

WILSON DEERFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(WDAC)
451 Windsor Ave.
Former Roger Wolcott School
September 21, 2023
Regular Meeting

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Charles Jackson, Will Pelkey, Lakisha Hyatt, Alvin Bingham, and Debbie Baker.

Members Absent: Kathleen Woodward, Karen Zak.

Staff Present: Flavia Rey de Castro, Community Development Specialist; Patrick McMahon, Economic Development Director; Joshua Amaro, Community Resource Officer.

Guests Present: Mason Thrall, CREC Director of Operations.

Public Present: Ivelisse DeJesus.

1) CALL TO ORDER

Bingham called the meeting to order at 7:23 PM.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT – None

3) DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Officers Nomination and Election

Committee members had a short discussion on how the elections should take place, deciding on voting by raising hands after nominations have been heard. Jackson nominated Bingham for the Chairperson position. Hyatt nominated herself. Bingham won with a 3-2 result. Committee members agreed that Hyatt should be the Secretary, which she accepted.

b) Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) updates for Roger Wolcott School

**Prior to formally starting the meeting. Thrall gave a tour of the facility to those present, indicating that one of the three wings in the building was fully renovated and in operation. The group toured various rooms in the finished wing. These rooms were being utilized either by infants, toddlers, or young children. He also noted that the program currently in operation had moved from a previous location in Bloomfield and that the two new wings would serve to expand the program and recruit new families. Thrall explained that the two unfinished wings would be renovated once CREC would secure funds to do so.*

Thrall provided all present with a handout summarizing the scope of a grant that CREC had written to fund the renovations needed at the two unfinished wings. Thrall encouraged all to contact their legislators in support of this grant. The group then discussed the early childhood programs including accessibility to local residents, hours of operation, etc.

4) ITEMS FROM THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Hyatt expressed her hope for WDAC to show support of local businesses. She indicated she would meet with the Executive Director of the Windsor Chamber of Commerce to discuss methods of outreach and ways to engage with the local businesses. WDAC members agreed that the committee should start hosting their meetings at different locations including neighborhood businesses and town facilities. They mentioned several potential sites including The Collective Space, Hopewell Baptist Church, Wilson Congregational Church, the Library, Lily's, and the Kebab House. They also mentioned hosting a meet and greet during the holiday season to invite the public and to update them on community matters.

Pelkey raised concern about security in the Deerfield neighborhood. He provided a summary of incidents that had occurred in the neighborhood in the previous months and requested information on what residents can do to improve the situation. He asked if Amaro would provide a summary of his interaction with neighbors in regards to setting a community neighborhood watch. Amaro indicated that he had met with eleven neighbors to provide them with information and to answer questions. He noted that the ways in which neighbors can help the Police Department (PD) with investigations is by sharing recordings of security cameras. He noted that in this case, neighbors had called and sent videos. He also indicated that many times neighbors are witnesses but do not always call the PD, stressing that the calls can be done anonymously. He emphasized how it's necessary to call. Amaro briefly discussed the existence of tools to share videos directly with the PD. Pelkey asked where these trends were coming from and if this was a pattern also happening in other towns. Amaro noted that car robberies typically take place in neighborhoods that are close to highways. Jackson asked about the PD's role in setting up a neighborhood watch. Amaro indicated that the PD is there to provide support, advice and information, and that the PD doesn't run these groups.

**For additional information on PD services: <https://townofwindsorct.com/police/>. PD Non-emergency number: 860-688-5273.*

Baker provided updates on the Beautification subcommittee's efforts. She noted that the median replacements would be done all the way to Sunset Street to the south and Wolcott Street to the north. She reminded committee members of the upcoming community planting event that would take place outside the former Wolcott School. She explained that it would take place at 4pm either on October 4th or 5th, depending on the weather. She encouraged committee members to help with the outreach of the event and to participate, if available. She explained that the beautification of this particular area had been funded by the town's Community and Neighborhood Enhancement Grant. Baker then discussed a grant that the

town would soon submit to the Hartford Foundation on behalf of WDAC. She indicated that the project entailed engaging small neighborhood businesses and beautifying their sites. The committee would reach out to ten interested organizations and set an agreement with them in which they would receive and maintain planters. There would be a small matching requirement, of around \$25, on the businesses end. If successful, there would be a second phase, in which more organizations would be added. Ideally, she noted, this initiative would take place in the Spring of 2024.

Pelkey asked about WDAC having a budget. McMahon explained that in the past, when the Human Relations Commission had applied to a grant, this money had been allocated to a special revenue account until expended.

Jackson recommended for WDAC to participate in organizing the Shad Derby so that some of these events would be brought to the Wilson neighborhood. The committee agreed it was a good idea. He volunteered to be the designee.

5) STAFF REPORTS

Rey de Castro reminded committee members that there were two vacant sits for the committee and encouraged members to help with the recruitment of new members. She also informed member that the Emergency Services assessment would be discussed at the upcoming Town Council meeting and encouraged those interested in attend this meeting.

McMahon provided economic development updates in town. He reminded the group of the upcoming Big Lots grand opening. He informed the group that the town would learn in the next few days if they were awarded funds through the Community Investment Fund program to initiate construction at the future Wilson Park and to plan on how to plan for development of vacant sites in the Wilson neighborhood. McMahon also informed the group of the Small Business Boost Fund (SBBF), a program in which small organizations can have access to low-interest loans and technical support. He indicated that they had reached out to the town and would probably be doing outreach in the area. Finally, he provided updates on the development of 29 Windsor Ave. indicating that the developer had been approved for a gas station and car wash in the site.

* For more information on SBBF visit: <https://ctsmallbusinessboostfund.org/>

6) APPROVAL OF 7/27/23 MEETING MINUTES

Hyatt moved to approve 7/27/23 minutes. Jackson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7) ADJOURNMENT

Hyatt moved to adjourn at 8:30 pm.