

## OPC Special Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2023

Room 206

Attendance: First Selectman, Monica McNally; Board of Finance Chairman, Jim Palen; Planning and Zoning Chairman, Steve Olvany; RTM Member, Lois Schneider; and Board of Education Vice-Chairman, Jill McCammon. Also in Attendance: Town Administrator Kate Buch and State Representative Tracy Marra.

Mrs. McNally called the meeting to order at 8:34 am.

Ms. McNally called for a motion to approve of the OPC Regular Minutes of December 21, 2022. Mr. Palen moved, Mr. Olvany seconded and the motion passed. Ms. Schneider and Ms. McCammon abstained.

**First Selectman** Ms. McNally provided updates on:

- Ms. McNally's State of the Town address was presented to the Human Services Planning Council (HSPC) and will be presented to the Senior Men's Association later this morning.
- Ms. McNally discussed SB-122 regarding utility companies clear cutting trees. She provided both oral and written testimony in support of this bill.
- WestCOG hired SRF Consulting Group to conduct a New Canaan Branch Noise Abatement Feasibility Study which will review the 11 railroad crossings from Stamford to New Canaan. A diagnostic meeting is being planned for late March or early April.
- The Board of Selectmen will vote on its budget this evening and present it to the BOF on March 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Tracy Marra was welcomed to her first OPC meeting and Ms. McNally reiterated that all Darien's representatives are always welcome.

**Board of Finance** Mr. Palen provided updates on:

- The Board of Finance will meet on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Among the items to be addressed that night: an increase in the bond appropriation for the DHS track; bonding for a new NHFD pumper; approval of gift donations; and approval of a heart and hypertension claim.
- Board of Finance members are monitoring budget meetings and will receive the BOS and BOE budgets on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The BOF will publicly review the budgets with the goal of meeting operational and capital needs while being mindful of impacts to the mill rate.

**Planning & Zoning** Mr. Olvany provided updates on:

- Hindley, Holmes and Royle construction projects have gone through the P&Z process and only Holmes is still awaiting approval of the final resolution. Groundbreaking is expected to begin in June and construction should last about 28 months.
- Mr. Olvany provided an update on the three major development projects in town: Darien Commons (Federal Realty), Palmer's project and the Corbin Development (Baywater Properties). He has spoken with developers from each project and all were complimentary of Town Hall staff in the Planning & Zoning Department, Fire Marshal's Office, and Building Department.
- Palmer's structures are scheduled for demolition around March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- League of Women Voters recently hosted Hartford delegates. Part of the discussion included local control over schools and Planning and Zoning regulations.

**Board of Education** Ms. McCammon provided updates on:

- On February 14<sup>th</sup> the BOE will vote on its budget.
- There is a national teacher shortage and this impacted contract negotiations.
- The BOE priorities Chairman Dineen mentioned in his State of the Town address remain the same. Mental health is number one and school security is second.
- There are not more students in Special Education, but the students in Special Education are requiring a greater level of intervention.
- The BOE is looking for ways to fund the Robotics program K-12 as it comes off a grant from the Darien Foundation.
- Continue to focus on effective communication.

**RTM** Ms. Lois Schneider reviewed items before the RTM:

- RTM members have been following budget meetings live, or watching the videos, to keep informed on budget discussions.
- An FOI presentation will be provided by Tom Hennick of the FOI Commission to reinforce the guidelines for properly noticing and running a meeting. It will also be available on video.
- On Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> the Rules Committee will set the agenda for the RTM meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup>. Items expected to be on the agenda are: a commercial blight ordinance; acceptance and appropriation of gifts related to Cherry Lawn gazebo and Weed Beach Meadow bid package; DHS track and a worker's compensation voluntary agreement.

**State Representative** Tracy Marra provided updates on:

- Ms. Marra looks forward to the Governor's budget presentation later today. There has been mention of possible tax cuts for the middle class.
- A great number of bills are being introduced now in committees and Public Hearings related to bills often pop up quickly. Ms. Marra encouraged constituents to track bills on issues they want to follow in order to be able to submit oral or written testimony.
- Ms. Marra serves on Public Health, Education and Transportation Committees.
- Ms. McNally suggested Ms. Marra post information on her website (<https://www.repmarra.com/>) showing people how to submit testimony. Constituents should email her at [tracy.marra@housegop.ct.gov](mailto:tracy.marra@housegop.ct.gov) to let her know if testimony has been submitted so she may highlight the testimony with committee members.

Ms. McNally called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Olvany moved. Ms. Schneider seconded and all voted in favor.

Mrs. McNally adjourned the meeting at 9:03 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda O'Leary