

At the Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown, County of Washington, and State of Rhode Island, held in and for said Town, County, and State this 8th day of January, 2024 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 80 Boston Neck Road, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT WERE: Gregory A. Mancini, President  
Katherine K. Anderson  
Lawrence C. Mandel  
Matthew B. McCoy  
Dr. Kimberly Ann Page

ALSO PRESENT: A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager  
Jeannette Alyward, Town Clerk  
Susan A. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk  
James M. Callaghan, Town Solicitor

An audio recording and video recording of this meeting was made to supplement the written record.

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown held on January 8, 2024 was called to order by President Mancini.

2. Notice of Meeting being posted

Pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-6(c), notice of this meeting has been posted on the Secretary of State's Website.

3. Salute to Flag

President Mancini led those in attendance in a salute to the flag.

**I. PUBLIC HEARING**

4. Second Reading- Amendment to Chapter 2, Article V, Division 4

Motion by Councilor McCoy, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing.

Kathleen Guarino, 139 Summit View Lane, read the following statement:

"I am here tonight to take exception to the language in the amendment being discussed tonight. I am referring to Section 2-286, Powers and Duties, Meetings and Records, (a) 10 says, Support and advocate for the Water Department in its work to protect the town water resources and infrastructure used to distribute high quality drinking water throughout the town in a "best practices" manner.

As a concerned citizen and current member of the Groundwater Committee, I strongly recommend that the words "advocate for the Water Department" be removed. I also strongly recommend removing the words "in a best practices manner".

My reasoning for the above noted changes is as follows:

The amendment basically states that the Conservation Commission will have a DUTY to support and advocate for the Water Department. It goes without saying that the Conservation Commission will do its best to support the Water Department. However, stating that it is the DUTY of the Conservation Commission to ADVOCATE for the Water Department is going too far. That is a confusing and ambiguous phrase. There could well be an instance where the Conservation Commission and Water Department disagreed on some issue. An interpretation of the amendment could well mean that the Conservation Commission would be in dereliction of duty if they disagreed during their public meeting.

Please note that nowhere in the ordinance does it state that there is a need for the Conservation Commission to support and advocate for, say, the Planning Department. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, to coin a phrase. The lack of consistency is ambiguous and confusing. The phrase needs to be removed from the amendment or rewritten so that it makes sense.

In addition, I would request the removal of the words, "in a best practice manner". That is a vague and unclear phrase and would not be clearly understood by the general public. If that phrase remains in the amendment, I would recommend that it be clearly defined so that anyone would understand what it means.

Based on all the above, I would suggest that the amendment before you this evening not be approved until the language I have described is removed or rewritten."

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To close the Public Hearing.

Mr. Mollis stated that Councilor Anderson reached out earlier today with some of these concerns. He didn't have a chance to review with staff but did copy staff with his recommendations for language changes based on emails from Ms. Guarino and Ms. McAleer. He doesn't see "advocating and supporting" necessarily a negative thing; however, he does understand the concerns on how it could be perceived. It definitely doesn't mean to fall in line or not express concerns. Ms. McAleer suggested to include the words support and advise in (9) which he would support.

In regard to the concern of the phrase "best practice", the intent is considered industry standard language.

After a brief discussion, a motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To amend Section 286 (a) (9) and (10) as follows:

(9) Support, advise and educate regarding the town's efforts to provide a reliable and safe source of drinking water for all constituents.

(10) Support, advise and advocate for the Water Department's ~~in its work to~~ protecting town groundwater resources and infrastructure used to distribute high quality drinking water throughout the town. ~~in a "best practices" manner.~~

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To adopt an Ordinance in Amendment of Chapter 2, Article V, entitled, "Boards, Commissions and Committees", Division 4, entitled, "Conservation Commission", of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, as amended, and this shall constitute the Second Reading thereof.

5. Second Reading – Amendment to Section 9-418

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing.

There was no public comment.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To close the Public Hearing.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To adopt an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 9-418 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Filing Date; term", and that this shall constitute the Second Reading thereof.

6. Second Reading – Amendment to Section 11-66

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing.

There was no public comment.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To close the Public Hearing.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To adopt an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 11-66 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Stop Signs", and that this shall constitute the Second Reading thereof.

7. Public Comment

President Mancini congratulated North Kingstown High School Student Ella Mack for being named Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year.

Jennifer Lima, 4 Hickory Drive East, read the following statement:

“I am speaking here tonight in my capacity as the President of Towards an Anti-Racist North Kingstown (TANK). I sent a letter this weekend and I wanted to highlight some of the points this evening.

I want to start by thanking everyone who has volunteered their time to serve on the steering committee for the Town’s 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I know they are all working hard to ensure a memorable and successful community event.

As I have already expressed, we can’t discuss the history of North Kingstown without discussing the fact that we are on the unceded land of the Narragansett. That there was no land acknowledgment as part of Saturday’s event was an egregious omission.

The displacement of the people who were indigenous to this land was not mentioned during any of the remarks – nor was North Kingstown’s role in the transatlantic slave trade. There are so many good things to celebrate about our community, but we cannot ignore the parts of our history that are ugly and uncomfortable.

What was mentioned several times was North Kingstown’s connection to Roger Williams. I find that very ironic at a town event featuring not one, but two religious’ prayers. If a prayer was going to be included (which I don’t believe it should have been), faiths other than Christianity should have been represented.

We have many amazing women in our Town’s history. In fact, Tim Cranston wrote a whole book about them. So it’s unfortunate that anyone who was in attendance only heard about one of them – Olympic medal winner Elizabeth Biesel – who was mentioned almost as an afterthought.

North Kingstown has a number of incredible female elected officials who serve on our town council and in the general assembly. Why were none of them part of the speaking program? To include a man (Gabe Amo) who does not represent our district – and not any of the women who do – sends a message that only male voices are worth listening to.

Please consider what is being reflected out to the residents of North Kingstown when planning these events. Ask yourselves whose voices are not included and then find a way to make sure they are.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 4

The next generation of North Kingstown residents is watching. This is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to the community what this town values.

Thank you.”

Kahlia Shmerer, 383 West Allenton Road, read the following statement:

“In the last 93 days, at least 23,084 people have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, including at least 9,600 children, as reported by Al Jazeera, the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestine Red Crescent Society, and the Israeli army and Israeli social security agency.

More than 7,000 people are missing, unrecovered from under the rubble. These people are presumed dead. That brings the total loss of life to over 30,000 people in less than 100 days.

To put those numbers into relatable context: At the time of the 2020 US census, North Kingstown had a reported population of 27,732, about 5,100 of whom were under the age of 18. Taking into account those who are missing presumed dead, the number of people killed in Gaza is more than the population of North Kingstown. The number of children killed in Gaza is twice the number of children in North Kingstown.

Al Jazeera is also reporting an estimated 58,923 injured in Gaza, including at least 8,663 children. EuroMed Human Rights Monitor estimates that as many as 25,000 children have lost one or both of their parents. UNICEF estimates that at least 1,000 children have lost one or both of their legs. Israel’s blockade has forced doctors to operate without anesthetics.

A by-product of this mass killing and lack of humanitarian aid is increased disease and starvation. I don’t have time in my allotted 3 minutes to get into detail about that.

What we are witnessing in Gaza is a genocide. The United States government has so far failed to call for a ceasefire, and even blocked a United Nations resolution for a ceasefire in December. The United States Secretary of State has twice bypassed congress to sell weapons and equipment to Israel, the entity responsible for the astonishing loss of life I have detailed.

As elected officials, and as an elected body, what you can do is pass a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. No governing body is too small for this, Providence City Council did it on November 2. You can also call on our state and federal delegations to demand an immediate ceasefire. I know it’s comfortable to remain in our North Kingstown lane, but some things demand our attention, and require us to use whatever platforms we have to condemn war crimes, stand with the oppressed and demand freedom and safety for all. I think most people have thought about what they would have done, how they would have resisted during previous genocides. This is a time to put that hypothetical into action. Never again means never again for anyone.

Thank you.”

## **II. CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To approve Consent Agenda Item Numbers 8 through 16 as presented.

### 8. Approval of Minutes

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 20, 2023 and the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023 as submitted by the Office of the Town Clerk.

### 9. Receipt of Donations

VOTED: To accept with gratitude the following donations in the amount of \$5,045.12:

For: Beechwood Senior Center  
To be used for the Faith Fund  
From: North Kingstown Senior Association

\$3,135.12

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 5

For: Holiday Giving Program  
From: First Baptist Church in Wickford \$ 560.00  
Cynthia O'Connell 500.00  
First Baptist Church in Wickford 300.00  
Paula Silvia 300.00  
Wickford Seventh-day Adventist Church 110.00  
Concetta Nicolosi 100.00  
Judith Tysmans 40.00

10. Acceptance of a Grant

VOTED: To accept the annual grant from the Thomas and Erma Wood Peirce Cemetery Fund II in the amount of \$408.00 for the upkeep and maintenance of the William Smith Cemetery (NK013).

11. Authorization for the Town Manager to execute an amendment to the Concession Agreement

VOTED: To authorize the Town Manager to sign an amendment to the Concession Agreement between the Town of North Kingstown and Quonset Tavern by the Green, Inc., waiving rental payments for the months of January and February 2024 to allow the Town to do necessary repairs and renovations to the facility.

12. Approval of Contract Extension

VOTED: To approve the contract extension for the Department of Public Works for Container Services for Collection and Disposal of Solid Waste & Recyclables from Municipal Facilities with Allied Waste Services of Massachusetts, LLC, dba Republic Services, Inc., 1080 Airport Road, Fall River, MA 02720, in the amount of \$26,727.28 (no increase in contract amount), from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

Funding for this service will be from various departments participating in this program: Fire, Police, Facilities, Library, Golf Course, and Allen Harbor under FY2025 Budget (once approved), Line Item: 530305 - Solid Waste.

13. Detective License Renewals 2023-2024

VOTED: To approve the following list of Detective License Renewals, expiring on December 1, 2024, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a bond, and receipt of a recommendation from the North Kingstown Police Department:

12/27/2023

Detective Renewal License  
Town Council  
1/8/2024

NK#	Name	Address	City	State	Zip	Business Add	Phone	email
55	Peter Bruno	44 Anthony Dr	North Kingstown	RI	02852	44 Anthony Dr	258-2482	pbruno58@gmail.com
56	John J Staba	42 Main St	East Greenwich	RI	02818	320 Phillips St	524-5242	detectivestaba@gmail.com

All taxes/water assessments have been paid to date 12/28/23 collection dept

14. Refuse Collector – Commercial Not for Hire Licenses (4) (renewal)

VOTED: To approve to January 1, 2025 the renewal application for four (4) Refuse Collector - Commercial Not for Hire Licenses by Caldwell & Johnson, 6500 Post Road, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of copies of their vehicle registrations, and receipt of a copy of a certificate of liability insurance.

15. Victualling, Dance, and Amusement License Renewals

VOTED: To approve to December 1, 2024 the following list of Victualling, Dance and Amusement License Renewals, subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Marshall, the Building Official, and the Water Department:

VABDJ LICENSE RENEWALS  
January 8, 2024

NK #	NAME	DBA	BUSINESS LOCATIO	PHONE	SEATS	HOURS	LIC. HELD
207	LEVEL 10 NUTRITION CLUB LLC	NEW WAVE NUTRITION BY THE WATER	24 BROWN ST	268-5241	10	8:00 AM- 4:00 PM	V
265	NORTH KOFFEE INC		7726 POST RD	667-2889	30	6:00 AM- 4:00 PM	V
104	SUNRICH INC	7 ELEVEN INC	7330 POST RD	295-7295	N/A	24 HRS	V EXT

ALL TAXES/WATER ASSESSMENTS HAVE BEEN PAID TO DATE Alacia Bless COLLECTION DEPT.  
DATE 1/02/2024

16. First Bond Reduction

VOTED: To approve the request by Thorndike Partners, LLC, for a first bond reduction on Gilbert Lane, from \$210,962.39 to \$21,096.21, in the amount of \$189,866.18.

**III. REPORTS**

17. Report by the Town Manager

Town Manager Mollis gave the following report:

**Revolution Offshore Wind Project**

1. We continue with our bi-weekly meetings with Revolution Wind regarding their Offshore Wind Farm Project. Work continues at the site of the new substation which is located within Quonset Business Park. Crews will begin steel sheet piledriving which will produce some noise and vibrations and will result in an increase in traffic on Camp Avenue. A notice has been sent to all residents within this area. The construction work along Circuit Drive has ceased and won't resume until April 15<sup>th</sup>. Remediation work continues on the uncapped landfill and is still projected to be completed by mid-January. We are working with all parties to schedule a public meeting, as they promised to my Administration and the Town Council, sometime in mid to late February. We are hoping they provide some possible dates within the next two weeks. As always, if there are any questions or concerns, residents should feel free to contact them at 401-251-2207 or at [Info@revolution-wind.com](mailto:Info@revolution-wind.com).

**Finances**

2. We have requested an extension to complete our Fiscal Year 2023 Audit due to a handful of outstanding issues highlighted by the School Department needing to complete their Capital Assets, UCOA and MTP. The Auditor General, based on their review of our request, decided that the remaining items needing to be completed were reasonable and they approved an extension to January 31<sup>st</sup>. We have assured them that we have every intention of providing them with a completed, final Audit for Fiscal Year 2023 by January 31<sup>st</sup>.
3. Finance Director Deb Bridgham and I appeared before the Asset Management Commission at their meeting last Thursday night to recap their months of review with Department Heads and the School Department and we look forward to their completed report being submitted to us by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

4. As I'm sure you're aware, we have brought our internal budget deliberations to the next level as we prepare for presenting the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget to the Town Council at your March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. I also hope to provide an update and review of our ARPA Program, and its relation to the Budget, at this same meeting. This will be followed by the Town Council meeting with Department Heads on the evening of March 11<sup>th</sup> and all day on March 12<sup>th</sup>, followed by the Public Hearing on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the hopeful adoption of the Budget on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Projects**

5. We continue to follow up on RIDOT's proposal intended to address our concerns with the timing of the traffic signals along Route 4. We have met with RIDOT, met internally, and have a meeting scheduled with RIDOT this Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. We are hoping to address and resolve some internal concerns. Either way, I will have an official update, or an official presentation, ready for the Town Council's review at your January 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.
6. A brief update on the Wickford El Residential Project: We are working with the developer and the project continues to move forward. Their pursuit of tax credits has slightly delayed the project. They are currently in the process of appearing, again, before the Planning Commission for preliminary and final approval and are also finishing up the State approval process. While we don't have any commitment dates at this point, we are hoping that a closing could take place in approximately 6 months with a hopeful groundbreaking this Winter or Spring of 2025. I will continue to keep the Council and public up to date.
7. We are happy to announce that we have completed the Field Lighting project that the Council authorized back on July 17<sup>th</sup>. The project resulted in us converting the McGinn and Ryan Park fields lighting to LED. Working with RI Energy the project resulted in \$166,035.00 in direct incentives. The conversion has been well received by those who use these two locations by improving the lighting, having control systems which allows us to control light settings, and of course provides us with significant cost savings. The project was completed on time on December 8<sup>th</sup>. He thanked the Public Works Department for getting this done on time so we received the incentives.

### **Grants**

8. Governor McKee announced the grants from the Rhode Island Community Development Block Grant Program. Among the awards, North Kingstown was awarded \$5,000 to support our Summer Camp Program providing scholarships to allow 50 children in low-income families to participate in our 8-week summer program. This is a significant assistance this year as the increase in minimum wage will result in an increase in the cost of our Summer Camp Program. And they awarded \$138,000 to North Kingstown's Crossroads RI to support two Case Managers and a part-time Resident Services Coordinator who will work with individuals towards housing stability and self-sufficiency.
9. Congratulations to Chelsey Dumas-Gibbs and Haley Wicker as they were successful in receiving a \$1,200 Grant Award from the RI Interlocal Trust as part of them receiving the Working Wellness Gold Level Award for their leadership and commitment towards our Wellness Program in Town. Our Wellness initiatives over these past few years have truly provided a positive workplace wellness culture among our employees.
10. And we've worked with Mike Donohue and Rob Zimmer in sending in a Grant Application for our Town Meeting House under the Save America's Treasures Preservation Grant Program. My thanks to the Planning Department and Deputy Chief John Linacre for their work on this application.

**Miscellaneous**

11. I've been chosen as 1 of 3 Managers/Mayors as part of the RI League of Cities and Towns to meet with the Governor, Speaker of the House, and Senate President to discuss the upcoming State Budget and its effect on cities and towns. Our initial meetings have been productive, while at the same time concerning as the State is working within a very tight budget and the declining student enrollment statewide jeopardizes the State Aid to Education that is critical to all 39 communities.
12. In a somewhat related matter, I will be participating in the meeting of the RI League of Cities and Towns Executive Board this Tuesday morning, the Finance Committee of the RI Interlocal Trust Tuesday afternoon, the Governor's State of the State Address the evening of Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, and the Annual Meeting and Reception of the RI Interlocal Trust the evening of Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.
13. The Fire Department will be hosting a promotional ceremony for a newly promoted Rescue Lieutenant and the swearing in of five new recruits on Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup> here in our Council Chambers at 6pm. The Town Council is invited to attend.
14. We had a very successful kick-off to our upcoming, year long celebration of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our town on Saturday morning. Our thanks to the Federal Delegation, State Delegation, and local officials who joined us as well as the hard work of the Steering Committee. The 350<sup>th</sup> website is up and running with information on our events and the opportunity to purchase items pertaining to our 350<sup>th</sup>. The upcoming events include an Anniversary Gala on April 25<sup>th</sup>, a Family Day Celebration on September 14<sup>th</sup>, a 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade on October 5<sup>th</sup>, a Founders Day celebration on our anniversary on October 28<sup>th</sup>, and a year long Speaker Series beginning with the first on January 29<sup>th</sup>. The Committee is looking forward to providing exciting and appropriate events to celebrate this milestone anniversary of our great community.
15. The Narrow River Land Trust sent out their end of year mailing with a map showing all their land holdings in the three towns, North Kingstown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett, that the Narrow River runs through. Their map indicated that 664 acres of land in the Narrow River Watershed are preserved and, amazingly & proudly, 512 of those 664 acres or 75% of all the preserved land within the Narrow River Watershed are in North Kingstown. This is yet another indication of the successful work of our town in preserving and protecting our resources and open space.

**Retirement**

16. I want to conclude this Manager's Report with a heartfelt thanks and recognition to Police Chief Pat Flanagan who retired on December 21<sup>st</sup>. After over 7 years of historic progress as Chief of Police and after 35 years of dedicated service, Chief Flanagan announced his retirement amid health challenges that he is strongly working to overcome. Chief Flanagan had a remarkable career, working every position within every shift; forming the department's first drug detecting K-9 unit; preventing a suicide by courageously pulling a man back to safety on the Jamestown Bridge; receiving Police Officer of the Year Award; receiving multiple commendations and letters of recognition; increasing manning to full complement; implementing a body camera program; providing for a licensed clinician available on our calls; championing the Law Enforcement Advocates for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; and so much more. While Chief Flanagan expressed his thanks for the privilege of working with the members of the Police Department, Department Head peers and residents, it is all of us who truly express our thanks for the privilege of working with him. We wish him all the best and look forward to him returning home so that we can properly celebrate his amazing career.



Thank you.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 9

Councilor Mandel thanked the Manager for an informative report. He further stated that in regard to the block grant, he unfortunately notes the absence of Yorktown Park as we were hoping to receive funding for improvements to the park. He hopes that during the budget process Mr. Mollis can suggest funding to accomplish upgrading the park. Mr. Mollis stated that we still have one grant outstanding. \*He further stated that he would like to assure Councilor Mandel and the Council that funding for upgrades to Yorktown Park will be addressed during the upcoming budget discussions either by a grant or other funding sources, as this has been a priority of the Council and the Town for several years. Mr. Mandel thanked Mr. Mollis. (\*Revised by the Clerk prior to approving)

Councilor Mandel asked with regard to the Route 4 proposal if there has been any effort to involve the citizens along the Route 4 corridor who are the most affected so they have an idea of what will be proposed. Mr. Mollis stated that RIDOT has worked with us over the years and our legislative delegation, Council, and Staff have been very active discussing and vetting this issue. After exhaustive research, they have come up with a proposal and now it is up to us to present this to the public. We will be presenting this at the January 22<sup>nd</sup> Council Meeting, and we will make sure that the public is well versed on the fact that we will be discussing this as well the local newspaper will be reporting on this. President Mancini stated that he was at a meeting with RIDOT where this was discussed, and Senator Valverde has expressed concerns over this project. What he learned from that meeting is that there are only so many options and he is not sure that any of these options will please everyone. Councilor Mandel stated that he hopes the proposal will satisfy some. President Mancini stated that no matter what is done it will be challenging.

President Mancini thanked the Manager for his extensive report.

#### 18. School Building Subcommittee Update by Councilor Page

Councilor Page distributed an update and the summary of the recent survey. (Clerk's note: Both are filed with the back-up materials for this agenda item). She further stated that after the bond did not pass, the School Building Subcommittee met and discussed where we want to go next. The subcommittee wanted to see the results of the survey, but they were not available at that time. The survey reflects a mixed bag of themes of which 483 people filled out the survey. Those who supported the bond stated it was because of the outdated schools, the incentives, and it was good for the community. Those who didn't support the bond stated it was because there were two projects combined in one question, there was no facilities plan, they didn't like a combined middle school, the tax impact, and the lack of trust in either the School Committee or Town Council. The survey was very open ended, nor was it scientifically based. When the subcommittee last met, they didn't come to a firm stance of what is next. What we did talk about was if we should pursue and recommend to the school committee proposing another bond, not for a middle school but for all the other capital projects for the schools. There were approximately over a \$100 million of projects that included roofs, HVAC, and ADA compliance issues. This didn't include anything at Wickford Middle School. Mr. Mollis is the Co-Chair of the committee, and she asked if he had anything he would like to add. Mr. Mollis stated that Councilor Page provided a great summary. It was a lengthy meeting, and we really had difficulty wrangling with the issues and figuring out what the next steps should be. He further stated that he believes they concluded with the agreement that we need to get something on a ballot to address the \$100 million plus to address the CIP projects for the district. Also potentially address a solitary middle school at the Wickford Middle School site if it could be done and make renovations to Davisville Middle School.

Councilor Page stated that the next School Committee Meetings are January 16<sup>th</sup> and January 25<sup>th</sup>. They haven't decided if they are going to ask for a bond for some general improvements; however, there are still a lot of things that need to be decided.

President Mancini stated that he thought it was important to have this update. It is the School Committee's responsibility to determine what their needs are, and it is the Council's

responsibility to decide how much we want to burden the taxpayers. He thought we could give them direction on how far we are willing to go. To him we have an estimated need of \$112 million plus a new school which is concerning, and he doesn't have an appetite for. He thought it was important to have this discussion to give the School Committee some direction and input on what this body would be willing to support.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 10

Councilor Mandel stated that he watched the last subcommittee meeting and has a sense of what the subcommittee went through and understands these are tough issues. He understands the frustration of the members as they are dealing with so many issues such as the need for improvements to all the schools and the need for a new middle school. He also appreciates the fact that Mr. Mollis pointed out the need for the Public Safety Complex, which is not going away. There are a lot of moving parts and he shares President Mancini's concern that we are going to be asking a lot from the taxpayers and the appetite is going to be limited. What he has seen over the years is that this community is reluctant to approve bonds that involve spending money as all bonds do. In moving forward, we must be cautious that we understand up front that we are not going to get everything the schools would want. We need to focus on what we most urgently need which will be frustrating as it is not going to accomplish all that needs to be done. He further stated that he would urge the School Committee and Subcommittee to pair down the requirements as much as they can in the interest of getting something approved.

President Mancini stated that he doesn't believe that there is an appetite to go forward with a bond for the recreation center. However, he feels everyone is in agreement with moving forward with a bond for the Public Safety Building.

Councilor Anderson stated she agrees with Councilor Mandel that there is a wide-ranging list of needs that we need to balance with the fiscal reality and what the community wants. It is pretty clear that the Council supports education and safe learning environments and that we are responsive to our constituents.

Councilor McCoy asked Mr. Mollis if he heard him correctly at the Asset Management Commission Meeting that he is still putting forward the proposal for the Recreation Center. Mr. Mollis stated that he felt it was a critical need for the community, but it was apparent that there wasn't an appetite to put this on a ballot in 2024, but we will continue to move forward to investigate securing other funding.

Councilor McCoy stated that he also participated in the subcommittee meetings as an observer and he felt that the process that was used to come up with the CIP list, which is \$112 million, was a straightforward, process and he doesn't see a lot of fluff on those projects. He thinks we need a Public Safety Complex, and he agrees with the comment that we need to balance our needs with what the community is able to support. He doesn't think that these needs are going away and by simply ignoring them would do a disservice to our community.

President Mancini stated hopefully the Council has provided some insights. Councilor Page stated that the subcommittee discussed if we should go back to the voters before June for those capital projects such as roof replacements as the window to complete those projects is limited to when schools are not in session. These needs are not going away and if we wait until November, it means some of these roof projects would not start for almost a year, especially at the High School. She isn't asking for the Council to agree on a bond question; however, there may be a request for a bond question for a special election in May.

President Mancini stated that this has been a good discussion, and he understands that they may come to the Council to take advantage of the incentive bonuses. In all fairness, the Council would like to know what Part 2 would be and if a referendum would be for a new middle school. He would ask the School Committee and the subcommittee to provide the Council with a plan for Part 1 and Part 2 so we have a better understanding. If we don't have that collaboration and understanding, there is a risk that Part 2 wouldn't be approved at all.

Councilor Anderson stated that she agrees that is important as the feedback we have received is the desire for a greater sense for a short/long term plan and the fiscal impact of the needs and goals. We need to be very clear and transparent of where we are heading.

Councilor McCoy stated that this year he would like to see the requisite work that needs to be done for Wickford Middle School which is critical to move forward as it is the big unknown. He thinks the School Committee at their upcoming meetings needs to listen to the recommendations of the subcommittee to take action so that question can be resolved and answered as soon as possible. First and foremost, having the environmental studies completed to determine if that site can be built on. Councilor Page stated that study will be done.

Councilor Mandel stated that he agrees that the environmental study at Wickford Middle School needs to be done, but there were a lot of questions by the voters if Wickford Middle School could be rehabbed. The State has a program that would evaluate if that could be done for a cost of approximately \$10,000 and he feels that would be a good investment so we can let the voters know whether it can be rehabbed or not. Councilor Page stated that she isn't sure if Wickford Middle School can be rehabbed as it is a 95-year-old building, and it is to the point that if we were to rehab it, we would not get any reimbursement. Councilor Mandel stated that is the point, if that is the case, we could provide that data/information to assure the voters that is not a viable option.

Councilor McCoy asked if the \$112 million is spread out over five years and that it doesn't include capital improvements to the middle schools. Councilor Page stated that is correct.

President Mancini thanked Councilor Page for the update.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **19. Resolution discharging the Groundwater Committee**

A motion was made by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously voted to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Groundwater Committee was created on July 18, 1988 by Town Council Resolution to promote public interest in this critical public health issue and request the Council to hire consultants if necessary to work towards protecting groundwater; report findings to the public, identify, and develop the Groundwater Protection Plan; identify and address conflicts; recommend revisions to the Zoning Ordinance; and develop an Implementation Plan for the aforementioned Groundwater Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, after accomplishing those objectives, the Town Council passed a resolution on May 11, 1991 amending the charge to focus on facilitating the implementation of the Groundwater Protection Plan, promote public interest in and understanding of the groundwater protection program, oversight of wellhead delineation studies, guidance of oversight of the Groundwater Protection Plan, public education, and investigation of implementation issues, including means of funding protection activities and identifying which town departments have responsibilities for implementing the recommendations; and

WHEREAS, at the Groundwater Committee's request, the Council on March 13, 2017, voted to adopt the following Mission Statement:

##### **North Kingstown Groundwater Committee Mission Statement**

Understanding that the Town of North Kingstown's drinking water supply has been officially designated by the US Department of Environmental Management as a "sole source aquifer" which indicates that we have no other practical water source other than our own groundwater resources, the North Kingstown Groundwater Committee has the following mission:

- To support the Town of North Kingstown in its efforts to provide a reliable and safe source of drinking water for all constituents.

- To support and advocate for the Water Department in its work to protect town groundwater resources and infrastructure used to distribute high quality drinking water throughout the town in a “best practices” manner.
- To provide education at all levels and to all stakeholders about best practices for protecting the groundwater resources upon which our town depends upon.
- To act in an advisory capacity on proposed developments in groundwater critical areas.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 12

WHEREAS, working closely with the Town of North Kingstown’s Planning and Water Departments, the Groundwater Committee assisted in the facilitation of a critical revision of the aforementioned Groundwater Protection Ordinance, which was subsequently adopted by the Town Council on March 14, 2022.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Groundwater Committee has not only accomplished all of its goals identified in the Town Council charges that caused it to exist, they have also, through the creation of succinctly written mission statement, detailed an action plan for the Town moving forward into the future to insure that this important resource is protected. As this action plan is most efficiently carried out by the Town’s Conservation Commission, which was created pursuant to RIGL 45-35-1, the North Kingstown Conservation Commission charge shall be amended as such; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the North Kingstown Groundwater Committee is hereby dissolved and Committee Members are discharged of their duties. However, those former Groundwater Committee Members are strongly encouraged to apply to any open positions on the Conservation Commission and consideration should be given for said appointment by the Town Council; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of North Kingstown owes a debt of gratitude to all past and present members of the Groundwater Committee, particularly longstanding members and committee chairs Harriet Powell and John McGinn for their service to the community.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

20. Audit Committee - Appointment

Motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Kimberly Haskins, 43 Ponte Lane, School Committee Representative, to the Audit Committee to March 1, 2025 to fill the unexpired term of David Johnston.

21. Letter of Resignation

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from Thomas G. Briody resigning from the School Committee.

President Mancini stated that the Council will be following the same process as the last time, whereas the Clerk will advertise that the Council is seeking letters of interest from qualified electors to fill the vacancy until December 2, 2024. He further stated that per the Charter although Mr. Briody’s term was until 2026, this seat will be filled by the 4<sup>th</sup> person on the ballot in November in addition to the three seats whose terms end in 2024.

He further stated that the deadline for those letters of interest is 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and the Council will make this appointment at the meeting on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

22. Receive and file Rhode Island Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion

President Mancini read the following statement:

“As many know, I recused myself from voting on the most recent bond matter. And while I did provide some assistance to local first responders in advocating, I stayed out of the public debate, and so did my employer. Notwithstanding my recusal some in our community regularly alleged that I had some sort of conflict of interest even though I did not even vote on the matter.

So, reluctantly I submitted the issue to the Ethics Commission. The Ethic’s Commission staff thoroughly investigated the issue, and the commission ultimately issued a unanimous decision that said...

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 13

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of North Kingstown owes a debt of gratitude to all past and present members of the Groundwater Committee, particularly longstanding members and committee chairs Harriet Powell and John McGinn for their service to the community.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### 20. Audit Committee - Appointment

Motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Kimberly Haskins, 43 Ponte Lane, School Committee Representative, to the Audit Committee to March 1, 2025 to fill the unexpired term of David Johnston.

### 21. Letter of Resignation

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from Thomas G. Briody resigning from the School Committee.

President Mancini stated that the Council will be following the same process as the last time, whereas the Clerk will advertise that the Council is seeking letters of interest from qualified electors to fill the vacancy until December 2, 2024. He further stated that per the Charter although Mr. Briody’s term was until 2026, this seat will be filled by the 4<sup>th</sup> person on the ballot in November in addition to the three seats whose terms end in 2024.

He further stated that the deadline for those letters of interest is 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and the Council will make this appointment at the meeting on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### 22. Receive and file Rhode Island Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion

President Mancini read the following statement:

“As many know, I recused myself from voting on the most recent bond matter. And while I did provide some assistance to local first responders in advocating, I stayed out of the public debate, and so did my employer. Notwithstanding my recusal some in our community regularly alleged that I had some sort of conflict of interest even though I did not even vote on the matter.

So, reluctantly I submitted the issue to the ethics commission. The ethic’s commission staff thoroughly investigated the issue, and the commission ultimately issued a unanimous decision that said...

... I could participate in council decisions on a potential bond because ultimately it is the voters that decide.

It also said my participation “would not directly financially impact” myself or my employer.

Notwithstanding this unanimous decision, a friend of mine suggested that I continue to recuse myself because I will still be criticized. Another friend disagreed. She said the issue of my supposed conflict of interest was brought up each of the last 3 elections and in each of those elections you were the top voter getter. She further said that the people of NK have clearly spoken about this on multiple occasions. My friend went on to say that the citizens of NK

elected me to do a job so in the words of Bill Belichick-do your job. So I will do the job I was elected to do.

I ask those who are tempted to criticize me for doing my job to have a conversation with me before you comment. If you do, will find out that I always respond to constituents and am always available to meet. You will also find out that except for at Quonset, none of the organizations I represent do business in town. All anyone would have to do is look at our town building permits to verify that—they are public records. You will further find out that bidding laws require our administration to award any contract to the lowest qualified bidder. Regardless of anyone's affiliation.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 14

... I could participate in council decisions on a potential bond because ultimately it is the voters that decide.

It also said my participation "would not directly financially impact" myself or my employer.

Notwithstanding this unanimous decision, a friend of mine suggested that I continue to recuse myself because I will still be criticized. Another friend disagreed. She said the issue of my supposed conflict of interest was brought up each of the last 3 elections and in each of those elections you were the top voter getter. She further said that the people of NK have clearly spoken about this on multiple occasions. My friend went on to say that the citizens of NK elected me to do a job so in the words of Bill Belichick-do your job. So, I will do the job I was elected to do.

I ask those who are tempted to criticize me for doing my job to have a conversation with me before you comment. If you do, you will find out that I always respond to constituents and am always available to meet. You will also find out that except for at Quonset, none of the organizations I represent do business in town. All anyone would have to do is look at our town building permits to verify that—they are public records. You will further find out that bidding laws require our administration to award any contract to the lowest qualified bidder. Regardless of anyone's affiliation.

Lastly, you may find out that I am putting my heart and soul into this job on pay for less than minimum wage.

Unfortunately, however not one in our community has ever reached out to me to discuss. Not one person. Yet I have been roundly criticized and personally attacked from behind a computer on social media on a regular basis, many times under the name anonymous. Unfortunately, this is the state of public service in NK. People lash out on social media before reaching out to their elected officials. This lashing out is getting harsher and harsher.

It is this councilor's humble opinion that this is exactly what is the principal reason why our community has had 3 school committee members resign in the past 17 months. Lashing out, particularly on social media has even escalated to multiple death threats in the case of one school committee member.

Former U.S. Congressman John Lewis said that "When you see something that is not right, not fair, and not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something."

So, I am speaking up tonight because the treatment of local public officials by too many in our community is not okay. We are better than that North Kingstown. Whether you agree with local public officials or not, I can tell you unequivocally that we are all participating in our democracy for one reason and one reason only--because we care about our community.

To those that have questions, rather than personally attack someone on social media I say reach out to that public official individually. Or better yet come to a meeting and make your case on the merits to all of us.

To the silent majority, I ask are you okay with this? I ask you to speak up when your fellow citizens are viciously assassinating the character of those who are trying to improve our community.

And lastly, to anyone in North Kingstown that think they can do better; I say step up and run for office. It is a lot more fulfilling than sitting behind your computer and criticizing those that are

trying to improve our community. These are challenging times, and our community has difficult decisions to make.

It is my hope that, in the words of Rep. Lewis, we all do something about it, in respectful and constructive fashion that benefits all of us.

Ultimately, however, the question of whether we act constructively or destructively is a decision we will be making as a community, and it will also be our individual and collective legacies.”

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 15

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of North Kingstown owes a debt of gratitude to all past and present members of the Groundwater Committee, particularly longstanding members and committee chairs Harriet Powell and John McGinn for their service to the community.

## V. NEW BUSINESS

### 20. Audit Committee - Appointment

Motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Kimberly Haskins, 43 Ponte Lane, School Committee Representative, to the Audit Committee to March 1, 2025 to fill the unexpired term of David Johnston.

### 21. Letter of Resignation

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from Thomas G. Briody resigning from the School Committee.

President Mancini stated that the Council will be following the same process as the last time, whereas the Clerk will advertise that the Council is seeking letters of interest from qualified electors to fill the vacancy until December 2, 2024. He further stated that per the Charter although Mr. Briody’s term was until 2026, this seat will be filled by the 4<sup>th</sup> person on the ballot in November in addition to the three seats whose terms end in 2024.

He further stated that the deadline for those letters of interest is 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and the Council will make this appointment at the meeting on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### 22. Receive and file Rhode Island Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion

President Mancini read the following statement:

“As many know, I recused myself from voting on the most recent bond matter. And while I did provide some assistance to local first responders in advocating, I stayed out of the public debate, and so did my employer. Notwithstanding my recusal some in our community regularly alleged that I had some sort of conflict of interest even though I did not even vote on the matter.

So, reluctantly I submitted the issue to the ethics commission. The ethic’s commission staff thoroughly investigated the issue, and the commission ultimately issued a unanimous decision that said...

... I could participate in council decisions on a potential bond because ultimately it is the voters that decide.

It also said my participation “would not directly financially impact” myself or my employer.

Notwithstanding this unanimous decision, a friend of mine suggested that I continue to recuse myself because I will still be criticized. Another friend disagreed. She said the issue of my supposed conflict of interest was brought up each of the last 3 elections and in each of those elections you were the top voter getter. She further said that the people of NK have clearly

spoken about this on multiple occasions. My friend went on to say that the citizens of NK elected me to do a job so in the words of Bill Belichick-do your job. So I will do the job I was elected to do.

I ask those who are tempted to criticize me for doing my job to have a conversation with me before you comment. If you do, will find out that I always respond to constituents and am always available to meet. You will also find out that except for at Quonset, none of the organizations I represent do business in town. All anyone would have to do is look at our town building permits to verify that—they are public records. You will further find out that bidding laws require our administration to award any contract to the lowest qualified bidder. Regardless of anyone's affiliation.

JANUARY 8, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE 16

After a brief discussion, a motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Anderson and

VOTED: To receive and file Rhode Island Ethics Commission Advisory Opinion 2023-48 regarding Council President Gregory A. Mancini.

Clerk's note: A copy of the Opinion is filed with the back-up materials for this meeting.

### 23. Correspondence

01/03/2024 – Kathleen Guarino – Second Reading of Ordinance No. 24-XX scheduled for Town Council Meeting

01/04/2024 – Kathleen Guarino – NK's 350<sup>th</sup>

01/06/2024 – Mariana Tenanty – Today's event

01/06/2024 – Janice McAleer – School Board Appointment Question

01/07/2024 – Janice McAleer – Suggested Wording of North Kingstown Conservation Commission Ordinance

01/07/2024 – Donna Hutchinson – Books [God, War and Providence by James Warren]

01/08/2024 – Janice McAleer – Re: School Board Appointment Question

01/08/2024 – Janice McAleer – Re: Suggested Wording of North Kingstown Conservation Commission Ordinance

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Jeannette Alyward  
Town Clerk