

Special Meeting Minutes  
for a Tri-Board Meeting of the  
Board of Education, Board of Finance & Board of Selectmen  
April 19, 2021 at 6:00 pm  
Meeting to be held remotely due to Covid-19

- 1. Call to Order:** First Selectman Spaulding called the meeting to order at 6pm, also in attendance were Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Selectman Stephan Grozinger, Board of Education Chair Tony Pesco and Board of Education members, Board of Finance Chair, Steve Ezzes and Board of Finance members as well as Representative Anne Hughes, Senator Will Haskell, Senator Tony Hwang and Town residents participating.
- 2. Discussion about the current legislative session with State Senator Will Haskell, State Senator Tony Hwang, and State Representative Anne Hughes:** For each of the bills discussed First Selectman Spaulding read out a summary as provided by Counsel of Small Towns (COST).

**HB 1024 – Affordable Housing Mandate,** Senator Haskell addressed this bill, his favorable opinion on Planning and Zoning model regulations and how these models can ease costly consultant fees. He mentioned he was not sure why Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) aren't deed restricted, as this would help with Weston's affordable housing issue without changing it too much. Senator Hwang expressed his concerns over the language of the bill highlighting the fact that a one size fits all solution does not fit with Weston especially regarding the potential environmental impact. He also mentioned his concern with failure to meet the affordable housing requirements and the implication of all local Planning and Zoning regulations becoming null and void. Representative Hughes is a fan of ADUs and feels the bill allows for more incentive for towns like Weston to think creatively and expand the diversity of affordable housing available.

Mr. Rone Baldwin asked questions on the affordable housing percentages and when this would have to be adopted. He also asked why ADUs built after Jan 2022 do not count towards the affordable housing threshold number? Senators Hwang and Haskell address these questions with specifics on timing and where these regulations would specifically apply. Senator Hwang encouraged the public to voice their opinion by sending letters. Mr. Ken Edgar provided further clarification.

First Selectman Spaulding asked that the Senators take into account the environment and watershed areas and to ensure that Weston is strongly advocated for. He mentioned that a dual mandate of sustainability and affordability would be ideal. Selectman Grozinger asked whether the legislature had researched how many more ADUs Weston should expect in the passage of this bill. Senator Hwang addressed this saying the increase in density would have to fit with the infrastructure but that an increase in capacity would potentially put the Town on the hook for those infrastructure expansions. His hope is that they work with local input and collaborations to find solutions unique to Weston.

Mr. Ezzes asked about taxes on ADUs and whether incremental taxes are charged. His concern being that an influx of people would significantly increase the burden on Town services with the cost falling on the Town. First Selectman Spaulding said that this would cause a significant tax problem that would need to be taken into account. Senator Haskell addressed this saying there are 136 other towns in Connecticut that have already implemented this and they haven't seen a dramatic increase in demand on services or a tax burden.

Representative Hughes believes this Bill will be used to spur towns not being proactive, unlike Weston, into creative solutions where model regulations and different examples of housing is a good use of policy.

**HB6107 – Reorganization of Zoning Enabling Act**, First Selectman Spaulding asked for more details mentioning the vague language in the bill. Senator Hwang went into some detail saying it states that Connecticut Fundamentally has the power over planning and zoning and agreed that the language is very vague and mentions no local representation. Representative Hughes said the bill gives a developer who may be denied a permit the recourse of appeal and affirms that municipalities demonstrate a good faith effort in their progress towards the Fair Housing Act. Senator Haskell went over further details explaining that the bill does not take away consideration of things like watersheds and environmental factors etc.

**HB6611 - Fair Share Housing Assessment**, First Selectman Spaulding said this sounds as though it will be Hartford driven and asked that the particular COGS and Land Use Directors comments are taken into account. Representative Hughes contradicted this and saying that the creation of affordable housing standards are looked at by the COGs and that they are trying to look at this more holistically. She went on to say that right now affordable housing is concentrated in the high poverty areas of cities and we need to broaden the area being looked at to meet these goals. Senator Haskell mentioned that he does not support this bill because the formula for calculating how many units are needed in a town is unrealistic; e.g. adding 600 units in Weston does not make sense. He does not think the Bill in its current form will pass. Senator Hwang and Representative Hughes agreed.

**HB-6655 – Property Tax Cap and Incentivizing Regionalization** First Selectman Spaulding expressed his concerns on various items, like the intangible assets tax. Senator Haskell acknowledged that he would need to dig into the details of the bill further as it is enormously complex. Senator Hwang said that this would not be raised for passage in this session.

**SB-1105 – Elimination of Car Tax and Increasing the Uniform Property Assessment Rate** First Selectman Spaulding expressed his concern about the redistribution of taxes for Weston residents. Senator Haskell explained his reasoning for the elimination of Car Taxes explaining that this is not a tax cut, but a tax simplification, making things simpler for Town Hall and making tax rates more equitable. Questions were heard from Ms. Gina Albert and Mr. Pesco. Senator Hwang acknowledged the reality of this bill and the difficulties in how to actually make it work because municipalities have come to rely on this revenue.

First Selectmen Spaulding closed out the meeting by giving the Town's position on two other bills, **SB-660 – Workers' Compensation Benefits – Post Traumatic Stress** and **HB-6669 – Juvenile Motor Vehicle Theft**. First Selectman Spaulding went on to say that there were other bills that have been highlighted in the document provided and he would be happy to discuss them further. He encouraged everyone to reach out to their representatives to make sure that their opinions are heard. He thanked Senators' Hwang and Haskell and Representative Hughes for their time.

### **3. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7.30pm**

Minutes submitted by: Sara Beer, Executive Administrative Assistant.

## MUNICIPAL AID

Q) Do you anticipate Weston's Municipal Aid being tied to housing composition?

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**SB-1024 – Affordable Housing Mandate** - As amended, the bill 1) requires local zoning laws to designate locations or zoning districts within the municipality in which Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed as of right, including ADUs which are detached, within or attached to the main home; 2) provides that ADUs must be approved within 65 days; 3) provides that if municipalities fail to adopt ADU provisions, their zoning laws are null and void; 4) excludes ADUs built or permitted after 1/22 from counting towards a town's 8-30g 10% affordable housing threshold; 5) replaces the requirement that zoning regulations consider the "character of a district" with consideration of physical site characteristics and architectural context; 6) requires WPCAs to include specific allocations of capacity to serve areas that may be developed for residential or mixed use buildings with 4 or more dwelling units; and 7) facilitates the greater use of alternative sewage treatment systems. Although provisions mandating as-of-right multifamily housing and middle housing were stripped from the bill, proponents are calling for the language to be added back. **Status: Amended and approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the Senate.**

**HB-6107 - Reorganization of Zoning Enabling Act** - Reorganizes the Zoning Enabling Act to provide greater clarity. The bill also 1) eliminates the requirement that zoning regulations consider the "character of a district"; 2) requires municipalities to demonstrate that zoning regulations affirmatively further the purposes of the federal Fair Housing Act to provide varied housing development opportunities and promote housing choice and economic diversity; and 3) requires OPM to convene a working group to study incentivizing and measuring compliance with (a) the affordable housing planning requirement and (b) zoning requirements related to housing choice. **Status: Amended and approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the House.**

**HB-6611 - Fair Share Housing Assessment** - Based on a New Jersey model, HB-6611 calls for (1) an assessment of the state-wide need for affordable housing and an allocation of such need to planning regions and municipalities, (2) the creation of affordable housing planning and zoning goals for each municipality, (3) the implementation schedule for such goals, (4) enforcement of such goals, and (5) state support to meet affordable housing needs beyond those met through such goals. **Status: Amended and approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the House.**

## PROPERTY TAX ISSUES

Although the so-called "mansion tax" bills, which would have imposed a statewide property tax on certain homes assessed at more than \$300,000, died in committee, lawmakers are considering a raft of other bills affecting local property tax revenues and collection:

**HB-6655 – Property Tax Cap and Incentivizing Regionalization** – 1) Imposes a 2.5% cap on municipal property taxes beginning in FY23; 2) Allows municipalities to impose a local tax on income, goods, services, tangible or intangible assets or any combination thereof; 3) Provides municipalities with Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA) grants if they regionalize services, such as education, police and fire and other services; and 4) Allows individual collective bargaining units to establish a coalition bargaining unit to negotiate wage and benefits for the delivery of regional services. **Status: Awaiting action by the Finance Committee.**

**SB-1105 – Elimination of Car Tax and Increasing the Uniform Property Assessment Rate** - Eliminates the property tax on motor vehicles, which will result in the loss of \$950 million in local property tax revenue and increases the uniform property assessment rate from 70% to 100%. **Status: Public hearing scheduled for April 20 before the Finance Committee.**

**SB-1064 – Interest Rate on Delinquent Property Taxes** - Allows any municipality, upon approval by its legislative body, or by the board of selectmen in any town in which the legislative body is a town meeting, to waive the interest on any property taxes that may be due for the 2020 tax year and reduces the interest rate on delinquent tax, fees, and assessments going forward from 18% to 12%. **Status: Approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the Senate.**

**HB-6643 – Property Tax Deferral and Interest Rate on Delinquent Property Taxes** Authorizes municipalities to (1) offer programs for the deferment of tax and certain other payments and for lower interest rates on such payments, and (2) waive any property tax due in an amount less than \$100. **Status: Approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the House.**

### **LABOR ISSUES**

**SB-660 – Workers’ Compensation Benefits – Post Traumatic Stress** - Expands eligibility for workers’ compensation benefits for post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSI) to cover (1) emergency medical services (EMS) personnel; (2) all Department of Correction (DOC) employees; (3) telecommunicators (i.e., 9-1-1 emergency dispatchers); and (4) under certain circumstances related to COVID-19, health care providers. **Status: Status: Approved by the Labor Committee, sent to the Senate.**

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

**HB-6597 – Modifications to Police Accountability Bill** – Revises certain provisions adopted in July 2020 as part of the Police Accountability bill by 1) allowing law enforcement units to obtain accreditation from the state Police Officers Standards Training (POST) Council by 2025 rather than the more expensive Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc (CALEA) process; 2) increasing reimbursement rates for the municipal purchase of body-worn cameras and related technology from 30% of costs to 50%; and 3) requiring the state to make recommendations on ways to lower the municipal costs for digital data storage devices and services related to body-worn recording equipment and enter into a cooperative purchasing plan with municipalities for data storage. **Status: Approved by the Public Safety Committee, sent to the House.**

**HB-6669 – Juvenile Motor Vehicle Theft** – Aimed at addressing concerns regarding the incidence of juvenile car thefts and break-ins. **Status: Approved by the Judiciary Committee, sent to the House.**

### **MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS**

**SB-183 – Electronic Public Meetings – Permissive** - Authorizes public agencies, including municipalities, to hold any meeting remotely by using conference call, videoconference, or other technology, provided the public has the ability to view or listen to the meeting simultaneously with its occurrence, using such technology, but excluding any portion of the meeting that is an executive session. The bill also prescribes how such meetings may be conducted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. **Status: Approved by the GAE Committee, sent to the Senate.**

**HB-6448 – Electronic Public Meetings - Mandatory** - Requires all state agencies, local boards and commissions and town meetings to allow citizens to participate in meetings remotely using electronic means. **Status: Approved by the Planning & Development Committee, sent to the House.**

## **EDUCATION**

**SB-948 – AN ACT ADDRESSING EDUCATION FUNDING AND RACIAL EQUITY IN CONNECTICUT.** To make revisions to how public education is funded in the state to address issues of equity and systemic racism.

**SB-949 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MONEY-FOLLOWS-THE-CHILD APPROACH TO FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION.** To establish a money-follows-the-child approach to funding public education in Connecticut.