SHARED SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, May 19, 2022

MINUTES

Present: Daniel Keune, Christopher Socha, Tracey Kiff-Judson, *Michael Purcaro, David Stavens

Members Absent: Jennifer Dzen, Ted Graziani

Others Present: Lori Spielman, First Selectman; Tiffany Pignataro, Finance Officer/Treasurer; Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations, Ellington Public Schools (EPS); Walter Lee, Emergency and Risk Management Director; Joy Hollister, Director of Human Services; Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner; Dustin Huguenin, Director of Parks and Recreation; Diane McKeegan, Town Clerk; Ann Marie Conti, Tax Collector; James York, Fire Marshal; Mary Dickerson and Nicole Govert, Sustainable CT

(*attended via Zoom)

I. Call To Order

Chairman Keune called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

II. Citizens’ Forum

No citizens came forward.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. April 21, 2022

MOVED (KIFF-JUDSON), SECONDED (SOCHA) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 21, 2022 SHARED SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING.
IV. New Business

A. Review of New Suggestions Received

There were no new submissions received.

B. Departmental Updates

Mr. Greenleaf and Ms. Pignataro shared that through the connection of the Board of Education (BOE), the Town has aligned with USI Consulting Group, Inc. to provide consulting services for Workers' Comp Liability-Auto-Property (LAP) and building insurance through the Windermere School Project. Over the past four weeks, the consultant group has already saved the Town a significant amount of money. The Town is working collaboratively with USI and Ms. Pignataro feels this was a very good move to utilize their services.

Mr. Purcaro joined the meeting at 2:03 PM.

C. Discussion of Shared Services

Mr. Purcaro shared some detailed information regarding new programs specifically designed for municipalities and new construction projects with Energize CT. Mr. Keune thanked Mr. Purcaro and stated that the Permanent Building Committee should be notified quickly of these new programs, as the funding is capped and available on a first come, first served basis.

V. Other Business

A. Presentation from Sustainable CT with Mary Dickerson

Mr. Keune reflected on the April meeting saying Ms. Kiff-Jusdon and Mr. Purcaro shared some insightful information regarding Sustainable CT. Ms. Kiff-Judson said that some potential cross departmental projects were discussed last month, with Mr. Purcaro suggesting that the Sustainable CT program may be able to help cover some of the costs associated with these projects. Ms. Kiff-Judson stated that back in 2018, the Board of Selectmen voted to participate in Sustainable CT. Ms. Kiff-Judson asked Ms. Dickerson to attend the Shared Services meeting to explain to members and Town department heads exactly what Sustainable CT is and how the program works.

Ms. Dickerson explained the “Small Changes, Big Impact” way of thinking that Sustainable CT uses. Their mantra is to foster resilient, vibrant, inclusive and thriving communities. A group of over two hundred people including college professors, State of CT employee department heads, industry professionals, Town Planners and First Selectmen collaborated to create this non-profit organization, including an action plan of thirteen categories and certifications for towns to complete in order to make a better State of Connecticut. The program Works by municipalities choosing Sustainable CT actions, implementing them and earning points toward certification.

Ms. Dickerson shared the Sustainable CT website and information. Ms. Dickerson shared the community match fund, explaining that when a municipality raises funds for a project, they will match the funding, up to $15,000. The Town does not have to be certified, just a registered town, which Ellington is. Ms. Dickerson shared examples of what equitable actions towns have done in the past, recommending that the Town invite local conservation groups and reach out to everyone in the community to get feedback and opinions on how to make the Town better for everyone. She
stated that just by reviewing its website, the Town of Ellington has already accomplished many actions and is currently doing multiple things where points could be earned in the thirteen categories. Project points earned range from five to fifty and it takes two hundred points as well as one equity tool kit to get certified as a bronze community. There are a multitude of free services provided to the Town, such as the Fellows Program which provides a college student to assist municipalities with the application process for the summer months.

Ms. Dickerson stated that Sustainable CT is not a state agency and is fully non-profit. She also said that this is not an easy task and it takes a lot of collaborative and meaningful work, by all departments, commissions, officials, volunteers and residents. Mr. Purcaro added that in his experience with Vernon, this is absolutely a group effort and it is impossible for the Town Planner to do on their own. This certification process forced the departments in Vernon to work better and more cohesively, in turn having a deeper appreciation for the meaningful work they do, as well as include and engage the community.

Mr. Keune asked Mr. Purcaro if there was a committee created in Vernon and if so, who did it consist of. Mr. Purcaro answered yes, it is a ton of work but extremely meaningful. One person needs to manage and coordinate this project but if they are left alone, it will fail. The Town of Vernon held weekly meetings and assigned tasks between himself, the mayor and department heads by breaking down tasks by department and individual person. It was made a standing agenda item at staff meetings and was made a priority. Ms. Houlihan mentioned that she had previously discussed these categories with the Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands Agency and Planning and Zoning Commission when they realized they are already doing most of the tasks that would earn the Town points. They also realized there are a number of items outside of their purview, such as arts and culture and human services that they would need further assistance with.

Ms. Houlihan asked Ms. Dickerson to review the 13 categories with everyone in attendance so that they have a better understanding of what they are. Ms. Dickerson listed the thirteen categories: Inclusive and Equitable Community Impacts/ Thriving Local Economies/ Well-Steward Land and Natural Resources/ Vibrant and Creative Cultural Ecosystems/ Dynamic and Resilient Planning/ Clean and Diverse Transportation Systems and Choices/ Renewable and Efficient Energy Infrastructure and Operations/ Inclusive Engagement, Communication and Education/ Strategic Materials Management/ Optimal Health and Wellness Opportunities/ Healthy, Efficient and Diverse Housing/ Effective, Compassionate Homelessness Prevention/ Innovative strategies and practices.

Ms. Dickerson suggested that towns submit their application for certification in April and get constructive feedback from the professionals who review the applications. This will allow enough time to utilize the summer fellow to work with the team and make the necessary adjustments for resubmission to meet the August deadline.

Discussion was held on the different departments that would need to be included in beginning a committee. Mr. Stavens stated that the Sustainable CT website has a very useful worksheet and tools to get started. Ms. Kiff-Judson asked Ms. Dickerson who she recommended be part of this type of committee. Ms. Dickerson stated that it varies; some towns are entirely volunteers and ask Town staff for documentation and access to information, other towns have a hybrid with a staff liaison, department heads and residents. Some towns do an entirely municipal group. Ms. Dickerson stated that no matter what, this needs to be a group and collaborative effort, not
something solely placed on the Town Planner. Someone needs to be in charge, but not doing all the work.

Mr. Purcaro suggested the Town not rush the process right now and wait until next April's deadline. When done correctly, there will be more efficiency and cohesiveness between departments, additional grant money coming in, as well as stronger community engagement. There are many extra benefits and cost savings for the Town.

Mr. Purcaro left the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

Mr. Keune asked Ms. Spielman to mention this in her next Department Head meeting and reach out to Ms. Kiff-Judson for her assistance in establishing a Sustainable CT committee. Mr. Keune thanked Ms. Dickerson for presenting and providing information on Sustainable CT.

VI. Adjournment

MOVED (KIFF-JUDSON), SECONDED (STAVENS) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE SHARED SERVICES COMMISSION AT 2:49 PM.

Submitted by: Rebecca Einsiedel
Recording Secretary

Approved by: Daniel Keune
Chairman