

**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL & WPC AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
LOCATION: ONLINE/REMOTE
May 4, 2020**

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A **REGULAR MEETING** of the City Council & WPC Authority was held on Monday, May 4, 2020. In response to the Governor's Executive Orders regarding COVID-19, this meeting was held remotely using the ZOOM online meeting platform. Participants included Mayor Elinor Carbone and City Councilors Drake Waldron, Sharon Waagner, Paul Cavagnero, Frank Rubino and Anne Ruwet.

Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell, Fire Chief Peter Towey, Public Works Director Raymond Drew, City Clerk Carol Anderson and City Treasurer Daniel Farley also joined the meeting remotely.

Councilor David Oliver was absent.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes Approved

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held April 20, 2020.

Budget Review & Discussion

Mayor Carbone reviewed the budget adoption process and presented the level two City budget totaling \$57,800,519. She explained that the budget, as presented, reflected a 5.57% increase over the current fiscal year budget and informed the Council that the Board of Finance requested a proposed budget with no more than a 2.5% increase. Mayor Carbone explained that an additional \$1,690,000 would need to be cut from the City budget in order to reduce the increase to 2.5% and the City and Board of Education budgets collectively would need to be reduced by approximately \$5,455,000 in order for there to be no impact on the mill rate. Mayor Carbone also discussed the difficulty of projecting revenues and grant funding from the State.

The Council discussed the proposed budget and revenue projections and agreed to schedule a joint meeting with the Board of Finance at a later date to review an amended City budget. Councilor Cavagnero expressed his concerns regarding the potential loss of State revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilors Ruwet and Waagner commended the Mayor and stated that they would not support any mill rate increase.

Release of Liens

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to accept Corporation Counsel's recommendation and authorize the Mayor, pursuant to C.G.S. §12-179, to release the liens described in Atty. Muschell's memo dated May 4, 2020.

Tax Collector Refunds

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Tax Collector and authorize the nine tax refunds indicated on the list dated May 4, 2020.

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Rubino, the Council herein acting as the WPCA voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Tax Collector and authorize the four sewer usage refunds indicated on the list dated May 4, 2020.

Business by Dept. Heads

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to consider business by Department Heads.

Fire Chief Peter Towey presented an update on the City's emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and reported that the virus is still having a substantial impact in Torrington.

Public Works Director Raymond Drew informed the Council that, effective May 4, 2020, City employees returned to work on-site with offices open by appointment only.

City Treasurer Daniel Farley presented an update on the City's bond rating and reported that Torrington received the following rating after the Standard and Poor's interview on April 15, 2020: "AA Negative with a stable outlook."

Business by Mayor & Members

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to consider business by the Mayor and Council members.

Councilor Rubino requested an update on the THS building project and Mayor Carbone reported that any decision on the project would be postponed until the City Council and Board of Education are able to meet in-person. Councilor Rubino also asked whether the grant application period for the proposed THS building project was extended and Chief Towey reported that an extension was under consideration.

Councilor Cavagnero urged for the Board of Education to revamp their curriculum and improve the performance of Torrington Public Schools before the THS building project moves forward.

Councilor Ruwet expressed her concerns about the State’s plan to reopen CT and how information is shared with the Northwest corner. Chief Towey reported that Torrington receives information from the State through WebEOC, a web-based emergency management information system. Mayor Carbone also discussed the City’s long-term recovery plan and strategies underway to help support local businesses.

Councilor Waagner expressed her interest in the THS building project, reported that the region is experiencing broadband issues with teleworking and students attending school from home, announced that the Northwest Connecticut Regional Food Hub has expanded, and proposed an alternate site for Verogy Energy’s proposed solar farm.

Councilor Waldron provided an update on teaching from home and acknowledged that under current circumstances, it would be difficult to garner enough support for the THS building project while the coronavirus pandemic is still going on.

Mayor Carbone reported on the success that some companies experienced with teleworking as a result of the pandemic. She also discussed the success and bright outlook of Torrington’s real estate market, including the sale of the old Howard’s building and heightened interest among residents and workers in larger cities to move to more rural areas such as Torrington. In addition, the Mayor informed the Council that the mural on the side of the old Libby’s building would be taken down and relocated because the property owner received approval from the state’s Historic Preservation office to move forward with window replacements.

Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Jonathan R. Draper, Asst. City Clerk

ATTEST: 
CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK