



**PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING AMENDED MINUTES
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2023
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
Via WebEX.com
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

Members Present: Councilman Gene Nocera
Councilman Ed McKeon
Councilman Mike Marino
Councilman Darnell Ford

Staff Present: Christopher M. Holden, P.E., Director of Public Works
Howard Weissberg, P.E., Deputy Director of Public Works
Cathy Lechowicz, Director of Recreation
Rohan Manning, Chief Management Analyst

Public: Philip Nettis, Patti Nettis-Deegan, Tyler Eckstrom, Janet Smith, Kate Wiltsie, Taylor Brown, Raymond Blaney, Jill Chase, John Sutton, Rachel Conners, Kate Wiltsie, Kimberly Inglis, Sebastian St Ivory, Don Degennaro, Brian Kronenberger.

The meeting was called to order by Councilman Nocera at 6:30 p.m. Councilman Ford moved to approve the Meeting Minutes dated January 11, 2023. Councilman Marino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Jill Chase of Old Road Drive shared that she and neighbors were in attendance to discuss Old Road Drive and possible City assistance to make it accessible to emergency vehicles and any other services the residents of the street may need. She reiterated that they would love for it to be a public road or at least accessible and safe for all.

Philip Nettis of Dripps Road shared he met with Howard and that they discussed some new solutions to the problems they have on Dripps Road and Saybrook Road.

Tyler Eckstrom stated that repairing or rebuilding Pameacha Pond is the right decision for the City considering its natural beauty and history with the City of Middletown. He said there is a lot of opportunity to improve upon the pond and if taxpayer's money is being put into the pond, it is a good opportunity to put in a public access point.

Kimberly Inglis is very excited to hear the news about Pameacha Pond. She thanked everyone who worked towards this solution.



John Sutton is very happy about the decision for Pameacha Pond and looking forward to seeing the dam go up.

Maryellen Sutton applauded Public Works and members of the Council who took into consideration the issues of dam removal versus dam replacement and she is eager to work with everyone moving forward.

Janet Smith said she speaks for all the turtles that are going to hatch in the spring- thank you very much for keeping their home alive and well. She appreciates all the work that went into this and is happy with the news that the town will keep the dam.

Taylor Brown shared he appreciates moving forward with the decision to repair or replace the dam and he looks forward to hearing more about what the construction of the dam looks like, to what extent it can get the water level back to what it was and the potential to build in a public access point.

Rachel Conners thanked everyone and shared that there is continued interest in design plans for the repair or replacement of the dam.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Coleman's Carnival- March 19, 2023- April 19, 2023. Councilman Ford made a motion to approve the application for Coleman's Carnival to operate for the above dates. Councilman Marino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. Parks Fees- Director Holden shared that pavilion rental prices are very low and that there needs to be an avenue to have our residents have first choice and a reduced fee over non-residents coming in and reserving parks for their picnics. There is a lot of work that goes into preparing the site and cleaning up the site afterwards. Director Holden believes that we need to increase the fees for out of town residents. Deputy Director Weissberg took a look at surrounding towns. Many towns charge separately for the use of other things within the parks and that there should certainly be a focus on making rentals fair and balanced and consistent with neighboring towns. Director Holden stated there is a meeting scheduled for later in the week with the Parks Department and the Recreation Department to look at a fee schedule. Councilman McKeon asked how we enforce park reservations. Director Holden said he would check with the Parks Department on what they currently do. Councilman Ford asked if there is a breakdown of residents versus nonresidents who rent the parks facilities. Deputy Director Weissberg said that there were roughly 180 rentals and about 15% of them were nonresidents. Crystal Lake had the most out of town rentals. Crystal Lake, Smith Park and Vets Park have been the most reserved parks.
- c. Field Naming- A new field behind Beman Middle School needs to be named. A discussion should be had with the BOE. Councilman Nocera said he would reach out to the BOE Chair and spark a discussion. Director Holden stated that the BOE has to make a recommendation and the Public Works Commission then needs to review and approve it.
- d. Pameacha Pond- There was a motion to move this topic to the top of the agenda as there were many people from the public in attendance who would like to speak to it. Councilman Ford made



the motion and Councilman Marino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Director Holden stated that a few years ago the Water and Sewer Department started their project to relocate the sewer line downstream of Pameacha Pond, there was a release of raw sewage in the area because a manhole was dislodged, so the DEEP directed the City to do something with the dam. The consent order says to repair the dam, but during meeting with them, it was clear they wanted the City to remove the dam. There was an evaluation of the sediment and survey under the surface of the pond of what kind of contaminants were out there. 6-8 months ago a concept of what could be done if the dam was removed. Save the pond came into effect and based on their inquiries, the State changed their support for removal of the dam. Across the state the DEEP has been promoting removal of dams to bring back the natural channels of streams, brooks and rivers. In December the City Public Works Department met with DEEP fisheries at the dam and they stated again that they preferred dam removal but it's ultimately a City decision. At that time it was decided to move forward with either repairing or replacing the dam and not removal. The City is in the process of hiring a company that specializes in dam repair. Several other City dams will be evaluated and addressed as well. Councilman McKeon asked if there is any grant or state funding available to help with the costs associated with this project. Director Holden stated that would be evaluated during the first initial phase with the company. There is currently a proposal from them to do the initial evaluation for approximately \$6,000. Councilman Nocera reiterated to the attendees that as there was no objection by the commission, they are supporting the repair or rebuilding of the dam at Pameacha Pond. Director Holden stated that a letter was received the day of the meeting so that it did not make it on the agenda under correspondence. He read the letter into the record from Dave Wilson at 300 Russell Street, who is part of the Save Pameacha Pond group. Councilman McKeon thanked the members of Save the Pond for their participation.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Monarca Drive – No additional updates at this time.

b. Dog Park Update- Deputy Director Weissberg stated that the goal is to design, build and sustain a high quality dog park that is environmentally responsible, and accessible to the community and City as a whole. Locations are not going to be a discussion for another meeting or so as they are going to nail down what is important to this plan.

c. Recreation Center Update – Director Holden stated that all that is left is the flooring around the pool area and some punch list items. There are many activities going on already with the exception of the pool. Director Lechowicz shared that many of the offerings they have are full. It is expected that the pool flooring should be completed within the next month and once that's done, aquatics training can be done in the facilities. Official 6-12 weeks offerings will start in March. She stated that they will be staggering registration so that residents have first pick of classes and then non-residents can join. March 10th, 2023 will be the official grand opening.

d. Veterans Pool and Splash Pad Update – Director Holden stated that they are still on track to open on time. They are working on some of the pool amenities. Retaining walls and stairs are going up. Interior work continues including piping.



e. Saybrook Rd/ Dripps Rd Update- Deputy Director Weissberg said that for Saybrook Road they are looking at options for stabilizing and making the existing concrete road surface more appropriate and addressing some of the issues with heaving and cracking due to the thaw freeze cycles. No parking signs will be going on Dripps Road. They have met with the Middletown Land Trust to address concerns they may encounter with the parking restrictions in relation to the spider weave. They met on site to determine if it is feasible to add a parking area within the spider weave preserve. They are also working to address sedimentation issues in the pond by a possible detention basin.

f. Old Road Drive Update- Director Holden shared a drawing of Old Road Drive. He said there is currently a driveway that goes up off of Country Club Road that has access to the homes in the back. He is not sure if there are easements in place to allow access to the properties in the back. If the City were to take this over they would need to establish a right of way from all the owners and then reconfigure and construct a road. The cost estimate to establish a right of way and construct a road up to City standards is around \$1,200,000. Councilman Nocera waived the rules to allow resident Don Degennaro to speak. He asked where the estimate of \$1,200,000 came from. Director Holden stated that the City Chief Engineer put together a probability cost estimate based on what it would take to construct the road, easements, survey work that is necessary, and maps that would need to be generated. Don Degennaro told Director Holden there is an easement boundary that exists. Director Holden said there is not and that they couldn't find anything on the land records. Don Degennaro said that Brian Kronenberger had a survey done and there are markers out. Director Holden said that having stakes for easements from the back properties to the front properties does not establish a right of way for the City. Councilman Nocera noted that this is a very expensive proposition for the City and that we don't have a road bond to match up to something like that. He asked what, if any, improvements we can consider for emergency vehicles getting up the road? Director Holden stated that we would need to get a legal opinion to see if we were to do improvements and something were to happen, would we be responsible for anything going forward. Councilman Nocera asked that if there is precedent if they have addressed issues like this before for other roads. Director Holden said he is not aware of any private roads we have done improvements to prior to taking them over. Don Degennaro said that he does heavy highway construction and he feels that the true number is nowhere near the \$1,200,000 figure that was presented. Councilman Ford said that his concerns mirror that of the constituents in regards to safety and access for emergency vehicles and that he feels all measures and alternatives should be explored. Councilman McKeon said that this is not the first private road that the City has been asked to change to a public road and that we recently took one over. He agrees with Councilman Ford that this is worthy of taking a very close look at but he also shares that it will set a precedent and there are a lot of roads that this can be the case for. He reiterated that these should be reviewed by Planning and Zoning before they go in to ensure they're up to certain standards. Director Holden said there is a difference with Monarca Drive, which Councilman McKeon was referring to. Monarca Drive was a subdivision with a private road. Old Road Drive is more of a private driveway than a road, whereby parcels of land behind the original home were divided out and built upon and this isn't the same situation. Councilman Marino agrees the issue should be looked into further but that this is a Pandora's Box situation. Councilman Nocera said he believes we need to be as creative as we can as the cost associated with this is so high. He reiterated that it needs to be looked into further and the options laid out that are feasible. Director Holden said he will get a legal opinion and it can be discussed from there.



OTHER: Reported on by Christopher Holden

- a. January Updates- Catch basin repairs, Christmas tree pickups, bulky waste pickups, sweepers are out. Councilman Nocera said that the Chamber asked the commission to consider naming a road or facility for Joey Logano (NASCAR driver).
- b. January 2023 Monthly Report - Highway Division- Sanitation and Landfill are operating certain Saturday hours.
- c. January 2023 Monthly Report - Parks Division – The parks building has had a full cleaning, rug removal and an underground storage tank evaluated.
- d. January 2023 Public Works Overtime Report- Nothing additional to department update.
- e. January 2023 Building Permits – Nearly \$900,000 in building permits. There have been some large projects for Wesleyan ongoing. To help with building inspection back logs the department is looking at hiring an on call contracted worker.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS: None

Adjourn – As there were no further questions the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.