

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Jonathan Luiz, in attendance, held a Special Meeting at 6:00 P.M. in Community Room B of the Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles Street. Also in attendance were members of the Board of Finance and Board of Education, as well as department heads of town and education staff. 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
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll {excused}
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh
Mr. John Cavanna {excused}
Ms. Mary LaChance
Mr. Jacob McChesney
Mr. Whit Osgood
Ms. Jennifer Wang

a. Pledge of Allegiance *Led by Susan Karp*

2. Public Comment and Petitions pertaining to the Call.

Dan Boughton of 35 Checkerberry Lane, is opposed to artificial turf, due to the higher risk of injuries and the heat island effect. He urged saying no to artificial turf fields in Glastonbury.

Jenn Jennings of 34 Cranesbill Drive, stated that over half the GHS population participates in athletics. Synthetic turf gets more playing time than natural grass and is more resistant to wear and tear, as well as safer for athletes to land on its pressurized rubber surface. There is also a maintenance cost savings over time.

Shawnee Baldwin of 57 Nuthatch Knob, asked how many have read the report by the TALK environmental committee. Artificial turf products need to be replaced every 8-10 years and cleaned after every use, which is not happening. She questions the installation of more PFAS, which goes against the Town's sustainable policy. She asked to instead invest in needs like mental health services, composting, and installing solar carports over school buses.

Lisa Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, asked when the \$25,000 study for artificial turf was completed and who conducted it. She also pointed out a conflict of interest, with the state providing a grant for PFAS testing and remediation, while there is consideration to install two

artificial turf fields. She is concerned about the health risks of artificial turf, and urged investing in natural grass, which is safer for players and cheaper to install.

Rick Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive, stated that artificial turf fields are expensive to install and replace. He also noted that the proposed location of the two turf fields are next to a conservation easement. He worries about PFAS getting into the water.

Jim Buckley of 37 Olde Stage Road, has many years of experience in refereeing soccer players on these fields. He opposes artificial turf because of environmental concerns, the increased risk of injury to players, and the financial cost, which is not clearly defined. He cannot name another public high school with a second or third artificial turf field in central Connecticut.

Heather Hassan of 404 Addison Road, is concerned with the amount of money being spent on artificial turf. She wonders whether they could reach a compromise by improving upon the existing turf. She is opposed to the artificial turf proposal.

Timothy McGuire of 107 Pond Circle, is captain of a varsity sport who believes that an additional turf field would add more efficiency.

Patrick Butler of 119 Morgan Drive, is captain of the boys' varsity soccer team, who often wait to share time with other sports teams on turf, causing players to get home very late. Adding more turf fields would help ease the scheduling load.

Mr. Niland read the written comments received, as listed on the Town website:

Erica Thrall of 10 Abbey Road, does not support adding artificial turf to the high school fields because they increase risk of injury, contain PFAS chemicals which are harmful and polluting, and the cost to install and replace them is fiscally irresponsible.

Christina Mukon of 4 Candlewood Road, opposes adding AstroTurf fields on the basis of environmental and mental health concerns. Installation of these fields sends the message that adults do not care about the climate anxiety that is present in future generations. It is also a misappropriation of resources that could be used more meaningfully to improve mental health.

Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way West, opposes the proposed artificial turf field, due to its multitude of environmental impacts, which clash with the Town's stated commitment to sustainable practices. Artificial turf fields also have adverse impacts on athletes' health.

Debbie Hickey of Chestnut Hill Road, strongly supports a new animal control shelter which is modern and energy efficient. She does not support spending the current budget to renovate the old shelter, which is poorly designed. She also suggested moving the new shelter further up, which will support the need to possibly expand in the future with plenty of space and will not delay the start of construction.

Karen Fecko of 24 Vista Lane, is proud of Glastonbury's silver medal for its climate leadership by Sustainable CT. For this reason, she is mystified that the Town is considering the purchase of

two turf fields at the high school, which will contain 80,000 pounds of non-recyclable plastic. This will cost the Town financially, and harm children's health. If this were a referendum issue, she would vote no. She urged the Council to do the same.

Brenda Sullivan of 49 Thompson Street, is concerned about the environmental and health impacts of artificial turf. The perceived playtime benefits are overshadowed by significant financial and ecological costs. It does not make sense that the Town would spend public funds to perpetuate a problem that the State is trying to fund to repair. Natural field maintenance offers a sustainable, cost-effective alternative. She also questioned recycling claims by turf companies, stating that used turf always ends up in landfills.

Lisa Mendum of 45 Candlewood Road, opposes the artificial turf fields proposal, and provided alternative suggestions on how to spend the \$3 million: invest in curriculum less dependent on YouTube; install structures/screens/trees at school/town buildings to help regulate temperatures and lengthen the life of HVAC equipment; swap gas-powered school buses for a more sustainable option; donate food surplus/waste collection in schools; and enhance their curriculum to help farmers research new agricultural methods.

William Marut of 264 Carriage Drive, stated that Glastonbury TALK published a report on the harms of artificial turf, countering an earlier report that was put out by Glastonbury Public Schools. He wonders how the Council will decide which side to come down on. As long as "the jury is still out" on synthetic turf, his recommendation is to eschew the more controversial, higher risk, and less well-understood solution of artificial turf, and move forward with the less controversial, lower risk, and more well-understood solution of natural turf.

David Kuzmak of 20 Tryon Farm Road, stated that the Buffalo Bills have played on artificial turf since 1973. In their new stadium, they will play on natural grass. He questions why the Town's proposal is doing the opposite of a successful NFL franchise.

Melinda Kuzmak of 265 Tryon Street, urged staying with natural grass on the athletic fields. The initial expense, and replacement and maintenance costs will exceed the cost of maintaining grass. Injuries to young athletes are also more likely to occur on synthetic turf. On a 90-degree day, artificial turf can reach 165 degrees.

Joan Brown of 119 South Mill Drive, is against town funding for artificial turf fields currently under consideration. The environmental, safety, and health concerns overrule the benefits of the turf fields. The PFAs-containing plastics cause long-term health concerns, use fossil fuels, and conflict with the Town's sustainable purchasing policy agreement. Injury rates are also higher on this type of field.

3. **Special Business as contained in the Call.**
 - a. **Annual Capital Improvement Program Budget presentation and discussion.**

Superintendent Alan Bookman presented the BOE's CIP projects, which include replacement of the roof at Gideon Welles School and a new gymnasium floor at Naubuc School. He explained

that the Glastonbury High School Design Roof Replacement request is for a design study, in which the design will take place now, with the roof replacement next year. There is also a proposal for a similar design study at Naubuc School, with roof replacement in two years. Both roofs are over 30 years old and experiencing cracks and leaks. Dr. Bookman then shared information about the two turf fields, which the BOE voted unanimously to add to CIP. He explained that the cost for the first field is \$1.2 million and \$2.1 million for the second. However, these price estimates were provided over a year ago. They are still looking for other funding sources to ease some of the financial burden on taxpayers. More research will be conducted before bringing the matter before the Council. Mr. Gullotta added that the Town Manager has not included artificial turf fields in the CIP.

Mr. Zeller asked if it is viable to place membrane roofs with a solar component at Gideon Welles. Dr. Bookman will look into it. Mr. Zeller asked if the moisture issues at Naubuc School have been remediated. Dr. Bookman did not know of any moisture problems, so it has been taken care of. Mr. Zeller asked why 59,000 square feet of roofing is being replaced at Naubuc School if it is in good condition. He also asked to look into the potential for solar panels on the shingles. Mr. Cavanaugh asked why the design study cost for both schools is the same, when the GHS roof is over 277,000 square feet versus 59,000 square feet at Naubuc. Director of Operations / Maintenance Al Costa explained that the design study has always been a placeholder. Historically, the Town has used \$75,000.

Mr. Luiz reviewed the 31 project recommendations proposed this year, excluding the BOE. Some are funded through the Capital Reserve Fund and some through ARPA. The first category is General Government, which includes 9 projects. This includes property revaluation at \$100,000 and Town Hall/Academy renovations and security improvements at \$75,000. Mr. Cavanaugh asked how much the last revaluation cost. Ms. Rowley replied, \$285,000, which was spread out over two years, excluding ongoing lawyer fees. Mr. Luiz explained that there is a new project for EV charging stations at six locations. Some grants and rebates have been received, leaving taxpayer funding at \$215,000. This also includes five years of funding for software and maintenance costs. Mr. Gullotta asked to exercise caution when choosing the EV charging stations, as some corporations have a track record of unreliability.

Mr. Luiz reviewed the Planning and Zoning updates, which is a multi-year view. In FY25 and FY26, a total of \$150,000 will be spent. The focus will be on updating the Town's building zone regulations and subdivision regulations. In FY27, there will be a \$75,000 appropriation for consultants to tackle the Affordable Housing plan and the POCD. Mr. Cavanaugh would like this to be a one year process instead of two years. Ms. Caltagirone explained that her predecessor started the process on a comprehensive update, but it was slow-moving, so consultant support is important. The Design Guidelines cost \$150,000, and were supposed to be for one year, but took 18 months. She noted that this would be a heavier lift. She believes that sustained community engagement over 2-3 years is a good way to do this.

Mr. Luiz reviewed the renovations for the Building-Fire-Health Office. Mr. Cavanaugh finds it hard to believe that there is still asbestos in Town Hall. Mr. Luiz confirmed that asbestos was found in the tiles underneath the carpet that was replaced. Ms. Caltagirone added that this is continuing a project which started before the pandemic. A portion of the office has been

remediated. Ms. Karp asked for a recap on the improvements that have been made to the building over the past several years. Mr. Zeller asked for an update on what the building has cost over the last 10 years. Mr. Gullotta clarified that they are talking about the old Town Hall and not the Academy building.

Mr. Luiz noted that the \$500,000 STEAP grant will not allow ARPA to be used as a match for the Nye Road project. That money will instead be allocated to offset other projects in FY25. He then noted that they await feedback from the structural engineer for the Williams Memorial project. There is an opportunity to use \$1 million of ARPA money, but time is of the essence because ARPA has a December 2024 deadline for placing the purchase order. Mr. McChesney is surprised to see this item again. He cannot support allocating this much money for this project. Mr. Osgood asked if the project includes any connections between this building and the Academy. Mr. Luiz explained that the plan is to establish a rudimentary interior connection between the front hall on Main Street into the entryway that faces the Academy. Ms. Karp asked if it is possible to look at parts of this project rather than the whole. Mr. Luiz stated that it is possible but separating it out would take more time.

Mr. Luiz then reviewed the Public Safety projects, which include replacement of portable and mobile radios. Mr. Cavanaugh asked if there are dead spots in the community with the radio. Fire Chief Mike Thurz stated that their coverage is about 95%. The radios work, but the problem is that the parts are no longer becoming available. Mr. Luiz explained that there is also a proposal for partial funding for the replacement of the Fire Apparatus - Engine Tanker. The apparatus is over 25 years old and will take three years to construct. Chief Thurz explained that they have already invested \$181,000 for repairs, and the parts are becoming increasingly harder to acquire. If they were to appropriate money, the vehicle would not be received until FY26 or FY27. Ms. Wang asked why there are significant cost increases in projects from this year to next year. Chief Thurz explained that costs are going up 1% every month.

Mr. Luiz then reviewed the projects under Physical Services, which include the pedestrian bridge repair and the road overlay program; for the latter, about three-quarters of the funding would come from ARPA. About half of that ARPA funding will be from savings from the Nye Road acquisition. Also for consideration is the roundabout at New London Turnpike, which will be in lieu of a traditional traffic signal. The State would fund the design but not the construction. There are also proposals for sidewalk repair and pavement restoration.

Mr. Luiz then reviewed the six projects under Parks and Recreation. Mr. Gullotta asked about the status of the tree management study at JB Williams Park. Ms. Caltagirone explained that the GZA is conducting a public study which covers JB Williams and former MDC properties. They have also received a \$30,000 grant from CT DEEP and will apply again next year. Lisa Zerio, Director of Parks and Recreation, explained that the Addison Park renovations proposal will make improvements to the basketball and tennis courts, as well as make repairs to the three buildings on site. Ms. Wang asked about the possibility of an entrance to the splash pad without needing to buy a pool pass. Ms. Zerio explained that, in the future, they can create a separate entrance to the splash pad, with inclusion of a separate bathroom, which is a regulatory requirement.

Mr. Luiz explained that the Riverfront Park and Boathouse proposal would replace the existing plumbing and piping at the park, and conducting a feasibility study on the silting up of the boat launch. There may not be a solution, but this will provide information on what the cost will be to remediate on an ongoing basis. Mr. Gullotta asked to put together a report on the income generated from projects to show whether or not they are paying off their expenses. Mr. Luiz will provide that. He then reviewed the renovations at the RCC, replacement of heavy equipment, and replacement of aging playground equipment. Mr. Gullotta asked about the Welles Village playground. Ms. Zerio stated that it should be in before early June. The Town Manager then reviewed the projects under Human Services, which include building renovations and upgrades at Youth and Family Services.

Mr. Luiz summarized the total project cost of all the segments, which net \$11.71 million. Though not part of the CIP, other projects are being funded from the Sewer Sinking Fund (Parker Terrace Station and Force Main Replacement) and Town Aid Road. The 5-Year pro-forma projections show no gap in funding, assuming all anticipated funding is received. At the conclusion of this budget season, he proposes reviewing the CIP outyears and making a reasonable determination as to whether or not the CIP can afford to fund going forward on a cash basis or needs to bond.

He noted that there will be a savings in the debt service of \$1.82 million, and suggests reprogramming that into savings in the CIP budget. Ms. LaChance disagreed, believing that more expenses will arise as the student population increases. Mr. Luiz had the same thing in mind. He explained that going out to bond for new projects increases the surge in the mill rate, which drives his concern. Mr. Osgood sees no problem with placing savings from bond payments into capital because, in essence, bond payments are capital. Mr. Niland is torn by this. In FY20, they went down a little too much and have been trying to work back gradually, but this is more than gradual. Mr. Luiz stated that there is a placeholder to bond for a \$2 million land deal next year.

Ms. Wang would like to get a better sense of which projects are urgent. Mr. Luiz will review that at the Council's meeting next week. Ms. Wang asked why funds were not allocated for three projects that have typically been allocated: new sidewalks, traffic calming, and general bike/pedestrian improvements. Mr. Luiz explained that a lot of that work has been conducted through grants. Additionally, as part of the traffic calming grant, they will tack on new sidewalks. There is also a federal community connectivity grant. Mr. Zeller asked to include two small missing sections of sidewalk to the list, from Ash Swamp Road to Diamond Lake Road.

Mr. Gullotta would like to resolve the issue of the dog pond before settling this budget. Mr. Luiz stated that the design plan is ready and could soon go out to bid. The plan is for \$2 million, but they have allocated only \$1 million of that. Mr. Osgood asked about a regional solution. Mr. Luiz has reached out to their neighbors besides Marlborough and there is no regional solution. Mr. Cavanaugh stated that the Council was generous with the BOE for their midyear rooftop units. He suggested exchanging one of the current projects on their list for the dog pond. Ms. Karp asked why they feel the need to sustain \$2 million in the Capital Reserve Fund Balance when their policy is only \$1 million. Because of the time crunch for the ARPA funding, she would also find it helpful to know which projects could meet those parameters in the next 11 months; this would limit the scope of their discussion.

Mr. Niland asked for an update on the bigger ticket capital fund items. Mr. Luiz will provide that. Mr. Cavanaugh asked about the Dug Road construction project, for which they have recently received a petition. Mr. Luiz explained that the project will be listed in the outyears. Mr. Pennington added that the \$2.7 million project cost makes a lot of assumptions regarding factors such as road construction and drainage. If the Council chooses, the project could be broken up into two sections: the gravel portion and the grass portion. Ms. Wang finds the pro forma helpful, but asked to add border lines that would help readability, as well as an index.

There was consensus to not hold a second CIP workshop tomorrow.

4. Adjournment.

Chairman Gullotta thanked all for a lively discussion and closed the meeting at 9:09 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk

Thomas Gullotta
Chairman