

**MONROE TOWN COUNCIL
Monroe, Connecticut
MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

October 22, 2012 – 8:00 PM – Council Chambers

Present: Chairman Enid Lipeles
Vice Chairman Deborah Heim
Councilmember Debra Dutches
Councilmember Nick Kapoor
Councilmember Raymond Knapp, Jr.
Councilmember Frank Lieto
Councilmember Dee Dee Martin
Councilmember J.P. Sredzinski
Councilmember Tony Unger

Absent: First Selectman Stephen J. Vavrek

A regular meeting of the Monroe Town Council was held on Monday, October 22, 2012 at 8:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Monroe Town Hall.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the minutes and voting record of the regular meeting held on October 9, 2012 (Session 2012-17).

Motion to approve the minutes and voting record of the special meeting held on October 15, 2012.

Reappointments:

Jan Larsen (D) of 11 Redcoat Lane to the **Board of Assessment Appeals** for a term ending November 30, 2015.

Jerry Isleib (D) of 53 Cedar Lane to the **Lake Zoar Authority** for a term ending November 11, 2015.

Angelo Lisi (D) of 30 Farm View Road to the **Parks & Recreation Commission** for a term ending October 21, 2016.

Councilmember Dutches requested her comments stated on the October 9, 2012 Meeting Minutes regarding the roof for the Town Hall be added verbatim in the minutes.

The Consent Calendar was passed unanimously with the noted amendment to the October 9, 2012 Town Council Meeting and was passed unanimously to the Special Meeting held on October 15, 2012.

COMMUNICATIONS

Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated October 17, 2012 regarding an appointment to the Board of Police Commissioners.

Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated October 17, 2012 regarding an appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals (alternate).

Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council Chair dated October 17, 2012 regarding reappointments to various boards and commissions.

Memo from the First Selectman to the Town Council chair dated October 18, 2012 regarding an appointment to the Youth Commission.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

APPOINTMENTS

Motion: (D. Martin)

To approve the appointment of Domenic J. Paniccia (D) of 25 Easton Road to the Zoning Board of Appeals (alternate) for term ending November 30, 2015

Second: (N. Kapoor)

Discussion: Mr. Paniccia is a resident of Monroe who is a semi-retired construction manager. He spends the majority of his time (pro bono) working for children identified on the autism spectrum. In addition, he does some supervision of weatherizing work for the State of Connecticut. Mr. Paniccia has served on the Long Island Sound Advisory Commission. He has a BS from Sacred Heart University and has done graduate studies at Fairfield University and NYU.

Motion passed 9-0

Motion: (D. Heim)

To approve the appointment of Bernard Sippin (R) of 23 Westview Drive to the Board of Police Commissioners for a term ending May 16, 2015.

Second: (T. Unger)

Discussion: Mr. Sippin is a prominent local business owner, well known philanthropist and lifelong resident of the Town of Monroe. He is the owner and operator of West View Farms and Sippin Safaris and retired executive of Sippin Energy and Sippin Management Companies all of which are headquartered in Monroe. Mr. Sippin holds a Bachelor's of Science from the University of Connecticut and in 2002, was elected into the University's Business School Hall of Fame. Mr. Sippin is a former President of the Stepney Volunteer Fire Company; former President of the Monroe Chamber of Commerce; former member of the Monroe Finance Committee; current member of Fairfield Fish and Game Association; a member of Washington Lodge #19; and for the past 62 years, served as Committee Man for Boy Scout Troop #62. Mr. Sippin is an honored recipient of the Monroe Rotary Club McNiece Service Award and has received two official citations from the State of Connecticut for recognition of his contributions towards advancement of the local community. It is without question that Mr. Sippin's extensive qualifications as highlighted above make him an ideal candidate to serve the Town of Monroe on the Board of Police Commissioners. This appointment replaces the expired term of Linda Suhr.

Councilmember Martin and Councilmember Knapp stated they will vote in favor of this appointment for Bernard Sippin, but would have preferred a female to serve as only 15% of officers are female.

Motion passed 8-1 (opposed N. Kapoor)

Motion: (D. Martin)

To approve the appointment of Kelly Plunkett (D) of 34 Kettle Creek Lane to the Youth Commission for a term ending October 12, 2013.

Second: (N. Kapoor)

Discussion: Ms. Plunkett is a long time Monroe resident whose community service history includes volunteer work with Project Warmth as well as her elected position on the Monroe Board of Education. Ms. Plunkett has been serving as a liaison to the Youth Commission and as such is aware of the important role this commission has in our community.

Councilmember Lieto expressed his concerns regarding Ms. Plunkett being an elected member of the Board of Education while also serving as the liaison for the Board of Education on behalf of the Board of Education to the Youth Commission. He also stated she has an obligation to report back to her elected body as to the various programs that the Youth Commission is offering and will have extensive input. He feels Ms. Plunkett is serving a dual role and "it has been a long standing tradition in this town of not serving dual roles". Councilmember Lieto noted that Ms. Plunkett is very active in the town of Monroe and very well qualified, but would like to see another qualified person serve in this position and does not recommend someone being placed in a dual role. Councilmember's Unger and Sredzinski also expressed the same concerns. Councilmember Dutches praised Ms. Plunkett for all her excellent volunteer work, but feels being an "elected official" is a pretty high importance and would like to see her just dedicated to that. Councilmember Kapoor noted Ms. Plunkett has been a dedicated public servant to the Board of Education and is happy to support her. He stated the Town Charter has a process established to resolve potential problems and the Board of Ethics had looked at the issue and found no problems. Vice-Chairman Heim stated Ms. Plunkett knows to exclude herself with any conflict with the Youth Commission and the Board of Education, and Councilmember Martin stated Ms. Plunkett has already been a liaison with the Youth Commission which makes her a non-voting member and a more qualified candidate for the job.

Motion passed 5-4 (opposed D. Dutches, F. Lieto, J.P. Sredzinski, T. Unger)

ACTION ITEMS

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

Vice Chairman Heim reported they met this evening with the Board of Education and discussed the full time kindergarten. The Board of Finance discussed the Honeywell contract and also had many questions. She stated the contracts are with the Town Attorney with much information that needs to be brought back to Council. Vice-Chairman Heim reported the Munis contract is still being worked on and an approval to get a thermal imager for the Fire Department was made. The contract with Kimball and Chalk Hill will be brought up in a couple of weeks. She also stated the EMS was interviewing for the part-time employee, and the paramedic contract was still being reviewed by the Town Attorney. Vice Chairman Heim reported there was a meeting with EMS and the Fire Department to negotiate ambulances and paramedics in the building. She

also stated on November 7, 2012 there will be an Alcohol Awareness at Masuk High School and they are also working on their website. The next meeting is scheduled for November 26, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Councilmember Dutches stated the Board of Education closed their books for 2012 and will be returning approximately \$30,000 to the general fund. Councilmember Dutches expressed her concerns with approving the purchase/receiving of services in the current fiscal year, and just hearing that “we will take care of it at the next fiscal year” is a huge concern. She does not think this is an appropriate way to manage a municipality and finances.

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

Councilmember Unger reported they met on October 15, 2012. He stated a list of questions for the First Selectman on the Chalk Hill Facility and the Committee will be sent to the First Selectman in a few days, so all can get a full idea of the alternatives and costs, and reasons why we are doing various things. Councilmember Unger also reported a discussion on the issue of planning for projects that are presented at Town Council was made. He read the Town Council Policy and Procedures and requested this be sent to L&A for review. *When a project or a bonding request is made to Town Council, it must be made at least two weeks before any potential vote and it must include the following items for the project to be considered: a complete scope of the project; a timeline for implementation and completion as well as status review dates and other milestones; an estimate of costs including contingency; a suggested oversight committee; potential alternatives considered.* “The aforementioned items must be submitted in writing by the First Selectman to the Town Council. The Council also welcomes the input of various department heads and members of the public on projects. However, it is important that the Council have a written record of these items from the First Selectman.” The next meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2012 before the Town Council Meeting.

Councilmember Martin stated she wanted to verify that this policy will be added to the Council Policy Book.

Town Council Committee on Legislative & Administrative Matters

Councilmember Sredzinski reported they met on October 15, 2012 with the Planning and Zoning Chair in attendance. He stated during the public participation, comments on the Zoning Enforcement Ordinance that the Town Council approved recently, has been successful for the department and reported that there was positive feedback. Councilmember Sredzinski noted “often we do not see the end result of our ordinance changes, but in this case things are improving”. A brief discussion on the inland/wetlands ordinance was made as well as the anti-blight ordinance review. He stated the Zoning Enforcement Officer is going to get more information to Council which will add some positive changes to the ordinance. Councilmember Sredzinski concluded that the Charter Review and Comprehensive Code Book review was also discussed. The next meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.

Trumbull/Monroe Health District

Councilmember Knapp reported they have not met and has no communication.

First Selectman's Update

First Selectman Vavrek was not present tonight and Chairman Lipeles read a typewritten communication from the First Selectman.

Chalk Hill Update: Ongoing meetings with various department heads and Board of Education with Mr. Kimball. Next full meeting, October 29, 2012. Usage and locations are being discussed. Safety, parking, building code questions are depended on usages.

Project Warmth and Food Pantry: Financial donations sorely needed. Behind where we should be due to many factors but fact remains. New Food Pantry Director has created monthly food themes to create menu diversity. This month is Italian, next month Thanksgiving based. This past weekend, a very successful Project Warmth fundraiser, A GHL Trail Run was held. Over 700 registered runners. This coming Saturday, Trunk or Treat will be held at Masuk each car admitted. For a suggested \$5 donation. Last year we had close to 200 cars. This year will hopefully be even better attended.

Road Update: Garder Road renovations have been delayed due to Scenic Road Ordinance violations. Department of Public Works interpretation of ordinance has caused the delay with P&Z. More up to date roads done and to be this fiscal will be presented at next Town Council meeting.

Chairman Unger wanted to express his thanks and appreciation to Lee Hossler and the Committee on Monroe Means Business for work well done.

Councilmember Martin commented on the First Selectman's Update on Chalk Hill stating this was an unacceptable report for Council to know what really is going on. She did state this was not to be meant as an attack but only wanted an understanding of what is going on. Councilmember Martin stated this report tells Council nothing and would like more information.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Honeywell Energy Contract (Town Attorney)

Town Attorney Fraccacini was present at this meeting to discuss the Honeywell Energy Contract. Attorney Fraccacini stated most of the contract is done but he had concerns. He noted the contract is complete with financial information, guarantees, etc. He did state that he is not comfortable finalizing this contract without reports being made by the Board of Education and the town. Mr. Fraccacini noted he spoke to Honeywell about the contracts and they want to send final versions. He also wanted to make it clear, the Boards and Commissions of this town should not rush to judgment on this contract. There is much information as this project is between 5-7 million dollars in terms of obligations to the town. He stated there is much work that the Board of Finance has to do, as they also considered whether to do certain buildings. He is hoping to get a decision this week and stressed he was not comfortable with the financial information and wants to make sure that the appropriate officials in the town are comfortable before it goes to the Board of Finance and Council for further investigation and questioning. He assumes if Town Council and the Board of Finance approve this, we are talking a town wide referendum.

Councilmember Martin questioned who would make the decision if all buildings should be included. Attorney Fraccacini stated it would be Council and the Board of Finance would make that decision. Councilmember Martin also questioned if a building like Monroe Elementary had to be broken out, would we need a new contract, and Attorney Fraccacini stated yes. Councilmember Unger stated he would not be in favor without a break out by building. He would like to see costs and savings by building. Councilmember Dutches expressed a concern whether there is a State or CL&P rebate component to some of this. She asked if we need Honeywell to do this and receive it. Attorney Fraccacini said he could not answer but believes the answer would be yes.

Chalk Hill Building

Councilmember Kapoor stated the town received an RFP on August 13, 2012 and it is now October 22, 2012. He stated First Selectman Vavrek said his intention was to have Chalk Hill begin its new course by July 1, 2013 to begin the new fiscal year. Councilmember Kapoor stated on the First Selectman's update, usage and locations are being discussed and other things depend on usage. He is concerned no other information was presented from the First Selectman's office two months after the RFP has come in. He stated there is no other information on where the First Selectman is headed or going. Councilmember Kapoor hopes on June 30, 2013 "the Council will not be blamed for not doing something". He stated although discussions were done on Mr. Kimball's RFP about a public private partnership, there are costs associated with that; whether mothballing it, keeping it open, or demolishing it. He feels many options need to be discussed. He does hope the First Selectman will share with Council the needed information very soon to meet the deadline of July 1, 2013

NEW BUSINESS

Roads Update

Chairman Lipeles stated we will get more information at our next meeting.

Town Council Policies and Procedures (DRAFT)

Councilmember Unger stated this was discussed on the Town Council Committee on Planning & Zoning, Public Works and Parks & Recreation Matters. Councilmember Unger did request Councilmember Sredzinski give an update on the police department.

Motion: (T. Unger)

Chairman Lipeles stated to amend the agenda and put Police Department Renovations under C, **New Business**

Second: (R. Knapp)

Discussion: Councilmember Sredzinski stated renovations are ahead of schedule and on budget. He stated there is a great team working together and communication is always available and progress reports given. He noted plumbing and concrete is in and the building is taking shape. He also stated some new doors are in with more work needed to be done in the south addition. Councilmember Sredzinski stated the staff has been very patient and understanding throughout the process. Councilmember Unger questioned if there was a projected end date. Councilmember Sredzinski stated he did not have one, though the project is 50-60% completed. Councilmember Sredzinski also stated they wanted to get mostly everything done on the outside,

weather permitting, so the workers can utilize the winter for indoor renovations. The contract stated 300 days and the contract began in May. He stated, hopefully by May 1, 2013.

Motion passed 9-0

Motion (J. P. Sredzinski)

Councilmember Dutches requested to amend the agenda and put Referral to First Selectman, including Public Works Director and Finance Director, regarding work desperately needed at Jockey Hollow Fire House under **D, New Business**

Second: (D. Heim)

Discussion: Councilmember Dutches wanted to state the referral for a plan and schedule a return on a Town Council meeting for November 26, 2012. The meeting will be for remediation and how it will be financed, and the scope of what needs to be done so we can move forward with paramedic service/alternative for housing paramedics and EMS. Vice-Chairman Heim expressed her concerns that this needed to be addressed soon.

Motion passed 9-0

2ND PARTICIPATION

Steve Kirsch, 35 Applegate Lane stated he would like to see documents such as the Energy Contract and the RFP put on the web site so citizens can review them. He stated citizens can not readily get to see such documents on these web sites.

Kelly Plunkett, 34 Kettle Creek Lane expressed her thanks to Council for allowing her to have a voice. She stated this position has been open for eight months but the commission has been having trouble getting quorums to conduct official business. Ms. Plunkett noted she had looked into the Town Charter rules and would be respectful of having two positions.

Next Town Council Meeting will be scheduled on Tuesday, November 13, 2012

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: (T. Unger)

To adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Second: (R. Knapp)

Motion passed 9-0

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Cerreta
Town Council Clerk