
Hybrid | Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
4 So. Eagleville Road, Mansfield, CT

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moran called the meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Ausburger, Berthelot, Moran, Schurin, Shaiken (*late arrival noted below*)
Virtual: Bruder, Coleman, Cotton (*late arrival noted below*), Fratoni

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Jonique Soler, Mansfield Hollow Road Extension, raised concerns about comments made by Mayor Moran at the December 29, 2022 School Building Committee meeting in regards to gender neutral bathrooms at the new elementary school, Conservative Christian Evangelicals and Liberals. Mr. Soler felt the comment was divisive and asked that the Charter be consulted in regards to the removal of Council members.

4. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

[*Shaiken arrived.*]

Town Manager Ryan Aylesworth presented and discussed his written report. The report is available online at www.MansfieldCT.gov and is on file with the Town Clerk. In response to a question from Mr. Coleman, Mr. Aylesworth provided details regarding a recent sprinkler break at the new elementary school.

Mr. Coleman expressed displeasure regarding the sprinkler break and its impact on the gym floor, the issuance of the certificate of occupancy and the planned April move into the new school because he believes it is happening too quickly. He also stated TSKP and Colliers should not be employed by the Town.

[*Cotton arrived.*]

In response to a question from Mr. Bruder, Mr. Aylesworth summarized his recent meeting with residents in the area of Four Corners in regards to the role of the Town and residents in the development process.

In response to a question from Mr. Ausburger, Mr. Aylesworth explained that a permanent fix for the gym floor is currently being evaluated as is the impact of the water on the performance of the floor. It is expected that the floor will be usable for the remainder of the school year and the permanent fix is likely to occur over the summer break.

In response to a question from Mr. Shaiken, Mr. Aylesworth shared that no one working on the school project has suggested that the school will not be fully ready by the April move-in date.

5. REPORTS AND COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Moran apologized for her comments made at the December 29, 2022 School Building Committee meeting. She indicated that the issue was whether or not there should be gender neutral bathrooms in consideration of the fact that the Superintendent had heard from parents and there were concerns about compliance with State rules. She noted that she spoke hastily and exaggerated with the purpose of making a point. Though she did not intend to offend, she recognized that she did offend and further apologized for making the comments. Mayor Moran further commented regarding the upcoming Taste2Towns and her recent tour of the new school.

Mr. Coleman commented that he was shocked by the Mayor's comment at the December 29, 2022 School Building Committee meeting and asked the Council to discuss the matter at the next meeting.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

B. Appointments to Town Committees

C. Neglected Cemetery Grant Application

D. Quarterly Financial Statements

E. Local Transportation Capital Improvement Request - Baxter Road

Ms. Berthelot **moved** and Mr. Schurin seconded to approve the consent agenda. Motion **passed** with all in favor.

Motions passed by consent:

- Move, to approve the January 23, 2023 meeting minutes.
- Move, effective February 13, 2023, to appoint Jeannine Kanadia as a full member of the Human Rights Commission for a term ending 7/1/2024.
- Move, effective February 13, 2023, that Town Manager Ryan J. Aylesworth is authorized to apply for and accept, on behalf of the town, a grant from the Neglected Cemetery account and is further authorized to enter into and execute any and all agreements, contracts and documents necessary to obtain said grant should the town be selected for a grant award.
- Move, effective February 13, 2023, to accept the Financial Statements dated December 31, 2022.
- Move, to approve the submittal of the grant request for Baxter Road Rehabilitation to the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) as a Transportation Improvement Project for funding under the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program.

7. OLD BUSINESS

None.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. ARPA Funding Allocation - Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment

Mr. Aylesworth provided a summary of the assessment process to date and the proposal to move forward into the community input phase.

Mr. Ausburger indicated his discomfort with the proposed motion that included TSKP Studios as he disagrees with their facility recommendations and he wants another opinion.

Mr. Ausburger **moved** and Mr. Coleman seconded, effective February 13, 2023, to authorize the use of up to \$100,000 for the purpose of obtaining the services of a professional firm to design and implement a comprehensive public engagement strategy relative to the Town's ongoing municipal facilities needs assessment and master planning efforts, as well as provide funding for a professional firm in this next phase of the municipal facilities needs assessment study. All funding for this purpose to come from the Town's American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) allocation.

Councilors discussed and debated whether or not replacing the name of TSKP Studios with "a professional firm" meant the exclusion of TSKP in the project. Mr. Ausburger indicated that the exclusion of TSKP Studios in the project was the intent of his motion. Mr. Schurin indicated that he did not believe the motion meant the exclusion of TSKP Studios.

In response to Councilor questions, Mr. Aylesworth explained that TSKP Studios' involvement in this next phase would be at the direction of the primary consultant and for assessment explanation purposes only.

Motion **failed** with Ausburger, Coleman, Fratoni and Schurin in favor and Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Moran and Shaiken not in favor.

Mr. Shaiken **moved** and Ms. Berthelot seconded, effective February 13, 2023, to authorize the use of up to \$100,000 for the purpose of obtaining the services of a professional firm to design and implement a comprehensive public engagement strategy relative to the Town's ongoing municipal facilities needs assessment and master planning efforts, as well as provide funding for TSKP Studios' continued involvement in this next phase of the municipal facilities needs assessment study. All funding for this purpose to come from the Town's American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) allocation.

Mr. Shaiken spoke in support of his motion and noted the Town is a long way from a referendum on any proposed facility project. Councilors and Mr. Aylesworth agreed that diverse communication and participation are needed when collecting the feedback.

Motion **passed** with Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Fratoni, Moran, Schurin and Shaiken in favor and Ausburger and Coleman not in favor.

B. Management Organizational Update - Chief of Shared Services and Administration

Mr. Aylesworth described the need for and responsibilities of the proposed new position. Interim Human Resources Director Lee Palmer spoke in support of the proposed position.

In response to Councilor concerns, Mr. Aylesworth confirmed that the Finance Director would still work directly with the Town Manager to prepare the budget; that confidentiality in HR matters is about having the right person in the new position; and that a department head could not fulfill the new proposed role in addition to their current job duties.

Mr. Palmer indicated that an HR Lead or Personnel Manager would handle recruitments.

Mr. Coleman shared that he wants the Town Manager to spend time looking at town wide efficiencies.

Ms. Berthelot **moved** and Mr. Schurin seconded, effective February 13, 2023, to establish the position of the Chief of Shared Services and Administration as outlined in the attached job description, and, further, that the Director of Human Resources position be concurrently eliminated to help offset the funds required to establish the Chief of Shared Services and Administration position. Upon the filling of the position of Chief of Shared Services and Administration, appropriate transfer of funds, if necessary, will be made to provide for this position.

Motion **passed** with Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Fratoni, Moran, Schurin and Shaiken in favor and Ausburger and Coleman not in favor.

C. Fire Department Funding Application - Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program

Chief Fred Mitchell briefly described the grant application which includes a river rescue course for fire department members.

Mr. Shaiken **moved** and Mr. Ausburger seconded to approve the Town's application for the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program as described by the Chief. Motion **passed** unanimously.

D. Mansfield Parks and Recreation Annual Update

Jay O'Keefe, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided the Council with an update on the services, operations, programs, facilities, and current projects being undertaken by Mansfield Parks and Recreation. Jennifer Kaufman, Director of Planning and Development, discussed parks, preserves and natural areas, trail systems and recreation areas.

In response to Councilor questions, Mr. O'Keefe discussed the fee waiver and Silver Sneakers programs. Councilors expressed an interest in further analysis of the data around the Silver Sneakers program to gauge financial viability.

Mr. Coleman expressed concern over the budget. Mr. Aylesworth indicated that the financial viability of the Community Center is being studied. Mr. O'Keefe stated both the Parks and Recreation and Community Center budgets present challenges.

E. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations - Fee/Rate Schedule

Mr. Aylesworth explained the need to establish a fee for the use of power. Allen Corson, Director of Facilities Management, provided an update on the installation of charging stations in town.

In response to Councilor questions, Mr. Corson stated the charging stations will be monitored and repaired as needed. Mr. Aylesworth reviewed the total investment and maintenance costs.

Mr. Shaiken **moved** and Mr. Bruder seconded, effective February 13, 2023, to set the fee for use of Town-owned and operated EV charging stations as \$0.36 per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Coleman **moved** and Mr. Ausburger seconded to amend the motion by replacing \$0.36 with \$1.50 to cover maintenance and initial investment.

In support of his amendment, Mr. Coleman stated the technology is new and money should be added for projected maintenance so it doesn't become a burden to the taxpayer. Mr. Shaiken stated the proposed amended rate is an exorbitant rate to charge the citizens of the town.

The amendment **failed** with Ausburger and Coleman in favor and Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Fratoni, Moran, Schurin and Shaiken not in favor.

Original motion passed with Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Fratoni, Moran, Schurin and Shaiken in favor and Ausburger and Coleman not in favor.

9. REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Mr. Shaiken reported that the financial statements were approved and the Town's contract with the auditing firm was extended for one additional year.

Mr. Bruder reported the Committee on Committees met and made recommendations for appointments that will come before the Council at the next meeting.

10. DEPARTMENTAL AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

11. PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Downtown Storrs Parking Garage Financial Report (December 2022)

B. EHHD COVID-19 Reports

C. Town Manager's Office Newsletter

12. FUTURE AGENDAS

- Ms. Berthelot asked that the Gurley Cemetery expansion request be discussed after the budget meetings.
- Mr. Coleman asked the Council to review Mr. Soler's complaint and consider the referenced provision in the Town Charter.
- Mr. Coleman asked the Council to write a letter to the PZC to request the notification to property owners when there is a development project be extended further out from the site of the development.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bruder **moved** and Mr. Shaiken seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m. The motion **passed** unanimously.

Antonia Moran, Mayor

Sara-Ann Chaine, Town Clerk