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AT 5:10 pm AND RECEIVED BY

Kristen Panzo TOWN CLERK

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers

**January 14, 2025**

**6:30 P.M.**

**RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES**

The Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Autumn Allinson, Craig Fishbein, Thomas Laffin, Christina Tatta, Samuel Carmody, Vincent Testa, Christopher Regan, Jesse Reynolds, and Chairman Joseph A. Marrone. Mayor Vincent Cervoni, Town Attorney Gerald E. Farrell Sr., Deputy Comptroller Brian Naples and Town Clerk Kristen Panzo were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Consent Agenda
  - 3a. Consider and approve Tax Refunds totaling \$15,843.24 (#496-555)  
Acct. #1001001- 41020 - Tax Collector
  - 3b. Acceptance of donation from Csaba Frecska and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$100 to Revenue Donations – Police, Acct. #2502002-47152 and to Expense Donations-Police, Acct. #25020050-58830-10135 – Police Dept.
  - 3c. Acceptance of Federal/State Highway Safety Grant “ARPA Auto Theft and Violence” funds and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$35,000 to Revenue Highway Safety, Acct. #1002001-45208 and to Police Overtime, Acct. #10020050-51400 – Police Dept.
  - 3d. Acceptance of Overtime Reimbursement of Federal Taskforce funds and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount \$2,496 to Misc. Revenue, Acct. #1009052-47040 and to Police Overtime, Acct. #10020050-51400 – Police Dept.
  - 3e. Acceptance of outside Private Contractor Work funds and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$200,000 to Charges for Current Services, Acct. #1002001-46020 – Rev. and to Outside Contractors, Acct. #10020050-51600 – Exp. – Police Dept.
  - 3f. Acceptance of State Local Cyber Security (SLCGP) Grant and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$99,720 to Revenue-State

Grants, IT-State Local Cyber Security Grants Program (SLCGP) Acct. #2501002-45114 and to Exp - IT- Cyber Security, Acct. #250-TBD – IT

- 3g. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$3,000 to Purch Svs-Negotiations, Acct. #10010150-56712 and to Salaries and Wages, Acct. #10010150-51000 – Mayor’s Office
- 3h. Consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$13,400 to Rev-Misc., Acct. #1009052-47040 and to Exp-Consulting, Acct. #10050050-56774 – Recreation;
- Consider and approve a Transfer of funds in the amount of \$1,600 from Exp-Prof Services-Entertainment, Acct. #10050050-56746 to Exp-Consulting, Acct #10050050-56774 - Recreation
- ~~3i. Consider and approve Farmland Lease Properties Program bid waiver revision – Conservation Commission~~
- 3j. Consider and approve Farmland Lease Properties Program bid award for five-year term – Conservation Commission
- 3k. Consider and approve appointment of William Wright to the Personnel and Pension Appeals Board for a Term of five (5) years set to expire December 31, 2029 – Mayor
- 3l. Consider and approve the Wallingford Community Theatre’s use of the Robert Parisi Town Council Chambers from March 12, 2025 through March 24, 2025 for a production scheduled from March 21, 2025 through March 23, 2025 – Mayor
- 3m. Consider and approve FY 2024-2025 budget amendment and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$5,750,000 from Cash to Fine Screens Construction, Acct. #46300331 – Sewer Div.
- 3n. Approve Minutes of December 10, 2024 Town Council Meeting.

**MOTION WAS MADE to approve Consent items 3a-3h, 3j-3n.  
MADE BY: TATTA  
SECONDED BY: FISHBEIN  
ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN FAVOR**

**4. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda**

No items were removed.

## 5. PUBLIC QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD

Darrell Stancuna of Old Village Circle wanted to know what actions will be taken against the Town Clerk, Ms. Panzo and the Democratic Registrar of Voters Mr. Wolfer. He was upset because his nominating petitions to get on the ballot for Town Council in November of 2023 were sent to the State of Connecticut, Elections Division late. He stated that he had to call Denise Napier and speak with her to see if his petitions were ever sent to her. He stated because he made the phone call is the reason he was able to be on the ballot. It was stated that there was miscommunication between the Town Clerk and the Registrar of Voters and Mr. Stancuna's petitions were sent four days past the due date and in term, the Town Clerk had to pay a late filling charge of \$50. He wanted to know what disciplinary action is taking place against Ms. Panzo and Mr. Wolfer. He is also filling an ethics complaint against both of them.

Paul Ciardullo of Bayberry Drive mentioned that he attended the public hearing for the budget last year and stated that the Town of Wallingford should cancel the tax increase. He stated that he provided the necessary data to prove his point. He then proceeded to state that the town was under budget for the 2024 fiscal year. He said because the town under performed and there was money that was left over; there was no need for the tax increase.

Jason Michael of Meadow Street asked when the Town Council Chambers will be getting Wi-Fi. He asked about the new police station coming under budget and wanted to know if anyone had the final numbers as to how much it really cost to build it. Mayor Cervoni stated that there are still bills that are being reconciled and they should know soon what the final cost was. Mr. Michael wanted to know what the Public Work's bill is to the town for picking up Christmas trees.

Bill Comerford of Broadview Drive stated that is has been one year since the Hidden Brook agenda item first appeared on the agenda and he stated that nothing has changed in that one year. He asked what the update was on the grant for the Historic Railroad Station. He stated that he found out that it was rejected for the third time.

Update on Hidden Brook Lane- Attorney Farrell stated that Corporation Counsel Small indicated that the developer is hiring a new attorney. If that does not happen and it cannot be resolved she will be bringing a lawsuit.

6. Update and Discussion on the following: / Councilor Reynolds

(a) Community Pool Bid

Councilor Reynolds asked for an update as to where the town is with the pool. Mayor Cervoni said the town is still waiting for the architect to return the plans after code review. He stated that he hopes they can get the plans back any day now.

b) Town Building Maintenance Assessment

Councilor Reynolds asked for an update on the report for the municipal buildings.

Rob Baltramaitis, Public Works Director stated that the town went out to RFP for this project and there was a purchase order issued around June or July. They retained a national firm, Architecture Engineering Environmental National Presence. The assessments began in the fall of September and October. He stated that he had asked for draft reports in the RFP to review them. He is looking to quickly get them finalized He said these reports will be helpful in planning his budget for 25-26 year and to come up with short term goals of 3-5 years along with long term goals of 10-20 years for all seven buildings that he maintains.

Councilor Reynolds asked if they RFP stated if it is worth it to stay in a particular building or have people move out of a building due to the condition of the building. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that would be a different kind of consulting report. He said they ask for facility condition issue reports.

Councilor Carmody asked what happens after the review of the reports is done. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that they would get any comments and markups. He thinks the cost assessments will take the longest.

Bill Comerford of Broadview Drive asked if the Town Council will also be able to get the same reports that Public Works will be getting. He asked if they will be able to get the draft report and not just the final report. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that once the reports are done if anyone wants a copy of the draft, final report, comments etc. he would share with anyone that asks. Mr. Comerford asked if the town would take a deeper look into some of the buildings. He asked about a hole in the back of the Town Hall building and wanted to know what that was from.

7. Discussion and possible action regarding Fire Department RFP Study – Chairman Marrone

James Buck, Fire Chief was present to speak about this item.

**MOTION WAS MADE to approve and fund the Fire Department RFP study to the winning bidder out of the remaining ARPA funds.**

**MADE BY: MARRONE**

**SECONDED BY: LAFFIN**

Councilor Fishbein is concerned about the final product. He said the bidder before them seems to operate in this space, have a lot of people who work for them and have done other studies like this one. He stated the other bidder is smaller than the winning bidder. He hopes that the final work product is based on them and not. He hope whatever product comes out of this is unique. He wanted some type of presentation to be done to look at what exactly will be done and be able to ask questions to the consultant. He mentioned the package the council received has nothing like that in it. If both consultants were to come before the council so they can ask

each company questions that would have been helpful.

Vice Chair Tatta stated that the winning bid and who the motion is made about is Municipal Resources INC. They are out of Plymouth, NH. They scored the highest when it came to price and technology. The other bid was Center for Governmental Research. They are out of Rochester, NY.

Mayor Cervoni stated that there is no ARPA line fund for the council to take the money out of to pay the winning bidder.

Chairman Marrone modified his motion to approve the bid

**MOTION WAS MADE to approve the Fire Department RFP study bid.  
MADE BY: MARRONE  
SECONDED BY: LAFFIN**

**ROLL CALL**

**ALLINSON: AYE**

**CARMODY: AYE**

**FISHBEIN: NAY**

**LAFFIN: AYE**

**REGAN: AYE**

**REYNOLDS: AYE**

**TATTA: AYE**

**TESTA: AYE**

**MARRONE: AYE**

**8- AYE**

**1- NAY**

**MOTION: PASSED**

8. Presentation of the Draft Educational Specifications prepared by Collier/SLAM – Councilor Carmody

Danielle Bellizzi, Superintendent of Wallingford Public Schools, Dominic Barone, Business Manager for BOE and Chuck Worthington, Director of Project Managers for Colliers.

Councilor Carmody talked about the combining of the one high school project.

Ms. Bellizzi wanted to give the council a high level over view presentation of what the consolidation of one high school would look like as far as square footage, square footage per student, etc. She talked about the Educational Specs of this project and showed a power point presentation.

Mr. Worthington talked about the proposed building size, if it will include a pool or not. He talked about the enrollment projection. This is needed for the grant application. He talked about the reimbursement part of this project.

Councilor Fishbein about the 1,605 number of students in the new high school and where that number came from. He asked how did the 8 year projection of students come to be. Mr. Worthington explained as best he could that there is a multitude of factors that go into trying to project the number of students that will be in each grade over the course of 8 years.

Vice Chair Tatta asked if some of the farm lands sell and houses are built on the properties Than what happens to the projection of students if there are numerous new houses and families in town. Mr. Worthington explained that this very thing happened in South Windsor, CT. He stated that each year they have to do an enrollment projection of students to make sure there is enough room in the school for all of the students.

Councilor Reynolds asked what year of enrollment the 8 year high is taken from. There was a discussion as to how that is calculated. The reimbursement part of the project was mentioned.

Mr. Worthington went back over the presentation talking about how much square footage is needed per student. The space standard calculation was discussed. He also discussed the reimbursement rate and how it is calculated.

Councilor Carmody asked if the BOE when finalizing the ED Specs if they will decide if there will be a pool or not. Ms. Bellizzi said that is a piece of it. They will go back and look at the feedback they receive from the public, the data they have and so forth to make a decision. She mentioned that the ED Specs can continue to change from now till they have to submit the grant June of 2026. Mr. Worthington stated the next steps would be to gather the comments from the draft of the Ed Specs to review and input comments into the Ed Specs. Then they would have to evaluate the impact of the comments on programming and proposed building area. Public Outreach would take place along with a Site Selection, Transportation Study and a Traffic Study.

Vice Chair Tatta asked what final decision will have to be made. Mr. Worthington stated that decision would be of the final project and what is included in that, where the final site will be for the school, etc. Ms. Bellizzi stated that the BOE has already approved the one high school so moving forward they would keep the Town Council, Mayor's Office, the public informed as far as Ed Specs, cost of the project, etc. There was a discussion if a referendum needs to happen or not at some point to help move this project along.

Councilor Fishbein discussed the various points of going to referendum. He wanted clarification on the 1,605 and 1,570 population number for the eight year span. He wanted to know why the BOE wouldn't be planning on the numbers in the eight year term and why they would keep fluctuating. Mr. Worthington explained that the revised eight year high for student population is that 1,570 based on the numbers they received from Nasdeck, the company who did the projection report for the BOE. The 1,570 will replace the 1,605 number in the report. Councilor Fishbein stated that one of the concerns of residents he has talked too is that the consolidation of the one high school never appears on a regular BOE agenda. Ms. Bellizzi stated that on the operations committee agenda for the BOE it did state as an agenda item, the consolidation of one high school. The planetarium was mentioned. He asked how much money has been spent so far on the one high school idea. Ms. Bellizzi

stated approximately \$245,000 has been spent so far. He asked where this money is coming from to pay the consultants. Mr. Barone stated that some of the money is coming out of the 2% fund and some of the money came out of the surplus account. The VOAG program was discussed. The question of a location for the one high school was discussed. The transportation study was discussed.

Councilor Reynolds asked if 2030 is the ceiling date for the VOAG program. Ms. Bellizzi said that 2034 would be the date. There was a discussion that if everything goes according to plan with the one high school build, the doors won't open possibly until 2032. There was a discussion as to if Lyman Hall can be a potential site for the one high school or not. He talked about the amount of money it would take to just maintain the schools in town. The schools in town all need help in one way or another because they buildings are just that old. He talked about his own school experiences with his sons and how the academics are somewhat lacking.

Vice Chair Tatta discussed conversations she had with some teachers and if it is possible to create programs at both high schools so students do not have to pick and choice classes, but can take the classes they want. She mentioned the square footage needed for the one high school. 316,000 to 318,000 square feet is basically the equivalent to the IKEA building in New Haven, CT. That building is 311,000 square feet so it is a bit smaller but still a good reference in size. The discussion of the one high school and what the public wants might be different than what the BOE wants. The renovation costs of the one high school compared to updating the two high schools we have was brought up. The lack of a location site for the one high school was brought up.

Councilor Laffin mentioned what was said at the past two BOE meetings that were on youtube. He mentioned the planetarium. The Ed Specs was discussed and how they are very important when making a decision as to where to put the one high school. The concept of the referendum was discussed. He asked the BOE for a complete cost to renovate the two high schools vs. the building of one new high school.

Chairman Marrone discussed the programming at the two high schools compared to the one new high school if it is built. He discussed maybe working on the other schools in town while waiting for the one new high school project that is estimated to take seven years from start to finish. He does not think a referendum is a good idea. He thinks there are other ways to get the information out to the public without having a hefty price tag of a referendum to pay for.

Joe Corso of Juniper Street spoke about how he is in favor of the one high school. He suggested that the Town Council come to Lyman Hall and see just how bad the building is and what needs to be done to update the school. He spoke about the student population and how it will fluctuate over the years. He talked about the gym at Lyman hall, how it is the oldest and worst in the state. He discussed the poor conditions at Lyman Hall during winter and summer months. He discussed how renovating the two high schools is not a good idea and would disrupt the students and their learning for 3-4 years. He talked about the sports teams in town and how if the town had one high school and the sport teams can have three levels, freshman, JV and Varsity teams which they do not have now.

Mike Votto of North Elm Street discussed the one high school vs two high school and how one high school just makes more sense. He brought up the VOAG program. He talked about the ED Specs.

Charity Kuchyt of Laden Avenue spoke about missing a lot of the communication going on about the one high school. He spoke about coming up with a better way to get families who have younger children more involved in the conversation and keep them more up to date. She wants to see more comparisons with the one high school compared to the two high schools we have now.

Laura Lana of Clearview Drive spoke about how parents are so busy and want to be involved more but they need more information to be able to do so. There needs to be more information on the buildings in town and what those costs are. She talked about how students are missing out on playing sports because of the schools in town. She talked about what the public as a whole values in the community and what they want to see happen.

Ray Ross of Center Street spoke about the fact that the BOE does have possible sites for the one high school and it can be discussed in Executive Session.

Leslie Williams of Woodhouse Avenue spoke about how her mind was changed from wanting two high schools to now wanting one high school. She does not believe that the town will pay for two state of the art brand new high schools. She talked about the sport teams in town and how when her boys were young the coach would cancel the freshman games so that five of the players can go play on the JV and varsity teams instead.

Jason Michael of Meadow Street asked what is the town doing with the old police station, the armory building. He asked about what the consequences would be if the two high schools were closed. He also stated like other members of the public that all information needs to be available for everyone to see before a decision is made about what to do.

Councilor Fishbein thought that the vote from the BOE about having one high school in town was premature. He stated that without a site to put the one high school how can a decision to build one high school be voted on. The original discussion was to have Lyman Hall be the site for the one high school. He talked about if the town is going to spend two hundred million dollars on a brand new high school, then the pool should not even be a discussion. It should be installed at the new high school. The council does not decide on the new high school. It is the BOE that decides that.

Councilor Allinson stated that the council chose this item to be on the agenda and not the BOE. She wanted to clarify that for everyone. She is for the one high school. She talked about the students at both high schools having to choose between classes they want to take because the classes are only offered once because of the number of students at each high school. Students are missing opportunities because of the lack of educational classes. She thinks the town will lose the arts and music classes if the one high school is not built because of the decline in enrollment. She stated like so many others tonight that without the full knowledge of what it costs to renovate two schools compared to



building the one school decision cannot be made moving forward.

Councilor Testa spoke about the timeline in the presentation that the BOE drew up. He talked about the ED Specs. He said that all of the questions and concerns of the one high school will be answered during the 2025 year if someone is reading the timeline that the BOE created.

Councilor Laffin stated that to go to referendum the town would need 3,000 signatures not 6,000 signatures as previously stated.

9. Discussion regarding potential Board of Education and Town Council Committee for one high school – Chairman Marrone

Chairman Marrone stated the BOE chair Ms. Roscoe reached out to him to discuss this item and to put together a working group made up of the BOE and Town Council to discuss these items.

**MOTION WAS MADE to have a combined group with the BOE on the project of one high school.  
MADE BY: MARRONE  
SECONDED BY: ALLINSON**

Councilor Allinson asked what this group would be charged with doing. She thinks the charge for this committee should wait until the council has more information of keeping the two high schools and renovating them or building one new high school.

Councilor Fishbein stated that the BOE should be the one deciding what is best for education in the town and not the Town Council. He said that usually big projects like this will have a committee created after a site is picked and how much the project will cost is decided.

Vice Chair Tatta stated that she was confused because she thought the decision was already made for the one high school, so why is there a discussion about forming a committee to talk about the one high school. She asked what is the point of a committee if the decision has already been made. Chairman Marrone stated that the point of this committee is to collaborate with the BOE because the Town Council is the one who will approve the funding of this project so the more information both sides have the better. She asked if public comment would be allowed at these committee meetings.

Councilor Reynolds thinks that the concept of creating a committee for this particular item is a bit early in thinking. He does believe that having regular communication with the BOE on the school project would be beneficial.

Councilor Laffin suggested to table the motion until the BOE comes back with a timeline. Chairman Marrone withdrew his motion after hearing everyone speak on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Panzo  
Town Clerk

Meeting digitally recorded

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Joseph A. Marrone III, Chairman

Date

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Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk

Date