

Minutes of the February 1, 2022 Special Meeting of the City Council – Harriet North Court Room

The Special Meeting of the West Haven City Council was held on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 6:36 p.m. in the Harriet North Courtroom.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call Members Present were Council members Ronald Quagliani, Gary Donovan, Bridgette Hoskie, Meli Garthwait, Sarah Ackbarali, Mitchell Galignano, Robbin Hamilton, Robert Bruneau, Steven Johnstone and Peter Massaro. Also present were Mayor Nancy R. Rossi and Corporation Counsel Lee Tiernan.

Absent were Council members Trenee McGee & Colleen O'Connor.

The Clerk read the call of the Meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT – 6:40 – 6:45

Please refer to the tape for comments.

The Chairman turned the meeting over to Councilwoman Bridgette Hoskie, Chairwoman of the Finance Committee to conduct the workshop discussions on potential projects/programs and their prioritization in the West Haven ARPA Plan.

Some of the items discussed were by Councilwoman Hamilton concerning the conditions regarding flooding and the need to identify those areas in need of work. Councilwoman Hoskie stated that she would like to have an engineer/consulting firm determine all areas with these problems and then come up with a plan to address them. Councilman Quagliani's concerns were also flooding mitigation and the need to do an inventory of the systems and flooding issues. Councilman Donovan is in agreement, however, feels that our own City Engineer can come up with the list to identify these problem areas. He also suggested that we should hire another Engineer in his department to assist Mr. Quadir, our City Engineer and to be able to fill in should Mr. Quadir ever leave or retire. Councilman Johnstone stated that he has spoke with 2 people who already work for the City – Mike O'Brien who works in the sewer department and Rich Comar who is a contractor hired by the City to do our drainage work. He feels the biggest issue would be maintenance. Donovan thinks the pump stations are too small. Hoskie stated that she has not seen a plan from Abdul, City Engineer nor Tom McCarthy, Commissioner of Public Works and that maybe we need fresh eyes and fresh thoughts on this matter. She is in agreement with Donovan that the City does need another Engineer to help in the City Engineer office. Councilman Borrás was in agreement. Councilman Bruneau said they should talk to McCarthy as he believes he has a consultant that has worked with the City in the past. Councilwoman Ackbarali agrees we need a permanent fix. Councilwoman Garthwait agrees we need to bring someone in to help Abdul and that the flooding is the #1 issue in her district. Councilman Galignano also mentioned flooding as an issue.

Councilman Quagliani spoke about the need for a Fund Manager to make sure that the monies are used within the plan. Hoskie stated that the Mayor has spoken about a Fund Manager being a part of the process and that they may want to put out an RFP or vote on it. Chairman Massaro stated that he believes that is what the ARPA Committee is doing already. He also stressed that we need to be careful on how we spend this money and to take care of high & top priority issues first.

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Councilwoman Hoskie stated that she would like a letter sent to the Mayor and to the ARPA Committee asking them what is their goal? What are they supposed to be doing? And that the Finance Department is not to be able to oversee these funds. She pointed out that that the members of the ARPA Committee are parttime volunteers and would like a definition in writing from the Maor for a clear understanding as to what their duties are. Johnstone stated that we have a big responsibility to report quarterly to the State of the funds we are spending. Donovan suggested that the Council have a joint meeting together with the ARPA Committee. Hoskie mentioned that we do have a Resolution in place that no money can be spent until we have a Fund Manager in place and that we should start the process by putting out an RFP. Bruneau asked about the Council liaison for the ARPA Committee. Chairman Massaro indicated that it will be on the agenda for the February 14th City Council meeting to appoint a Council liaison for the ARPA Committee.

Some of Chairman Massaro's other concerns were building or renovation of warming centers, something for the homeless, something for public safety, police & fire. He also mentioned the Vertical Church and not sure if federal funds can go to a church. He has concerns for the need for equipment in case of another catastrophe like COVID, proper gear/coverage for police. He also mentioned that he has a list from Tom Conroy about the Parks that need repairs and that we should make sure that the sidewalks around the schools are in good shape. He also mentioned that if we are to get a Brewery at the Savin Rock Conference Center, there are pilons that and he would like to see a plan that get them removed and a boat dock put in.

Councilman Bruneau would like to discussion on what can be done for the Police Department. Councilman Borrás noted that a lot of businesses lost a lot of money and how can we help our city businesses.

Open Space and the lack of parks in the 5th District was brought up by Councilwoman Hamilton. Councilman Quagliani would like to see something done with Marginal Drive as it could be a very nice area back there for walking/jogging and it would be nice to have a design put in place with neighboring input. Councilwoman Hoskie brought up Quigley Stadium and that she would like to see money invested to rehab that facility and that she would like to see the list that Tom Conroy has with the Park information. She also stated that she would like to see revenue generation and revitalization projects to have these types of projects to help the City help itself. She also stated that she would like to see the liens/foreclosures brought back in-house and that maybe we should hire an additional attorney in-house to help Lee Tiernan do the foreclosures. She also mentioned that we have \$15,000 to create a livable cities initiative and that they did a study but nothing further has happened. Her concern is non-owner occupied properties being inspected and a fee paid by the homeowner and this being an effort to change the way people are living and have a safer community. Quagliani was in agreement that now would be the time to kick start this. Hamilton asked if there is an opportunity to get funding from the Housing Authority. Chairman Massaro believes that there is a state statute that indicates the property must be a 3 family or more to be able to inspect a property.

Councilwoman Hoskie spoke about encouraging economic development and noted that there is money to hire a consultant and the possibility of giving the Mayor more money to hire another person. She also spoke about monetized parking, especially in our City Hall parking lot.

Councilman Donovan mentioned an Arts Center and the possibility of having an Arts Center combined with a Youth Center in the basement and maybe can be also used for an after school program.

Councilman Quagliani pointed out the lack of community space and he would like to support a Library in Allingtown with a community room to accommodate the community. Hoskie mentioned that she spoke to Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools and he would like to have a meeting and walk the area behind Carrigan for the possibility of a Library. Donovan thoughts were that the Library was in a contract to purchase a property. Hoskie stated that the Library is askin for 5 million dollars and wants to know the long term cost to run it.

Councilman Borrás would like to see some funds put towards public safety as there have been many cars throughout the City being broken into. Hoskie believes that the Chief of Police is asking for cameras in certain areas. Bruneau mentioned that he believes that the Chief is working on a list to identify the most important areas.

Councilwoman Hamilton mentioned that the Allingtown Fire Department needs a new facility. Councilwoman Hoskie brought up the need to address mental health issues in the City and her concern that according to some of the residents there is a 2 month wait for meals on wheels. She stressed that the City needs to figure out a way to do a better job of helping people who are struggling, and maybe a central area/campaign to get the work out. She suggested some type of outreach program to help the residents receive the information on vaccines, mental health, substance abuse/addiction, homeless shelters, art center. Chairman Massaro would like to look into the City obtaining a vacant property/home to possibly fix up and put people who are struggling in there for up to 6 months until they can get back on their feet. Councilwoman Ackrabali would like to see programs for kids, art center, after school programs, music, yoga, technical computers. Councilman Johnstone would like to see field trips to open spaces for kids to go for free to experience the wildlife, deer, birds and that kids want to go to camps. He also mentioned that the ball fields are run down and in need of rehab.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Gallignano made a MOTION to Adjourn which was SECONDED by Councilman Donovan. All were in favor. Meeting was Adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

Stacy Riccio, Clerk

City Council

These minutes are subject to the City Council Approval