

MONROE TOWN COUNCIL
Monroe, Connecticut
Regular Meeting
February 27, 2012 8:00 P.M.
Council Chambers

A regular meeting of the Monroe Town Council was held on Monday, February 27, 2012 at 8:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Monroe Town Hall.

PRESENT: Chairman Enid Lipeles
Vice-Chairman Deborah Heim
Councilmember Debra Dutches
Councilmember Raymond Knapp, Jr.
Councilmember Frank Lieto
Councilmember DeeDee Martin
Councilmember Tony Unger
Councilmember J.P. Sredzinski

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Stephen J. Vavrek

ABSENT: Councilmember Michele Mount

CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Motion to approve the public hearing held on February 8, 2012 regarding the Proposed 2012/2013 Town of Monroe Budget.
- B. Motion to approve the minutes and voting record of the regular meeting held on February 13, 2012.

Chairman Lipeles noted the unanimous approval of the consent calendar.

COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Correspondence from Chairman Michael O'Reilly of the Conservation and Water Resources Commission to Town Council Chair regarding Resolution for Sisters of the Holy Family Nazareth property.
- B. Correspondence from Richard Orr of 40 Woodlawn Road, Monroe to the Town Council Chair received on February 21, 2012 regarding Monroe EMS Paramedic Service proposal.
- C. Memo from the First Selectman to Town Council dated February 16, 2012 regarding the Acceptance of Donation to Parks & Recreation Department from All About Art.
- D. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 22, 2012 regarding an appointment to the Commission for the Aging.
- E. Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated February 22, 2012 regarding an appointment to the Youth Commission.
- F. Letter from Gregory R. Citrano and Mary-Alice Citrano to the Town Council dated February, 27, 2012 regarding 6 Cedar Terrace.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Joe Sullivan, Garder Road stated he wanted to call attention to the actions made by the Town Attorney in Superior Court and also actions that have nothing at all to do with the Pond View litigations but in our own Town Hall. He wanted to make the Town Council aware that when he first met with the First Selectman on Tuesday evening, he was aware the Town Attorney was in Court on Friday but it was his opinion that the Town Attorney was acting neutral. Mr. Sullivan wanted to share what the Town Attorney did that was not considered neutral.

Councilmember Dutches stated that this regards a person employed by the Town of Monroe and she doesn't believe that a Public Participation is the place to discuss this.

Councilmember Unger stated this is not a Court and we are not here to judge anybody. If Mr. Sullivan has an issue he should write a letter to the First Selectman because he is the

supervisor of that particular gentleman and if he wishes to copy Town Council that is fine but we are not going to sit up here and judge passed on comments.

Chairman Lipeles stated that he should take Mr. Unger's suggestion and write a letter and we can have it read into the minutes at the next meeting. Mrs. Lipeles read from the guidelines what the rules are when speaking during the Public Participation section.

Joe Sullivan stated that this is not defamatory. He has a disagreement with how he is conducting the Town's business. He stated he has every right as a citizen to say he doesn't agree with the way he is conducting the Town's business in this matter, in this litigation. He also stated that the Town has been more successful with taking cases away from the Town Attorney and putting it in the hands of a privatizing agent, Pullman & Comley LLC. and we end up winning in a matter of months.

Chairman Lipeles stated that he is making too many defamatory comments and suggested he just send a letter.

Steve Ballok, 115 Wheeler Road, stated that he has a few things he wants to say about Pond View. This is a matter that really doesn't have anything to do with Pond View but instead with a matter of Freedom of Information and how we control it here in Town. He went to the Planning & Zoning Office last Tuesday and asked to see the file. He was instructed by the Office that the file was closed. He then stated how can this file be closed. They told him it was under litigation and that was why. Mr. Ballok also stated that the other matter is that they are back in Court and this has been on for eight years. Mr. Ballok wanted to know where the Town Attorney is getting his direction in this matter.

Councilmember Dutches stated that the Client is Planning & Zoning and the client is not here.

Chairman Lipeles stated that Town Council has nothing to do with the Planning & Zoning so they don't know where he is getting it and they are not going to make any comments about it.

When First Selectman Vavrek was addressed on his opinions he stated that Mr. Ballok should go to Planning & Zoning they will give you all the answers you need.

Jennifer Aguilar, 32 Surrey Lane, expressed her disappointment in the vote to close Chalk Hill. She doesn't feel that the right people have been reached out to in order to make it a money maker. She commented that Councilmember Sredzinski stated that he doesn't feel comfortable asking tax payers to pay for that space but instead he is going to ask them to pay for half of it to be closed and do nothing with. She knows parents who would volunteer once a year every Friday to have a Teen Night at Chalk Hill. \$3,000 could be made three weeks out of every month.

Ernie LaFollete, Hammertown Road, stated he saw under new business the item about Advanced Life Support. He read the letter that was submitted by Mr. Orr and he agrees with him on wanting to know what the \$360,000 for. He stated that if we are willing to take that money out of the undesignated fund and at the same time they are going to bond all this money for roads and you take the money out of the undesignated fund it will affect the bond rate. We are trying to get that money up to improve the bond rate so this seems to be a big step to make since. He thinks that you can just go down to the walk-in Medical Clinic and have all the Advanced Life Support you could imagine.

Karen Terino, 149 Wheeler Road, stated that she runs the 3, 4, and 5 year old program for Parks & Recreation in the Summer. She is really displeased with the decision to close Chalk Hill. In looking at the number of houses that have gone under foreclosure if you leave them alone for a number of years they will get so dilapidated and it will cost more money to bring it back a year later. They bring in a lot of revenue with 150 kids for eight weeks a year paying \$125 or \$145 just in the first, second, third, fourth and fifth grade. She truly believes that you have to invest in this Town to get something out of it. Monroe is one of the only Town's that do not have something for these kids all the time.

Nick Kapoor, Cardinal Lane, commented on the vote anticipated for the amended minutes from January 23, 2012. He stated that in calling the question is an incidental

motion to the main motion that requires a second and two-thirds approval and this is still not reflected in the minutes.

Karen Martin, 142 Garder Road, encouraged all the Town Council members to consider Advanced Life Services for this Town because you cannot put a price on someone's life.

APPOINTMENTS

COMMISSION FOR THE AGING

MOTION: (D. Heim)

To have council approve the appointment of Kathleen Quinn (U) of 194 Josies Ring Road, to the Commission for the Aging for a term ending July 2, 2012.

SECOND: (D. Dutches)

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Quinn is a dedicated skilled RN possessing 20 years of healthcare experience in a broad range of areas including adult, geriatric, and psychiatric and developmentally challenged nursing. Mrs. Quinn is currently the Director of Nurses for the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in Monroe, a 45 person facility consisting of multi-tiered care including assisted living, sub-acute, long term care, hospice and independent living. Mrs. Quinn's work experience makes her an ideal candidate to work on the issues of the aging in Monroe. She lives in Monroe with her husband and four sons. This appointment replaces the vacancy created by the late Robert J. Wesche.

Motion passed 8 - 0

YOUTH COMMISSION

MOTION: (D. Martin)

To have council approve the appointment of Brooke Burling (D) of 81 Maryanne Drive to the Youth Commission for a term ending October 12, 2013.

SECOND: (D. Dutches)

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Burling is a six year resident of Monroe, is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted. This is a statewide advocacy group in education whose goal/mission is to help meet the needs of talented and gifted children. Mr. Burling has worked as a volunteer with the Monroe School System as part of his advocacy for the gifted. He has also volunteered as a set designer for the Monroe Middle School Drama Program and as a Youth Soccer Coach at all levels for the past ten years. Mr. Burling looks forward to continuing his work with the youth of Monroe through his work on the Youth Commission. This appointment replaces the vacancy created by Myrna Mills Albino.

Motion passed 8 - 0

ACTION ITEMS

Town Council Committee on Finance, Education, Health & Public Safety Matters

Councilmember Heim said they have not met because they have been working on the budget every night. After the budget is passed they will be setting up a meeting.

Town Council Committee on Planning & Zoning, Public Works & Recreation Matters

Councilmember Unger said they have not met either because of the budget meetings. They plan to meet on Monday, March 12, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

Town Council Committee on Legislative & Administrative Matters

Councilmember Sredzinski said they have not met since the last Town Council meeting. They are scheduled to meet at March 15, 2012 at 5:30 p.m.

Trumbull/Monroe Health District

Councilmember Knapp said they have not met but there is one program that is called Cut Out the Fat. There are three sessions: March 20th, March 27th, and April 3rd from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Registration is required.

First Selectmen's Update

First Selectmen Vavrek spoke in response to Ms. Aguilar's comment. He stated that the YMCA does run these programs and he has been approached by them. Although, the initial numbers don't look good they will be meeting with a bunch of people between the

YMCA, different Hospitals and other people that are zoned for that property to put together a plan. The Town does have a new Parks & Recreation Director that has made these buildings work all over. Whatever the Town Council decides to do with the Budget it will still come before the Board of Finance and hopefully there will be an adequate plan. He feels that they can do something with it. There is a definite interest in this building and he asks everyone not to give up. The numbers once he finally got them did not look good but like anything else in this Town we have to progress and move forward and work together to do that. Lastly, he wanted to Thank the Democratic Town Committee for putting up an Unaffiliate.

Councilmember Martin addressed Mr. Vavrek and asked him if he is now telling the Town Council after they voted on his second recommendation that this building should be moth-balled because things were just not coming together?

First Selectman Vavrek responded that the numbers he was getting at the time were not coming together. The numbers he had finally gotten from the Building Department, Finance Department and the Parks & Recreation Department were not coming together. He stated that he recommended that if he does not get them together they should moth-ball it. He also stated that he also said he was bringing people in next week to see it. All Board of Finance wants to see is a plan on how we can make some of this money back and it cannot happen in the first couple of years. He will take full responsibility for getting this building closed and moth-balled but they do have other Committees and other groups that could of, should of, and maybe instead of pointing fingers instead of looking for little ways to cut maybe they could have looked for little ways to help.

Councilmember Martin addressed the rest of Town Council Members if she is the only councilmember seated at the meeting that misunderstood Mr. Vavrek's direction he was giving them on Thursday evening?

Councilmember Dutches, Vice-Chairman Heim, Chairman Lipeles, Councilmember Unger and Councilmember Lieto stated that they all heard what Mrs. Martin had heard.

First Selectman Vavrek stated to the public that the numbers are what they are but we have always had numbers in this Town and we have made them work and this is not a dead issue. There will be things brought before Board of Finance and they will make the ultimate decision.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

PARKS & RECREATION FEES

MOTION: (D. Heim)

To approve the original fees as amended.

SECOND: (T. Unger)

DISCUSSION:

There was no discussion needed.

Motion passed 8 – 0

AMENDED TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES DATED JANUARY 23, 2012

MOTION: (D. Martin)

To revisit the amended minutes to include the incidental motion that was not correctly stated in the amended minutes.

SECOND: (T. Unger)

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Sredzinski stated that he doesn't fully understand the motion.

Councilmember Martin stated that the amended minutes from January 23, 2012 still do not completely reflect the amendments she wanted to come out of the original minutes. She thinks they still need to be still tightened to include the incidental motion. She would like Mr. Unger's motion to call the question to be included and the fact that there was not a two-thirds vote in this new amended minutes.

Councilmember Lieto stated that he doesn't believe that such a reflection would be appropriate for the minutes only in respect to that she is making a conclusion about the propriety of a certain motion that speaks for itself. There is no second included in the minutes. The minutes do accurately represent what transpired at the meeting and he suggests that the minutes not be amended.

Councilmember Martin withdrew the motion.

MOTION: (D. Martin)

To approve the minutes as amended.

SECOND: (T. Unger)

Motion passed 8 - 0

NEW BUSINESS

5K TRAIL RUN FOR PROJECT WARMTH: OCTOBER 21, 2012

Andy and Lori Pfau and their three children Sarah, Katie and Bridget, 35 Field Rock Road, are seeking support for a new proposed Trail Run which will kick off on Sunday, October 21, 2012 at 9 am starting and ending at Wolfe Park.

MOTION: (J.P. Sredzinski)

To have Town Council instruct the First Selectman and the Parks & Recreation Department to work with Mr. and Mrs. Pfau to accomplish this.

SECOND: (T. Unger)

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Sredzinski asked if they have mapped out the route and if they now where the start point would be.

Andy Pfau stated that they tentatively have mapped it out by starting at the parking lot and winding through Great Hollow Lake and then go through the trails.

Councilmember Dutches stated that this is a wonderful proposal and appreciates that a family in the community is making this proposal.

Motion passed 8 - 0

MONROE CONSERVATION AND WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION RESOLUTION

Dr. Michael O'Reilly, Chairman for the Conservation and Water Resources Commission wanted to make Town Council members aware of a wonderful opportunity for this Town. The Commission has put forth a resolution concerning the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth who have put their property on the market. This property is a beautiful property that adjoins Wolfe Park, Discovery Zone and some of the trails. The Sisters would like to sell the property and there has been an effort to save the Castle. The Commission is more or less interested in making them more aware of an additional 125 acres of open space that is still available and still on the market. They do not have any idea at this point for the cost. They would hope for a grant to work with GPL as they did with the Discovery Zone. There is no decision on what to do with the disposition of the present residents residing on the property at the moment.

Councilmember Martin asked about the open space property that they are referring to is accessible from where?

Dr. Michael O'Reilly stated it is accessible from the Blue Top Trail and the River that is already Town Property.

Chairman Lipeles stated that the Town Council members have this resolution and that they will vote on this in two weeks.

Vice-Chairman Heim asked for clarification on what exactly Dr. Michael O'Reilly is looking for from the Council.

Dr. Michael O'Reilly responded that at this point a resolution of support for 120 acres of the land surrounding the property. Any further questions can be directed directly to him.

DEBT SERVICES

Mr. Manjos stated that when this all started when the Police Station came to them with a proposal. The first questions that came up were what the existing debt level was, what acceptable level of debt was, what metrics were used to measure that level of debt. There were not a lot of answers to be gotten. They had no parameters to judge this on. The Board of Finance thought there should be some standards in place and created a subcommittee on Debt. The last 7 or 8 months they have been working on this. The plans that are currently in front of the Town Council set a number of parameters to establish a plan for debt and that will control the level of debt and will set limits on whatever debt service can be and how we develop a debt plan going forward. They also plan to create a full set of Board of Finance plans that will also create plans for the undesignated fund. Right now the fund sits there and there are no parameters of what the Town expects that fund to be. What you see in other Towns is a set plan that is discussed with all the Governing bodies and there is a level of agreement so as bodies change and offices change there is a continuity in the direction the Town takes as opposed to how they finance the Town. They would like a consensus from the Town Council members.

Councilmember Dutches stated the importance of the plan far outweighs some of the numbers they come up with in the plan. It is the idea of actually having a plan that they try to stick to the parameters of it. Her understanding is that he is looking at 8% of the Total Budget as Debt Service and we are close to 7%. She also asked what the engl number is.

Mr. Manjos stated that 1.35 is the number from last year. The Engl number is a number the state produces for them. The ten year payout rate of 70% is at 75% right now.

Councilmember Sredzinski asked if this is something that could be referred to FEHPS so they could go over it more in depth and perhaps make a recommendation for the Council's Policy manual so that it is not so much a rule of procedure but more policy that is adopted.

Mr. Manjos stated that he thinks that would be a great thing to do because more of this is in-policy and is an agreed upon proposal. There needs to be a procedure in place for this.

Councilmember Martin asked if the Board of Finance has seen this?

Mr. Manjos stated they presented it to the Board of Finance. They have been working on this for the last 6 months and at the last meeting they all agreed on these numbers and felt it was time to share this with the Town Council, First Selectman's Office, and the Board of Education in order to get comments and feedbacks.

Councilmember Unger stated that it appears that there are two ways being talked about to finance projects. One way is debt service and the second way is pay as you go. One isn't in place of the other.

Mr. Manjos stated they work in tandem.

DONATION: ALL ABOUT ART

MOTION: (D. Heim)

To make a motion to accept the donation from All About Art who is recently closing their business.

SECOND: (T. Unger)

DISCUSSION:

Vice-Chairman Heim stated they would like to donate supplies to the Parks & Recreation Department totaling \$827.50.

Chairman Lipeles stated that anytime they get donations of more than \$500.00 they will publically acknowledge it.

Motion passed 8 - 0

ALS PARAMEDIC SERVICE

MOTION: (D. Heim)

To make a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance the use of the Undesignated Fund for a sum not to exceed \$360,000 for EMS expenditure for the purpose of creating an ALS Paramedic Service.

SECOND: (D. Dutches)

DISCUSSION:

Vice-Chairman Heim stated that this is for the expansion for the Paramedic Service since right now Monroe only has a Basic Life Support and this would bring us up to instead of having a Paramedic come in from Bridgeport or some other location this would allow for the Town of Monroe to have a Paramedic on site in the Town.

Councilmember Unger stated that this also included two vehicles for Paramedics and the expenses to outfit the services. This cost may continue in year two or three. If this is not managed properly a major part of this cost may be in subsequent years. They still have to pay for the Paramedic even if there is no call for the service.

Vice-Chairman Heim stated that the first year is going to be the most costly to the Town. After the first year they can go to the State and ask for the rate increase with the Paramedic Service. We have to have a Paramedic out from another Town because the Monroe EMS cannot do it unless we get the Paramedic Service in the Town. Once we get the rate increase from the State then they can start charging the higher rates.

Councilmember Unger stated this may not be just one year and need to consider for the following year whether it goes into the operating budget and they also have to have a history of billing because if they don't bill out the Paramedic's still have to be paid for.

Councilmember Sredzinski stated that he feels that all the Town Council members wanted to fund this out of the operating budget and wanted to add money to the EMS budget in order to do so. Trying to balance the needs of this Town with the ability of the taxpayers to pay for it is a very difficult balance. The \$360,000 that the Board of Finance would consider to spend would back enough in the initial investment in order to get them over the hump to get a Paramedic on Staff 24/7 and 365 days a years.

Councilmember Dutches stated that any fund that is set up needs to be approved by the Board of Finance and if the service was to make a profit or break even the money could then be returned to the undesignated fund.

Councilmember Martin stated that this is a service that needs to be updated and it will cost the Town a lot more than \$360,000 the first time they don't get to a call in time.

Motion passed 8 - 0

RECESS

MOTION: (D. Heim)

To make a motion to have a 10 minute recess before the adjusted numbers of the Budget are presented to the Town Council.

SECOND: (D. Martin)

Motion passed 8 - 0

Upon return from the Recess Budget numbers were not available therefore Chairman Lipeles called for a Special Town Council Meeting the following evening, Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (E. Lipeles)

To make a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

SECOND: (R. Knapp)

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Sredzinski stated that the Town Council member's were informed by First Selectman Vavrek that the Finance Director and the Assistant have left for the

evening and that is why they are adjourning and that is why they have to come back tomorrow evening.

Councilmember Unger stated he is against adjourning because he would like to vote on last year's numbers.

Motion passed 7 - 1 (*Councilmember Unger opposed*)

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Bobel
Town Council Clerk