

**MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL & WPCA
REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL AUDITORIUM
ONLINE (ZOOM)
December 21, 2020**

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the City Council and Water Pollution Control Authority was held in the City Hall auditorium on Monday, December 21, 2020. In response to the Governor’s Executive Orders regarding COVID-19, members of the public were able to attend the meeting remotely using the ZOOM online meeting platform. Board members and City staff also had the option to join the meeting remotely.

The meeting was attended in-person by Mayor Elinor Carbone, Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell and City Councilors Frank Rubino and Sharon Waagner. Police Chief William Baldwin, Jr., Economic Development Director Rista Malanca, Purchasing Agent Pennie Zucco, Parks & Recreation Superintendent Brett Simmons, City Clerk Carol Anderson, Blue Haus Group Founder Timothy Moore and City Councilors David Oliver, Paul Cavagnero, Anne Ruwet and Drake Waldron joined by ZOOM.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held December 7, 2020.

Presentation: Economic Development

Economic Development Director Rista Malanca provided an update and background information regarding the Building Healthier Communities grant. She reported that a social media intern was hired to enhance the Economic Development Department’s online presence and explained how Blue Haus Group could help the City to reimagine and repurpose its spaces. Mayor Carbone provided further clarification regarding Blue Haus Group’s role and discussed some of the issues that have hindered the City’s redevelopment, including property owners over-valuing their properties and failing to consider alternative markets. She noted that pop-ups and events would only be one part of Blue Haus Group’s strategy. Councilor Waagner discussed some of the work of Torrington Downtown Partners, Main Street Torrington and local stakeholders and she urged the City to take advantage of the resources that the City already has. Councilor Cavagnero also expressed his concerns regarding the inclusion of property owners in developing an economic development strategy and emphasized the need to improve the City’s education system. He expressed support for grassroots efforts and asked when the Council would receive a report on Blue Haus Group’s progress. Ms. Malanca stated that a progress report would be presented to the Council at its regular meeting on January 19, 2021.

Transfer of Property at 117 Water Street

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to accept Corporation Counsel’s recommendation and authorize the City to convey the remaining half of the alley lying to the west of the “old firehouse” building at 117 Water Street to The Midland Group, LLC.

WPCA Invoices

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council herein acting as the WPCA, voted unanimously to approve the following payments from Fund #490 Sanitary Sewer Capital Improvement:

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>INVOICE</u> | <u>CONTRACTOR</u> | <u>AMOUNT</u> |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 12/8/2020 | 0000210606 | Wright Pierce | \$4,406.12 |
| 12/8/2020 | 0000210605 | Wright Pierce | \$7,219.81 |

Business by the Ordinance Subcommittee

Councilor Rubino reported that the Ordinance subcommittee met and unanimously agreed to advance the draft noise ordinance to the City Council to schedule a public hearing. On a motion by Councilor Ruwet, seconded by Councilor Cavagnero, the Council voted unanimously to schedule a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2021 to solicit citizen input regarding the establishment of a noise ordinance.

Timber Harvest at Charlene Susan Besse Park

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Parks & Recreation Superintendent and award the bid for the Timber Harvest at Charlene Susan Besse Park to Gutches Lumber Company, Inc. of Canaan, NY for the total amount of \$56,982.

Release of Liens

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Ruwet, 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 December 21, 2020.

TABLED: Tax Collector Refunds

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Waldron, the Council voted unanimously to table the acceptance and authorization of Tax Collector refunds.

Business by Dept. Heads

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

Parks & Recreation Superintendent Brett Simmons provided an update on Christmas Village, described some of the changes that were enacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and thanked the volunteers and donors. Councilor Ruwet asked how the current year's donations compared to previous years and Mr. Simmons reported that the total amount of donations was on track to be less than previous years, which he credited to financial hardships that have resulted from the pandemic.

Chief Baldwin wished the Council members and their families a Merry Christmas.

City Clerk Carol Anderson thanked Mr. Simmons and the volunteers at Christmas Village for providing a positive experience for her grandchildren.

Business by Mayor & Members

On a motion by Councilor Rubino, seconded by Councilor Waagner, the Council voted unanimously to consider business by the Mayor and members of the City Council.

Councilor Oliver wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councilor Waldron wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Councilor Cavagnero wished everyone Happy Holidays and asked when the Council would receive an update regarding an item that was discussed in Executive Session. Mayor Carbone informed the Council that the aforementioned item would be discussed at or before the City Council's next regular meeting.

Councilor Ruwet wished everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

Councilor Waagner commended the City's Highway Department for their response to the snow storm that took place on December 16th and December 17th. She also thanked the first responders that will be working during the holidays and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Councilor Rubino wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mayor Carbone reported that the City received notice from the CT Office of Policy and Management that the City of Torrington will receive a reimbursement in the amount of \$528,508.48 to offset COVID-19 related expenses. She also reported that the City, in conjunction with the Torrington Area Health District and Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, identified The Armory as the location for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations. She thanked Atty. Muschell for putting together the MOU that was approved by the State to begin mass vaccinations at The Armory beginning in January.

Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Waagner, seconded by Councilor Rubino, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

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

ATTEST:

Carol L. Anderson

CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK