to discuss the UConn Sewer Agreement.

Motion passed unanimously.

IX. REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Finance Chair Bill Ryan noted the Committee's special meeting scheduled for May 26, 2016 at which the Fraud Risk Assessment Report will be discussed.

Ms. Moran, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Rental Regulations and Enforcement, reported the May 25, 2016 meeting will include a review of current rules and regulations.

Ms. Moran, Chair of the Personnel Committee, announced the Committee recently met and discussed the Town Manager's evaluation calendar. The Committee will also be reconsidering how best to reconcile the gift policies of the Town with those of the Board of Education.

Ms. Moran, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Police Services commented on the retirement of both the UConn and Willimantic Police Chiefs and the effect that might have on any potential cooperative agreements.

Mr. Kochenburger, Chair of the Committee on Committees, forwarded the following recommendations:

- Peter Millman to the Sustainability Committee for a term ending 4/27/2020.
- Jim Raynor to the Recreation Advisory Committee for a term ending 8/1/2019

The motion to approve passed unanimously.

Mr. Kochenburger reported that a Council member is needed for the Mansfield Discovery Depot Board, volunteers are needed for the Historic District Commission, and a Republican or Unaffiliated volunteer is needed for an Ethics Board Alternate position.

X. DEPARTMENTAL AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

No comments offered.

XI. PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

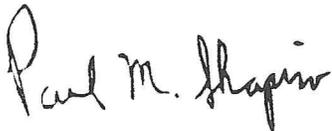
10. E. O. Smith Building Project Petition
11. R. Schafer (5/9/16)
12. P. Shapiro re: May 9, 2016 Town Council Meeting
13. Planning and Zoning Commission Referral: Trail Access at Storrs Center
14. Planning and Zoning Commission Referral: Zoning Regulation Revisions
15. State of Connecticut Official Statement re: Public Works Week

XII. FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Shaiken requested that the Region 19 Superintendent be invited to a future meeting to provide an update. Members agreed that they would like not just a synopsis of the June 9, 2016 information session, but an update on all facets of the project.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Shaiken moved and Ms. Raymond seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.



Paul M. Shapiro, Mayor



Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

Hi, my name is Kelly Bourquin. I am a 13 year resident of Mansfield CT. I have 4 children- one at EO Smith, one at the middle school and one at Vinton. Last week I attended the Building Committee as I became aware by reading the Daily Campus that Region 19 was proposing to sell EO Smith to Uconn and offset the costs with grant money and the profits from a sale to build a new school on the Depot Campus. I was quite shocked to hear this. I was aware that there were proposals for renovations in the works that started being looked at in June 2015. This was still the case until Tai Soo presented formal proposals to the Region with 3 proposals for renovations, and added the one to build a school. I was shocked to see how quickly the board looked at this and pursued it (which appears to have been voted on the same night it was formally presented in February).

If I was shocked and unaware, I'm sure there were others. This led to conversations and a Facebook group page started Keep EO Smith Downtown. It currently has 961 members. A petition was also started with 371 signatures, which you received around 30 pages of comments on from former EO Smith Students, current students, residents and a wide array of people. We are looking to slow down this process. From my understanding the Region 19 board is looking for a referendum vote in I feel the only thing that I can see that Region 19 has looked at is the bottom line of financials. I think more needs to be considered about how we have a high school currently located on the campus of a flagship university which affords the students the ability to walk to college classes to obtain credit early, experience a sense of freedom with the downtown, and socialize with other students from various towns with activities such as the community center. Even as an adult we find ourselves going for dinner and catching sporting events at the high school as a fun family event. All this is feasible because of the location of the high school.

Another concern I have is that if this project does come to fruition and UConn purchases the land. All zoning rights are lost, as UCONN does not have to follow them. UConn recently bought the Nathan Hale and is using part as dorms. They cannot convert all the dorms until a new hotel is built within walking distance to UCONN. How do we know a hotel will not go there? Another popular college campus housing option popping up is commercialized dorms. How do we know that this will not go there?

I love going downtown and feel like this is a true community, I fear this sense of community will be lost and the community will now just be going out to socialize on the UCONN campus which doesn't interest me. I think this move will hurt business owners.

In addition, currently the June workshop is being put on by DRA which has pre referendum fees of \$48000 being paid by the Region 19 budget. We have a consultant putting on a workshop. I saw some documents presented by one consultant group, Tai Soo that had figures of consulting fees for the various proposals option with acoustics, roof and MEP-\$21,000, option one (relocating voag) \$3,400,000 for, and \$5,400,000 for building on an existing site or another site. I am in sales, and if I was

putting on a meeting it would be tailored to get people on my page. I think they sold it pretty well. This is now a sales pitch to the community but the Region is forgetting one thing beyond dollar signs and a shiny new school- we are a community who likes where the school is located and sees many benefits of its location. On our Facebook Page we have building committee member say the following after talking about what the workshop would cover like real grass or artificial turf, roof top patios, rain harvesting, solar polar, greenhouses, He said "let's also be honest. Visioning sessions such as these have a predefined scope of discussion. This is NOT a forum to debate accepting a UConn proposal or not."

And another quote from that post "To be clear, I see no evidence that picking one day or another won't be inconvenient for *someone*. Given that the social exercise is not a show-stopper nor critical, I see no reason to change the trajectories. They will adjust themselves as things develop."

This group has been accused of being a whisper camp gain. I would like to say we are now a ROAR campaign and we are only going to get louder. The FB group was told by this individual that long discussions were had amongst the teachers about the proposals. The majority were very unhappy with the options let alone partial options, and that Veteran teachers shook their head early on saying a new school made more sense than investing in the existing structure. I reached out to several veteran teachers whose time at EO Smith is probably close to a combined 80 years of experience. I heard the following, *no one they knew had a direct conversation with Bruce, and all responded that the school board has not adequately communicated or involved the faculty as a whole in any kind of discussion about this building project.

Lastly the State of CT Building School Grant is currently seeing changes to it with Senate Bill 503. The state is in a budget crisis, I thought UCONN was too, but we are throwing out million dollars' worth of figures and don't even know what the grant funding is.

I would like to know-

-Has the Region 19 Board been working with the town council on this building proposal?

-Does the town have a stance on this building proposal?

-What studies can the town do to see the impact on this building proposal to the downtown?

-Have the towns of Ashford, Willington had their opinion sought out?

-What can the residents of Mansfield do to have their voices heard? Do we have procedures in place to slow this down?

As these last few weeks have unfolded, I hope that every member of the Mansfield Town Council has paid close attention to the various discussions that citizens, parents and taxpayers have fostered in response to the unsuspected direction taken by the Region 19 Board of Education regarding a proposed move of EO Smith to the Mansfield Depot Campus. There are so many levels of discussion among our community that it would be impossible for any one person to discuss them all in a single Town Council meeting, no matter how much time could be devoted to the issue. And I thank the Mansfield Town Council for devoting considerable time to this issue, and performing its duties in the best interests of our town and the surrounding communities. In respect to this issue, we are a community that has become something special in Northeastern Connecticut, and our community of towns enjoy special aspects of our corner of Connecticut that can never be replaced once it is gone.

This is evidenced very strongly by the commentary of citizens on the FaceBook page, Keep EO Smith Downtown, and the Change.org page, Slow Down the EO Smith Building Project. The social media outcry on both of these websites, referenced below shows that hundreds of citizens and taxpayers are asking for greater transparency in the process, more direct communication about abrupt changes in the scale and scope of the proposed plans and discussions with outside parties (and when the discussion is about moving the high school in a land swap, then UConn is an outside party), and an in depth discussion about how such proposals will affect our current students, our future students (for example our

elementary school children), and the nature of our community for decades to come.

As a start, I would like every Town Council Member to access these websites and view the message threads this issue has generated. The full context is far too long to be included here, but you will find very thoughtful insights that have not been part of the rushed decision to contact the University of Connecticut to become a partner in a plan that actually was never authorized for the Region 19 Board of Education to pursue. I urge every member of the Town Council of Mansfield, and the Boards of Selectmen of Ashford and Willington to review these responses by your constituents before deciding on whether it is prudent to push forward on a project for which the public has not been given due time for discussion and consideration to make informed decisions that will have very long lasting consequences.

Keep EO Smith Downtown

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/873797359416116/>

Slow Down the EO Smith Building Project

https://www.change.org/p/jac6854-sbcglobal-net-slow-down-the-eos-building-project?recruiter=542896871&utm_source=petitions_show_components_action_panel_wrapper&utm_medium=copylink

It is clear from the breadth and depth of the various discussions on this thread that there are many unresolved issues concerning the plans for EO Smith High

School, the events that led to a drastic shift from renovating facilities for two departments of the school to a complete rebuild and relocation project, and the manner in which this was communicated to the public. It is difficult to believe that the concerns voiced here were duly considered by the Board of Education in the very short time that it was discussed prior to approaching the University of Connecticut about a possible land transfer. It is also difficult to believe that the Mansfield town council, and the Boards of Selectmen of Ashford and Willington could have been given adequate information in such a short time frame so that those bodies could have proper guidance in deciding if this is a plan that should go forward. At the onset, the proposal by the Region 19 Board of Education was explicitly for renovation plans for the Fine Arts department, the Vocational Agriculture program, and for storage and maintenance facilities. Even as recently as the December 2015 Board of Education meeting there was no indication of anything different, and the minutes note that the Superintendent himself did not know what TKSP architects would propose. Thus, it would seem that this entire shift would have been complete news to every member of the Board, and a prudent course of action would have been to proceed slowly, being sure that all stakeholders (taxpayers especially) were made fully aware of this change in scope and scale, that there would be ample time for discussion of the impacts of such a plan, and that an alternative solution could be explored. That last point is very important as it is always advisable in any potentially life changing event to seek a second opinion before rushing into a course of action from which there may be no turning back. All this should have been done before approaching the University and setting the wheels in motion. This process has been marked by rash decision making, a lack of transparency, and a failure to complete the due diligence that

would be expected of the Board. Rather than continue on a fast track, it is in the best interests of the citizens of Mansfield, Ashford and Willington to halt this process and find a solution that satisfies the needs of the school without the adverse effects on the students and the community that the proposed school relocation would cause.

Considering that the Region 19 Board of Education, by record of their own meeting minutes, would have had no prior knowledge of a proposal to build a new high school as of their January 2016 meetings, and as such the said members of the Region 19 Board of Education could not have had the information necessary to enter into a discussion with the University of Connecticut for a property exchange for the purpose of moving forward with a relocation of EO Smith high school, and considering that such information would have been pertinent and essential for the Mansfield Town Council, as well as the Boards of Selectmen of Ashford and Willington, to make a fully informed decision of whether to fund this as a new project, and whether this should be considered in any referendum, I formally ask the Mansfield Town Council to reject the proposal of the Region 19 Board of Education to proceed with any architectural plans other than what was approved by the Region 19 Board of Education in its July 2016 meeting. At such meeting, member Frank Krasicki proposed funding for exploring renovations to the Fine Arts Department, the Vocational Agriculture facilities, and certain storage and maintenance facilities. I am asking the Town Council to remind the Region 19 Board of Education that those plans were the scope of what the citizens of Mansfield, Ashford, and Willington charged them with. As such, the

Region 19 Board of Education should cease and desist with all unauthorized activities regarding a new high school, and especially should cease and desist with any and all activities with plans to relocate EO Smith High School.

To: Town Council, Planning & Zoning Committee
Date: May 23, 2016
From: Rebecca Shafer RShafer@MansfieldNeighborhoodPreservation.org
Bill Roe, BRoe@MansfieldNeighborhoodPreservation.org

Re: Town Council Meeting May 23, 2016

STUDENTIFICATION

A quick update from Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group.

At last meeting, I distributed an article called *The College That Ate a City* describing how private developers overbuilt the college community of San Marcos, TX until the community itself was transformed into wall-to-wall dorms and eventually flooded when an apartment complex was built in a flood plain. In continuing to research what college communities do to push back against this, our group came across something extraordinary.

There is phenomenon called "studentification" and it is happening in Mansfield. It is not, as some have told us, that my neighbors and I are bad neighbors, anti-growth, or don't bring our student neighbors enough cocoa & muffins. As opposed to "gentrification" our town is dealing with studentification. And, it is driven by big business.

This is not only a national phenomenon, it is a GLOBAL phenomenon. Mansfield is in the cross hairs of a 160 Billion dollar annual business. If you put #studentification into the search engine, you will find towns from across the globe dealing with the influx of students into their communities and the explosion of off-campus housing complexes in their towns. UK, Canada, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Japan and even Nairobi, Kenya are dealing with the overflow of students into their neighborhoods.

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/studentification>

#Destudentification is the process of converting neighborhoods back to family neighborhoods, and forcing the universities to house their students rather than creating policies which push the responsibility for housing these young people onto the towns.

This is driven by **privatization of student life by big business**. These 3 articles discuss their marketing strategies, how their products push rents up, reduce affordable housing, shift focus to off-campus housing, and provide a higher ROI for their shareholders.

Many of these large firms are REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts). They make presentations prepared by their marketing firms encouraging universities to reduce their student housing stock. They first target flagship universities and when those are exhausted they target smaller universities with 10-15,000 students. As development sites become scarcer, they propose higher density, taller housing units in smaller spaces, but this is more challenging for them, they explain, because it gets closer scrutiny and requires lengthy approval processes. This is called "infill." Thus, when UConn refers to "student preference" for off-campus housing, that may be a developer-driven preference for a higher ROI, not a student-driven preference. Students are just a commodity in the sales strategy.

You will probably see some similarities to what is happening in our area when you read these articles because two of the articles refer to UConn/Mansfield. You can learn more about how this industry targets rural towns like ours in www.studenthousingbusiness.com

Our neighbors live here because they like the "Quiet Corner." They do not want the area to be transformed into an urban environment or to be overbuilt, they appreciate the rural character of our community. They do not want to be a target market in the sales game of the student housing market sector which is a subsector of the residential housing market. We would like these REITS to take UConn and Mansfield off of their "sales prospect" list.

To the extent UConn caves into these sales pitches, Mansfield must be prepared to stand strong.

Regards,
Rebecca Shafer
Bill Roe
Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group
@CtNeighbors