

WILSON/ DEERFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(WDAC)
VIRTUAL MEETING
December 3, 2020
Special Meeting

APPROVED MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Alvin Bingham called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Present were committee members Kim McCloud, Karen Zak, and Charles Jackson. Lakisha Hyatt joined the meeting at 7:35pm.

Staff: Peter Souza, Town Manager; Jim Burke, Economic Development Director; Flavia Rey de Castro, Community Development Specialist. Donald Melanson, Police Chief; Anthony Valenti, Lieutenant.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT – Attendee Katrina Patterson (resident of 99 Corey St.) shared her concern about a dump truck parked on Bussey Street. She indicated it blocks the view for drivers and that it's a hazard. She explained that she contacted the police a few days before but is still waiting for this to be addressed. She also urged the police to ticket cars for cars not to park on the street.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Police Department Enforcement of Winter Street Parking and Unregistered Vehicle Discussion with Town Manager and Police Department (PD)

Chief Melanson stated he would reach out to Ms. Patterson to get more information to address the issue she referred to. In regards to overnight parking, he indicated that the PD issues warning notices from the middle of November until December 1st. Starting in December they begin enforcement. He said that this will depend on how busy officers are with other issues (i.e. car break-ins, stolen vehicles). Lt. Valenti presented data in regards to parking tickets issued from November 2019 thru April 2020. Town-wide the PD issued 549 overnight parking tags. In the Wilson and Deerfield neighborhoods, they issued 144 tickets (over 25% of all). Furthermore, in Deerfield they issued 70 tags and 74 in Wilson.

Bingham stated that the PD should ticket cars more consistently than they are. Valenti explained that typically there is only one officer assigned to the Wilson-Deerfield area and if that officer is busy addressing other issues (investigating a burglary, domestic violence) they are not able to ticket cars every night. Jackson said that through a conversation with local police officers he had the impression that there is no consistency as to when cars start being ticketed. He also shared his concern about the danger of the dump truck on Bussey Street

and of cars parked on Route 159, near the fire station. He indicated the PD doesn't seem to be addressing the issues. Bingham also expressed frustration about the PD response regarding the dump truck on Bussey Street.

Souza offered that Valenti will discuss this issue with the officers assigned to this area and thanked Bingham, Jackson and Ms. Patterson for raising the issue.

Bingham raised concern about truck parking at the commuter lot as well. He indicated that over time he'd received conflicting information from town staff in regards to the town's ability to enforce parking there. Rey de Castro confirmed that the town has the ability to enforce parking at the commuter lot. Bingham said the police should be enforcing parking in the lot. Burke, explained that the town will replace the current signs which restrict parking to make them more visible and that the PD will enforce the restriction.

Jackson inquired about the replacement of the Corey Street sign, explaining that all other signs are of a historic style. Souza explained that historical signs are a special order that requires extra time to be made and that the town needed to replace the sign promptly. He indicated that the town is looking into replacing it. Jackson stated that on Wilson Avenue there is a parking issue because of the concentration of businesses there. He said it would be very helpful to have a police officer at the old fire house enforcing parking.

In response to comments about speeding vehicles, Melanson said that after the COVID stay at home order was lifted, the PD has noticed an increase of speeding issues. He indicated that in November the PD made almost 1,000 vehicle stops and that 75% of those are speed related. He highlighted that the PD is focusing on moving violations as they create risk to public safety. Melanson clarified that by state law, the PD is not allowed to chase a vehicle that runs off because of the public danger.

Jackson requested that the town look into the crosswalk by the redevelopment site on Windsor Avenue since there is a pedestrian crosswalk button on one side and not the other. Souza explained that the town will work with the State.

McCloud and Zak indicated that they do not have any questions for the Police Department. Hyatt asked about how PD is addressing dirt bikes riding on the road. Melanson explained that the PD has challenges in dealing with bikes. In regards to speeding, he explained that the PD will not chase a motorcycle because of the dangers involved in doing so. He said that the PD tries to identify riders, but emphasized it is difficult to do so.

Burke asked the PD to describe how they patrol throughout the Town and how officers are assigned to areas. (A Windsor Police District Map was shown) Melanson explained that on any given day there are five officers patrolling the town, on weekend mornings it's typically less. He said that this is based on call

volume. He indicated that on the midnight shift at a minimum there are four officers patrolling the streets along with a supervisor. Melanson described how districts are divided in Windsor (The map showed 5 districts); Wilson and Deerfield being on the smallest district (District 1). He explained that on the midnight shift, they drop down to four districts so District 5 (Town Center area) is removed and other districts take part of that area. He indicated that boundaries are drawn based on number of calls. The PD tries to disperse the number of calls that the officers handle so that the response time is appropriate. The PD monitors call volume on each of the districts and is consistent in the number of cases each officer handles. He explained that the districts on the southern end of town (including District 1) are the busiest areas with the most number of calls. He explained that the way districts are covered is part of a moving, flexible plan to ensure officers can covering for each other.

Hyatt asked if there are officers regularly assigned to specific areas and if so, are there strategies so that residents get to know officers regularly assigned to their areas. Melanson explained that every two months officers are assigned to areas and officers chose the areas and times for their shifts based on seniority. This is part of their union contract for their work assignments.

In regards to how the PD engages with the community, Valenti described that the PD is engaging officers into community policing. He explained that patrol officers are expected to do a minimum of three car stops and that they have to visit local businesses (i.e. stores, gas stations, etc.). Valenti said that after they set those expectations for everyone, motor vehicle enforcements and property checks went up. Valenti indicated he has received positive feedback from officers highlighting the importance of having officers making connections with community members. Melanson said that COVID has prevented the PD from further engaging with the community as they used to host events and programs that aimed to create opportunities for conversation in positive settings (community block parties at different parks, "Coffee with a Cop" program). Hyatt, commended the PD and highlighted the importance of having officers maintaining the relationship with the community.

Litter Control Discussion with Town Manager and the Department of Public Works (DPW)

Burke provided a summary of the report provided via email to Commission Members. First, he explained how Public Works allocates resources throughout the town. He said that DPW has 16 routes (areas) that are assigned to a staff member who is responsible for either snow removal or street sweeping depending on the time of year. Litter is picked up twice a month. Furthermore, he indicated that the town hires a third party, Viability, to help pick up litter on town properties (2 or 3 times a month). Cleanup at the commuter lot is handled by DPW staff and Viability approximately twice a month. Burke also explained that Windsor Sanitation picks up the barrels located at the bus shelters. As for the

boat launch, he emphasized that it is a DEEP property. He explained that the state has a litter crew that goes to the area during its regular patrol of properties. Public Works also picks up and monitors the area during the course of its regular duties. He noted that it is difficult for DPW to predict the frequency that the trash cans require emptying, since household trash is frequently deposited in them.

Souza stated that the litter issue has also been identified as a problem by Town Council. He explained that Town Council instructed town staff to develop a public education and awareness program. Town staff will develop a communications plan over the next month or so. Community service volunteer projects will also be developed (i.e. adopt a park).

Hyatt asked about the process of ordering the street signs. Souza explained that the town is looking into ordering them. He indicated that the company that makes them is in Canada and that it takes a long time since they are specially made. He also said that the town is looking at the cost, and if the company is able to do it again.

Hyatt indicated that as a community member who uses the boat launch, she knows that Monday mornings usually have overflowing trash and suggested that DPW should increase the pickup capacity on days where there is more trash. Souza agreed with Hyatt and noted that the town needs to coordinate with Windsor Sanitation and state's maintenance group to coordinate ways to address trash on those busy days.

Commission Input on Plan for Redevelopment Parcel Open Space Design

Souza stated that the Town Council, in early November, gave staff direction to develop concept plans to enhance the Redevelopment Parcel as an open space area. Souza explained that he presented Council with a few ideas for how will the area be enhanced. Rey de Castro, indicated that town staff is hoping to get guidance from commission members on which elements should be included as design proceeds. Bingham said he would rather see the concepts first and then provide direction. Jackson said he would like to see the space being used as a fairgrounds, to host food truck festivals. Hyatt suggested a walking path with some (but minimal) sitting along with greenery. Jackson reminded Souza of the idea of having a pathway that connects the boat launch to the open lot on Windsor Ave.

Souza asked if there were ideas they absolutely do not want in the property. Bingham again indicated that he is looking for ideas before commenting. McCloud agreed with Bingham and emphasized the importance of seeing the concepts first. Zak said that she would like to combine ideas and have the space be multi-use so that it can be used as a walking place and for passive recreation as well as a place to host larger activities.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Comments and Suggestions from Committee Member Regarding Capital Projects in the Neighborhoods

Rey de Castro said that committee members had not submitted ideas to be included in the CIP. Souza noted that the plan for open space design will be included in the CIP. Bingham indicated he might still make a suggestion, that he initiated a conversation with a town staff but wasn't able to get ideas in time.

Hyatt asked for clarification of what the CIP is and what was expected of committee members. Burke said that the CIP is created to plan town investments over a 5 year period. He explained that each year, every committee and commission is requested to propose or comment on potential projects. Burke said that WDAC members were asked to either comment on existing projects or suggest new projects for the next 5 years. Jackson asked what the current projects in Wilson are. Burke mentioned a few projects including improvements on the firehouse, roof replacement at the Wilson Library, repairs at 330, enhancement on the median on Route 159 (Souza indicated that currently there is no funding in place for this project and that the town is looking for grants to fund this project).

Hyatt asked what constitutes a capital project and if members can still make suggestions. Souza explained that project that are 50K, 100K or greater are incorporated into the CIP, which is a multi-year planning document. Smaller projects are typically incorporated into the town's annual operating budget or a department's budget. In regards to providing suggestions, Souza welcomed comments and explained that between November and mid-January, town staff updates the CIP.

Review and Adopt Annual Meeting Schedule for 2021

Committee members agreed with the schedule as presented for 2021.

4. ITEMS FROM THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jackson asked for updates on what will be done with Roger Wolcott. Souza explained that on a recent meeting, Town Council Members gave direction to staff to look into three options for the school property: 1) pursue the possible leasing or sale of the building for educational purposes; 2) provide updated information from the Board of Education in regards to their need or desire to utilize the building for early childhood education; and 3) find cost estimates for demolishing the building and potentially having residential housing at a similar scale as the surrounding neighborhood (single family duplexes). He explained that after the first of the year, town staff will provide Council information to review.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Rey de Castro indicated that as of November 30, WDAC has one additional open seat. She also explained that one person has been appointed to the committee and will hopefully join the group in January.

6. APPROVAL OF 10/20/20 MINUTES

Jackson moved to accept the 10/20/20 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Hyatt.

Motion passed 5-0-0

7. ADJOURNMENT

Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30PM.