

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2021**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Regular Meeting at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

1. Roll Call.

Council Members

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman
Dr. Stewart Beckett III
Ms. Mary LaChance
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll
Mr. Whit C. Osgood
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh
Mr. Jacob McChesney
Ms. Lillian Tanski

a. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mr. Niland

2. Public Comment.

Ms. Carroll read the written comment received, as listed on the Town website.

Robert Kalberer of 284 Wickham Road, commented on the third stimulus bill and the BOE budget. He stated that the \$129 billion earmarked in the third stimulus bill for school districts to cover the costs of reopening schools should be considered by the Council when reviewing the BOE budget. Alternatively, if the money was not included in the current budget request, any monies reimbursed by the stimulus bill should be returned to the Town for respective items funded in the proposed budget.

Mr. Niland opened the floor for comments from attendees.

Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way West, spoke on the timber harvest. She is concerned that the Town and Council are skipping critical steps to move forward on such a harvest without considering the need for such a harvest and whether such a harvest complies with the Town's POCD, whether the environmental benefits outweigh the negative impact of the effects on the animal habitat, as well as the environmental impact of cutting down carbon-cutting trees. She opposes harvesting trees in Town open space lands without some environmental justification. She urged the Council to not allocate tax dollars to any study on how to conduct a harvest.

Bruce Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive, wants more clarification on the timber harvest. He reiterated Ms. Weeks' concerns about the loss of natural habitat and also questioned whether this

complies with the Town's POCD and goals of sustainability. He would like to know more about the proposal before any further action is taken.

Elizabeth Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, also spoke on the timber harvest proposal. She stated that they need more information on this, and the public should be involved in the decision-making process.

Richard Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, agreed with Mrs. Eldridge, stating that they need more information before anything takes place on Town open space.

Mark Branse of 48 Birch Trail, spoke on the village district and the timber harvest. On the former, he urged the Council to recommend to the TPZ the proposed village district over the historic district because of the distinction that a village district does not need to be historical, among other advantages. He explained that he has drafted village district regulations for other towns and urged the Council to pursue it in Glastonbury. Mr. Branse also addressed the second topic, stating that harvesting of timber is a very typical activity on open space lands and it does not necessarily have a negative environmental impact. While he is not for or against the harvest at this time, he noted that it is something worth looking into.

3. Special Reports. None

4. Old Business.

a. Discussion and possible action – proposed Village District.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby refers to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission the creation of a Village District Zone extending along Main Street between the intersection with Naubuc Avenue and New London Turnpike and Rankin Road (but not overlapping the Main Street Historic District) for a preliminary review, and a consideration of enlarging the Village District Zone from Salmon Brook south to Rankin Road and from Main Street east to Route 2.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Plan and Zoning Commission is asked to forward its review by June 30, 2021.

as described in a report by the Town Manager dated February 19, 2021.

Disc: Mr. Cavanaugh stated that the Attorney's memo offers good guidance. They wanted clarification on the roles between the Council and the TPZ as the final zoning authority. He would like to get an independent opinion from the TPZ about whether the area they are discussing should become a village district. Dr. Beckett feels that the proposed village area is still too small, so he suggested the Council ask the TPZ outside of this motion to consider extending the area. Ms. Tanski stated that most of the area consists of newer commercial buildings, so she does not believe that it meets the intent of a village district. Mr. Cavanaugh

suggested the TPZ take a two-pronged look at it: the original and Dr. Beckett's proposed areas, as well. Dr. Beckett's suggestion was added into the amended motion listed above.

Ms. LaChance likes the idea of expanding it to a larger district and is eager to hear back from the TPZ. Ms. Tanski stated that if they are talking about design standards for the center of town, she is interested to hear what TPZ's thoughts are and how that relates to the formation of a district. She feels it would make sense to talk about a broader area instead of a couple of blocks. Mr. Gullotta thanked Mr. Branse for calling in this evening and offering his advice. He also thanked Mr. Cavanaugh for working on this issue with him. If this is a pathway to ensuring that this community does not continue to decline down a disastrous path of poor development, he is more than happy to comply.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

5. New Business.

a. Action on 2021-2022 General Fund, Special Revenue Funds and Capital Improvement Budgets for presentation at the Final Budget Hearing.

Mr. Johnson addressed a few specific line items of the budget. He noted that there was a total of \$15,000 of unanticipated tip fee costs. Mr. Niland asked if they should adjust the budget to account for that cost. Mr. Johnson stated that it is a two-step process: they could adjust the contractual services when the time is right, and they will adjust the fee structure to offset the cost, with no net increase to the mill rate. Mr. Johnson also noted that the 10-year phase down of the ECS funding education was postponed this year, but it could be resumed in the future. Mr. McChesney asked about the previously unanticipated revenue. Mr. Johnson explained that because the ECS funding remained level this year, revenues are \$300,000 higher, which allowed some flexibility to keep the mill rate level and decrease the pension assumption. He noted that this is more a mill-related matter, not a budget-related matter.

Mr. Gullotta stated that there were a few callers today who expressed concern about the timber harvest concept, which he had proposed, as a tree lover. He noted that Mr. Branse was on target when he stated that they have no old growth in Glastonbury. Mr. Johnson explained that the notion is to develop information to determine how to best proceed. He suggested that, if the Town wants to identify a number of potential properties, it could get a report on the benefits/impacts, and any revenue could be directed back to maintaining or acquiring open space. He stated that the cost might run around the \$35,000-\$40,000 range.

Ms. Tanski asked about the effect of greater liquidity within pension funds. Mr. Johnson explained that this question came up during the BOF meeting with the Town Actuary, who stated that the \$1 million would not really have any bearing on the liquidity factor. Ms. Tanski asked for a run of the numerical effect it would have in the short-term. Mr. Johnson stated that they can ask the actuary to provide that information. Dr. Beckett remarked that the actuary's report was

very clear, and he requested that Mr. Johnson provide the Council with the new report when it becomes available. Mr. Gullotta requested that Mr. Johnson present the budget information in a chart listing the pension assumption at 6.5%, 6.375%, and 6.25%. Mr. Johnson agreed to do so.

Mr. Cavanaugh stated that the BOF has been trying to lower the investment assumption for a while now. He asked who has been more accurate in regard to the question of the investment assumption: the BOF or the money managers. Mr. Johnson stated that the actuaries project out long-term. He noted that the question to consider here is, do they lower the investment assumption by one-quarter or one-eighth of a percent a year? He does not believe that there is a right or wrong answer. Mr. Cavanaugh asked if the assumption rate had ever been reduced by as much in one year. Mr. Johnson explained that, from 2006 to 2020, on two occasions, it went down by 0.25%, and one time, it was reduced by 0.5%. Most of the time, though, it has been reduced by one-eighth of a percent.

Mr. Osgood asked what the return of the pension was for calendar year 2020. Mr. Johnson replied, 16.8% for one year, 9.2% for three years. Dr. Beckett stated that this past year has been an outlier, so they should not anticipate returns of over 15% a year going forward. Mr. Johnson added that the recent double-digits numbers will skew all of the returns. Mr. Osgood is concerned that the \$975,000 is not sustainable. Mr. Gullotta remarked that looking at pension assumptions may be a way to lower the tax rate. Dr. Beckett does not believe that trying to cut the pension funding is a smart, sustainable idea. He believes that they should stay the course.

Mr. McChesney is uneasy about leaving money in the CIP that will not be used because it seems like they are overtaxing citizens. He agreed with Dr. Beckett about lowering the investment assumption to 6.25% eventually, but he is not quite sure if doing that this year versus spreading it over two years is a major concern. Mr. Niland is concerned about the \$1 million transfer in because there is no real means of replenishing that fund in the coming year, with the exception of two property sales. Mr. Niland agrees with the BOF about going down to 6.25%, but he thinks that making the jump now is too much, and he prefers spreading it out over two years.

Ms. Tanski stated that Mr. Gullotta's dump truck proposal to lower the operating budget and relieve the tax burden makes sense to her. The idea of overtaxing citizens when they are holding money in various funds could be applied to how conservative they have been with the Unassigned Fund Balance. She believes that \$1 million into the pension would demonstrate their commitment to addressing unfunded liabilities.

1. Recommend General Fund Appropriations and Transfers.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends an appropriation of \$46,084,904 for the 2021/2022 **Town Operating Budget** for presentation at the March 23, 2021 Final Budget Hearing.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends an appropriation of \$113,749,684 for the 2021/2022 **Education Budget** for presentation at the March 23, 2021 Final Budget Hearing.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends an appropriation of \$13,573,742 for the 2021/2022 **Debt & Transfers Budget** for presentation at the March 23, 2021 Final Budget Hearing.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

2. Recommend General Fund Revenues, Transfers and Use of Fund Balance.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends the 2021/2022 **General Fund Revenues and Transfers** in the amount of \$173,408,330 for presentation at the March 17, 2021 Final Budget Hearing.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends a transfer of \$1,000,000 from the General Fund Unassigned Fund to the Pension Fund for presentation at the March 17, 2021 Final Budget Hearing.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

3. Recommend Capital Improvement Program.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends the 2021/2022 **Capital Improvement Program Budget** in the amount of \$10,597,517 for presentation at the March 17, 2021 Final Budget Hearing. Funding will be provided as follows:

Capital Reserve Fund	<u>\$9,886,300</u>
Town Aid Road	<u>\$461,217</u>
Sewer Sinking Fund	<u>\$250,000</u>

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

4. Recommend Special Revenue Funds.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council recommends the 2021/2022 Special Revenue Fund Appropriations, Revenues and Transfers for presentation at the March 17, 2021 Final Budget Hearing as follows:

- i) Sewer Operating Fund \$3,186,660
- ii) Recreation Activities Fund \$1,545,090
- iii) Police Private Duty \$497,847
- iv) Riverfront Park Fund \$312,525
- v) Bulky Waste Closure Fund \$160,000

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

5. Action to schedule Town Council Final Budget Hearing and potential Special Meeting and – Zoom Video Conferencing.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby schedules the Final Budget Hearing and action on the proposed 2021-2022 Town Operating, Education, Debt and Transfer, Revenues and Transfers and Special Revenue Funds for 7:00 p.m. on March 23, 2021 by Zoom webinar and the Budget to be presented shall be as approved by the Council at its meeting of Tuesday, March 9, 2021. Additionally, Wednesday, March 24th will be a placeholder as a special meeting, if necessary.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

- b. Action on potential land acquisition (refer to Town Plan and Zoning and Board of Finance; set public hearing). *No action***

6. Consent Calendar. *None*

7. Town Manager’s Report.

Mr. Johnson explained that he has provided the Council with the most recent COVID-19 report, along with the wastewater report. Mr. Niland commented that the wastewater numbers show an uptick, which falls in line with the Governor’s numbers on positivity rates. Mr. Gullotta asked if the researchers are testing for the distinctions between the various COVID-19 variants. Mr.

Johnson stated that the last time they asked UConn, they were not testing for the variants, but they will ask them again. Dr. Beckett asked to add to the COVID-19 report, the vaccination percentage in Town. Mr. Johnson agreed to include it.

Mr. Johnson noted several upcoming events in Town, such as the household hazardous waste collection day, which will be held on April 3. He provided a copy of the newsletter, as well as the Community Service Officer's bulletin on coyotes, which was a question Ms. Carroll had asked previously. Mr. Johnson noted that the Town meeting format is likely to stay exclusively virtual for the foreseeable future. The plan for the coming summer at Cotton Hollow is to limit parking, with walk-in only from the Route 17 access, and there will be rangers present during the height of the season. Due to various challenges, it was decided that there will be no fee structure, but if it is proven to be necessary going forward, they will react.

8. Committee Reports.
a. Chairman's Report.

Mr. Gullotta explained that they had a great discussion on the budget this evening, but they need to come up with proposals the next time the Council meets.

b. MDC. *None*

c. CRCOG. *None*

9. Communications. *None*

10. Minutes.

a. Minutes of February 23, 2021 Regular Meeting.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

Result: Minutes were accepted unanimously {9-0-0}.

11. Appointments and Resignations.

a. Appointment of Napali Bridgelall to the Community Beautification Committee (D-2023).

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

Result: The appointment was accepted unanimously {9-0-0}.

b. Resignation of Timothy Lamb from Zoning Board of Appeals (R-2021).

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Dr. Beckett

Result: The resignation was accepted unanimously, with regret {9-0-0}.

12. Executive Session.
a. Potential land acquisition.

Motion by: Ms. Carroll

Seconded by: Mr. Osgood

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby enters into executive session to discuss a potential land acquisition at 9:20 P.M.

Result: Motion passed unanimously {9-0-0}.

Present for the Executive Session item were council members, Mr. Tom Gullotta, Chairman, Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman, Dr. Beckett, Ms. Deb Carroll, Ms. Mary LaChance, Mr. Jake McChesney, Mr. Kurt Cavanaugh, Ms. Lillian Tanski, and Mr. Whit Osgood, with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson.

No votes were taken during the Executive Session, which ended at 9:27 P.M.

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk

Thomas Gullotta
Chairman