



**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
SHELTON, CONNECTICUT
FINANCE COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 24, 2004**

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman Stanley Kudej called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call - Finance Committee

Alderman Stanley Kudej, Chairman, present
Aldermanic President John F. Anglace, Jr. - present
Alderman Diane M. Marangelo, present

Alderman Nancy Minotti – present
Alderman John Finn - present

Alderman Marangelo MOVED to change the meeting location from Room 104 to the Auditorium in City Hall; SECONDED by Alderman Anglace. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

Public Session

Jay Francino Quinn, President
Michelle Lasky, Vice President
Ripton School PTA

We're here to address the issue with respect to a playground. As you may possibly know, the playground facility itself is really not a safe facility for the children, but worse yet, having handicapped children – handicapped children can't access the playground. To me, it's sort of like having a class for the blind – you certainly don't want to provide a class for the blind and not give them the tools to work with. With these children, part of their curriculum, as agreed at one meeting we had been to, is to be able to provide them with the playground necessary for their development as handicapped children. Now, as you also probably know, there are also pals that would be with them.

Our vision for this playground is not only for the children at Ripton School, as a whole, but for all handicapped children within the City of Shelton to be able to access it – and/or possibly surrounding communities.

Ms. Lasky stated, to date, we have approximately \$11,294 that we have raised, the PTA has raised, over the years. We have less of a number of children at the school, so that may not seem like a lot compared to what other elementary schools are able to raise, but with the amount of children that we have, that is what we've raised thus far.

Mr. Quinn continued, so it becomes a very difficult task for us to be able to raise the appropriate funds that we need to be able to build this playground. We've gone through several different contractors; Michelle has done a lot of research to find someone who has, in fact, done work for the City – the park down on 110 and they'll also be doing the Nike Site. We have a price estimate that we can give you of approximately \$45,000. We have spoken with the Mayor, and he assures us that he'll be able to assist us, but we don't have a figure as of yet. We respectfully ask for your assistance in whatever way you can give it to us so that we can have this project moved forward.

At this point, the contractor has made contact with us. Since he's going to be here around the April/May timeframe, he would like to be able to do our project and complete it within the same timeframe. Unfortunately, we're also looking at a little bit of a timeframe as well, so that we could get our project completed.

We do have other projects that are ongoing. For example, the pamphlets that Michelle will hand to you right now. They're going out to several businesses and as well, we sent them out to many of the parents to see if we could get donations. We have a couple of other projects that are in the planning stages to help us raise even more bucks. Thank you.

Ms. Lasky stated, we do have some pictures of our playground that I could bring over to you, along with a fragment of our fence, which is disintegrating. Last spring we had an effort for cleanup and picked up all sorts of pieces all over the place. Our school, as you may or may not know, we have preschool children and we also have children that have multiple disabilities. These children are not necessarily aware that they can't ingest these things, though their supervision is excellent there.

The playground is falling apart. It's not up to safety standards. I've had four different estimates for the playground. This particular group, Childscapes, as Jay said, has worked on the Nike Site. The Mayor seemed to be very comfortable with the contact that we have there. It seemed to be the best of the other estimates that we received, and we definitely are under a time crunch. He really needs to know, *yesterday*, to move along and order the equipment so that it would be here in the same timeframe that he is working on the other groups.

I would just like to reiterate that these children, it truly is part of their curriculum. My child's individual education plan includes accessing low playground equipment independently. It's certainly a stretch for her, but, with a year and a half behind on her gross motor skills, she really doesn't have the time to wait, year after year, to raise the additional funds. It's just something that I want to point out, that these children – time is not something that they have.

We have also spoken to the Board of Education as well, and are currently working with them on, hopefully, a financial commitment. We are certainly trying to include the whole community in this effort. Thank you.

1. Approval of Minutes

Alderman Marangelo MOVED to recommend to the full Board to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of January 22, 2004; SECONDED by Alderman Anglace. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

2. Refund of Taxes

Alderman Marangelo MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the report of the Tax Collector relative to the refund of taxes for a total amount of \$3,328.39 be approved, and that the Finance Director be directed to make payments in accordance with the certified list received from the Tax Collector. Funds to come from the Tax Refunds account #001-6100-412-80.42; SECONDED by Alderman Anglace. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

February 2004 REFUND OF TAXES			
ACCOUNT #	NAME	AMOUNT	REASON
02-03-107	Ahmadi, Zahra	\$52.11	Paid wrong amount
02-03-1053	Berrien, Allen	\$9.00	Paid wrong amount
01-02-522	Blakeman, Monty	\$194.49	Paid twice
01-02-1711	Dota, Anthony & Carol	\$202.05	Paid twice
01-02-2087	Firgau, August & Mary Ann	\$88.53	Paid twice
01-03-4612	French, Lara & Douglas	\$171.46	Over assessed
02-03-5685	Haven, Kevin & Toni	\$1,303.64	Paid twice
01-02-2810	Hildebrand, Robert & Maureen	\$382.92	Paid twice

01-02-3209	Kellogg, Elmer & June	\$34.70	Paid twice
02-03-8108	Marchetti, Robert & Jaqueline	\$453.31	Paid twice
01-02-3826	Marini, Frank & Margaret	\$406.56	Paid twice
01-02-7029	Zuraw, Robert	\$29.62	Paid twice
		\$3,328.39	

3. Annual Merit System Increase

Alderman Marangelo MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the salary increase for Merit employees for fiscal year 2004-2005 be 3% and be applied per Section 5.6 of the Merit System and Personnel Rules, and

Further, MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the maximum figures on the salary schedule for job grades 11-29 be increased by six percent (6%).

SECONDED by Alderman Anglace.

Alderman Anglace explained that the average Merit employee's salary is roughly \$40,000. We have addressed in the past the lower grades and not the upper. That is why the upper grades are being suggested to move to 6 percent. At that rate, the average salary falls in the middle of Grade 13 – there are 29 grades, roughly a little below the middle.

Alderman Finn noted that his daughter, who works at the Library, is a Merit System employee so when the motion comes before the full Board he will have to abstain.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

4. Boy With Fish Fountain

I thought Marty Coughlin, who is heading this up for the Huntington Historical Society, would be here to talk to us about it. There are some things that have to be done. We met and went down and found that the question we have to answer is, do we want to bring water to the fountain as it originally was? Can it be done by re-circulating water in the fountain instead of wasting water, so to speak? Right alongside the fountain where there is a turnaround, there also is a drinking fountain and they were looking at that from a couple of points of view. Is it healthy in this day and age to do something like that? Secondly, is it practical because it's not protected or enclosed and somebody could break the pipe.

The plan has to be worked out, the schedule has to be worked out, so I would say that we should continue to have a strong interest in renovating the fountain, and looking to do it this year. I know that the Historical Society is working on it.

Their letter sent on January 15th must have triggered it coming onto our agenda. I assumed they'd be here, so I didn't call anybody. There is not much we can do with that but discuss it.

No action.

5. *Donovan Lane – Demolition*

Superintendent of Maintenance Joe Sewack addressed the Committee. He stated, I'm here to answer questions and discuss what we want to do with the facility.

Alderman Anglace stated, what I said to the Mayor, initially, I don't want to see this project get started and be an eyesore. There are people going in and out of there all the time, to the Ripton School.

The building is not serviceable any more; it's not cost effective. It is past the time it has to come down. The area can be used as parking area. The garage in back, where the underground is in the basement, take that down and use that for parking also.

Mr. Sewack agreed, stating, the building has electricity but no heat or water. The roof leaks, and there is a mold situation there. It currently is used for central storage for City records that are in cardboard boxes. There is no protection for those records there. If there were a fire in that building, there is no water you can put on it right there, there is no alarm system.

The Maintenance Department is renovating a room at the old Intermediate School that is protected. It's a brick building – there are no sprinklers, but there is heat and electricity. It's ground level, handicapped accessible. It is the size of a classroom, so it's big enough to bring records from three different places in the City to one central area.

Mr. Sewack continued, in that building (Donovan Lane) there are old rugs and furniture that have to be gotten rid of. The underground part of it is a four-car garage. Currently the upstairs level is used by the Registrar of Voters to hold the voting machines.

There is heat in there, and we put a new shingled roof on it a couple of years ago. The garage doors are falling apart and the place is not secure. We could move those to another room that is available at the old school where the mechanics can work on setting them up before the elections. Again, it's on ground level and you could roll the machines right out.

The lower level is the underground of that building and it's used by the Youth Service Bureau, on a weekly basis – maybe even a couple of times a week – to have meetings there. I'm sure that in the school we can find a room to renovate and accommodate them also.

We got a price of \$9,600 to take down the house and \$2,200 if we take the garage down at the same time. The garage was an addendum to the bid. It will be a lot more than \$2,200 in the future to take the garage down. All the electricity, the sewage and the water supply is in the basement and it out the back of the basement, underground to the garage building. If we take the house down, we have to accommodate, if we leave the garage, we have to make some kind of accommodations for that. Either bury it or re-pipe it and that will be an additional cost.

My recommendation to the Committee is to take them both down.

Alderman Anglace asked, do you have a comprehensive plan in place – what has got to be done and who is going to do it and a timeline?

Mr. Sewack replied, we went out to bid and there is a successful bidder.

Alderman Anglace asked, do you have the comprehensive plan written up that tells us what has to be done? We've gone to bid on this project?

Mr. Sewack stated, we've gone out to bid and I've gotten the pricing for disconnecting the electricity. I went through it with an inspection team to test for asbestos and got the pricing for that, and the demolition. The whole thing, with the garage, will cost approximately \$14,800.

Alderman Anglace asked, how long of a period of time will it take to have this down and the parking lot in? You haven't addressed the paving in here.

Mr. Sewack stated, the paving will probably be done in house by Highways and Bridges, depending on what kind of layout you want there. The garage area is level on top, but it's a steep hill – that could just be graded and made into a landscaped hill. The top part is okay for parking. It will help for safety because the school buses come around the back of that building and it's a blind corner. The demolition will help with line of sight.

Mr. Sewack continued, \$14,800 plus grading is a reasonable price, compared to what we paid for Grove Street and for Blacks Hill Road.

Mr. Sewack stated, the electricity will have to be disconnected and we will have to do something with the water that goes through there, but that's just capping it off – there is probably a minimal charge from the Water Company to dig that up and cap it off.

Alderman Anglace and Mr. Sewack discussed landscaping options. He stated, I don't think we want to get into this project until we have a plan laid out for the whole thing. If we don't, we'll knock down the house, knock down the garage, and then we'll have an eyesore for months and months.

I suggest that we say we are interested in having this done and are interested in bringing it to the full Board with this kind of money. But I think that the full Board would like to see a plan – how it's going to happen and when it's going to happen. Put something together sooner than later and we can take it to the full Board.

Mr. Sewack stated, if I can get the information for the full Board,

Alderman Anglace stated, no, you've got to come back here.

No action.

[NOTE: SEE FURTHER DISCUSSION BELOW]

6. Ernest Malecki

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the \$20 fee for returned check be waived and that Ernest Malecki be reimbursed the \$20 he paid to the City; SECONDED by Alderman Marangelo.

Alderman Anglace stated, the rationale behind it is very simple. He is right. He sent a check in that was made payable to himself. The City deposited that check, or attempted to deposit it, and then when it came back, they were charged a \$20 for a check fee from the bank. I don't think he should pay it. It's that simple.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

7. Establishment of Procedure for Purchase of Equipment at Auction

Alderman Anglace asked Mr. Duggan, what are your recommendations?

Purchasing Agent Ed Duggan stated, if we have to go this route we have to realize it's pure competition, but it's also the easiest to reach by way of collusion. I think we have to be very careful in our approach to purchasing anything of significant value at auction. If we have to do it, we have to come up with a plan. We have to come up with questions like, "what is the appraised value of the equipment and/or value that we desire, and what is the condition."

It is my understanding that the Public Works Director and Superintendent of Highways and Bridges think that we can go to auction and get some used equipment that will be fine for their purposes, they can maintain it, and we can save a lot of money doing it. We are willing to entertain the idea. We asked you to be here tonight so that we could get started with the thought process, because we feel, like you do, that it should be carefully done.

Mr. Duggan stated, the approval would have to be made by the Board of Aldermen on a case by case basis.

You couldn't discuss openly, for example, "*yeah, we have examined the equipment list and we find items that are available that fit our needs and we recommend a price structure of ___ ...*" We can't do that at a public forum, then all the other bidders and the sellers will know exactly what your position is. I think the best approach would be to involve the purchasing agent and the subject matter expert.

Alderman Anglace asked, do we know of any other municipalities that do this?

Mr. Duggan replied, no; the federal government does not do this.

Alderman Finn asked, if no other municipalities go this route, then why does the City of Shelton wish to explore it?

Alderman Anglace replied, it appears that the Superintendent of Highways and Bridges and the Parks & Rec Department and those guys feel they can get some equipment – such as the used trucks that they bought – and they feel that at auction they can save the City a lot of money.

Alderman Marangelo stated, the person going to the auction would have to be authorized to be able to spend between 'x' and 'x' amount of dollars. They'd have to know what to look for, and it would have to be really structured.

Mr. Duggan stated, you'd also have to have somebody there that is willing and able to sign the check for the equipment.

Alderman Anglace stated, you're talking some pretty heavy equipment with some pretty big numbers. They feel that they don't need a new piece of equipment – they can do it with a used piece of equipment. Generally when they put them on auction they're refurbished and in pretty good shape.

Alderman Finn asked, how does that come in line with the bidding process – we say there's a cap of \$5,000 and after that it has to go out to bid, and then you go to auction, and buy a piece of equipment for, say, \$60,000. We'll have a conflict between the Charter and what we're doing.

Alderman Anglace stated, that's why we're talking about it, because it's not a simple thing. If we're going to do it, we have to have some understanding. We just don't know where to begin. We'll check with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and see if anybody there is involved and we'll do some research on that. There are some things, like, if you go to an auction, you'd better have a certified check with you. You don't know what that number is going to be, so I guess you could give some authorization up to a certain amount of money.

Alderman Finn asked, who will give the authorization? Is the person bonded to carry a City check?

Alderman Anglace stated, if you're going to enter into an auction, you'd have to, prior to going, waive bids, because you don't know what you're going to run into until you get there. You have to understand it and have to grant the people going the empowerment to cast a bid up to so much money.

Alderman Finn stated, it should be a separate line item account as well.

Mr. Duggan stated, if you want to do this, what you'll need is – the Charter does address the fact that the Board of Aldermen can set up their own bidding procedures if they feel like it. You have to empower specific individuals to act as agents for the City, for the specific purposes of buying whatever we want, and assign parameters to that individual.

Alderman Finn stated, that should be part of the Charter, under bidding.

Mr. Duggan stated, it's almost impossible to try and cover, in a Charter, every possible contingency of how to do business. I don't know how to do it. The federal government had tried to do that and they have volumes and volumes and volumes of regulations. I don't think we want to, or need to do that.

Alderman Anglace stated, we will all give this some thought. I have my reservations. We are not going to resolve it tonight.

Mr. Duggan stated, it would be very difficult to preserve the public trust in the purchasing process in an auction environment.

No action.

[NOTE: SEE FURTHER DISCUSSION BELOW]

8. *Ripton School PTA – Request for Funds*

Alderman Anglace stated, as with other City playgrounds, we should and will participate. There is no question about that. We need to know a few things.

My recommendation to the Board of Aldermen would be to participate in the amount of \$20,000. We need to know who is going to take responsibility for the project. Is it a Board of Education undertaking or is it a City undertaking? Who has ownership of it once it's done? Who is going to be responsible for overseeing the build out? What is the construction schedule? Who will sign the contracts with the vendors involved? We have interest – we're putting money in – we do nothing without the Mayor overseeing everything.

Consequently, this would be my recommendation, and then we'd have to hear from the Mayor and see what his position is on it. My preliminary discussion with him is that it's full steam ahead, coordinate with his office, we won't have any trouble unless the Aldermen balk at it. I don't think they will. We have been participating in playground renovations all over the City – new ones and refurbishing. We suggest, also, that you ask the Board of Education to participate.

Ms. Lasky stated, we've been there twice. We're currently waiting for them to get back to us.

[Mayor Lauretti arrives at this point]

Alderman Finn stated, they were at the Building & Grounds Committee and the Building & Grounds Committee was in support of the playground, and they forwarded it on to the Finance Committee, because Building & Grounds cannot approve any finances.

Alderman Anglace stated, as I recall, you raised \$11,000, so there is \$31,000 toward your goal.

Mayor Lauretti stated that he would make a conscious effort to put more money on the table through private solicitation.

Alderman Anglace stated, I think the Board of Aldermen, keeping with what we've done in the past with other playgrounds, we should support it, and I think \$20,000 would be a good contribution. Other questions would be, who owns it, who is building it out, who is overseeing the build out, and I think that has to be coordinated with the Mayor's office. The Board of Aldermen can authorize the money, but beyond that, the day to day activities and build out has to be coordinated through the Mayor's office.

Mayor Lauretti stated, Parks & Recreation has handled the one at Riverview. Ron and Dean will be handling Pine Rock and the Nike Site with the same company that is slated to do the Ripton Playground. We've already gone out to bid on it and I believe they've given you what our numbers are. There is no reason that the Parks & Recreation staff couldn't oversee the build out.

I had asked Dean to go there and take everything out of there because they have time now.

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board to contribute \$20,000 to the Ripton School Playground Renovation Project with money to come from Contingency General; SECONDED by Alderman Marangelo.

Mayor Lauretti stated, I think that this is a LOCIP qualifier. I would recommend that we do this under LOCIP.

Alderman Anglace WITHDREW the motion. Alderman Marangelo WITHDREW the second.

Alderman Anglace MOVED to add the Ripton School PTA Playground Renovation Project to the Capital Improvements List with \$20,000 to come from LOCIP; SECONDED by Alderman Marangelo. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

Tape one, side two

Mayor Lauretti asked Mr. Quinn and Ms. Lasky if they have solicited any grants. He suggested that they contact the Community Foundation and the Gates Fund because they have miscellaneous grants, up to \$5,000, for neighborhood projects that are available that they approve on a year-round basis. The majority of their grants are done annually for greater issues and it's throughout the Greater New Haven area. I'm going to be at their annual meeting tomorrow. I will follow up on that. The full Board of Aldermen meeting is on the second Thursday in March.

9. Consideration of Veteran's Exemption

Alderman Marangelo MOVED to disapprove awarding a Veteran's Exemption to William Spencer; SECONDED by Alderman Anglace.

Mayor Lauretti asked, was he invited to be here?

Alderman Anglace stated, my understanding is, notice was sent to him. He lives in Bridgeport.

Mayor Lauretti stated, he lives in Milford now.

Alderman Anglace stated, I see a note on the paperwork that reminds somebody – "please send notice of board meeting to Mr. Spencer." If he didn't get it, we'll table it and take it up next month.

Mayor Lauretti stated, I don't know if he got it or not, I'm more concerned that he have the opportunity to come here and make his case. I've gone round and round with him for the last month and a half, and I don't think it's an issue for me.

Alderman Anglace stated, since he isn't here, I have no problem tabling it. We'll take it up next month and make sure he's got notice.

Alderman Marangelo MOVED TO TABLE; SECONDED by Alderman Anglace. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

*DISCUSSION WITH MAYOR LAURETTI –**Item 5 – Donovan Lane Demolition**Item 7- Establishment of Procedure for Purchase of Equipment at Auction*

Mayor Lauretti discussed Item 5 – Donovan Lane demolition. Alderman Kudej summarized that the Committee took no action on this item tonight, and has asked Mr. Sewack to present a comprehensive plan at the next meeting.

Mayor Lauretti stated, the landscaping of the area can all be part of the bid, and normally it is. When a building comes down and there's a foundation to be removed, the foundation usually gets broken up and either taken away or pushed in, then it's filled over the top. That can happen immediately. If it's not part of the bid, it certainly can be done by Public Works.

Alderman Anglace stated, we think it's a good idea – if the building has mold and all of these other problems in it – it's taking up space and the school buses come around there – it will be safer for the buses with sightline problems. It will add more parking up there and we don't need the building. Right now it's being used for storage and that can be accommodated elsewhere. The underground can be accommodated elsewhere. If we take it down, the only concern we have is that there is a plan in place to get it done and not leave it an eyesore for six months.

Mayor Lauretti stated, more important for me is that everybody understand this building sat vacant for 15 years – there have been no requests for usage on it and I can't think of a usage. If the City was going to do anything with it, it will require a pretty good sized expenditure and investment because it has sat vacant for 15 years.

Alderman Kudej noted that there is no heat, no water, and the roof leaks. It's in very poor shape. We want to make sure there is a plan for after the demolition. All we got was that there were bids on destroying it.

Mayor Lauretti stated, that part is easy – there's a quick answer for that.

Alderman Kudej stated, we asked him to come back with a plan as to what happens after the building comes down.

Mayor Lauretti asked, what do you want to happen?

Alderman Anglace replied, the upper part has got to be graded and converted to parking so it can be used in conjunction with the building next

door that the Fire Department is using. They have no parking in the back there at all, so whatever parking we can get will be a big improvement. They've got more cars there than they can park in the back. This would be ideal for them.

Mayor Laretti stated, you probably should know that I have met with the emergency services and we're entertaining the thought of moving everybody out of that building and putting all that the building holds over to the old Shelton Intermediate School. I can't seem to get education to move off the dime and it would be consistent with the Judge of Probate and Parent-Child Resource Center. There is some additional outside interest in the space, and I think that before too much longer we have to make some moves in getting some people in there.

As far as what happens after the building comes down, that is easy and something we can do in house. Whether we are going to fill it and grade it and plant grass and create some green space over there, or put in some parking or a combination of both. I want to make sure that everybody's thought is considered before we go ahead and take this building down. I'm certainly in support of it.

Alderman Kudej stated, we didn't have any objections; we didn't feel he presented a plan.

Mayor Laretti stated, let's let it go to the full Board and in the next two weeks I will have him submit something in writing to the full Board that you can look at.

Alderman Anglace stated, we'll let it go without a recommendation and speak to it at the meeting.

Discussion – Item 7

Mayor Laretti asked, what was done about Item 7?

Alderman Anglace stated, we identified a few things that have to be done, but Mr. Duggan had no written suggestions for us.

We talked to the fact that it's a difficult process and you have to know how much you can bid on various items in advance, you have to waive bids, you have to go with a certified check. There has to be a process in place that authorizes what to spend. Other than that, we have nothing in writing so we have nothing.

We said we'd check with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and see what they recommend. Ed knew of no municipalities that do it - or the federal government.

Mayor Laretti stated, that doesn't make it wrong, in my opinion. It's really about money right now. I thought it was a good idea - I want to put it on the table for some discussion. We are in need of some equipment and there is a lot of very good equipment that winds up in an auction for any number of reasons - most of which are financial. If someone buys a new truck and in two years they can't make the payments on it, they lose it, and it winds up in an auction. Things of that nature - and we have a need.

Alderman Kudej stated, there are some good points to that, but to hand somebody a blank check and say "go bid" without any strings?

Mayor Laretti stated, I guess you have to decide for yourself if you think it makes sense to put the trust in someone to do the right thing. For me, it's about saving money - strictly - and I think there are big savings to be had.

Alderman Anglace stated, the Aldermen can set up procedures to do it. I don't think we're ready to do that tonight. I called him and asked him to put something together in writing for us and talk about it tonight. He had nothing in writing.

Adjournment

At approximately 6:50 p.m., Alderman Anglace MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Alderman Marangelo. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Regan
Clerk, Board of Aldermen