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TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers

October 14, 2025

6:30 P.M.

RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES

The Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, October 14, 2025, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Thomas Laffin, Craig Fishbein, Christina Tatta, Autumn Allinson (on video call), Jesse Reynolds, Christopher Regan, Vincent Testa, Samuel Carmody and Chairman Joseph A. Marrone. Mayor Vincent Cervoni, Corporation Counsel Janis Small, Comptroller Timothy Sena and Town Clerk Kristen Panzo were also present.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call

Brief Presentation regarding Red Ribbon Week Campaign/Coalition for a Better Wallingford.

Dianne Mark, Executive Director and Nicolina Cotto, Youth Sec. Director spoke about Red Ribbon Week Campaign and the events taking place that week.

3. Consent Agenda
 - 3a. Consider and approve Tax Refunds totaling \$23,161.62 (#223-#235) – Tax Dept.
 - 3b. Acceptance of Overtime Reimbursement of Federal Taskforce Funds and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$2,205 to Misc. Revenue, Acct. #1009052-47040 and to Police Overtime, Acct. #10020050-51400– Police Dept.
 - 3c. Acceptance of donation from Masonicare at Ashlar Village to fund Recovery Equipment for UTV and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$2,500 to Revenue Account-Donations, Acct. #2502002-47152 and to Expense Account-Fire Department Program Expenditures, Acct. #25020150-58830-TBD – Fire Dept.
 - 3d. Acceptance of Connecticut Fair Plan grant to purchase Canon EOS Rebel camera and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$479 to Revenue Account-Grants, Acct. #2502002-47152 and to Expense Account-Misc. Grants/Donations/Fire Dept., Acct. #25020150-58830-TBD – Fire Dept.
 - 3e. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$3,440 from Maint. of Buildings & Grounds, Acct. #10030000-54315 to Cap Acct. – Suppression System, Acct. #10030000-57000-TBD – Public Works
 - 3f. Consider and approve a Transfer in the amount of \$37,790 to Volunteer Tax Abatement, Acct. #10020150-52961 and to Drill Attendance, Acct. #10020150-58825 – Fire Dept.

- 3g. Consider and approve FY 2025-26 Budget Transfer in the amount of \$27,100 from General Plant-Transportation Equipment, Acct. #392 to General Plant-Communications Equipment, Acct. #397 – Electric Div.
- 3h. Consider and approve FY 2025-26 Budget Transfer in the amount of \$15,000 from General Plant – Stores Equipment, Acct. #393 to General Plant-Power Operated Equipment, Acct. #396 – Electric Div.
- 3i. Consider and Approve FY 2025-26 Budget Amendment and consider and approve Appropriation of funds in the amount of \$50,600 from Retained Earnings Maintenance, Acct. #431 02162 to Maintenance of T&D Lines, Acct. #43100673 – Water Div.
- 3j. Consider and approve FY 2024-25 Budget Transfer in the amount of \$20,075 – Water Div.
- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| \$20,075 | From: Maintenance of Hydrant Expenses | Acct. #43100677 |
| \$ 775 | To: Maint of Misc Water Plant | Acct. #43100617 |
| 1,700 | Pumping & Labor Expense | Acct. #43100624 |
| 2,800 | Maint. of Pumping Equip. | Acct. #43100633 |
| 3,800 | Maint. of Water Treat Equip. | Acct. #43100652 |
| 300 | Meter Expenses | Acct. #43100663 |
| 10,700 | Customer Records & Collection Exp. | Acct. #43100903 |
- 3k. Consider and approve FY 2024-25 Budget Transfer in the amount of \$5,325 – Sewer Div.
- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| \$ 5,325 | From: Operation Labor Expenses | Acct. #46100642 |
| \$ 975 | To: Meters Expenses | Acct. #46100663 |
| 950 | Maintenance of Meters Expense | Acct. #46100676 |
| 3,400 | Administrative Salaries | Acct. #46100920 |
- 3l. Consider and approve Job Description Buyer – Human Resources
- 3m. Consider and approve naming the Community Lake baseball field Timothy Keogh Field – Parks & Recreation
- 3n. Consider and approve a Resolution authorizing Mayor Vincent Cervoni to deliver to the State of Connecticut, Department of Economic Community a Historic Restoration Fund Grant application and to execute an Assistance Agreement and an Easement, Declaration of Covenants and Declaration of Preservation Restrictions if awarded – Mayor’s Office
- 3o. Consider and approve reappointment of Mike Caruso to the Inland Wetlands & Watercourse Commission for a term of five (5) years effective immediately and expiring March 1, 2030 – Chairman Marrone

- 3p. Consider and approve reappointment of Caroline Raynis as an alternate to the Inland Wetlands & Watercourse Commission for a term of three (3) years effective immediately and expiring March 1, 2028 – Chairman Marrone
- 3q. Consider and approve Merit Review (2) – Human Resources

MOTION WAS MADE TO approve Consent items 3a-3q.

MADE BY: LAFFIN

SECONDED BY: FISHBEIN

ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR; EXCEPT VICE CHAIR TATTA ABSTAINED FROM VOTING ON CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS 3F AND 3N.

Chairman Marrone read a memo from Director of Parks and Recreation, Kenny Michaels, stating to name the baseball field at Community Lake after Timothy Keogh.

4. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

There were no items removed from the Consent Agenda.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD-

Larry Moranstein of South Main Street spoke about the progress and the groundbreaking for the Community Pool. He mentioned it was a long process to get to where the town is with the pool, and he wanted to thank all that have been involved.

Larry Kellogg of Stetson Street spoke about some members of the Town Council who have gotten back to him about the traffic light issue he discussed at the last Town Council meeting. He mentioned that the State DOT Department will not acknowledge that he even reached out to them or that the Town of Wallingford tried reaching out to them for help with the traffic light issue. He discussed a show he was listening to on WTIC that discussed property liability. After speaking with an attorney, he went over what the State statute 13A-144 was for the State of CT liability and also discussed the Municipal statute 13A-149 for the town liability. He stated that he would give a copy of the statutes to the Town Council after the meeting. He stated he was discussing this because today he got brushed by a side mirror on a vehicle walking his dog along Parker Farm Road, crossing where the gas station is to go to the south side of Parker Farm Road. He stated that there is a time restriction on this. Chairman Marrone stated that after the last Town Council meeting he spoke with the Police Chief, who said the town has other issues with traffic lights. The Town acknowledges the problem but it is a state road that is in question. The state sets the timing on the traffic lights they maintain in town. The Police Chief spoke to the state about this, and they were supposed to look into it. Chairman Marrone said he would follow up with the Police Chief. Mr. Kellogg stated that there is a handheld device that can adjust the light sequence and that is all that it would take to fix this issue.

Bill Comerford of Broadview Drive asked Mayor Cervoni about a press release on his Cervoni for Mayor Page. He asked Mayor Cervoni if he wrote the press release. Chairman Marrone stated that the Town Council minutes say that any questions asked by the public at the microphone have to be related to town business. The question is related to the Mayor Cervoni's campaign page which is not town business but personal business. Mr. Comerford stated that the mayor signed the press release, Mayor of the Town of Wallingford. He wants to

know if the mayor wrote the press release. Chairman Marrone said that this is a Town Council meeting and Mr. Comerford can take this discussion up with the mayor after the meeting or at a different time. Mr. Comerford stated the reason he gave Chairman Marrone flowers is because it is the one-year anniversary of him submitting questions to the council about the Center Street Cemetery. He stated it has been over a year and the questions have not been answered. He asked Chairman Marrone if he received any answers and he stated that he had not received any answers to Mr. Comerford's questions. Mr. Comerford mentioned the groundbreaking for the pool and asked the mayor when the pool will be open for use. Mayor Cervoni stated that the latest estimate is for the Spring of 2027. Mr. Comerford mentioned a survey that was done for the buildings. He asked about the cost of 5-year and 10-year plan. Mayor Cervoni stated that surveys are in the hands of an architect who is reviewing them for the purposes of composing a plan and estimates. Mr. Comerford mentioned the new roof being installed at the Town Hall building. He mentioned that the Director of Public Works said two years ago that the roof was ok. He wanted to know what has changed since those two years have passed. Mayor Cervoni stated that he is not sure what Mr. Comerford was talking about with regard to the roof two years ago. This current roof project was funded with ARPA funds sometime in the last two years. It went out to bid, and the bid was awarded last spring and the town is going forward with the replacement.

Cathy Hunter of North Orchard Street spoke about the Town of Wallingford adopting a common sense Social Media Policy or adapt a communications policy to cover social media if one does not exist. This is due to a recent post, she has seen on pages.

Joe Sanders of Piper Road wanted to thank the Town Council and the mayor for doing a great job with managing the Town of Wallingford. There has been progress in technology, roads, infrastructure, a decision on the Community Pool, leadership on Economic and Housing Development and budget priorities that have helped retain a double A1 bond rating. He mentioned that we live in a world where disrespect is loud and everyone sees and hears it. He had his own thoughts on how this could change.

Keith Massamino asked the Town Council how the minutes process works and when do they receive them. He mentioned the minutes from the September 9 Town Council meeting or any set of minutes as a reference. Chairman Marrone stated that the process is the Town Council should receive the minutes seven days after a Town Council meeting. Mr. Massamino asked if that is usually how that works that they receive the minutes seven days after a meeting. Chairman Marrone stated that is the process they follow. Mr. Massamino stated when himself and Chairman Marrone spoke earlier, Chairman Marrone stated that the Town Council received the September 9, 2025 meeting minutes on September 23, 2025. Mr. Massamino stated that the minutes were recorded on September 16, 2025 and that not one of the Town Council members received them until September 23, 2025.

Cheryl DiGenova of Lincoln Ave spoke about how everyone keeps talking about the previous mayor and what was not done in the last 40 years in the town. She stated the town has a new mayor now. She mentioned that all the work that has to get done in town will get done it just takes time. She mentioned that the current mayor has only been mayor for 20 months and not 40 years.

Barbara Kapp of Demi Road spoke about the driving around in Wallingford over the past couple of years and how dangerous it has become. She mentioned things like passing cars who pass people on the right side of the ramp where Yankee Silver Smith used to be. People crossing Cheshire Rd and Hartford Turnpike and how those people ignore the traffic lights. She would like to see more police presence where they are pulling people over so that people can get the idea that you cannot drive like that. She mentioned that Wallingford is

a very safe town and the people driving like they are need to be stopped and held accountable. She suggested having the police patrol on foot even and in their cars to make their presence known around town.

6. Discussion of old business – Chairman Marrone

(a) Update on Hidden Brook Lane

Corporation Counsel Small stated that she has been able to resolve an additional easement and hopefully she can finish the rest. They have to check on one of the fire hydrants because it is supposed to have a riser in it and that is in the works she mentioned.

(b) Update on Community Pool

Mayor Cervoni stated that there was a groundbreaking for the pool a week ago yesterday. The demolition of the old facility is well under way. The town was waiting for a building permit to be issued but part of the hold up on the building permit, which is partially issued by the way is that the portions of the project that involve permitting from the State Department of Health are under review and they are waiting to hear from them. Once that happens the full building permit will be issued.

7. Discussion and possible action regarding the September 9, 2025 and September 23, 2025 regular Town Council meeting minutes – Vice Chair Tatta

**MOTION WAS MADE TO approve the September 23, 2025 Town Council minutes.
MADE BY: TATTA
SECONDED BY: MARRONE
THERE WAS A VOICE VOTE AND ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR.**

Vice Chair Tatta discussed the September 9, 2025 Town Council minutes. She stated that a concern was brought to the council's attention because a comment made by a member of the public was omitted from the September 9, 2025 minutes. Herself and a few other members of the Town Council looked into this matter. She stated that transparency is important to her and will always be. She mentioned that the Town Council has received three memos to date regarding the issue and are all public records. One memo from Corporation Counsel dated 9/26, another memo from the Town Clerk also dated 9/26 and one from Chairman Marrone dated 10/7. All three memos are public documents and available to the public. She mentioned based on her own research she has a couple of outstanding questions that are currently unanswered. She is working to get her questions answered and will be able to conclude soon. Corporation Counsel has asked to hold off on certain questions for tonight and she is respecting that request. She mentioned that the Law Department is helpful in finding answers to her questions. Councilor Regan asked for the public's sake if the minutes are transcripts of meetings or are they about agenda items. Chairman Marrone stated that the minutes are not and have not been in the past a transcript of the meeting.

MOTION WAS MADE TO add to the minutes of September 9, 2025, under the first section of public comment, at the end of Mr. Bill Comerford's comments, Mr. Comerford questioned the mayor, "I just recently saw that there was a lawsuit against you as far as

malpractice goes, is this going to affect your ability to be the mayor or are you going to have to step down while this lawsuit is taking place”, to which the mayor replied, “ at the present time I am not aware of what you are talking about but the short answer is no.”

MADE BY: TATTA

SECONDED BY: CARMODY

Chairman Marrone stated that this concern with the motion made is that the item that was asked and answered does not relate to town business which is against the council rules. He thinks it would be far to say that a question was asked and answered of a personal matter but to list the question and answer that is unrelated to town business is a little unfair. He thinks anyone can come to the microphone and say or ask anything about the personnel of Town Council members, the mayor etc. He does not think that the council wants to open it up to anyone coming to the microphone and asking anything personal and then have those comments be put into the minutes. The minutes belong to the council and are a record of their meeting. He mentioned that if they agreed to put it into the rules to not allow people to ask questions that are not related to town business than he does not know why the minutes have to be an accurate representation of the things that anyone can come up to the microphone and discuss.

Councilor Fishbein appreciates that the minutes have been a lot better than they were in the past. He mentioned that he has won cases all of the state by reviewing minutes from different bodies. He discussed that someone creates the minutes, and the council reviews said minutes to see if they are an accurate account of what happened at the meeting. He wanted to know if there was a prior version of the minutes that reflected the question and answer asked because what is before the council does not have that. He wanted to know at some point when the person was putting together the minutes, they thought it was appropriate to add a comment in that section that referenced the exchange that they are talking about in the motion. Chairman Marrone stated that the motion on the floor is whether that gets included in the minutes or not. Councilor Fishbein stated the reason he asked is whomever they have deemed appropriate to make those decisions, may have at one point put together alternative language that they thought was appropriate and if so what they language was. Chairman Marrone said that no one has the ability to adjust the minutes outside of the council as a whole. Whoever the author of the minutes is, no one else should have input of how the minutes are handled outside of the council as a body. He does not know the answer to Councilor Fishbein's question. Councilor Fishbein said that if the motion succeeds, he does not want to close the door to his question and what would result from that question. He would be comfortable holding the minutes for approval and getting the questions answered.

Councilor Testa mentioned a letter the council had received from a past council secretary who mentioned that many years ago she used to transcribe the minutes for the council. He stated after this person, the next council secretary was doing almost the same thing with transcribing the council minutes which led to a delay in the council receiving the minutes. He stated that it was a desire of the person creating the minutes and was not due to the policy of the council or state laws to create the minutes that way. He said the law requires the minutes to reflect the actions and motions that were taken. There is also mention of who attended the meetings but the law does not say that minutes have to be a transcription of what was said and what happened. The council meetings are recorded and that is what the Town Clerk or secretary would use to create the minutes. He likes it when there is a bit more information in the minutes, so he knows what happened at the meeting but as soon as you start putting too much information or transcribing minutes you run into the depression of the minute maker. He mentioned that even when you start to add this person said this and that person said that you are creating a problem if too much information is added to the minutes.

He discussed the motion presented and how there is no requirement that it has to be in the council minutes. He agrees with Chairman Marrone and how that discussions added to the minutes from the public should only be added if they relate to items on the agenda and not just town business. The question and answer portion of the meeting is a discussion he thinks the council should have so they can decide how to proceed with that and what should be put into the minutes. He thinks the council needs to come up with a procedure and state what should be included in the question-and-answer period. Town Council is the only one who has the authority to amend the minutes. He mentioned if Vice Chair Tatta's motion gets approved, going forward where does it stop and how much of the public question and answer period should be recorded in the minutes. He stated that there was accusations made of breaking the law because of altering a public record is a felony. His understanding is that the minutes are not a public record until the council adopts them so everything up until that point is a draft of the minutes. He mentioned he was uneasy due to the fact that anyone would receive the minutes before the council does. He assumed that the minutes were in a packet and he wanted to know if the change was made after the packet was created but before the council received the minutes to adopt.

Chairman Marrone stated that the reason he said town business is because the rules state that the questions should be limited to policy and operation of town government and those are the rules the council voted on. He would have no problem with Councilor Fishbein's suggestion to hold off on approving the minutes until the questions they have are answered.

Vice Chair Tatta wanted to clarify when it came to Councilor Testa's comments. She made this motion because going on past precedent, the council minutes have reflected every comment from the public. She wanted to include the comment because all of the other resident's comments were included.

Councilor Fishbein commented on the point of the comment being added, stating that looking at the minutes in the public and answer section, it appeared that the resident's comment section is six lines long and addresses him speaking about different topics. Where is that balance of how much of public comment gets added to the minutes. He stated that he does not care about the issue of the comment, he is concerned with the process of the minutes.

Councilor Allinson mentioned that she benefits from the televising the meetings. She agrees with Chairman Marrone's statement that the minutes should be relevant to what happened at the meeting. She mentioned She has gone through the videos from the meetings looking for information. She thinks the minutes should be kept to what is being discussed on the agenda. She understands the motion, but she thinks this opens up a lot of questions of propriety when the minutes start reflecting questions or comments not related to the meeting. The minutes should represent the business of the meeting and not every question asked by a member of the public. She mentioned either this council or the next council need to discuss the rules and procedures of the council when it comes to the minutes and what should be included.

Councilor Laffin mentioned that a discussion on process should occur. He stated that during his 14 years on town council he cannot remember when there was a time when the minutes reflected anything other than business or policy of the town. No personal questions or comments about town employees were ever included in the minutes before. For that reason, he does not support the motion.

Councilor Fishbein is concerned with the political nature of utilizing public questions and answers and how that may or may not be reflected in minutes that are approved or denied. The question that was asked was not a

proper question to ask at a Town Council meeting. He stated that the motion presented reflects a level of information that is not related to council business.

MOTION WAS MADE TO amend the original motion to say a personal question was asked of the mayor and he answered the question.

MADE BY: FISHBEIN

SECONDED BY: MARRONE

Vice Chair Tatta stated the reason she used the direct quotes in her motion was because she did not want this to be political. She thought this was the cleanest way to recognize that a comment was left out but to keep it nonpolitical by using the direct quote and that was her reason for the motion.

Chairman Marrone stated that by using a direct quote is a departure from procedure also.

Councilor Laffin asked if the minutes are going to reflect every time a personal comment or question is made during council meetings from now on going forward. This would be precedent setting if so to make that adjustment. He mentioned during campaigns in the past when people would come to the microphone to speak the council would not go through with a fine-tooth comb. Candidates are up for election now, so he asked if they would have to go back through all of the past minutes to make sure every comment or question asked during a meeting during a campaign period was included in the minutes. He mentioned when does it start and when does it end really. He is not in favor of either motion to amend the minutes to add any type of comment.

Councilor Fishbein wanted to be clear that Councilor Laffin would vote against the motion because he does not think it is appropriate to be included in the minutes, and he is meeting the need of Councilor Fishbein's amendment to the original motion but taking it a step further.

Councilor Allinson agrees with the spirit of the motion but does not think it is appropriate to include at all.

ROLL CALL ON THE AMENDMENT:

ALLINSON: NAY

CARMODY: AYE

FISHBEIN: AYE

LAFFIN: NAY

REGAN: NAY

REYNOLDS: AYE

TATTA: NAY

TESTA: AYE

MARRONE: AYE

5- AYE

4-NAY

0-ASBENT

MOTION: PASSED

ROLL CALL ON THE MOTION AS AMENDED:

ALLINSON: NAY
CARMODY: AYE
FISHBEIN: AYE
LAFFIN: NAY
REGAN: NAY
REYNOLDS: AYE
TATTA: NAY
TESTA: AYE
MARRONE: AYE
5- AYE
4-NAY
0-ASBENT
MOTION: PASSED

8. Discussion and possible action regarding municipal options for permanently and totally disabled veterans – Assessor

Kevin Coons, Assessor and Ian Fuller, Chief Appraiser were present to present information to the Town Council.

Mr. Coons stated he sent a memo to the mayor dated September 30 and also sent a recommendation memo for the council to review both memos. He stated that last year for the 2024 grand list, there was a new state statute that they are required to exempt the value of dwellings for 100% totally and permanently disabled veterans. He mentioned that this year the state has allowed towns to adopt certain municipal options to expand that program. The main issue is that they had to deny several veterans last year because they were less than 100% disabled, so they did not qualify according to the state statute at that point. The other issue was surviving spouses. The Assessor's Office sent out a lot of letters or about 250 letters to veterans that had some type of a disability rating to let them know that they may possibly be eligible for this significant exemption. They got a lot of responses. They granted the exemption to about 35 veterans, but they had to deny a number of veterans this exemption. There were veterans who were unemployable and their disability rating from the VA was less than 100%, but they were being paid as if the benefit was 100%. Mr. Fuller stated that due to their unemployment rate, they get paid at 100% rate even though their disability rating is less than 100% so these folks were not eligible for the exemption under the original writing of the public act and with this municipal option, it would allow the Assessor's Office to grant about 10 veterans that they had to deny previously even though they are eligible for other exemptions. They have a triple exemption that if a veteran is totally or permanently disabled. Mr. Coons said looking at some of the conversations back and forth since this started, and from what he understands it was intended to grant these exemptions to these veterans who were particularly unemployable. There is about 1,200 or 1,300 veterans in the state that fell under that category. The exemption was designed for those veterans because of their unemployability. In his memo to the mayor, he outlined what the impact would be if the Town Council ran any one of these municipal options. They wanted to get ahead of this. His staff had to take some difficult phone calls from veterans who did not qualify under the statute. They did get some calls from surviving spouses who discovered that they were not eligible as well as some folks who were not eligible under this unemployable act. There were other municipal options. One option

was to increase or to extend the exemption of the land value up to 2 acres. Anything under 2 acres, is not exempt. He anticipated some veterans bringing these issues to the council, so he wanted to get ahead of this in case the council had questions. Some of his recommendations would be to grant to the exemption to the veterans who are unemployable, TDIU category and surviving spouse who veteran passed away prior to October 1, 2024. There is language in the municipal option sort of indicates that the legislative body would have to pick a starting date. In order to make his recommendation to the council he would suggest picking a date of October 1, 2000. That way the Assessor's Office would be able to cover the surviving spouses that they are aware of that came in or contacted their office. All towns in CT are going through the same process now, meaning whether to adopt these municipal options or not. Middletown is considering the unemployable ability option, Shelton is not going to be doing it.

Councilor Regan asked about the list that went out to 250 veterans and what the source of that information was. Mr. Koons stated that the first letter went out in October of 2024. He got permission from the Groton Assessor's Office to use and amend their letter that they send out to veterans. He read the letter. The point of the letter was to have the veteran bring in their letter for proof of disability and if their disability is service related. Councilor Regan stated that he is a recognized VA disabled veteran. He stated he would not qualify for these programs but wanted to know why he never received a letter. Mr. Fuller stated that they have an exemption database that they extract the information from and anyone who had any disability rating in the database got a letter. The database is from their internal office. The veterans have to bring in their disability letters to the Assessor's Office to possibly qualify and to be put into the database. He stated that the information is not public unless the veterans brings in their letter the Assessor's Office has no way of knowing who gets an exemption. Councilor Regan stated that there are ways they can get the information without having to make the veteran bring in their letter in person. His concern is that this could affect more than just the 30 veterans in question.

Councilor Fishbein is concerned with the number of eligible people. He thinks all veterans who served our country should get the exemptions. He mentioned that number 3 in the memo was not recommended. He asked why number 3 was not recommended to the council. Mr. Koons stated that in his memo there would be about five veterans who's exemptions would be reduced if he recommended number 3 which is the median assessment.

Councilor Reynolds mentioned that based on the estimates presented it would be at least the amount mentioned in the letter that the veteran would have to qualify for. He discussed the percentage of disability that the veteran would have to qualify for to be able to get a certain municipal exemption.

Councilor Testa was asking for clarification. He mentioned that is would be \$170,000 for the program for those veterans with 100% disability across the board. He mentioned that the 2-acre land exemption expands the exemptions for the land other than just the dwelling. If they grant number 4 municipal exemption it would apply to both. That would be \$60,000. The surviving spouse exemption only applies to the veterans who were 100% total disabled. He stated that the way it is written, he wanted to know if by passing number 4, would that apply to the surviving spouse exemptions. Mr. Koons said it would apply. Councilor Testa thinks this is something that the veterans should be able to get.

MOTION WAS MADE TO adopt options #1,2,4 as sent out in the memos sent to us by Mr. Koons with the start date of October 1, 2000 for surviving spouse.

MADE BY: REGAN

SECONDED BY: LAFFIN

ROLL CALL:

ALLINSON: AYE

CARMODY: AYE

FISHBEIN: AYE

LAFFIN: AYE

REGAN: AYE

REYNOLDS: AYE

TATTA: AYE

TESTA: AYE

MARRONE: AYE

9- AYE

0-NAY

0-ASBENT

MOTION: PASSED

9. Discussion and presentation regarding the Wallingford Emergency Shelter – Chairman Marrone

Lewis Gill, Ceo of Columbus House was present to speak.

Mr. Gill stated that Columbus House has operated the emergency shelter for a number of years. He stated that last year's opening was not efficient, and they do not want that happening again. He has met with various people and organizations who express a desire to the emergency shelter open up on time. He provided the Town Council with data about the emergency shelter and went over that data. He discussed the emergency shelter breakdown. They would like to open from December 1-March 31 very year. Their hours are Monday-Saturday 4pm-7am and Sundays they are open all day. They have a capacity of 15 beds, 10 men/5 women. The hours open are due to a staffing matter. The emergency shelter is open 24/7 during extreme weather and open all day on Sunday. They have relationships with the local police and the YMCA. He discussed the budget. To date they have raised \$62,000. He mentioned that they will be receiving another \$10,000 bringing the number up to \$72,000. Homelessness is a crisis and if they can help a person and find out what caused the crisis then they can help provide the right services. He has been doing this type of work for 22 years and is new to this part of the world. He was recruited from California. He states unfortunately it is not possible to have all needed services in each town. There are not enough resources available so there has to be collaborative. He explained the program data of who is at the shelter and the age range. He mentioned that behavioral health issues are also a real problem. He discussed the outcome and realistic expectations of the emergency shelter. If people do not use the emergency shelter then they people who work there cannot help those people so it is important for people to use the emergency shelters to get services needed. He discussed what happens of the emergency shelter does not get the funds needed to stay open. That would mean people in need would be out in the street. He discussed other reports that can be given to the council along with talking about staffing. He wants to make sure that the council is updated at every turn. He wants to work with the council in collaboration to make sure the emergency shelter has everything it needs to run efficiently going forward.

Councilor Fishbein asked how long Mr. Gill has been with the Columbus House. Mr. Gill stated that he took over responsibility in June. Councilor Fishbein stated that it is far to say that Mr. Gill was not associated with

Columbus House prior to him starting in June. Mr. Gill stated that is 100% far to say. He was in California. The first thing he did after getting settled into town and after his neighbor gave him a newspaper article talking about the emergency shelter and the Town Council was to start setting up meetings to meet people and figure out a way to collaborate with people to help the emergency shelter be able to run better. Councilor Fishbein understands the need for the emergency shelter and that homelessness is a crisis. He hopes that the people who decided not to open the emergency shelter last year understands the impact that caused people who needed a place to go. Mr. Gill wants to make sure that what happened last year does and will not happen again. He wants to have the council know where the emergency shelter is at with funding, etc. and be able to work with them. Councilor Fishbein said he appreciates what Mr. Gill is trying to do. He asked who owns the property right now. Mr. Gill stated that the Columbus House owns the property. Councilor Fishbein asked if they also owned the long-term housing complex on the side and Mr. Gill stated that they do indeed own that too. He asked if those housing complexes are full, and Mr. Gill said they are all full. Councilor Fishbein mentioned that he did a mock tour starting with calling 211 and then going through the process of the intake and such and landed in the long-term Middletown facility where he was able to talk to people there about the Wallingford Emergency Shelter and their opinions on it. He mentioned that the emergency shelter needs to come before the council with a need and a plan of how to address and get the need met. He stated that the council does not micromanage the emergency shelter and never has since he has been on the council. Mr. Gill stated that in the past the overnight is what people were generally comfortable with. He would like to see the emergency shelter run 24 hours but that would require additional staffing.

Councilor Testa asked about the operation budget and if that includes the two two-family homes. Mr. Gill said the two two-family homes are separate. He asked Mr. Gill if any of the money that the town gives them go towards those homes and Mr. Gill stated that it does not and would go to the emergency shelter. Councilor Testa asked how many months the emergency shelter is open, and Mr. Gill stated it is open for 4 months of the year. The monthly cost per bed was discussed. Councilor Testa said the council had to approve \$30,000 last budget to make sure that the emergency shelter can be open. The monthly expenses were discussed to see if they have enough money to stay open for the whole 4 months. The cost of having the emergency shelter open all year long was discussed. Mr. Gill stated that the majority of the cost is always staffing. The organizations who donate money was discussed.

Vice Chair Tatta asked about the backup and the how the information differed from the original backup to the updated backup. Mr. Gill stated that was an error when creating the presentation and was noticed after the presentation already was sent out. There was a discussion of how many people were served last year. The number was 14. It is a 15-bed emergency shelter. There was a discussion trying to figure out how much it cost per person. There was a discussion about spending taxpayer dollars on the cost per person. Vice Chair Tatta said there might be more cost-effective ways to help these people then to have them just stay at the emergency shelter for one night. She asked how many Wallingford residents there were. Mr. Gill stated that people in these situations will stay as close to home as possible.

Councilor Laffin asked if the total served is the number of people served, and Mr. Gill stated that is correct. It is different than the average served. For about \$120 per night the emergency shelter can house an individual, get them food, laundry services, medical needs met, etc. Councilor Laffin stated that he wants this relationship with Columbus House and the emergency shelter to work. The services provided are vital.

Councilor Regan stated that he is an invested partner with the emergency shelter. He mentioned that if Columbus House is coming to the council with an ask especially money, then it is reasonable to ask where did

that money go. He mentioned how a more detailed operation cost presentation will be helpful in the future for the council to be able to make decisions. He mentioned that Mr. Gill's predecessor stated that the emergency shelter is an overflow shelter, and they don't have the regional need here in Wallingford. He understands the regional nature of the process but is not comfortable with the way it was run before. He wants more details from Columbus House as far as who is being reached out to that way the council can maybe help with that. The regional aspect of Columbus House was discussed. Mr. Gill mentioned that he was not aware that financial reports were not given for last year and he can certainly give that to the council. Proper staffing and training was discussed.

Councilor Reynolds asked if there are other towns that have cold weather shelters similar to Wallingford and what the town would contribute. Mr. Gill said that he does not have that information but can say that each town's contribution varies. There is various state support as well. There was a discussion of how they start asking people where they are from so they can be housed properly that can become an issue.

Councilor Allinson stated that there is some hesitation on the council's part because of past relationships. She mentioned that this is not an easy conversation to have. She understand the whole local aspect of this but if Wallingford did not have a bed for people they would be housed in a different shelter. She mentioned that this issue is becoming more prevalent due to the mental health concerns, the lack of human support etc. She thinks the emergency shelter should be open this season and that the conversation can be had about making it a year-round emergency shelter.

Councilor Fishbein discussed the shelter history and impact. He asked what a positive exit referred to. Mr. Gill stated it is permeant housing placement. There was a discussion as to what a permeant housing placement can be. There was a discussion about how many positive exits occurred each year. There was a discussion on how the Wallingford emergency shelter is a dry shelter meaning is someone is inebriated or under the influence of a controlled substance they cannot be admitted into the shelter due to safety concerns they may present. Mr. Gill stated that if someone comes to the shelter under the influence of something but can go sleep it off inside, they will be admitted into the shelter to sleep it off. He feels that we need to give people the opportunity to be helped. There was a discussion on how that situation would affect the other people staying at the shelter. The cost for the full 4 months of the emergency shelter was discussed. It would cost \$184,000 for the full 4 months it is open. There was a discussion about whether there are other cost-effective places to house people for longer than 4 months.

Councilor Laffin discussed the cost of putting someone up at a hotel and what the cost that would be just for that one person. He mentioned to do that would cost more for the 4 months than it would cost to house someone in the emergency shelter. At the shelter a person can get their needs met to help them out.

Councilor Allinson discussed how there would have to be some additional hiring at the emergency shelter to keep it running longer than just the 4 months it is open now. Staffing is the most expensive operational cost. The community aspect was discussed.

Fire Chief James Buck spoke about how the mayor and Town Council require accountability from Columbus House seeing how what happened last year. He stated that he was quite angry last year because the emergency shelter was not open and everyone found out about it late. He discussed when the unhoused cannot get assistance from the shelter they become part of the 911 system. Mr. Gill said

it will be fully staffed with no more volunteers. There was a discussion on programs who can be reached out to to donate money to the shelter.

Cathy Hunter of North Orchard Road asked about volunteers. Mr. Gill said that volunteers are not for staffing but can help in other ways with meals and other portions of the services. She discussed how her family used to bring Christmas stockings to the emergency shelter some years ago. She suggested looking for volunteers now so that when the emergency shelter opens Columbus House will have the help.

Kelly Craft, MMW CAN Director spoke about them being the regional oversight for the entry and exiting of homelessness. She can be a good resource to answer questions and team up with Mr. Gill to help get information out. Their state funding is very limited as she mentioned. They are the lowest funding CAN in the state. The money is a huge factor and can mean life or death if not funded properly.

Sean Reynolds of North Airline Road spoke about serving 25 years in the City of New Haven Fire Department. He mentioned that they were at the Columbus House constantly on a daily basis. It was his experience that the emergency shelter was always a dry shelter and if anyone was under the influence they were not allowed in. He discussed that there is another cost when denying someone shelter. Mr. Gill mentioned that he is CEO of all of the Columbus House facilities.

Councilor Fishbein discussed how important items of clothing are especially socks to someone that is homeless. He suggested that when Mr. Gill is up and running that he thinks about taking donations of socks for those people who are homeless. There was a discussion if the emergency shelter in Wallingford is an overflow shelter or not. The data presented to the council was discussed mainly the number of people served each year. Councilor Fishbein stated that by looking at the data provided he cannot tell how long each person housed stayed for.

Councilor Carmody asked Mr. Gill what the timeline he is looking for the town to participate in funding. Mr. Gill stated it is coming upon the time when Columbus House has to start hiring staff. He can instruct his people to start hiring staff but just know that there is a fine line and only so much money to keep the emergency shelter open, if no other money is raised. Councilor Carmody asked Chairman Marrone when can this item be on the agenda again for discussion. Chairman Marrone asked Mr. Gill if he can have the information the council asked for in two weeks, in time for their next meeting. Mr. Gill stated that he can have the information to the council within a week.

10. Consider and approve a Resolution to participate in Sustainable CT – Mayor's Office

Sheila Dravis-Cosgrove, Grants Coordinator was present to speak.

Mayor Cervoni stated that Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove from Program Planning was here to present a resolution to the Town Council.

Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove explained what the resolution to participate in Sustainable CT was. The program has been around since 2017. It was formed by three towns and partnership with CCM, some nonprofit businesses, The Eastern Connecticut State University who did the coordinating development along with three foundations. It is a program that provides a model to municipalities to help them plan for initiatives and programs that are municipal based. Some of the things the town does already can count towards a certification. They are always looking for ways to improve the town and this would be a good way to do that.

Councilor Fishbein explained that he was looking at the website for the organization and wanted to know what does the administration see in the town that is so wrong that they need to rely upon someone else to provide the road map. Mayor Cervoni stated that he does not see that there is something wrong. What he sees is that the town can get credit for a lot of the stuff they are already doing or stuff that is just good for their economy. One of the things you can do is supply support to local businesses, something that the town already does. Councilor Fishbein asked if the town is already doing these things, then why get attached with this group to say that the town is following their road map. Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove stated that it is a road map and a point of reference for planning. It allows a volunteer group to provide input that may not be being provided at this point. Councilor Fishbein asked for an example. An emergency shelter is an example. Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove stated that the goal is to have a committee with experts in different fields who would work with the town to provide input and implement things that the town is interested in doing. Councilor Fishbein stated that he was trying to find a need for this program.

Councilor Reynolds stated that he was looking at the website and the community match fund section. He mentioned that the matching grant usually comes with a crowd funding campaign up to \$6,000 per project. He can't see why the town would not want to do this. He mentioned that they hear all the time that the Town of Wallingford doesn't apply for grants. Well, the programs provides small grants that are matched. Most of the projects looks like it is community-based grant projects and grants for kids projects and agriculture grants.

Councilor Laffin asked for clarification as to how this resolution came about. Mayor Cervoni stated that very early in his term he received an email about this and started a conversation with Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove about what this program entails and what it can do for the town. It provides the town with a community designation assistance to sustainability. One of the programs is addressing homelessness in towns. The Emergency Shelter provides that need in town. It is stuff that the town is looking to do anyways and gives the town a positive designation. There are 139 towns in Ct who are already participating in this. He stated he received an informative email about this. Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove stated that they also work with COGS.

Sean Reynolds of North Airline Road discussed an email he sent to Councilor Fishbein about participating in Sustainable CT. He mentioned in the email how he met with Mayor Cervoni about the adopt a road program and the amount of litter that needed to be picked up around town. He also mentioned in his email how he met with Sheila Dravis-Cosgrove regarding the same issue. Over the past five years he and his wife have dedicated an hour or two to picking up roadside trash. He expressed his interest in expanding the adopt a road program with Mayor Cervoni. He mentioned that he received an email from Mrs. Dravis-Cosgrove about joining the advisory committee for Sustainable CT. He went on their website to research what this was all about and he does not feel that the town should be joining. He wants to expand the adopt a road program so it can get more community engagement and better advertising. He thinks the state should not be involved in the town's affairs. He said they were both receptive to his concerns about this program. There are other ways to help the environment.

MOTION WAS MADE TO consider and approve a Resolution to participate in Sustainable CT.

MADE BY: REYNOLDS

SECONDED BY: ALLINSON

ROLL CALL:

ALLINSON: AYE
CARMODY: AYE
FISHBEIN: NAY
LAFFIN: NAY
REGAN: NAY
REYNOLDS: AYE
TATTA: NAY
TESTA: AYE
MARRONE: NAY
4- AYE
5-NAY
0-ASBENT
MOTION: FAILED

11. Discussion and possible action regarding the possibility of the town setting up a system to protect lawful owners of property from mortgage and deed fraud – Councilor Fishbein

Councilor Fishbein discussed how he was contacted by a resident on October 2 about this matter. The resident found out that someone had recorded a mortgage in his name without his knowledge. He explained that the document had a notary stamp from South Carolina. The resident called Councilor Fishbein explaining that he has never been to South Carolina. It is a fraudulent document that was recorded. He happened to read the record Journal that day and came across an article about mortgage and deed fraud in CT. He stated that our homes are one of the most expensive purchases we might make in our life and for someone to go and try to sell their home only to find out that this mortgage that was recorded without your knowledge and the homeowner cannot do anything about it. It will prevent the sale of the person's home, and you cannot contact the individual for a payoff. He mentioned that Record Journal stated that Beacon Falls, Bethany, Hamden and Naugatuck offer fraud alert systems. He stated the purpose of putting this on the agenda was to talk about it. Corporation Small stated she went on one of the town's websites and she said it id more of a notification than an alert. The residents of a town can fill out that they want to receive notifications when something gets recorded on the land records in your name. It does not prevent it from happening because the Town Clerk's Office is legally obligated to take in the document. Councilor Fishbein agrees that is all you can do. The resident he discussed just so happened to looking at his land records and noticed the fraud recording of a mortgage. Corporation Counsel Small does not know if this notification system would obligate the Town Clerk's Office to do something themselves or if the notification just happens when you register for them. Councilor Fishbein wants to look into this to see what the town can do and what the cost of this would be. He mentioned that the land records are hooked up to vision appraisal. Corporation Counsel Small said that the town can look into this and also talk to IT to see if this is something they have to be involved with. Councilor Fishbein does not want to lose sight of this issue and wants to continue to have discussions about it.

12. Discussion of the basketball courts at Doolittle Park – Councilor Reynolds, Councilor Carmody, Councilor Testa

Councilor Reynolds first of wanted to thank Corporation Counsel Small and Comptroller Tim Sena for the Information they provided for the backup. The intent for this agenda item is to start a discussion about the basketball courts at Doolittle Park and what could be done to address some of the issues that have been brought

to the council by the public on multiple occasions. This issue keeps coming up so a discussion needs to be had about this. The funding for these two basketball courts began in 2022 and 2023 when he was not on the council. It came from an initial \$200,000 that was the Cap N Non-Recurring, which is the Electric Division money that was used to build these basketball courts. It was then amended to include an additional \$160,000 from the C&R Reserves in May of 2023. The work began in 2023 and was completed in 2024. For five months beginning in 2024 they received pictures forwarded from issues being found on the tennis courts and basketball courts. He mentioned that he is certain that other Departments were also contacted about these issues and asked for design work for these basketball courts and the oversight of the projects and the sign off process on the finished work. The overall cost of the courts was \$326,000. That cost included the demolition of the existing courts, the removal of the debris, the construction of the new courts and the finishing of the courts. He mentioned that he went to see the courts in late September with Mr. Jason Michael and walked Councilor Reynolds through the issues he had found with the court on Henry Street and the court on Wall Street. On Sunday of this past week he took his dad and went back to the park and walked and looked at them again. He mentioned they also took a ride to Pragemann Park to look at a similar post tension concrete court. He was told that court could provide a better-looking product used. He stated the cracks that Mr. Michael showed him when they walked to the courts initially, he could not find them when he went back with his dad. He thinks the weather had something to do with the cracks disappearing. Mr. Michael also expressed a concern with the fence. There is a 10 ft. fence that is around the basketball court on Wall Street, and he was concerned that there was a middle bar missing. Councilor Reynolds looked it up and it appears to not be a requirement to have a middle bar on the fence. His main concern is that from a distance the courts look very nice but when you are up close inspecting them the concern is safety. He stated that both of those basketball courts are not lined properly. There is not out of bounds lines on the courts. The tops of the basketball courts are already starting to crack and fall apart. There is also no padding on the posts on the courts. He mentioned it is a lot of money for two basketball courts that have a 20-year warranty for the construction and a 10-year warranty for the surface of the courts and they look like they are not holding up very well, and they are not even two years old. There is no signage stating that no equipment should be used on the basketball courts, like bikes and such. He mentioned that he saw tire marks on the courts. There is only one sign on the Henry Street court and no sign on the Wall Street court.

Councilor Carmody asked what type of recourse the town has because these two basketball courts have various issues already and should not have any issues and should be in pristine condition. Corporation Counsel Small stated that they have to follow the bid specs. She has not heard from staff that they have issues with the work.

Chairman Marrone asked if there was a real concern with this would there be a situation where the town would hire an outside engineer to have them look at the bid specs to determine if they were built correctly or not. He wanted to know what the next step would be if the council saw a legitimate issue with the courts and the staff is unsure. Corporation Counsel stated that if the staff is not telling her of any concerns she supposed the town can hire an independent person to look at it further. She does not know if the list of concerns was submitted to the departments involved in the basketball courts for their review and comment or not. Mayor Cervoni stated that there was an issue with the surfaces on both basketball courts and the town made a warranty claim and the contractor came and replaced the surfaces without the town having to hire an expert. If the town starts to make a warranty claim and there is resistance then the town would have to look to see if they have to hire someone to look into it to support the claim. Chairman Marrone stated that then the next step would be for Councilor Reynolds to list his concerns and then give them to the department head to review. Mayor Cervoni said the list of concerns can be forwarded to his office, and he will distribute them to the correct departments.

Bill Comerford of Broadview Drive thanked the Town Council for putting this item on the agenda. He said he would be looking at the bid specifications if he was on the council. He mentioned that it states that the Town Engineer inspects the final completion of the project. It was stated by the mayor at the last Town Council meeting that no one from the Engineering Department inspected the basketball courts. He mentioned that he will give the Town Council all of the pictures he took of the issues of the basketball courts. He still wants to know what the root cause was for the issues. He explained what the pictures were that he was giving to the Town Council. He mentioned that the issues should have been in writing and addressed by the Town Engineer before the work was completed. He has a video of the company testing the concrete that he is willing to give to the Town Council.

Keith Massamino spoke about the Town Council procedures item #4 and how he was not able to comment or ask questions about agenda item #7. He stated that the Chairman decided to take his own authority which he thinks he does not have and decided to overrule the Town Council rules and procedures. He wants Chairman Marrone to make a public apology. If he chooses not to then Mr. Massamino will be taking this up with FOI Commission. Chairman Marrone said that Mr. Massamino is welcome to take it up with FOI but those are the council rules. It is not a FOI matter; those are the council rules. He stated when he spoke with Mr. Massamino before there was no guarantee that the public would get to comment on any item at a council meeting. The rules are dictated by the Town Council and exclusively by the Chair. Mr. Massamino said that Chairman Marrone picked and choose which items to let the public comment on then. Item #7 was an internal council matter and the public gets no input into the minutes. Mr. Massamino said the rules state that the public should be allowed to comment on any agenda item. Mr. Massamino stated that the basketball courts reflected a poor job on the contractor and a poor job on the administration. He said the town has a Lw Department that refuses to look out for the publics best interest as citizens, a mayor who refuses to listen to reason when to came to the basketball courts said they were fine and had a Town Council member go to the basketballs courts and say they are not fine. He stated he was confused because in June he had Mr. Michaels say the courts were perfect, yet Councilor Reynolds looked into the matter and said it was not perfect. He mentioned the town protecting contractors when they do shoty work. He said Community Lake has the same issues. The contract states that a Town Engineer has to be there to inspect the work, yet two weeks ago at the last Town Council meeting it was stated that the Town Engineer never inspected the work. He mentioned that there should be some accountability here for the work not being done correctly and the courts failing.

The meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Panzo
Town Clerk

Meeting digitally recorded

Joseph A. Marrone III, Chairman

Date

Wallingford Town Hall, 45 South Main Street

Kristen Panzo, Town Clerk Date