MINUTES
Commissioners' Meeting
SIXTH TAXING DISTRICT, City of Norwalk
February 3, 2025
6:00pm, Community Center-Grace Room and via Zoom

Commission Chair Mrs. Langalis called the meeting to order at 6:05pm

Attendees – Commission Chair, Mrs. Langalis, Commissioner Mr. Meyerson, Commissioner Jody Sattler, Treasurer Gil Kernen, Assistant to the Treasurer, Doug Hillman, Beach Director and Rental Coordinator, Bill Nollman, Joe Bell and Jay Sequeria of the Fire Department.

Minutes from the January 6 meeting were approved by Mrs. Langalis, Mr. Meyerson, and Mrs. Sattler.

List of the sections below
Tracy Marra, State Representative
Bayley Beach camp proposal
Grants for 25-26
Bayley Beach Playground Update
Dog Park Management
Train Station Barnacle System Update
Annual Budget Meeting
Treasurer Report
Fire Marshal Report
Beach Report
Property Manager Report

State Representative Tracy Marra discussed the following:

- Legislative priorities and major legislative issues
- Contact information provided for assistance with any issues.
- Represents all of Rowayton except a small part north of the train station

Legislative Session Structure
- Two-year sessions: long year (budget) and short year.
- Long year: legislators introduce bills.
- Short year: bills run through committee.

Fiscal Guardrails
- Implemented in 2017 to address pension debt.
- Spending cap: limits annual spending to inflation or growth.

- Volatility cap: extra funds go to rainy day fund or pension payments.
- Goal: keep guardrails intact.

Education Funding
- Two main areas: cost sharing and excess cost sharing grant.
- Cost sharing: funds for Board of Education based on poverty level and student needs, but not fully funded.
- Excess cost sharing grant: for special education costs, but Norwalk and Darien received less than expected.
- House Bill 5 Year 1 and Senate Bill 1 focus on special education.
- Special Education Committee is doing a listening tour throughout the state.
- Bridgeport: Tuesday, February 11th, 5-7pm at Housatonic Community College, Room 214.

Committee Assignments
- Legislators are appointed to two committees.
- Tracy Mara's committees: Education, Public Health, and Transportation.
- "Transportation makes so much sense for this area. There's so many issues around transportation."
- Public health aligns with her pharmacy background.

Energy Bills
- The speaker is now ranking on energy and gets tons of emails about energy bills.
- Energy bills are broken up into four parts: supply, delivery, federal transmission, and public benefits.
- The public benefits portion of the bill went up because they started to retrieve arrearages from the moratorium and from the nuclear plant.
- The public benefit charge is the one that the legislative body really affects and is supposed to drop down in May.

Volunteer Fire Department
- The volunteer fire department needs new hoses.
- The city of Norwalk got a grant for new hoses but didn't share that information with the volunteer fire department.
- The speaker will help the volunteer fire department on the state side.

Speed Limit on Rowayton Avenue
- The speaker has tried to get the speed limit reduced on Rowayton Avenue, but Jim Travers has not been cooperative.
- Jim Travers says there are no issues with speeding and won't submit the data to DOT.

- The speaker will get on another meeting with Jim Travers and DOT to solve the issue.
- The Rowayton Village sign will designate the area as a village district, which will give them more ground to stand on.

Speed Limit
- One person requested an illegal deletion, which was put in customer service.
- Lowering the speed limit to 20 might help, but some people, including the police, don't believe it will.

Train Station Infrastructure
- A resident complained about loud megaphones announcing train arrivals at night, which was resolved quickly.
- The walk bridge is being improved, and a tour event may be organized in the spring for those interested.
- DMT outreach programs with schools were discussed, including potential internship programs, but no internships are currently planned, and they wouldn't do anything with McMahon.
- Waiting on updates regarding the existing approved pedestrian walkway, which is currently through Norwalk.

Telecommunications Infrastructure
- Unsure about telecommunications issues; it falls under energy and is not a focus this term.
- Inquiries about 5G upgrades around the area will be checked into.

AI Task Force and Social Media Bill
- The speaker is on the AI task force, a multi-state working group with national involvement.
- Following a social media bill in New York that would restrict teenagers from algorithms that lead them to darker content and continuous feed.
- The speaker has a similar bill out there, and the attorney general and a Democrat senator are also working on similar bills.

Lead in Water
- Residents received a letter from SNEW about potential lead in the water, but it doesn't confirm its presence.
- Personal lead tests are recommended.
- One resident had a positive reading, which could be due to pipes, especially in older houses.

Majority Rule Cap Bill
- The Independent party in Norwalk requested support for a bill requiring a majority cap in all towns.
- This would limit the number of elected positions the majority party can hold, allowing other parties (unaffiliated, independent, or Republican) to have seats.
- The speaker put in the bill for the Independent party, but its passage is uncertain.

Library and Hate Crime Bills
- Unaware of the hate crime bill but knows about the library bill.
- The library bill, put out by Senator Duff and Senator C.C. Moore, aims to protect librarians in schools and public libraries from people who want to remove books and sue.
- Concerned that the bill might supersede the existing process for addressing issues with books in public schools, particularly regarding age appropriateness.

Age Appropriateness
- A book was removed for lower levels because it might scare immigrants.
- It talked about ice coming in.
- It was felt that the way a word was presented was not age-appropriate.

Trees and Solar Panels
- A bill came forward preventing trees from being cut down for solar panels.
- Solar companies are not altruistic; they are businesses.
- Legislators need to balance green initiatives with business interests.

Telecommunications
- The telecommunications question is about initiatives to improve cell service.

Water Quality Concerns
- There are concerns about water quality, particularly regarding lead and PFAS.
- The library tested its water and found it to be fine, suggesting the issue might be with pipes.
- Letters were sent to residents, especially those in older homes (pre-1930s), about potential lead issues.
- The issue may not be the city water itself, but rather lead pipes in individual homes.
- Pressure testing was done on city pipes.
- The first selectman in Darien did a video explaining the water issue.

- The water fountain in the library's temperance area was shut down as a precaution and will be replaced with a filtered water fountain.
- PFAS (forever chemicals from plastics, Teflon, fire retardants) are a concern in the water.
- Connecticut Water is seeking legislative funding to remediate PFAS.

ARPA Funds and Budget Concerns
- A state senator identified risks to the budget process:
- Stopping of ARPA funds.
- Risk to volatility and spending caps being tinkered with.
- There's a concern that programs started with ARPA funds may now be seen as essential services.
- A "nightmare scenario" is the governor proposing tax increases to cover funding gaps.
- ARPA dollars should not have been used for services that would be needed in the future.

Budget and Fiscal Awareness
- Federal dollars drying up would be an issue.
- Obligations to pensions are important promises.
- The state needs fiscal awareness and a strong budget.
- The governor has been steadfast with making sure that his budgets are good and proper.
- Towns are struggling with BOE budgets, making cuts, and increasing class sizes.
- It's a hit on towns when you don't pay for education.
- Kids need education, funding, extra help, and parents in the class.

Budget Address and Fund Usage
- The speaker hopes tough decisions can be made within the guardrails and that fluff can be trimmed.
- The governor will give his budget address on Wednesday.
- A list of 900 uses of funds will be made public in a booklet after Wednesday.
- The Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) website is filled with information.

Special Education Concerns
- There is a growing number of students identified as special ed students.
- Costs can range from $50,000 to $300,000 per student.
- Regional coordination of special education could be helpful.
- Coordinating helpers that come into the schools could reduce expenses.
- Ideas being considered:
- Capping what can be spent on outplaced students.
- Requiring outcomes from outsourced spots.
- The state recently increased the age of services to 22 without providing additional

funding.
- "The right hand doesn't know what the left hand's doing."
- Special education spending is breaking boards of education.
- Cities are trying to bring special ed back in-house to reduce costs.
- There are more kids identified as special needs at the higher level ($200,000 - $300,000).
- Transportation and district tuition are a big burden.
- SOMGA may send the special ed issue to the board of education.

Bayley Beach Camp Proposal

- It's been years since there was a camp at Bayley Beach.
- Paco, the new director of tennis operations, has experience with camps and coaching.
- He is presenting a proposal for running a camp at Bayley Beach.

Introduction
- Paco Fabian is excited to be the director of tennis at RTA for the 2025 season.
- Paco is a nickname, his real name is Dennis.

Background
- Director of tennis at Easton racquet club from 2007-2012.
- Started all day sports camps there.
- In 2020 moved to Weston Field Club.
- The club already had summer camps.
- He was involved with the camps there on a daily basis.

Camp Idea
- "Sports by the shore" is the catchy phrase for the camp.
- The camp aims to be a fun, competitive outlet for preteen children.
- Goal: Build a sports camp that all the kids look forward to every summer.

Athletic Activities
- Tennis, basketball, portable soccer goals, wiffle ball, beach games, pickleball.
- Kids would spend one hour on each activity.
- Tennis and pickleball would be staffed from RTA staff members.

Camp Details
- Camp times and dates: 7-8 week period.
- Full day: 9am-4pm.

- Half day: 9am-12:30pm or 12:30pm-4pm.
- Staff:
- Tennis and pickleball instructors from RTA.
- Other sports: local high school and college student athletes.
- Age: 6-12 or 5-12 (preteen).

Survey Results
- 45 responses.
- 88% said yes or maybe to being interested in a day camp for their children.
- Hours:
- Half said a full day.
- 40% said the morning.
- 9% said the afternoon.
- 70% said they would attend three to four or five to six weeks.
- Top sports: tennis and soccer.
- There were very few negative comments.

Camp Size and Cost
- Limit to 30 or 40 kids the first year.
- Cost: Between $300-$400 per week.
- Questionnaire is going to be the insurance.

- The speaker is considering allowing kids to go up to their knees in the water, but is looking into the insurance costs.
- The speaker recalls that the pool was a major attraction at Easton, especially during hot afternoons.

- The speaker acknowledges the lack of shade at the beach and suggests considering morning-only sessions.

- The speaker is asked about using the routine tennis staff to teach tennis and pickleball and whether this aligns with the RTA.
- The speaker is also asked if the camp will limit access to the tennis and pickleball courts for RTA members.
- The speaker says they would not want to take away any court space from RTA members and will pick times that do not interfere with member access.
- The speaker will work closely with PAC to ensure no fees related to junior memberships are lost.

- The speaker is reminded of state regulations around camps, including the number of children allowed and bathroom facilities.

- The speaker says they will contact the state to ensure all rules are followed.
- The speaker already has $2 million in tennis court insurance, and the camp insurance will be separate.
- The speaker confirms they are the new tennis pro and will have a camp director and staff, most of whom they have known for years.

- The speaker wants to take advice from people who have kids at Rowan elementary growing up through the middle schools of who is great for this area because it'd be great to have somebody local working that lives right around the corner.
- The speaker notes that Malcolm is running the camp now with Jaden.
- The speaker says that the camp would be open to children anywhere from Norwalk, Darien.
- The speaker wants to keep the camp more in-house, for those with a junior membership or membership.

- The speaker says that if you have a family membership and you're a junior part of the junior camp, you're covered under that family membership.
- The speaker says that if you are a child that would like to participate in the tennis program the way it is now, you have to pay a junior membership fee, which is $50.
- The speaker would like for Rowan kids to have the opportunity to go first.
- The speaker says that they find it problematic if a parent doesn't want to join rowing tennis, but wants their kid to go to the camp, they shouldn't have to pay an additional thing to join Rowayton tennis because you're going to your camp.

- The speaker says that people need a permit to get into the beach, so if you open it up to all of Norwalk, then they have to have the name at the gate so they can drop their kid off.
- In the event of a rainy day, the speaker says they would just cancel the camp.
- The speaker says that they used to do inside activities, but there is nowhere inside.

Grants

The grants this year are:
Shakespeare on the Sound $10,000
Rowayton Civic Association (For Fireworks) $10,000
The Library $258,000

Also, $20,000 is allocated to the Friends of Bayley Beach for the playground project in the Capital Fund

Bayley Beach Playground Update

- The committee raised enough money to order the equipment.
- A survey and staff are helping with grading the site.
- The equipment has been ordered and they want to start mid-April.
- A special wetlands permit was not needed.

Dog Park Management

- A dog park meeting was held with good turnout and discussion of survey results.
- The survey had almost 400 responses.
- The resolution was to implement a FOB or keycard system for park access.
- This would require new gates with a FOB entrance and running electrical lines.
- On-site dog registration is planned for two dates in June, with enforcement starting July 1st.
- The former dog park committee has $4,000 that has been given to the district
- The plan to form a non-profit was abandoned in favor of registration fees and direct donations to the sixth taxing district.
- "And it didn't seem like it was worth the effort to anybody in the room to go through the process of forming a 501 for the, who knows, maybe 10 people that were going to donate beyond their registrar fee."
- The fee amount is still undetermined, pending cost estimates.
- The form would be like the Bayley beach form
- Hours of operation were discussed, with a consensus for reasonable hours, such as 7 AM to dark.
- There was discussion about enforcement and whether it would be a dog warden or not.
- A dog park email list of about 500 will be used for communication instead of Facebook.

Usage Restriction

- Hoping the restriction of less usage will occur because people have to register and have a file to get in.
- "Maybe it won't be somebody."

Trail Conditions

- Speaker went on Saturday and "couldn't even step anywhere without finding mud."
- Registration fees will be used for maintenance.
- "It's going to be muddy no matter how much you million dollars."

Train Station Barnacle System Update

- The Barnacle system addresses scofflaws who haven't paid parking fines.
- The district is contacting people to collect fines before deploying the device.
- The Barnacle is a large plastic device with suction cups that attaches to the windshield.
- It requires a code, phone number, credit card payment, and down payment for removal.
- The goal is to recover fees owed to the 6TD and deter future parking violations.
- Money collected goes into the railroad account, not the 6TD.
- Training is scheduled for February 14th, with potential live deployment by March 1st after sending letters to violators.

- There is a suggestion to cross-reference Bayley Beach sticker numbers with license plates to identify violators.
- Accessing DMV information requires state approval and is treated with confidentiality similar to HIPAA.
- The speaker suggests contacting state representative Tracy Marra for assistance.

WI-FI
- WI-FI is needed for the Barnacle system.
- Two gate lines are being installed by Frontier, and Marty will install the light.
- The train station will have free public WI-FI.

Annual Budget Meeting

- There was a motion made by Mrs. Sattler to have the Annual Meeting on Monday March 3 at 6pm with the monthly Commissioner's meeting right after it.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Meyerson and approved.

District Treasurer Report

-The budget can probably be finished with a series of emails, or a quick Zoom meeting if needed.
- Revenue is in line
- A decent size payment was received last month, and a large payment is expected this month.
- Percentage-wise, snowplowing and base station upgrades are higher in the railroad budget, but the total is only $10,000.

Open Items
- Finish the budget.
- Complete last year's audit.
- An extension was already filed for January 31st and they will keep going until it is done.

Fire Marshal's Report

- Activity this month:
- Two building inspections, three man hours.
- Fire marshal conference, one hour.
- Two career development trainings, three hours.
- Two fires, five hours.
- One oil tank inspection, one hour.
- Remarks:

- 36 Roten Ave: Ashes from fireplace were not properly disposed.
- 1 Cublip Street: Improper disposal of painters rags were the cause of the fire.
- The Cublip Street incident could have been much more serious if there had not been working smoke detectors that alerted the family because it was in the middle of the night.

Volunteer Fire Department
- Thank you to the volunteer fire department for being there for the residents.

Beach Report

- Preliminary plans for:
- Ordering a new swim float
- Five new Adirondack chairs
- Five new picnic tables
- New swim lines
- Painting needed on the pavilion upper railings.
- Caulking needed in the bathrooms.
- The front gate shack will probably be repainted.
- Looking into planting catalpa plants along the Roton point fence where trees were removed due to lantern bug infestation.
- Considering shade sail structures similar to those along the shared border.
- They aren't super expensive but would require installation.
- They have to go on a big cement block.
- They can get wind.
- They could be placed by the snack bar area.

Property Manager
- A tree was removed because it was unsafe.
- The city removed it because it was on city property but hanging over the paddle courts.
- It was removed on Saturday.
- It will not be replaced in the same spot because it was too close to the paddle/pickle courts.
- They are working on storm drains, storm sewers, and roofs.

Next Meeting
- March 3, 6pm