



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WINDSOR TOWN HALL
JANUARY 6, 2020
Regular Town Council Meeting**

APPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Joe McAuliffe, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor James Govoni, Councilor Donald Jepsen, Councilor Michael Tustin and Councilor Kenneth Wilkos.

2) PRAYER

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe led the group in prayer.

3) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4) PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS - None

5) PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Eric Weiner, 76 Palisado Avenue wished everyone a Happy Holiday and New Year. He supports the resolution to enhance tax benefits to volunteers in town. He wanted to make the Council aware that on the first night of Chanukah, the Mayor opened up Bart's for a community celebration which involved lighting the Menorah. There were 30-40 people there. It was a wonderful evening. However, it was not advertised because the organizers were afraid of publicizing this event due to the political environment in the country and the attacks during Chanukah. He felt that an organization should never fear advertising this type of event due to fear of criminal action.

Beth Caruso, 147 Pleasant Street, had a conversation with Eric to support him and the Jewish community. Windsor has a very wonderful and recent history of tolerance and we should continue to be that way.

6) REPORT OF APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMISSION

a) Board of Education

Ayana Taylor, Board of Education, gave the following report:

Dr. Cooke recently announced that Christopher Fulton has been named the new athletic director for Windsor Public Schools. Mr. Fulton comes to Windsor from Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford, where he has worked as the Athletic Director, among other roles, since 2005. He has been an English teacher, head football coach and most recently, assistant principal.

Mr. Fulton has been a long time resident of Windsor and is very excited about the opportunity to "come home" to work. He had previously taught English at Sage Park Middle School. He is looking forward to building on the great traditions of Windsor's athletic programs. Christopher Fulton will begin work in Windsor at the end of January 2020.

The students and staff at our schools and central office collected hundreds of jars of peanut butter and jelly over the month of November. The jars were delivered to the Windsor Food and Fuel Bank. Central office staff also sponsored two families through Project Santa.

Due to the interest and generosity of Windsor town residents, the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Cooke, had Windsor Food Service create a meal donation fund account. Interested donors may contact the Food Service Department with questions and donations. Monies will be distributed at the discretion of the Superintendent or his designee. Principals, school counselors and school social workers will also help with the distribution of funds. All information pertaining to this fund is confidential. The district recently received an anonymous \$5,000 donation bringing the total in the account to \$6,800.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe asked about the food program and how many students are in need. Ms. Taylor said they don't have an actual total right now. They are in the midst of figuring that out, however, it is nowhere near the amount stated. This money will help students that are in default and cannot pay for lunch.

7) TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration – January 20, 2020

The Archer Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is sponsoring its annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration for the community on Monday, January 20, 2020, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM in the council chambers of town hall. All are welcome to attend. For questions, please contact the church office at 860-688-5225.

Also, Town Offices will be closed on January 20, 2020 due to the holiday.

Winter Parking Rules

Just a reminder that until April 15th, there is no parking on Windsor streets between the hours of 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM and no parking on any street during a snow or ice storm that has been in progress for one hour or more. Also, please do not leave your vehicle on the street in such a position that it impedes snowplowing operations or the free flow of traffic.

When the snow arrives this year, please remember that the town ordinance requires all property owners to clear snow from the sidewalk (and fire hydrants if there is one on your property) within 12 hours after the storm.

Blood Pressure Screenings

The Health Department will be sponsoring several Blood Pressure Screenings as well as six 2-hour educational sessions over the Winter and Spring 2020. Blood Pressure Screenings will be held from 10:30 AM to noon on the first Wednesday of each month. The first screening is this Wednesday at the L.P. Wilson Community Center. You do not need to register for the screenings.

Educational sessions will be on the second Wednesday of the month starting on February 12th at Town Hall. The sessions will start at 6:30 p.m. Topics will include Blood Pressure Classifications and the Importance of Blood Pressure Control, Self-Measurement of Blood Pressure, Lifestyle modifications, etc. For more information and to register go to townofwindsorct.com/health or call 860-285-1824.

Coyote and Fox Sightings

In the past several days there have been sightings of coyotes and foxes during the day in the Rood Ave, Ford Road and Custer Drive neighborhoods. Animal Control Officer Brian Davis will canvas the neighborhoods to provide informational material so residents are aware of what steps to take should they see wildlife in their neighborhoods.

Residents should call police immediately if they see any of these animals behaving abnormally or if they are posing an immediate public threat.

Here are some links provided by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection that give guidance on coyotes, fox and bears:

Coyotes: https://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325936&deepNav_GID=1655

Fox: https://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325940&deepNav_GID=1655

Bears: https://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325930&deepNav_GID=1655

This information and DEEP links will be posted on the town's website and through various social media platforms.

Rail Crossing – Quiet Zone Public Information Meeting

On December 19th a public information meeting regarding Quiet Zone Designation for rail crossings was held here at Town Hall. Approximately two dozen residents attended and heard presentations from the Federal Railroad Administration as well as the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

The process to pursue a Quiet Zone Designation from the Federal Railroad Administration can be rather complex and lengthy. Therefore, it is my recommendation that the town secure proposals for technical assistance from engineering consulting firms that have experience with this type of work. It is expected the work will include evaluating each of the seven crossings as to the current safety measures in place and identify what additional improvements might be needed to meet Federal Quiet Zone regulations. Additional services may involve assisting the town in discussions with Amtrak and the CT DOT.

Staff will be soliciting technical assistance proposals over the next several weeks.

Fiscal Year 19 Independent Financial Audit

The FY 19 independent financial audit performed by RSM US LLP has been completed and submitted to the State of Connecticut prior to the end of the calendar year.

Hard copies have been distributed to the Council.

An auditor's management letter was not issued as there were no material findings or recommendations by the auditors.

As in years past, I look forward to reviewing the reports with the Finance Committee and the external auditor at the Committee's convenience.

MDC Invoice Changes

This month the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) is implementing a major upgrade to their computer operating system. In order to prepare to switch from the current system to the new one, billing cycles have been adjusted, which resulted in some customers receiving invoices earlier than usual in December.

Also starting this month, MDC water customers will notice a new look to their bill. The new format will show past usage and new payment options. Also, customer account numbers will be changed.

Health Department Offering Flu Shots

Come and get your flu shot. There are still plenty available. The flu shot is your best protection to avoid getting influenza. Remember to bring your insurance card with you when you come. If you don't have insurance, the cost will be \$30 cash. To schedule an appointment, call the Health Department at 860-285-1823 or go online to learn more at <https://townofwindsorct.com/health> and click on the 'get your flu shot' advertisement.

8) COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

Councilor Dobler stated he was at the December 19th meeting regarding designating Windsor as a 'quiet zone'. He felt the previous meetings had residents stating their frustrations without anything being remedied. The difference between prior meetings and this meeting is that he believes the residents came out of the meeting with a plan of action. They also understand that it won't be a short process. Later on under 'New Business' we will be voting on increasing the tax exemption for the firefighters and he is wholeheartedly in favor of that.

Councilor Black-Burke wanted to thank the Town Manager for his attention to the item that she brought forward. She wanted to share with those watching at home how important it is to have the ear of one of the councilors so they can share concerns and move them forward. She added that she is in favor of the vote that will take place regarding the volunteer firefighters. She extended a Happy Three Kings Day to those that celebrate that holiday.

Councilor Rampulla Bress is saddened to hear about the fear associated with the meeting at Bart's. She thinks it's a wonderful thing that the citizen brought this to everyone's attention. She thinks it is important for the Council and Police Department to consider some type of outreach to community groups that might feel threatened in some way. She added that she and Councilor Jepsen attended the CCM convention in December and thanked the town and Town Manager for that opportunity. She was able to go to budgeting workshops and to go to workshops on Strategies for Fearless Community Engagement. She looks forward to sharing the information she learned with her fellow councilors.

Councilor Govoni - None

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe addressed what the two citizens brought up. He remembers when the mosque attacks happened in New Zealand. He said the Police Department was very proactive in making sure that the children at the Madina Academy felt safe and were safe in their place of worship. He felt it was more proactive at that time. He hopes that in the future that the 'ask' wouldn't have to happen but rather the offer from the Police Department would go out to a group that would want to worship. Town Manager Souza added that for all the years that he's been in town (20 years), police department administration has been proactive in that effort.

Councilor Tustin - None

Councilor Jepsen wished everyone a Happy New Year. He added that he is sorry that people feel afraid because of something that happened in New York City, but he feels we have a safe town.

Mayor Trinks said that on behalf of the Council, he'd like to welcome home Major Cheryl Mead of the 103rd Airlift Wing. On Saturday there was a ceremony for Ms. Mead at the National Guard hanger where she was given a medal for her work. It was a nice ceremony.

Councilor Wilkos wished everyone a Happy and Healthy 2020.

9) REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Personnel Committee – The committee met on January 2nd and is proposing many reappointments and appointments for the Council's review at tonight's meeting.

Health & Safety Committee - None

Special Projects Committee - None

Town Improvements Committee - None

Finance Committee - None

10) ORDINANCES - None

11) UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

12) NEW BUSINESS

- a) Introduce an ordinance to amend Chapter 5, Section 5-15, Property Tax Exemption for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Technicians, of the Code of Ordinances

RESOLVED by Councilor Jepsen, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe that the reading into the minutes of the text of an ordinance entitled, 'AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5-15, PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELIGIBLE FIREFIGHTERS AND AMBULANCE TECHNICIANS' is hereby waived, the full text of the ordinance having been distributed to each member of the Council and copies being made available to those persons attending this meeting; and that the full text of the ordinance be recorded with the minutes of this meeting.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

MOVED by Councilor Jepsen, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe to introduce an ordinance entitled, 'AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5-15, PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELIGIBLE FIREFIGHTERS AND AMBULANCE TECHNICIANS.'

Town Manager Souza gave an overview of the item as follows:

In 2000 the Town Council adopted an ordinance providing a property tax abatement of up to \$1,000 for eligible members of the volunteer Fire Department and the Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Association. Eligible volunteers can earn up to that \$1,000 value based on various standards related to categories such as length of service, training hours, and percent of response to calls. It is weighted at 25% for each of those categories, so it's not a straight \$1,000.

Public Act No. 19-36, An Act Increasing the Property Tax Abatement for Certain First Responders, provides a local option for towns to allow for an exemption of local property tax up to \$1,500 between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021. The dollar amount may be increased by \$500, for a total of \$2,000 maximum, on or after July 1, 2021.

In 2018, a total of 78 volunteer firefighters and 6 members of the volunteer ambulance service qualified for the abatement program under the current ordinance language.

Before the Council tonight is a multi-fold proposal. First to increase the maximum benefits from \$1,000 to \$1,500 and then after the July 1, 2021 time frame to increase it up to \$2,000.

In addition to adjusting the annual maximum benefit, it is proposed to refine the benefit schedule from what was adopted in 2000. Proposed adjustments would be to require firefighters to attend at least 24 hours of drills per 6 month period versus the current level of 12 hours per 6 month period. Emergency medical volunteers would need to have 24 hours of service monthly versus the present amount of 12.

Also, the State enabling legislation allows the tax abatement benefit to be provided to a retired volunteer firefighter or emergency medical technician that has completed at least twenty-five years of service in the municipality. This provision is being proposed for Town Council consideration and would apply to eligible volunteers retiring after this past October 1st. Retirees would receive a benefit equaling the average of their annual benefit over the past three years.

Mayor Trinks wanted to confirm this is a reduction in their tax liability to the town. Town Manager Souza stated that yes as long as they meet the requirements.

Fire Chief, Bill Lewis, stated that he received a question about a 'tactical' member being eligible for the tax exemption. He explained that every member of the department is considered 'tactical'. There is only one member that is not tactical. He is strictly administrative and cannot respond to fires or drive apparatus.

Chief Lewis added they've increased training hours in order to align it more with the standard operating guidelines, which under 'membership' states you have to reach 50% of your training hours or you can get thrown out of the department.

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked if this is attainable by the volunteers. Chief Lewis responded, yes it is. There are plenty of opportunities for the volunteers to get their training hours. This also gives members that are close to attaining their exemption an opportunity to move closer towards it.

Councilor Jepsen asked if veterans get \$1,000 off as part of another program (veterans program) are these benefits stackable where they would get a possible \$3,000 tax exemption. Town Manager Souza replied that yes they are as long as they meet the requirements of the programs. Councilor Jepsen asked if this benefit carries over to the spouses. Town Manager Souza said that it does not.

Councilor Rampulla Bress wanted to clarify for the public that the veterans tax benefit is not \$1,000. It comes out to be less than that.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

- b) Set a Public Hearing for January 21, 2020 at 7:20 p.m. relative to an ordinance to amend Chapter 5, Section 5-15, Property Tax Exemption for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Technicians, of the Code of Ordinances

RESOLVED by Councilor Jepsen, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe, that a Public Hearing be held at the Windsor Town Hall on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at 7:20 p.m. (prevailing time) on the following ordinance entitled, 'AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5-15, PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELIGIBLE FIREFIGHTERS AND AMBULANCE TECHNICIANS' and "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is authorized and directed to post and publish notice of said Public Hearing.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

c) Approve Amendments to the Town Forester position description

MOVED by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe, seconded by Councilor Wilkos, that the job description for the position of Town Forester be amended and approved as amended.

Amelia Bliss, Director of Human Resources and Bob Jarvis, Director of Public Works/Town Engineer gave an overview of the item.

Ms. Bliss stated the main duties of the town forester are to perform work maintaining the town's tree program and designing planting and maintenance plans for trees, shrubs and turf. This position also oversees a small crew. In addition to these duties, the town forester sees that dangerous and dying trees are removed, responds to questions from the public regarding tree shrub and turf problems, and applies herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. The town forester position became vacant in 2019 due to a retirement.

Ms. Bliss said it is customary for town staff to review the job description when a position is vacated prior to completing the selection process to ensure that the duties, education and experience requirements reflected in the job description align with the town's needs. Staff is proposing to update the town forester position description to reflect the current duties and minimum qualifications of the positions. Format of the job description is also being updated to include required competencies and the physical qualifications of the position.

The most significant changes proposed to the job description are:

- clarifying the position is responsible for snow removal and storm control duties
- clarifying the position may oversee a crew performing parks and ground maintenance duties in addition to forestry duties
- clarifying the position may be designated as the town's Tree Warden
- clarifying and adding needed knowledge, skills and abilities, and special requirements
- adding responsibility for reviewing development and roadway improvement plans to insure plantings are consistent with standards and requirements
- adding responsibility for using computerized work order entry and tracking system for recordkeeping
- adding the section related to required "Competencies"
- adding the "Physical Demands and Work Environment" section as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act

Earlier today, Councilor Govoni requested that there be an update to the language under the 'special requirements' section of the position description. Councilor Govoni stated that under the heading 'special requirements' it states *"Must have and maintain Arborist's License and/or Tree Warden's Certificate and be able to obtain a pesticide applicator's license if required"*. Councilor Govoni is requesting that the language be changed to read, *"Must be a licensed or qualified tree warden and be able to attain a custom grounds government pest control license if required."*

A friendly amendment was made by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe, seconded by Councilor Jepsen to change the wording as follows under special requirements: *"Must be a licensed or qualified*

tree warden and be able to attain a custom grounds government pest control license if required.”

Councilor Dobler asked about the phrase ‘must have and maintain an Arborist’s license’ in comparison to ‘must be a licensed Arborist.’ If you have that license can you ever lose it? Councilor Govoni stated that you need to get continuous education and annual training with the State of Connecticut in order to maintain and keep the license.

Councilor Dobler stated that we are taking ‘maintain’ out of the language. So, what’s to keep a person from having the license and then once they’re on the job losing it? Councilor Govoni stated that per the position description, you must be a licensed Arborist to keep the job.

Councilor Black Burke commented that there must be some type of notification. She used the example of being a Claims Adjuster in the State of Connecticut. If you don’t go through the proper maintenance, you lose your license automatically. A notification then gets sent to the proper channels that you no longer have that license. She asked if that is the same type of situation for the Arborist. Councilor Govoni replied that for an Arborist it is.

Councilor Jepsen asked if an Arborist should lose their license would the union be against their being removed from the position. He added that’s the real issue, how do you get rid of someone who doesn’t keep up with the requirements? Ms. Bliss stated that per the job description if you don’t meet the requirements for any reason, then you’re not qualified to maintain the job. The way we would navigate the union piece is that we’d work with them to come to some resolution.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

13) RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Councilor Rampula Bress stated there are 14 names being submitted for the Town Council’s consideration tonight. The Council has two weeks to review those names and bring up any questions and concerns. There will then be a vote at a subsequent Town Council meeting on those 14 proposed appointments.

14) MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

- a) Minutes of the December 16, 2019 Town Council meeting

MOVED by Councilor Jepsen, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe to approve the unapproved minutes of the December 16, 2019 Town Council meeting.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

15) PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS - None

16) EXECUTIVE SESSION – None



17) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Wilkos, seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary