
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 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth Sparks, Cedar Swamp Road, asked the Council that a moratorium be placed on the project at Four Corners to allow time for the real housing needs of the town to be assessed and current and future water needs, sustainable building designs and potential renovations to be further considered.

[*Ausburger arrived.*]

David Rhodes, Timber Drive, spoke regarding the importance of communication between town departments and with residents and asked for more publicity around projects in town.

Martha Kelly, Bundy Lane, member of the Board of Education but speaking as a private citizen, spoke regarding her disapproval of the comments made by the Mayor at the December 29, 2022 School Building Committee meeting. (*Statement attached.*)

4. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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.

Jennifer Kaufman, Director of Planning and Development, summarized projects and Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) decisions affecting the Four Corners area. At the request of the Mayor, Ms. Kaufman explained the role of the PZC.

Mr. Shaiken indicated that the aforementioned projects were described in the Town Manager's Report and the Council may wish to add further discussion of projects at Four Corners to a future agenda so all interested parties have the opportunity to attend.

At the request of Mr. Bruder, Ms. Kaufman described the Town's development activity webpage where applications in various stages can be reviewed.

In response to a question from Mr. Coleman, Mr. Aylesworth explained a pump at the new elementary school was replaced due to a sediment issue. Mr. Coleman expressed concern over sediment issues and the potential impact that unresolved issues can have on drinking water and sprinkler systems.

5. REPORTS AND COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Moran reminded everyone about the Taste2Towns event going on and wished luck to the Mansfield students competing in the upcoming History Week.

Mr. Coleman expressed a desire for the Council to make recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission and frustration that he requested a discussion of the Mayor's comments made at the December 29, 2022 School Building Committee meeting be put on the Council agenda and it was not.

Mr. Coleman **moved** and Mr. Ausburger seconded to add an agenda item to review what the Mayor said, what she may have done wrong when she said it and if the Council should take any action in regards to discipline of the Mayor.

In support of his motion, Mr. Coleman stated there has been displeasure about what the Mayor said and he hopes his colleagues will review the issue tonight.

Ms. Berthelot voiced concern that if the Council goes down the path of holding a trial whenever someone misspeaks, they won't get anything done. She expressed her respect for the Mayor and commented that the School Building Committee put much thought into the topic of gender neutral bathrooms and came to a conclusion by working through the democratic process not by taking one sentence out of context and making it divisive.

Mr. Shaiken noted that the Mayor has apologized both at the School Building Committee and the Town Council meetings and he did not think a debate about punishment should be an agenda item. The majority tradition has been to allow for discourse even when opinions have been expressed in an offensive way.

Mr. Schurin stated his agreement with Ms. Berthelot and Mr. Shaiken. He expressed his distress that the issue has been brought up again, that the divisiveness has continued and indicated he wanted to move on to do the business of the Town.

Mr. Ausburger stated he took offence to politics being brought into the School Building Committee where it didn't belong.

Mr. Coleman stated his agreement with Mr. Shaiken that no one has ever been censored but pointed out that the minority recommendation of Ric Hossack for appointment to the Town Council was blocked by the majority party.

Ms. Berthelot noted that the Mayor was trying to illustrate that not everyone in town was comfortable with gender neutral bathrooms not that any one position was wrong and she has sincerely apologized.

Mr. Shaiken indicated that per State Statutes the political makeup of the Town's elected bodies represents the political makeup of the Town and yes sometimes a party recommendation is

rejected such as when the Council rejected a minority recommendation and when the PZC rejected a Democratic recommendation.

Mayor Moran explained that the intention of her comments was to point out to her colleagues that they do not live in this town all by themselves and they have to recognize the opinions of others in order to make good policy.

Motion **failed** with Berthelot, Bruder, Cotton, Fratoni, Moran, Schurin, and Shaiken against and Ausburger and Coleman in favor.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

B. Appointments to Town Committees

Mr. Shaiken **moved** and Mr. Ausburger seconded to approve the consent agenda. Motion **passed** with all in favor.

Motions passed by consent:

- Move, to approve the February 13, 2023 meeting minutes.
- Move, effective February 27, 2023, to appoint Louanne Cooley to the Cemetery Advisory Board for a term ending 7/1/2025; Melanie Desch as an alternate to the Agriculture Committee for a term ending 10/13/2024; Paul Stern to the Affordable Housing Committee for a term ending 01/01/2024.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Council FY 2023/2024 Goals and Objectives Proposed

Mr. Shaiken **moved** and Ms. Berthelot seconded, effective February 27, 2023, to adopt the Town Council FY 2023/2024 goals and objectives as presented, and authorize the inclusion of these goals and objectives in the “Legislative” section of the FY 2023/2024 budget book. Motion **passed** unanimously.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Introduction of New Director of Human Services

Ryan introduced Allison Maynard, Mansfield’s new Director of Human Services. Ms. Maynard spoke briefly about her career and the Council welcomed her to Mansfield.

B. Human Rights Commission Annual Update

Jane Fried, Chair of the Mansfield Human Rights Commission (HRC), provided the Council with an update on the activities of the HRC. She also discussed obstacles some people face to public participation, the challenge of discovering whether DEI works or not and expressed a continued interest in reviewing the personnel policies of the Town.

C. Presentation on Mansfield Wayfinding & Signage Plan

Mr. Aylesworth briefed the Council on the work done by MERJE to date including stakeholder feedback and a proposed wayfinding design. Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership, added that the wayfinding project is one of the outcomes of Mansfield’s Positioning and Marketing Plan.

Glen Swantak from MERJE updated the Town Council on the work that has been completed on the Wayfinding & Signage Plan, and discussed next steps including CTDOT review, bid phase and installation. In response to Councilor questions, Mr. Swantak shared that he has been

working successfully with UConn to coordinate wayfinding efforts and all Town parks and eating and shopping districts will be included in the signage plan.

D. Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement (FY 2023-2025) - Mansfield Firefighter, Local 4120 IAFF

Mr. Aylesworth summarized terms of the proposed agreement. Attorney Ken Weinstock indicated that negotiations were characterized by productive dialog and discussion.

Mr. Schurin, by recommendation of the Personnel Committee, **moved**, effective February 27, 2023, to authorize the Town Manager to execute the proposed successor collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Mansfield and Mansfield Fire Fighters, Local 412 International Association of Fire Fighters effective July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025. Motion **passed** unanimously.

9. REPORTS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Mr. Schurin, Chair of the Personnel Committee, reported that the Committee discussed the proposed charge, a 360 degree evaluation of the Town Manager, and reviewed positive feedback regarding the four-day work week.

Mr. Bruder, Chair of the Committee on Committees, reported that recent recommendations for appointment were approved during tonight's consent agenda.

Mr. Ausburger reported that he recently attended a productive arts roundtable meeting.

10. DEPARTMENTAL AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

11. PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Resident Letters

B. Downtown Storrs Parking Garage Financial Report (January 2023)

12. FUTURE AGENDAS

- State Designated Cultural Community

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ausburger **moved** and Ms. Berthelot seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. The motion **passed** unanimously.

Antonia Moran, Mayor

Sara-Ann Chaine, Town Clerk

February 27, 2023

Town Council
Town of Mansfield
Four South Eagleville Road
Mansfield, CT 06268

Dear Members:

My point of reference is the December 29, 2022, School Building Committee meeting.

I cannot sit by while the standards of “Conservative Evangelical Christians” (or adherents of other belief systems) are subjected to bias, poor judgment or elitist, aberrant thought processes. This offense was not a one-word pejorative. It was delivered as a stream of self-explanation, borne of well-honed actions nurtured by “liberal” members of the School Building Committee and their contracted advisors. The overt behavior revealed the underbelly of a usually more disciplined and discreet agenda. The design and implementation of this sensitive portion of a child-centered building project was an exercise that lacked judgment; it should have been guided by cultural understanding, insight and reason. Idealized intentions resulted in an unfortunate outcome which exhibits what could be interpreted as an inconsiderate, insensitive, centripetal pull toward some sort of transcendent liberal futuristic experiment.

Nonetheless, this unnecessary, ethically tenuous slip of the lip spilled the beans and recalibrated the focus. This pristine revelation is an acute exemplar of an underlying, years’-long, instinctive and obdurate undercurrent of distaste by some members of the majority party for the minority—tolerance by the liberal “us” for “them.”

In one fell swoop, this odious cautionary broadside, spawned by hand-picked building committee members and their agents, stained legitimate hope of meaningful agency, equity or equality for--or in consideration of— minorities, cultural and otherwise.

This major *faux pas* should be an embarrassment not only to the leadership of the dominant party but also to agents of the town of Mansfield.

Such a disrespectful “sin” of commission will be difficult to expiate.

Remediation should include introspective resignations, as well as cancellation of contracts for convenience. Also, to advance equity, our town’s Charter should be amended to increase minority representation from three members to four members.

With respect,



Martha Kelly
29 Bundy Lane
Storrs, CT 06268

NB: Although an elected member of our town’s preK-8 Board of Education and its auxiliary committees, I am speaking tonight as a private citizen.