

**MINUTES
COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
SIXTH TAXING DISTRICT, City of Norwalk, CT
October 21, 2020**

**Via ZOOM Virtual Meeting
8:30 p.m.**

The October 21, 2020 Commissioners' meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Tammy Langalis at 8:35 p.m. A motion to approve the September meeting minutes was made by Commissioner John Igneri. The motion passed unanimously and the Minutes of the September Commissioner's meeting were approved as submitted.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Mike Barbis gave an update of the possible extension of the Ambler Parking Lot. Mike said that we have a limited number of spaces which are used more and more. We've also been approached by merchants who wish to see the expansion of the Ambler Lot. We have been working with an engineering company on the possibility of this project. The rest of the land with parking spaces is actually owned by the 140 Rowayton Avenue Association. Two Wilson Avenue neighbors fought the construction of the original lot and entrance but they both sold their properties to a developer. We would like the Ambler Lot to be better and have an expanded capacity. The engineers are working on the plan. The part of the parking lot owned by 140 Rowayton Avenue Association is private property. We'd like to expand the lot about 35 feet on the east side and a little bit more than that on the south end. We would like to make it easier for people to enter and exit the lot so as to have traffic not emptying onto Rowayton Avenue which has a quagmire of traffic all the time. The plans look good, in Mr. Barbis' opinion. Commissioner Igneri said that we've been looking at this for a long time and it is time to do it.

Commissioner Barbis also reported an update of the Bayley Beach drainage project. If you look at the beach from Pine Point Road, there are storm drains all the way around our Little League Field. There is also a drainage ditch which runs underneath Pine Point Road and into Farm Creek. A lot of water that occasionally comes into Farm Creek. The phragmites have taken over. You can't even see our drainpipes because there's so much sediment as well. The phragmites are definite signs that the soil has been disturbed by man. Once we stopped allowing saltwater coming

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up from Farm Creek (via a new Tide Flex valve), the phragmites took over. We are on our third set of engineers now who have worked on the problem. We've worked with the Little League and with the Rowayton Tennis Association. We have had the RTA fix it so that the Har-Tru could not come off and plug up our drainage system. We are proposing to put in a new drainage system, which would be installed using perforated PVC pipes. They shouldn't get clogged. We have cut back the phragmites twice. We continue to work on it. We're going to get permits to facilitate the work. We'll have periodic updates on the progress of this project. The money will come from the capital budget. We want to design this so that every 5 years we can do maintenance on this. Commissioner Igneri asked how we will deal with the phragmites going forward. If we dredge, we'll take out a lot of them. Mrs. Langalis thanked Commissioner Barbis for his work on this project.

Commission Chair Tammy Langalis reported on an update at the Rowayton Train Station Concession. At this point we don't have as many commuters going back into the city as we had hoped. The Station House is still closed. When do we want to open it? Should we put out an RFP for someone who might want to open a business in there. We could also have the hours of the guards increased a bit so that they could open the station during the peak rush. We may need it just as a shelter for peak times. We think we should wait until January to make a decision.

Commissioner John Igneri said that he is in favor of waiting until January to make any decisions. Mrs. Langalis said that we have about 375 annual permits out now. There are people who are waiting to go on the Wait List. We may have to decrease the hours of the guards since we don't have much revenue coming in right now. We will have to decide whether or not we want to open the Station House again. Additional information will be communicated at a later date.

Commission Chair Tammy Langalis said that a couple of weeks ago, an email blast was sent out asking people for feedback on the fence and signs posted there. We received about a dozen or so replies. Most people said they liked it the way it was. 114 people signed a petition (not all 6TD residents) asking the commissioners to change the guidelines for the fence to allow indefinite posting of a Black Lives Matter sign. We asked what kind of signage they would like to see on the fence. We did speak with the mayor, asking him to let us know what the city does in these conditions. We asked him because the Old School property is owned by Norwalk and only managed by the Sixth Taxing District. The information we received said that it didn't apply to Norwalk since signs, lawn signs or others, are not allowed to be displayed in Norwalk. We welcome what the guidelines should be. Maybe some people would like to speak to this.

Rob Pratt of Farm Creek said that there is a focal movement for the equality of black people, that the fence policy should be updated to express this moment in time. He feels that the Black Lives Matter should not be categorized as political. It is a social movement. He and others have drafted a framework for the Old School Property fence policy.

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Kate Connors said that the sign was taken down without a public vote or explanation of why it was taken down. There were four protests over the summer. The sign is not political. There was a petition to allow for the continuous display of the sign expressing that Black Lives Matter.

Mrs. Langalis said that when the original sign was taken down, it had been up for a month already. This length of time already exceeded the time allowed for sign on the fence, which is two weeks. We've had other conversations during meetings and we've put the issue on our web site. We are listening to both sides and we are still discussing the issue.

A person identifying as "Happy Clam" thanked the Commissioners for allowing people to join the meeting. Happy Clam said that we want the sign to go back up and wondered why there wasn't a more diplomatic approach and follow up plan since the last meeting. Mrs. Langalis said that we sent out an email blast and got back about a dozen comments. Happy Clam wanted to state that a Black Lives Matter sign has been hung across the front of a church in Westport.

Don Lennon(?) a board member for "Nancy on Norwalk" said he would not comment directly on the sign. Commissioner Mike Barbis said that the rules regarding posting of signs on the Old School Field is posted on our web site, www.rowayton6td.com, We feel that Nancy on Norwalk has a reputation of being political. Mr. Barbis also said that the fence is for signs of Rowayton organizations only. People may post private signs but the organizational signs are only for Rowayton organizations. That part of the fence guidelines has always been the same. The caller asked if there has ever been any exceptions to the rules. Mr. Barbis answered that since the guidelines have been put into place, we have never had any exceptions to those guidelines.

Daniel Harmond of 151 Highland Avenue wanted to commend the Sixth Taxing District for the work it does, in general. He claims that this is not being handled in an equitable way. The follow up highlighted a leadership vacuum. He is frustrated in the way the 6TD has handled this issue. He wants to see that the people are being listened to. Mr. Barbis said that if people want to change the guidelines on the fence, we can speak to that.

Mrs. Langalis, in the meantime, said that the Commissioners wanted to get some dialogue going, so we sent out the email blast.

Another caller said that there is quite a bit of misinformation around. The owners of the sign are not here anymore. They've worked really hard to get you to make an exception. Her emails have an underlying current that the District is sending a racist message. The protests happened because many people requested them. The caller doesn't see the Commissioners out there supporting Black Lives Matter. We need to put the sign up and we want to resolve this tonight.

Lauren Henry of Bryan Road asked why, if the 6TD would post a statement on their web site supporting Black Lives Matter, why can't we put up the sign? It seems like the bare minimum of what we should be doing.

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Mrs. Langalis said that the Commissioners support the Black Lives Matter issue. We've had four demonstrations. She wonders if other places have many Black Lives Matter yard signs. Why is the fence so important? Why aren't the yard signs up in other places.

Commissioner John Igeneri agreed with Tammy. He wanted to clarify that we did not go to the Mayor about the fence. He came to us since he'd been getting email and text about the topic. They're allowing us to make our own decisions about the fence. We've maintained a neutral position. We're just trying to talk about what's going on in the community. Blue Lives Matter is another issue. Do we allow a sign about that issue? What if someone wanted to post a sign taking a position about abortion, do we allow a sign about that? It's not as easy an issue that everyone says.

Commissioner Mike Barbis said that lots of comments are coming in. He said that he and the other commissioners try to do the right thing. We're only volunteers. He's been on the Board of Ed for 9 years. We're all giving back. The fence has never been allowed to be a political entity. We've felt very strongly about Black Lives Matter. We're just trying to be objective. He doesn't really understand why this sign has become such a flashpoint.

Mr. Igeneri said that he is walking his dogs earlier and earlier so that he doesn't run into people who have such strong opinions on this issue. We're just trying to make the right decision.

Mr. Barbis said that maybe we can have an in-person public meeting at the Community Center to discuss this issue.

Mrs. Langalis thanked the other Commissioners and residents for their comments. They are totally in agreement on the issue of Black Lives Matter, but the fence may not be the place for a sign expressing that sentiment.

REPORTS

Report of the District Treasurer

November 2020

Gil Kernan

**Sixth Taxing District
Treasurer's Narrative Report
Commissioners' Meeting
October 21, 2020**

Handouts to Commissioners*:

- New Report Pending Open Items as of Oct. 17, 2020
- Budget vs. Actual report as of September 30, 2020 for FY 20-21
- Capital Funds Project Balances report as of September 30, 2020
- Railroad Budget v Actual for FY 19-20

- Railroad Budget v Actual as of September 30, 2020 for FY 20-21
- Reports of Bills Paid for the following months:
 - September 2020

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Comments on Reports:

- **Budget vs. Actual Report for FY 20-21**
 - Our income is at 38.5% of the budgeted expenses.
- **Capital Budget**
 - Including reserves, the Capital account has a balance of \$461,528

Events:

- We are working with the Auditors on the Annual Audit for FY 19-20
- An email has been sent to Dept. Supervisors requesting projected budget items for preparation of the FY 21-22 Budget Draft

*Please note, these are preliminary drafts and not final audited reports
 \$Statistical reports will be at the end of the Minutes

District Treasurer Gil Kernan said that we are at 46% of the projected income and 45% of the budgeted expenses. The funds for some of the items mentioned tonight will come from the capital budget and there are enough funds to cover them.

Tammy, Ed and I will discuss the RR budget in the near future.

Report of the Fire Marshal	September 2020	Ed Carlson
<u>Type of Activity</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Total Man Hrs.</u>
Blasting Permits	***	***
Blasting Site Inspections	***	***
Building Inspections	5	6
Clerical (office) work		17
Fire Marshal Conferences	2	11
Career Development Training	1	3
Investigations	2	4
Meetings: District monthly	1	1
FNHCFMA	1	1
Propane tank install inspection	1	1
		Total Man Hrs. 44

ESO Solutions is the new vendor for Fire Incident reporting and Occupancy Inspection Data. Fire Marshal Carlson said that the fire department is going to have a house drill tomorrow as a home will be demolished at this time.

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Report of the District Property Manager

October 21, 2020

Ed Carlson

Community Center:

1. The UG is being used Mon. – Fri. for a Board of Education learning pod.
2. A tree was planted near the Potting Shed by Rowayton Gardeners in memory of Michael Poler.
3. The Community Center AED was removed for the winter by Norwalk Hospital. The Little League field AED was relocated to the Community Center Underground restroom.

Bayley Beach:

1. The entrance apron and area near the Bayley Beach basketball court has been graded and paved by P&S Paving.
2. The tree stump by the playground has been ground and the wood has been split for residents.
3. Concession equipment has been removed.
4. The AED has been removed by Norwalk Hospital for the winter.

Pinkney Park:

1. The maple tree on the north property line will have dead wood removed from it soon.
2. The AED in Pinkney Park has been relocated to the Pinkney public restroom for the winter months.
3. The Farmers' Market will be ending in November. Date TBD.

R. R. Parking Lot:

1. CT Rail has approached the District to see if there is any interest in assuming operation of the Station Building.

Report of the District Clerk

October 21, 2020

Andrea Woodworth

1. I've notified all groups who usually use the Community Center for meetings to let them know they can again meet here. I let them know that they will have to pay the District \$50 for an in-depth cleaning after each use. The District will send the money to the cleaning service.
2. One of the Pinkney Park yoga teachers will start having a maximum of 10 persons for the yoga classes in the Grace Room on Monday and Friday mornings starting on November 2
3. Greg Barringer may, in the future, run a weekend class but that is yet to be decided.
4. The Chamber Orchestra will start practicing in the Moose Room starting on November 4. I thought they wanted to practice on Sunday afternoons, but, judging from the paperwork that was left for me last night, they will continue to practice again on Wednesday

evenings. If and when we go back to in person meeting for the Commissioners' Meetings, I will either relocate them on that one Wednesday a month or have them cancel the practice.

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5. As I'm sure you know, there are remote learning gatherings in the Underground for students doing their learning only on those school days.
6. There may be a children's music class scheduled at the Community Center as well but the details have not been decided yet.

Mrs. Langalis stated that we had a security guard patrolling Rowayton this summer. We're trying to control the partying by youth that often gets out of control. There was no serious damage to district property. This has been better than in years past.

There were a few more people who wished to speak on the subject of the sign for the Old School Fence. Daniel said that passions are running hot. Michael Barbis said that he had felt personally attacked but doesn't really think that was the case. Mr. Barbis also said that we've raised the points that we have. We will continue to discuss this as long as the issue exists. Daniel _____? said that there seems to be a very clear lack of direction from the 6TD. How long are we going to go along with this? He would love to hear of some decisions being made.

A woman who is not a Rowayton, but a Norwalk, resident asked to speak. She doesn't think it's good to compare Black Lives Matter with Blue Lives Matter. You can always take off the uniform. Mr. Barbis said that she might be feeling threatened because we cannot take off the black skin. She went on say that she is trying to not make it personal. You cannot wake up not Black. What you are lacking is diversity training. People are just getting more angry with the way things are being handled tonight. What happened tonight isn't fair and some of it is personal. It's 400 years with misinformation. She asked if there was not anything taught about Black history.

Commissioner Barbis thanked everyone for expressing their opinions. We're just volunteers in this endeavor. We want to hear your concerns. The Commissioners have spent a lot of time talking about these issues. We're responsible for the whole district not just those who cime in here. Commission Chair Tammy Langalis said she would be willing to put the sign up for another two weeks. Mr. Barbis wants to have a public meeting and wants to have a public venue. We appreciate your impact. Mr. Barbis made a motion that we would put the sign up for two weeks and see where we go from there. Commissioner Igneri seconded the motion and the plan was cleared for action.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Igneri. The motion was passed to adjourn the October meeting of the Sixth Taxing District Commissioners at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea J. Woodworth

Clerk, 6th Taxing District