

Westport RTM *Health & Human Services, Library, Arts, & Museum, and Finance Committees*
August 31, 2022 | 7:00 PM | Virtual on Zoom | Joint Minutes for Agenda Item #1 Only

Summary

Called to order: 7:03 PM
Voted: 7:46 PM

Agenda: [Click here for public agenda](#)
Background Material: [Click here for BoF 08/03/22 Meeting Minutes](#)
Audio Recording: [Click here to listen \(Part 1\)](#) / [Click here to listen \(Part 2\)](#)

Attendance:

HHS

*Jessica Bram
Jaime Bairaktaris
Wendy Batteau
Harris Falk
Jack Klinge
Sal Liccione
Kristin Schneeman
Chris Tait

LMA

*Kristin Purcell
Candace Banks
Wendy Batteau
Brandi Briggs
Lori Church
Harris Falk
Karen Kramer
Richard Lowenstein

Finance

*Seth Braunstein
Jessica Bram
Rachel Cohn
Noah Hammond
Nancy Kail
Don O'Day

Guests

Elaine Daignault, *Town of Westport Department of Human Services*
Pete Ratkiewich, *Town of Westport Department of Public Works*
Louis Mall, *District 2*
Melanie Myers, *The Westport Public Library*
Claudia Shaum, *District 6*
Gretchen Webster, *community*
Jeff Wieser, *District 4, Moderator*
Jen Fava, *Town of Westport Parks & Recreation*
Michael West, *Town of Westport Public Works*
Peter Gold, *District 5*
Rachel Cohn, *District 8*
203-984-4468, *community*

Agenda Item One: Finance, Health & Human Services and Library, Museum & Arts Committees
"To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Human Services and the Westport Library, to approve a request for \$25,000.00 from the Westport's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, to develop a new Job Search Support Program at the Library."

Vote(s):

Finance Committee

Motion: Nancy Kail

Second: Don O'Day

Unanimously Approved

HHS Committee:

Motion: Harris Falk

Second: Sal Liccione

Unanimously Approved

LMA Committee:

Motion: Lori Church

Second: Candice Banks

Unanimously Approved

Joint Meeting also included:

Agenda Item Two: Finance and Park & Recreation Committees

"To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Parks and Recreation, to approve an appropriation of \$237,000.00 to the Capital and Non-Recurring Account for the installation of drainage on the Greens at Longshore Golf Course."

Agenda Item Three: Finance, Public Works and Public Protection Committees

"To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and a request by the Director of Public Works, to approve an appropriation of \$313,500.00 to the Capital and Non-Recurring Account for a Traffic Study of the Cross Highway School Zone between North Avenue and Bayberry Lane."

Minutes

Agenda Item One: *Career Counselor*

Presenting: Elaine Daignault, Director; Melanie Myers, Chief of Staff - Westport Library

Elaine began to discuss the history of the need for this sort of work due to an increase in clients looking for career assistance at the Westport Library. Melanie described the need and the connection with the Library - it being both a public access point and also a space with the technological assets required. The Counselor would assist in identifying jobs and also locating jobs, including in the local community.

Proposal:

Hire one (1) Career Counselor @ 10-15 hours/week for 1:1 career work and group work.
~\$24,000/year pilot program. Request received a favorable vote by the BoF at their meeting.

Discussion:

Sal discussed that this should be a line item in the budget for the Town.

Jessica asked if there's an estimate for the amount of people served in the community, to which Elaine responded with a description of a current email list with 350 in Westport who are currently looking for employment. An additional list has also been created with adults with different abilities. Melanie added that it's hard to estimate due to the unknown amount of support and time required by each client. "We'll be learning as we go." An average of 5 or so referral per week could be decided.

Jack spoke to the value of Westport's senior citizens skills and the value they could have for this program and offered his volunteer service to assist with the program, and further offered gaining volunteers with certain skills to assist.

Seth said that the ARPA funds were intended for projects that are *not* ongoing, but the program itself is important. He also said that advertising the program would be crucial.

Wendy said she disagreed slightly with Seth, saying that ARPA can be used by towns to help citizens who were damaged by COVID; "this specific program does that."

Lori wanted confirmation that there were 3 programs that fit this area pre-covid and that none currently exist today. Elaine said that Goodwill Career Center is now in Bridgeport, the Career Bus is active and hasn't been brought back to Town Hall because Human Services was doing all of the scheduling for the bus which was a very basic level system; "elementary." Lori said that she also understands Seth's point, but due to it being a pilot program, it fits. She ended asking if

any other options were considered besides the salary position. Elaine said that Westport Mentors were niche and the new position will be for a broader need.

Don said that he supports this and only wishes that the program was already in progress, and that it should be in the budget for the next fiscal year. He also said that he feels unemployment due to COVID is becoming outdated, and that it could be a more broad community need. Melanie and Elaine both explained that the people who are impacted by these programs are very impacted due to multiple jobs or financial hardships.

Dick asked who will be managing the program: Library or Human Services. Melanie said that the Library will hire and manage the program with close contact with Human Services. He also asked that, aside from prioritizing Westport residents, will CT residents be able to use the job placement services?

Nancy said she would support the program but questions the process on when the RTM will be updated on the program's success and wanted to assure that both organizations will be promoting the program. She also requested an update on *all* ARPA projects.

Peter confirmed the position is not benefitted, and then asked why the Town would give program updates and not the Library. Melanie described that it's not benefitted and that the relationship will be ongoing.

Karen said she fully supports the program and wants to offer her help.

Harris said he supports the program and that the percentage of unemployed in Westport has gone up since the April figures provided.

Jack followed up to ask how they will "score" the program, who is responsible for scoring the program, and when the RTM could expect a report.

Jessica followed up to applaud the Library for taking this project on and then asked to what extent the project goes to assist with job seeking and also job skills. Melanie answered that they will need to determine the roadblock for each individual, including interview skills or other individual skills training that the Library can assist with or if other agencies could be brought in.

7:46 - **Sal Liccione** called for a vote.

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RTM Parks and Recreation committee meeting report:

Attendance: Chris Tait, Jessica Bram, Seth Braunstein, Rachel Cohn, Andrew Colabella, Sal Liccione, Lisa Newman, Noah Hammond, Jimmy Izzo, James Bairaktaris, Jen Fava, Mike West.

Items Discussed:

- This capital cost will be recouped by golf fee's
- The cost was already put into the increased golf fee's prior to paying for the drainage system.
- Drainage system will increase quality and maintenance of the golf course.
- Golf Course holes 2 and 6 were done 2015 to see how effective the drainage system was. Was successful and this will finish the project for the rest of the course.

Sal Liccione Motioned

Jessica Bram 2nd

Vote - All in favor -10 yes

Against - zero no's

RTM Education Committee Meeting - September 5, 2022

On September 5, 2022, members of the RTM Education Committee met via Zoom to discuss and vote on the formation of the Long Lots School (LLS) Building Committee. Present were 7 of the 9 members of the Education Committee (Lauren Karpf, Lou Mall, Candace Banks, Brandi Briggs, Kristin Schneeman, Kristin Purcell, Lisa Newman), First Selectwoman Jen Tooker, Jay Keenan, BOE members Liz Heyer and Dorie Hordon, Sustainable Westport members Gately Ross and Johanna Martell, Candice Savin, and Jeff Wieser.

Ms. Tooker explained that the building committee members were chosen based on prior involvement in town building committees; skill sets as engineers, architects, and building experts; willingness to volunteer hundreds of hours of time over the next few years; the absence of a conflict of interest; and no kids at LLS. Mr. Keenan further explained that the committee will utilize a two phase approach. Phase one will focus on working with envelope consultants and other experts to set forth pricing and timetables for renovating, rebuilding, or a combination renovation/rebuild, with its recommendation going forward. Phase two will include the actual renovation or rebuild.

Members of the committee expressed concern about the lack of a Sustainable Westport representative on the committee. Mr. Keenan and Ms. Tooker explained that they want to keep the committee lean and efficient, and only included engineers, building experts, and architects. However, they are open to the idea of potentially adding a representative from Sustainable Westport for phase two of the project. A member asked what sustainability initiatives were included in the Coleytown Middle School renovation, and the response was that solar panels could not be put on the roof for several reasons, but that they used energy efficient systems throughout the building. The members from Sustainable Westport at the meeting voiced concern that nobody would advocate for sustainability, and that decisions made during phase one would impact the cost and timing of the committee's final recommendations (for example, federal reimbursements, long term return on investment, etc). Members of the Education Committee asked Ms. Tooker and Mr. Keenan if they would add a Sustainable Westport representative to the building committee (as either a voting or non-voting member), but they declined and explained that: (1) an existing committee member worked on energy efficient buildings for residential and commercial use; (2) they want a 5 person committee to move this project forward in a timely manner; and (3) they will do everything they can to make LLS an energy efficient building.

After a lengthy discussion, Ms. Tooker agreed to add language to the charge expressly stating the committee's aim to build or renovate a school in line with our Net Zero initiative.

We also discussed the fact that the BOE does not have a voting member on the committee. Individuals expressed a concern that since phase one is focused on a recommendation to renovate or rebuild, there are aspects of that decision that don't pertain to the skill sets of the committee

members. Mr. Keenan and Ms. Tooker explained that they will work in conjunction with the BOE, and that the meetings are public for anyone to attend and comment.

A question was raised about the process for appointing members to the committee. There was an open call for applications for town committees in general, not specific to this committee, which took place last spring.

Finally, we discussed the fact that the committee is not an advisory committee, but as a public agency is subject to FOIA requirements and will hold public meetings (other than meetings pertaining to bid selection and contract approvals). The committee reports to the First Selectwoman.

After much discussion, the committee decided not to vote on the resolution due to the fact that Ms. Tooker agreed to revise the charge prior to the general RTM meeting to include language emphasizing a commitment to sustainability. She will work with representatives from Sustainable Westport on the language. Thus, rather than vote on hypothetical language that did not yet exist, the committee agreed to adjourn. However, committee members stated that they do not wish to delay the process of appointing the building committee, and are hopeful that the RTM can vote on this tonight.

Submitted by:

Lauren Karpf