

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 22nd day of January, 2024 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 80 Boston Neck Road, at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT WERE: Gregory A. Mancini, President
Katherine K. Anderson (arrived at 6:11 p.m.)
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 22, 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. SPECIAL BUSINESS

4. Discussion of Legislative priorities with the North Kingstown Legislative Delegation

Representative Craven, Representative Casimiro, Senator Valverde, and Senator DiMario were in attendance along with School Committee Member Jennifer Lima and School Committee Chair Erin Earle.

President Mancini welcomed the Legislative Delegation and School Committee Members. He stated that every year we meet with our legislative delegation to discuss legislative priorities. We have provided a number of priorities to our delegation, the first one being an extension of the School Construction Housing Aid bonuses. As many of you know, we had an election this past fall for a school bond with up to 20% enhanced bonuses, which would have amounted up to \$33 million and over the life of the bond \$92-\$93 million. The citizens of our community decided not to go forward with this bond. We are trying to extend these bonuses which are set to expire June 30, 2024.

Representative Casimiro stated that she has had several conversations with the Speaker of the House on this issue and those conversations have not been positive. The Speaker has stated that there will be no extensions on any of these incentives as the cost of the bonds are going up which means the cost of the incentives are also going up. He further indicated that he will not make an exception for North Kingstown because if he did, that would mean he would have to make exceptions for everyone and he has already said no to Warwick.

Senator Valverde stated that on the Senate side this is an issue that leadership has discussed, and North Kingstown is not the only city/town that is interested in having these bonuses extended. She further stated that RIDE would also like these incentives extended as there are a number of cities/towns going out to bid very soon and there is a higher demand with a limited number of companies that can do these projects. By extending the deadlines and spreading out the bids, we hope that we can keep costs down. This is something that the leadership in her chamber is interested in talking more about.

Senator DiMario stated that she agrees with Senator Valverde, and in addition she also thinks that we are talking about advocating for an extension for school districts that are already down the road in the process and not in the beginning stages of these projects. There are a limited number of districts in the “in between” spot that potentially could take place by making certain changes to extend the bonuses for those who are further along in the process. There are further conversations that need to be had regarding what these extensions will look like.

Representative Craven stated the House plays an extraordinarily large role in the formation of the budget. What he has been told is that there is insufficient money to fund these extensions. This process is still an ongoing process. As of now, the Speaker has indicated that with information he has received from their Finance Director and Budget Director, this extension can't be worked into the budget. He further stated that he doesn't want to rain on the parade of the Senate, but if the Senate becomes an equal partner as they always do during the budget discussions, this priority should be communicated.

Councilor McCoy stated that he wants to be clear that we are talking about the additional 20% bonuses and not the 35%, which is in the budget and funded. Representative Craven stated that 35% has already been allocated.

President Mancini stated that he cannot understate the importance of this. The discussions that he has had with the Department of Education indicated that it would be cost neutral, and they are willing to amend legislation to ensure that. Any consideration that both chambers give to advocate for this extension is our number one, two, and three priorities. Any assistance the delegation can provide is greatly appreciated as our community stands to lose millions of dollars.

President Mancini stated that Education Aid is always a challenge. Mr. Mollis stated that he agrees. He further stated that he had a meeting with the Governor, Speaker, and Senate President at which time he expressed to the Council that he had concerns over the change to the education formula. It appeared that the way they described it in the reduced enrollment and wealth of the community, that North Kingstown may experience a decrease in aid. As a result of the additional aid going into the educational formula, a lot was allocated towards programs and about \$16 million was allocated to adding to the education funding formula. However, he then sent an email to the Council, and he received some back-up documents from the Governor's Office stating that his concerns were unwarranted, and that it looks like the FY2025 state budget being proposed by the Governor calls for additional aid to education to North Kingstown which will result in an additional \$1 million plus compared to last year. He thanked the delegation for their efforts in securing this and he asks that this remains a priority for the delegation. Even though there may be a decrease in enrollment, the cost of education is increasing. For us to make sure that we are attentive to the needs of the students and provide adequate funding to our School Department, it is important that state aid not be reduced, or level funded in future years.

Dr. Erin Earle, School Committee Chair, distributed a document to the Council and the Delegation outlining the School Committee's priorities. In regard to the funding piece and in addition to Mr. Mollis's comments, she has a good understanding of the ESSER funding and the challenges we will have with the vacancy of those dollars. We have been hearing from the School Administration that allowing the funding needs to be spent by September does not make the need gone. Things we have for additional support for our students currently, there will still be a need when those ESSER funds are gone and we will need to fund that gap, in addition to the rise of inflation.

Town Manager Mollis stated that although Affordable Housing is a state issue, in his meetings with the Governor, Senate President and Speaker he has relayed to them that we want to make sure that as the General Assembly is looking at this important topic, they realize that one size doesn't fit all. We need enabling legislation to allow us to create housing and to do things not only for affordable housing but also for workforce housing and market rate housing. Families, teachers, police officers, and firefighters cannot move into North Kingstown because it is not affordable. One statistic he gave to the Speaker, which surprised him, was that North Kingstown is one of the leading communities when it comes to percentage of affordable housing and that does not include mobile homes. If you were to count those units, we would be over ten percent and we need to have the state recognize that. Again, we need to focus on the workforce and affordable housing by giving incentives or offering some type of program. He further stated that he would invite the delegation to reach out to him and our Planning Department for any data they may need.

Representative Casimiro stated that the eight years she has been in the general assembly, affordable housing has never been a black eye for North Kingstown. Everyone knows where and how we rank, and it hasn't been discussed that North Kingstown is not doing their fair share.

Representative Craven stated that he was very much involved in creating the 13 new pieces of legislation focusing on creating additional affordable housing requirements for municipalities. Particularly as you have probably heard the Speaker say at a recent news conference, down here in South County. At which time the Speaker stated that he had some unfortunate conversations with some municipalities, one in particular, and he was disappointed that they didn't see the need to pitch in to allow people to live in a community like we live in. Particularly, for the reasons that the Manager stated, as part of the workforce because it is a benefit to the community when your municipal workers and teachers can live in that community where they work, if they so choose. He further stated that as North Kingstown goes through the process of incorporating the intent of the legislation, absent the one ADU's, working them into the zoning ordinance, please let him know of any concerns so that he can take it back to the general assembly to say that we must look at it in a different way for North Kingstown because of the efforts they have already made.

Councilor Mandel stated that he completely concurs with the necessity of workforce housing. At the same time, we have acknowledged that it is a counting problem regarding the required ten percent affordable housing calculation. He wonders if there is a way in which we can correct that to include mobile homes and other such properties. Representative Craven said yes, we can accomplish that.

Councilor McCoy asked where the legislative delegation stands on the concept of Accessory Dwelling Units. Representative Craven stated that he does support the concept as it is a great use of what used to be a tradition of extended families living in the same dwelling. He thinks it is a great way to meet the demand of another type of affordable housing.

Representative Casimiro stated that she absolutely supports Accessory Dwelling Units, and it is a priority for the Speaker as well.

Senator Valverde stated that she also supports Accessory Dwelling Units.

Senator DiMario stated that she thinks it is important that we get the language right to safeguard that the ADU's do not become short-term rentals and also that we look carefully at the reality of what the enforcement of that would be. There is a lot of conversation going on to tighten up the language of this proposed legislation on behalf of some of the Town Planners.

President Mancini stated that last year he requested that the delegation not vote for any tax decreases unless there was an increase to state aid for education for our community. That is exactly what happened, and he thanked the delegation. Unfortunately, we still had to raise taxes and he thinks it is in part due to state unfunded mandates generally, and there are a number of them.

Mr. Mollis stated when it comes to the trickle-down effect of these mandates, municipalities are the last step resulting in affecting the taxpayers. The PTSD legislation for firefighters is an example of an indirect mandate. He doesn't want to speak on the merits of that bill, but our concern of this bill passing is municipalities being able to fund such a mandate and he would request that the legislature fund this. He strongly believes that the burden of this bill should not be put on the municipalities.

Dr. Earle, Chair of the School Committee stated that another example of unfunded mandates is in the area of Professional Development for School Teachers and the way the union contracts are written. There is only a certain amount of time in general, and we are taking the time to implement these programs and training our teachers, which does have a significant fiscal impact on school budgets.

Mr. Mollis stated that he was happy to see the Governor is proposing to continue to fund the Municipal Infrastructure Program, which the Town of North Kingstown took advantage of. He asked that the legislature support and fund this program.

President Mancini stated that our Harbor Management Commission is requesting that the Council support enabling legislation being introduced by Rep. Carson regarding houseboats and asked the legislative delegation to support this.

Senator Valverde stated that on behalf of the delegation, they are always available to the Council and the Town to discuss any issues or concerns.

President Mancini thanked the delegation for attending and hoped that the delegation stays for the presentation and discussion regarding Route 4.

5. Presentation/Discussion – Route 4

President Mancini stated that he, the Town Manager, and members of the delegation met with DOT, and they had made a draft proposal which will be presented tonight. He got the impression that DOT is not open to much change of what they are proposing. DOT is looking for the community to support this plan, and if that is the case, it would go on their list for future projects. If we don't support it, it would be status quo. However, we can certainly make recommendations.

Mr. Mollis stated that the Council's concerns regarding Route 4 have been heard loud and clear over the last several years and there have been numerous meetings with DOT regarding these concerns. Due to the strong efforts of the Council and our Legislative Delegation, what is being presented tonight has risen to the top of DOT's attention. A few months ago, we met with DOT and Director Alviti provided what they think is a solution to this issue, which will require dollars, time, and efforts on the municipalities part. Although we think there are some minor flaws to this proposal, we felt it was worth evaluating the proposal and there are some public safety concerns which will be presented tonight. It is important to note that DOT was open to things we brought to their attention that they missed or did not have the knowledge that our Police and Fire Chiefs have. DOT has been very clear that this is a work in progress and based on the comments and concerns tonight, we will present them to DOT in hopes to find workable solutions to this frustrating problem. Nicole LaFontaine, Planning Director will be presenting what DOT is proposing. She will then turn it over to the Fire Chief to explain the public safety concerns. President Mancini will have the legislative delegation express concerns and then we will hear from the public. We will then take all these comments and concerns back to DOT, not all concerns may be able to be addressed with a solution but at least we know we are finally moving forward.

Planning Director Nicole LaFontaine stated that the solution being proposed is not installing overpasses. DOT has a different solution and if you were to go back and look at the records of these discussions, the concerns are the same. The Town has been working with DOT since the 1990's at which time DOT secured land to construct overpasses; however, that never came to fruition.

There is a document that the State uses as a "bible" which is called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and any deliverable is funded and moves forward, as to be in this document as it outlines funding and timelines. In the most recent TIP, which is updated every five years, there is a mention of the Route 4 intersection, but it is under the section called "regionally significant project" which is unfunded. The project is described as constructing full grade separated interchanges along Route 4 at three locations with estimated project costs of \$50 million to \$100 million. You can see why it is in the unfunded section of the TIP and that is why they are considering alternatives, which they are proposing jughandles. The main issue is that Route 4 has approximately ten times more traffic volume than the side streets. That doesn't make it any easier for North Kingstown to get through the congestion, which is a huge difference in the traffic volume.

The area in question for this Project is Route 4, north of Oak Hill Road to Route 1, the Tower Hill Intersection. This also includes local intersections of Tower Hill/Route 4, West Allenton Road/Route 4, and Oak Hill Road/Route 4. It also includes a portion of Route 1 (Tower Hill Road) from Route 4 to the Route 138 interchange.

Current DOT data shows approximately 600 crashes in this study area over the past five-year period (2018-2022). These crashes have included 16 serious injuries and 100 minor injuries. During this five-year period, there have been no fatalities; however, there have been 3 fatalities in the past 10 years. Of the 600 crashes in the study area, 350 occurred at one of the three intersections, most of them are left turn/angle and rear ends, they are congestion crashes.

For travel times, per DOT for the existing conditions are:

- Route 4 north or south traffic flow – about 5 minutes
- Oak Hill Road east onto Route 4 North – morning and evening – 7 minutes
- West Allenton Road east onto Route 4 – morning 11 minutes – evening 7 minutes
- West Allenton Road West onto Route 4 south – morning 3 minutes - evening 9 minutes
- Existing Route 1 southbound to Route 4 south – morning 5 minutes – evening 11 minutes

DOT is proposing to convert the 3 existing traffic signals to right in/right out only, remove the signals at the intersections, and install two jughandles. The left turns and straight movements will be accommodated at these jughandles instead. One jughandle is proposed to be located north of West Allenton Road south of Oak Hill Road with the exact location to be determined. One would be located south of West Allenton Road, north of the Routes 1 and 4 intersection. Mr. Mollis stated that these would be similar to the ones on Route 1 heading south to South Kingstown.

Those that are at the westbound Oak Hill Road intersection who want to go south will need to travel right or north up to the Route 102/4 intersection (Ten Rod Road). Those that are at the eastbound Oak Hill Road intersection who want to go north, will need to travel south, go to the first jughandle, and then head north. There will be deceleration lanes provided at these intersections and the jughandles are proposed to be two lanes.

She further stated that DOT is estimating the new proposed times with this proposal are:

- Oak Hill Road eastbound – 4 minutes in the AM – 5 minutes in the PM
- West Allenton Road – eastbound AM and PM – 4 minutes
- West Allenton Road westbound – 4 minutes in the AM – 5 minutes in the PM
- Route 1 southbound – 3 minutes in the AM - 4 minutes in the PM

According to DOT's data, these changes would result in up to a 30% reduction in injury crashes at intersections and up to a 20% reduction in non-injury crashes. One of the goals of any type of improvement is to reduce the number or percentage of crashes. DOT is looking at reducing travel times by up to 50% for the side streets.

Instead of the \$50 million to \$100 million for overpasses, the projected cost for this proposal is \$9 million and includes demotion of three signals, installation of two new signals with jughandles, and widening of Route 4 for acceleration/deceleration/auxiliary lanes at and between jughandles.

As the Town Manager mentioned during our internal discussions, there were some safety concerns that we need to vet with DOT. Chief Kettelle will be presenting these concerns.

President Mancini asked when the Data presented would be made available to the public. Ms. LaFontaine stated that it can be done immediately.

Chief Kettelle stated that the Police and Fire Departments were made aware of this proposal at quite a late date. When it was brought to their attention by Ms. LaFontaine, we immediately studied the proposal. First and foremost, Route 4 and Route 1, every rescue vehicle that is transporting to South County Hospital or Newport Hospital, under this proposal, will now have to go north on Route 4 to a jughandle, wait for the light to turn to go south, which will delay transporting patients on an everyday basis. The Fire Department does a significant number of calls to South County Nursing Home and addresses on Oak Hill Road on the east side of Route 4 will require the rescue truck to go north on Route 4, negotiate the traffic on the off ramp to 102,

negotiate the intersection at 102/2, negotiate the intersection in front of Home Depot and Stop & Shop, and go under the Route 4 overpass to access Route 4 south. These are two areas of concern.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Chief Kettelle further stated that in regard to Route 4 and West Allenton Road, NFPS calls for 4-5 people to staff an engine. In North Kingstown, we staff these trucks with 2 people. How we overcome the challenge of staffing our engines in North Kingstown is the fact our second due apparatus in areas is truly only 2-3 minutes away. This proposal is going to significantly impact those additional resources getting to an area. In 2023, the Fire Department responded over 1,000 times to addresses on the west side of Route 4.

Chief Kettelle feels that this proposal is a significant concern, and he would be remiss to not share his concerns with the Council and the fact that he does not feel that this is in the community's best interest. As the Manager stated, we were given an opportunity to meet with DOT two weeks ago, they identified our concerns, and acknowledged that there were issues that they hadn't thought of. We were adamant that we wanted to partner with them to find solutions and that we feel there are solutions. One of the proposals, or part of what DOT is proposing, is adding a turning lane at both West Allenton and Oak Hill Road intersections. It is his opinion and Chief Urban's opinion to add those turning lanes now as it will alleviate some of the congestion at the lights. He proposed to DOT the possibility of changing the timing on the lights in the off season to evaluate the impact to discuss modifying it in the summer. DOT gave a legitimate reason why that would not work at the Route 4/West Allenton Road intersection, due to the left-hand turn lights, which are offset so vehicles don't crash in the intersection. They can't change the timing of that light. However, that could be done at the Oak Hill Road and the intersection at Tower Hill Road.

Chief Kettelle again stated that we were very clear that we want to work with DOT to find solutions that are acceptable and safe.

The Town of North Kingstown purchased a product to allow emergency vehicles to control the light at West Allenton Road. It is our plan to have this product in all our vehicles, fire and police departments and we are concerned whether this product would work on these jughandles. The other concern is that there could be 20 vehicles within the jughandle and there is a good chance that the Opticon would not work.

Chief Kettelle further stated that it is his professional opinion that if we convince DOT to do this project in phases, with the first phase being to add the right-hand turning lane at these intersections, it will relieve a certain amount of congestion and the amount of time vehicles wait at these lights. If we can get DOT to work with us on this as well as adjusting the timing on the Oak Hill Road intersection and Tower Hill Road intersection traffic lights, this may alleviate some of the congestion.

President Mancini stated that he only attended one meeting with DOT and he got the impression that there wasn't much room for negotiations, so he is pleased to hear that is not the case and that they are open to exploring some modifications.

Councilor Mandel asked if we are talking about adding extra lanes on Route 4. Ms. LaFontaine stated that there will be a deceleration lane going into the jughandle, as well as acceleration lanes coming out of the Oak Hill Road and West Allenton Road intersections. She further stated that there could be concerns adding that turning lane and removing the signal, would be a constant flow of traffic causing difficulty getting out unless the acceleration lane is sufficient to ease into the traffic.

Councilor McCoy thanked the Chief for his presentation. Regarding the Opticom system, he asked if there is an ability for the signals to be changed from the EOC. Chief Kettelle stated he believes there is, but nothing we would recommend.

Councilor Page stated she appreciates that we are taking a slower approach to this as she would rather see a third lane than jughandles. She further stated that she appreciates that Chief Kettelle and Chief Urban are taking a lead in this to ensure that we have a well thought out and measured approach.

Senator Valverde stated that we met with DOT in October, and she had immediate concerns with this plan, mostly for those who live on the west side on Route 4, as if you are coming from the south you will have to go all the way to the Route 102/2 intersection to get back on Route 4 south. She further stated that she is even more concerned after hearing the Chief's concerns. She is hopeful that we can come up with a solution that is good for the residents and public safety.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Senator DiMario stated she would echo the comments regarding concerns. She is also concerned of the effect on secondary roads. She further stated that she hears a lot from constituents about the noise from truck braking, as well as excess emissions from idling at the traffic lights. She would like to see quantifiable information on what these changes will do to address these concerns as well.

Representative Craven stated that he has had a lot of conversations with DOT over the years and one of the things he knows from walking these neighborhoods are that people are sick and tired of being sick and tired at sitting at these traffic lights. He believes we need to continue to study this proposal, see if the jughandles are a solution, and the state owns the land to create that third lane on West Allenton Road as well as on Oak Hill Road. While we study this proposal, he would recommend that the Council request that DOT create those turning lanes now.

President Mancini opened the floor for public comment.

Marie Noble, 20 Butternut Drive, asked with the initial ideas presented how would the traffic get from West Allenton Road to Wickford? She is under the assumption that they are getting rid of the intersection completely.

Jean Whatmough, 255 Butternut Drive, stated that people are taking crazy chances trying to cross the road and she has safety concerns about a serious injury or accident occurring. She would like to see an overpass put at the intersection.

James Gentner, 62 Phillips Street, stated that he is a cyclist and asked if there could be a crosswalk button installed at Oak Hill Road because a bicycle won't trip the light. In the past, he has waited up to 15 minutes for a vehicle to come through and trip the sensor so the traffic would stop on Route 4.

Richard Welch, 8 Arrow Lane, agreed with Chief Kettelle's position regarding the jughandle concerns, and stated that we need to fix this problem now. He also stated that the State fostered this program on the Town 50 years ago when they did this to Route 4 by putting in a limited access highway without understanding the community impact on the Town. He feels that this is going to require some thinking outside the box and for people taking a right turn there is going to be a stacking problem with the traffic.

Donald Hourahan, 243 Orchard Woods Drive, asked where representatives of the RIDOT are tonight. He wants to know how long the third lane is going to be and will drivers be able to get up to speed to join the traffic. He is concerned about traffic merging onto Route 4 from West Allenton Road at peak times. He believes that amount of traffic will fill up the deceleration lane which will leave other commuters stranded on Route 4 with high-speed traffic around them. He has concerns about this from an accident potential standpoint.

Robert Marchesseault, 5 Ebony Court, stated that he agrees with James Gentner about the safety concerns for cyclists with the jughandles that have been proposed. He further stated that he doesn't think taking out the lights are going to help. He believes that would speed up traffic. He is also concerned with the amount of people rearending each other as they try to merge onto the highway.

Andrew Marchesseault, 54 Mockingbird Drive, stated that the State removed a house over 30 years ago to put in an overpass, so this conversation has been going on for years. He thinks the jughandles are a terrible idea and adding the additional lanes to Oak Hill Road and West

Allenton Road is only a short-term fix. He stated that an overpass is what the Town needs to pursue. He also asked if the DOT data is being made to the public.

Chester Kosak, 450 West Allenton Road, stated that he echoes most of the prior statements and has large concerns over the jughandles. He thinks it will back up the traffic especially during the summer months. He stated that there must be a very good traffic system/light, even if expensive, that can be regulated and that adjusts to the traffic at different times of the day.

David Ruggieri, 176 West Allenton Road, stated that he is a long-term resident of West Allenton Road. He feels there are too many cars on Route 4 and now we want to add more with the current trajectory. He also stated that blocking the intersection isn't good for the high traffic flow of rescue vehicles and their response times.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Beth Eustis, 109 Beauchamp Drive, stated that she came here tonight to propose adding a righthand turn lane on each side of the road. She also stated that she doesn't accept that DOT can't change the timing of the lights. She suggested putting Peter Alviti in a house on the west side so he can experience the intersection himself.

Josh Cleland, 97 Orchard Woods Drive, stated that most of his concerns revolve around convenience but was compelled by the Fire Chief's presentation. He believes the impacts of these actions on secondary roads need to be looked at more in depth. He also questioned the validity of the idea that two green lights couldn't be operating at the same time. He asked if the times presented only include sitting at the light or do they include the time traveling the jughandle as well.

Gina Cokely, 414 West Allenton Road, stated that she echoes everything her neighbors have said and believes a righthand turn lane is a fantastic idea to relieve traffic backup. She asked if the light at the Carriage Inn where you turn left to go south could be shut off. Is there anything else that needs to be accessed on Route 4 that people can't go to Tower Hill Road and access Route 1 that way?

Andy Murphy, 141 Pheasant Run, stated that he lives west of Route 4 and is concerned with Butternut Drive, Orchards Woods Drive, Holly Hills Lane, and the Glen having a lot of young, inexperienced drivers. He has concerns asking inexperienced drivers to merge onto Route 4 and work their way into traffic, especially if they are going south. He stated that we are better off with no solution than the proposed one.

John King, 80 Pinecrest Drive, stated that he represents the east side of West Allenton Road/Route 4. He likes the idea of turning right as an obvious solution. He also stated that when traffic gets backed up, it also impacts school busses and when you are trying to take a right, you get stuck in line.

Tom Sgouros, 15 Boston Neck Road, stated that he is also a cyclist and thinks maybe an underpass would help pedestrians and cyclists. He feels this could also be used on Shermantown Road and Gilbert Stuart Road.

Keith Floyd, 369 Shore Acres Avenue, feels that putting in a rotary is the answer for solving all of the concerns. It would reduce traffic speed and increase pedestrian and cyclist access. It's the cheapest way to go.

Suzanne Pleskunas, 685 Congdon Hill Road, agreed with the cyclists and wanted to speak up on behalf of the pedestrians, particularly the kids that live on both sides of Route 4. She stated that this proposal absolutely eliminates any pedestrian activity and that's important to consider. She further stated that she recalls a time when URI was considering redirecting traffic to an overpass by Wolf Rocks to reduce URI traffic on Route 4. She would like to see the idea of redirecting traffic down Route 2 to 138 reexamined.

David Medeiros, 56 Deerfield Court, stated that there are a lot of commercial vehicles on the road. He doesn't think the new proposal accounts for large commercial vehicles with their slow rate of travel enough time to get up to speed to merge into traffic.

President Mancini stated that he has been doing this job for five years and this is the most constructive citizens' comments he has seen. He thanked everyone for coming out and is

impressed with the collaboration between staff, public safety, and our legislative delegation. He further stated that we will keep the community informed on this project.

The Council recessed the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

6. Update by HistWick Members, Mike Donohue and Rob Zimmer

Mike Donohue made the following statement:

“Rob and I are here today to share an update on the progress that HistWick and the Town of North Kingstown have made toward obtaining the funding needed to renovate and restore the 1807 Old Town House.

When we came before you last September, we had, in hand, a pledge from HistWick to provide up to \$40,000 to the project if a similar amount was raised from private citizens and others. This evening we are happy to announce that, in less than three months, we raised \$73,000 in such pledges and gifts from 129 individual households, 220 members of our community, along with pledges for \$17,000 of in-kind donations from local businesses and service providers when the project starts. A total of \$130,000 in private monies to make this project a reality.

In combination with the funding approved by the previous Town Council, we, in coordination with the North Kingstown Planning Department applied for a matching grant of \$250,000 from the National Park Service’s Save America’s Treasures Program which will enable us to go forward with our efforts. We also have a solid cost estimate in hand for the work that will need to be done to bring this iconic building back to where it will again be used for public gatherings and meeting space for different town organizations.

We particularly want to thank Nicole LaFontaine, Becky Lamond, and Jenna McCauley from the Planning Department for their work in submitting the application.

Now we wait. The Save America’s Treasures Program will advise Congress of the winners in August of this year.”

Rob Zimmer made the following statement:

“The Town Council knows its business of local politics better than we do. At the same time, a reasonable person might infer that if the Council advises the Congressional Delegation that this oldest local town hall is a top 1 or 2 priority for 2024, odds go up we win this substantial Save America’s Treasures competitive award.

If the Town Council signals that the building, while important, is not a top 1 or 2 priority for 2024, all things being equal the odds decline, especially because we don’t know which other Rhode Island entities are also applying for these same funds.

For its part, Historic Wickford, which has already traveled to Washington to brief Senator Reed’s Chief of Staff, believes we are in a crystalline moment. The town, its people and organizations have come together here to make substantial pledges. The Town will celebrate an amazing milestone this year. The pledge money is there, but not forever.

Crystalline moments, by definition, don’t last long. We urge you to seize this, seize this moment, make your own history, and save this important treasure.”

In answer to President Mancini’s question if we are asking the delegation for any more earmarks, Mr. Mollis stated that we have a few outstanding requests, but nothing new. This would be a priority for us.

President Mancini asked if HistWick is looking for some type of letter from the Council stating that this project is a priority. Mr. Zimmer stated that is correct, we are especially requesting a grant from Senator Reed.

In answer to President Mancini's question if we should put this request on a future agenda, Town Solicitor Callaghan suggested this should be put on a future agenda for the Council to vote on.

Mr. Mollis stated that as long as there is no objection, he could reach out to the delegation and indicate that this is a priority, and a formal request will be forthcoming.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

7. Public Comment

Kahlia Shmerer, 383 West Allenton Road, read the following letter to the Council:

"My name is Kahlia Shmerer, I live at 383 West Allenton Road. For context, I am a Jewish American and an Israeli citizen. Since I spoke here two weeks ago, the number of people killed by Israeli forces or missing in Gaza has increased by over 3,000, and I am here to request a resolution for a ceasefire in Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestine Red Crescent Society, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are reporting at least 25,105 people have been killed, over 8,000 people are missing, and at least 62,681 people have been injured in the last 107 days.

EuroMed Human Rights Monitor is reporting that of those who have been killed or are missing presumed dead, 12,660 are children. That's more than twice the number of children that live in North Kingstown.

At least 115 journalists have been killed. Over 300 schools have been damaged or destroyed, and all of Gaza's 35 hospitals have been damaged or destroyed, none are fully functional according to the World Health Organization.

As of early January, EuroMed Human Rights Monitor estimates that as many as 25,000 children have lost one or both of their parents. UNICEF estimates that about 10 children a day lose one or more limbs and Israel's blockade has forced doctors to operate without anesthetics. None of these numbers include what's happening in the West Bank.

A by-product of this mass killing, injuring, and lack of humanitarian aid is increased infection, disease, and starvation. I don't have time to get into details about this aspect.

The United States Government has failed to call for a ceasefire, vetoed a United Nations ceasefire resolution in December, and by-passed congress at least twice to supply Israel with more weapons. Weapons manufactured in the US, using US tax dollars.

If you've been concerned about what's happening with your local tax dollars, know that your federal tax dollars are funding a genocide in Gaza that has killed, maimed, and orphaned tens of thousands of children.

I'm speaking on this tonight because no part of the world is unaffected by this, including little North Kingstown. I am therefore asking our town to join at least 15 other US cities and towns, including Portland, Maine; Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Providence, Rhode Island, in putting forth a resolution calling for an immediate permanent ceasefire. I am asking our state delegates, some of whom are here tonight, to introduce a resolution for a ceasefire on the state level. I am asking you all to call on our federal delegates and demand they support a ceasefire as well.

We have a duty to humanity to stand against this ongoing atrocity. Never again means never again for anyone. Thank you."

She also included the following list of municipalities that have approved resolutions for a ceasefire:

San Francisco, CA; Oakland, CA; Richmond, CA; Bridgeport, CT; Wilmington, DE; Atlanta, GA; Portland, ME; Detroit, MI; Dearborn, MI; Dearborn Heights, MI; Hamtramck, MI; Ypsilanti, MI; Albany, NY; Akron, OH; and Providence, RI.

Richard Welch, 8 Arrow Lane, stated that we have a delegation, Town Council, General Assembly, and Governor that are all democrats, yet we can't get a bridge over Route 403 started. This affects over 600 families and commercial vehicles. He's not sure what the problem is. He feels as though you can't trust the DOT as they are in no hurry to solve any problems in North Kingstown. He also stated that he is not sure what the Council's plan is for the bond issues if you don't hold the vote in November. When you decide to hold a special election and most people come out to vote, then you better come back with something different than you put out the last time. Keeping it the same would be a big mistake as the voters already turned it down. You need to think outside the box. He lastly stated that Wickford Middle School does not need to be destroyed.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

II. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To approve Consent Agenda Item Numbers 8 through 19 as presented.

8. Approval of Minutes

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of December 18, 2023 and the Regular Meeting of January 8, 2024 as submitted by the Office of the Town Clerk.

9. Tax Abatement List #875

VOTED: To approve Tax Abatement List #875 submitted by Deb Garneau, Tax Assessor, in the amount of \$747.22; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: That overpayments, if any, resulting from these abatements are hereby approved for refund by the Tax Collector.

10. Receipt of Donations

VOTED: To accept with gratitude the following donations in the amount of \$90.00:

For: Beechwood Senior Center In Honor of David Cruickshank	
From: Elizabeth and James Devault	\$50.00
For: Beechwood Senior Center To be used for the Mealsite	
From: William McGill	\$25.00
For: Beechwood Senior Center	
From: Concetta Nicolosi	\$15.00

11. Receipt of Donation

VOTED: To accept with gratitude the donation of \$300.00 given by Post 152 VFW to be used to make some small improvements to the Cold Spring Community Center.

12. Letter of Resignation

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from William Matson resigning from the Arts Council; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To direct the Town Clerk to advertise this vacancy.

13. Letter of Resignation

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from Eric Collins, Marina/Boat Yard Operator Representative, resigning from the Harbor Management Commission, and that the Town Council President send a letter of appreciation to him for the dedicated service he gave to the Town of North Kingstown.

14. Approval of Contract Extension

VOTED: To approve the contract extension for the Department of Public Works for Municipal Curbside Recycling Automated Collection (Bi-Weekly) to Waste Management of Rhode Island, Inc., 1610 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920, in the amount of \$514,989.40. This amount consists of \$500,851.00 (current contract amount) and \$14,138.40 (current fuel adjustment rate of \$1,178.20 per month).

Funding for this service will be from FY2025 Budget Account (when approved) 16210060-530610 Transfer Station/Recycling Pickup Services.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

15. Approval of Contract Extension

VOTED: To approve the contract extension for the Department of Public Works for Tractor Trailer Roll-off of Transfer Station Commodities to Waste Management of Rhode Island, Inc., 1610 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920, in the amount of \$541.00 per haul for trash trailers and \$289.00 per haul for roll-off containers.

Funding for this service will be from FY2025 Budget Account (when approved) 16210060-531206 Transfer Station/Contractual Services.

16. Award of Bid

VOTED: To award the bid for the Recreation Department for Portable Toilet Rentals for a two (2) year term to United Site Services Northeast, Inc., 118 Flanders Road, Westborough, MA 01581, as follows:

Year One: \$48,410.00

Year Two: \$42,908.77

Funding is as follows:

		FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
Recreation Contract Services	00116010-530305	\$5,230.71	\$26,349.29	\$27,900.50
Youth Recreation Programs	00116010-539057	\$ 255.00	\$ 935.00	\$ 1,225.70
Allen Harbor - Solid Waste	43421040-530305	\$ 291.43	\$ 1,748.57	\$ 2,101.20
Golf Course - Solid Waste	43321010-530305	\$1,092.86	\$ 4,007.14	\$ 4,078.97
Facilities	00110070-530704	\$1,092.86	\$ 4,007.14	\$ 4,202.40
Art Festival	00110000-122027	0	\$ 3,400.00	\$ 3,400.00
TOTAL		\$7,962.86	\$40,447.14	\$42,908.27

17. Award of Sole Source Contract

VOTED: To award a sole source contract for the Recreation Department for removal and reinstallation of the equipment at the Skatepark at McGinn Park to American Ramp Company, 601 McKinley, Joplin, MO 64801, in the amount of \$40,000.00.

Funding is from ARPA.

18. Victualling License (new)

VOTED: To approve to December 1, 2024 the application for a Victualling License by Overabarrel LLC, dba Barrique Wine Bar, 7610 Post Road, Unit 5, subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a certificate from the RI Department of Health; receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy; receipt of a copy of their Rhode Island Retail Sales Tax Permit; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Marshall, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

19. First Reading – Amendment to Section 9-4

VOTED: That this shall constitute the First Reading of an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 9-4 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, “Fee Schedule Enumerated –

Table VI – Recreation Department Fees”, and that this be advertised and referred to the Regular Town Council Meeting of February 12, 2024 for Second Reading and Consideration of Adoption.

III. REPORTS

20. Report by the Town Manager

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Town Manager Mollis gave the following report:

Projects

- We had our regularly scheduled bi-weekly meeting with Revolution Wind regarding their Offshore Wind Farm Project. Excavation for conduit and underground bank continues as does the work at the new Substation. Installation of the sheet piles at the substation site is taking place and will cause noise and vibrations in the area. There has been significant outreach to the neighbors in this area regarding this.

They continue bringing in material to these areas and the area of the capped landfill resulting in increased truck activity. Due to the multiple traffic complaints Public Works, Police and I have received from residents, we have requested, and the Police Department has recommended, the opening of the emergency access gate at Camp Avenue. It would address the safety, traffic, and noise concerns. We are awaiting what we hope will be an acceptable response to this request.

As I've mentioned, we have been working with all parties to schedule the public meeting promised to all of us and the Onshore Construction Open House has been scheduled for February 21st from 6pm – 7:30pm here at the Town Hall Council Chambers. Anyone interested in registering and attending can register on the Revolution Wind website or via our many social media posts.

As always, if there are any questions or concerns, residents should feel free to contact Revolution Wind at 401-251-2207 or at info@revolution-wind.com.

- The Rhode Island Department of Transportation has informed us that they will be completing the replacement of the Bridge Structure which carries Tower Hill Road over Route 138 as well as resurfacing 6.5 miles of Tower Hill Road from South Kingstown to the Route 4/Route 1 split in North Kingstown. They anticipate work beginning soon. Much of the bridge replacement work will take place over the weekends. Ramps connecting Route 1 to Route 138 will be closed with a detour in place and one lane open to traffic. They are projecting nighttime work as well. The projected completion date for all work is August 2025. We – public safety and public works --- are reviewing and we'll be sure to comment if we have any questions or concerns.
- I spoke with Eve Clulow, the owner of 55 Brown Street in Wickford, to get a further update on her heavily anticipated project. She has confirmed with me, once again, that she has revised the concept and has reduced her original plans. She will no longer be adding an addition to the current footprint with the possible exception of a small elevator or a rebuild of the old handicap ramp.

She also confirmed her plans to have a financial commitment in place earlier than, but no later than, June of this year; a building permit obtained by September of this year; and a Certificate of Occupancy by the end of next Summer. Eve and I will stay in contact and I will be sure to have an additional update over the next few months.

Finances

- As I reported, we received an extension from the Auditor General to provide the Fiscal Year 2023 Audit to January 31st. Deb Bridgham is meeting with the Audit Committee tomorrow evening and has everything in place for submission of our Fiscal Year 2023 Audit to the Auditor General before the January 31st deadline.
- Also as reported, we continue with our internal budget deliberations in anticipation of my introduction of the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. A reminder to the general public, I will be presenting the proposed budget at the March 4th Town Council Meeting, followed by the Town Council meeting with Department Heads the evening of March 11th and all day on March 12th, followed by the Public Hearings on April 3rd. I will also be presenting a supplemental ARPA Plan immediately after the Budget Presentation on March 4th. This will be an important supplement and compliment to the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

- Speaking of the Budget, Rhode Island's Managers & Mayors had a preview of the State's FY2025 proposed Budget from the Governor and his Budget Team this past Thursday, followed by supporting documents later that evening. My early review indicates the State will be tightening its spending based on the expiration of COVID funds; I am still evaluating the State funding of the Tangible/Personal Property Tax Exemption and Motor Vehicle Phaseout and it appears they've fully funded both projects; they are introducing a second Municipal Roads Matching Program; we will be receiving less Library Aid this year versus last year; and due to additional funding being proposed towards the Education Funding Formula and Educational Programs, North Kingstown appears to be receiving over \$1 million more in funding for Fiscal Year 2025 as compared to Fiscal Year 2024.

Miscellaneous

- The Fire Department will be hosting a promotional ceremony for a newly promoted Rescue Lieutenant and the swearing in of five new recruits this Friday, January 26th here in our Council Chambers at 6pm. The Town Council is invited to attend.
- The Rhode Island Blood Center will be hosting another Blood Drive at our Community Center a week from today, January 29th, from noon till 6pm at our Community Center. A \$10 Matunuck Oyster Bar Gift Card will be presented to all donors compliments of Matunuck Oyster Bar. Appointments can be made at ribc.org or 401-453-8383. Appointments are recommended but walk-ins are welcome.
- Our Celebration of our Town's 350th Anniversary continues with the first of our many Speaker Series this coming Monday night, January 29th, at 7pm here in our Council Chambers. The Town and our 350th Anniversary Steering Committee is pleased to welcome Loren Spears, the Executive Director and Educator of our Tomaquag Museum as she discusses the Narragansett People and the very early days of North Kingstown. She will share stories about the Narragansett People's relationship with Roger Williams, Richard Smith; about the Great Swamp Massacre Tragedy and its connections to the current Smith Castle Site; and much more. We encourage you to be here Monday night and at our many upcoming Speaker Series.

Councilor McCoy stated that he has received a complaint regarding the condition of the steps at the Old Library (Annex) and is concerned that it is a potential safety issue. Mr. Mollis stated that he will look at it and contact Ms. Clulow to have it addressed. He further stated that if it is not addressed, we would handle it as we do any other property, issue a NOV and if the issue is not in compliance, issue a summons to Municipal Court.

The Council thanked Mr. Mollis for his report.

21. Report by the Finance Director

Finance Director Debra Bridgham gave the following report:

The Council has been provided in their packets the December 2023 Budget report. This is the sixth month of the fiscal year.

Based on the current revenues and expenses that we are projecting; we are reporting a surplus of approximately \$856,000. The surplus is due to an increase in interest income, which the town funds have been invested in high yielding interest-bearing accounts. We also have an increase in revenue from our net metering program, which was not anticipated during the budget process.

We are concerned about several overtime lines, Consolidate Communications, and the Fire Department. After careful review of their current spending, and discussions with the Fire Chief, we have projected an increase in these line items of \$490,000.

We will continue to monitor and refine projections as needed.

The Council thanked Ms. Bridgham for her report.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

IV. NEW BUSINESS

22. Appointment of a School Committee Member

President Mancini stated he would like to thank Tom Briody for his service to our community as it is a challenging time to be a public servant and School Committee Member. We do have six candidates and he sent an email giving these candidates the opportunity to speak if they so choose.

Sarah Kelly-Palmer, 272 Laurel Ridge Lane, read the following statement:

“Thank you for the opportunity to express my interest in the open school committee seat once again.

As a Vice President of one of the state’s largest social service and behavioral health non-profits, I have dedicated my career to positively impacting the lives of children and families in Rhode Island. In my role, I manage a division of over 100 staff, overseeing a budget exceeding 5 million dollars. I collaborate with dozens of agencies across the state in both formal and informal partnerships, ensuring compliance with various state and federal regulations. My responsibilities include writing and negotiating contracts, as well as managing agreements with both public and private agencies. I also actively participate in compensation analysis and hiring processes.

With over two decades of experience in social work, I am adept at making high-level decisions in challenging crisis situations, often dealing with minimal funding and numerous regulatory requirements. In my current role, I was selected to oversee the implementation of a large-scale project that will significantly expand my division’s staff and more than double our operating budget. This project, subject to considerable oversight from the state, requires me to ensure the development of policies and procedures aligned with strict certification criteria, implementing programs in the most fiscally responsible way.

I am accustomed to maximizing resources on shrinking budgets and achieving more with less. I never ask for additional funds because I know they are simply unavailable. Instead, it is my responsibility to rigorously scrutinize my budget, identifying efficiencies and innovations to meet shifting targets or expand programmatic capacity within existing resources. I also proactively seek alternative funding or resource solutions such as grants or community partnerships.

Recognizing the critical role of stability in our school committee for the success of our school district, I acknowledge the steep learning curve for anyone entering this role. Over the past several years, I have consistently attended school committee meetings, and when unable to attend, I have reviewed the recordings. I understand the current climate and landscape and I am clear about the responsibilities entailed in my role as a school committee member. Furthermore,

I am committed to running for the School Committee in November so that, if appointed, I can take the knowledge learned and apply it to the longer term.

My passion for contributing to the success of our schools for all the children in our community extends from my career and defines who I am as a person. If selected for this seat, I will incorporate data-driven decision making and aim to contribute as a solution-oriented and collaborative school committee member. My professional experience directly translates to bringing substantial value to the committee, and I humbly request your support of my candidacy.”

Lee Domaszowec, 334 School Street, read the following statement:

“Thanks for the opportunity to submit my name for the open position on the School Committee. I’m going to speak tonight about 3 comments made to me.

First, “I don’t think you can be fiscally conservative and socially progressive”. I’m a businessman. I run my business and I help others improve theirs. That’s my whole job, and I’m good at it. Yes, you can demand accurate, on-time accounting and transparency. I expect nothing less for this town. I am critical of how our town and school financials, including those related to cap and the bond proposal, have been handled and shared. I do find it unacceptable to spend almost a million dollars on the school bond project - fail - and then not do *every single thing* to make it right. I don’t think any of those concerns are unreasonable.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Second, someone suggested I was “more of the same.” That’s probably the only time in my life it’s been said, but let’s address it. When I put my name in for consideration for the School Committee, I replied ALL to an email with the other 10 applications and invited active collaboration. No one responded. I emailed again after Mr. Sheehan’s appointment. No one responded. And I’ll do the same thing tomorrow. I made a public offer to co-author a bipartisan letter with specific, actionable items to the Town Council and School Committee, and again - no takers. Reaching out and reaching *across* aisles to find solutions isn’t “More of the same” at all.

I’m also different because I moved here recently. “You haven’t been here long, you don’t know the whole story, the history of the town.” Listen it was a huge decision to move our family here 18 months ago. Very few people do that without a lot of research. So, what drew us here, and why did I fall in love with this town? Safety. Great schools. Beautiful parks. A welcoming community. Relatively low taxes, especially compared to EG and Barrington. But what other things do people find when they consider moving to NK? Scandal. Abuse. A revolving door of school leadership, and School Committee. Failed capital planning and bond vote. Bickering on camera and in the papers. People who politicize *every* trivial thing, or worse, *Weaponizing other people’s genuine trauma*. White supremacist propaganda. Anti-science protests. Unfounded criticism of journalists. Book banning. Anti-LGBTQ, homophobia, transphobia. Not so thinly veiled racism. National mockery of our town about ridiculous things like kitty litter. Harassment and even death threats to people just trying to serve. Is that what we want the world to see? Is that who we want to be? I don’t think it is.

Which brings me to the final comment. She said, “Thank you for using your voice and standing up for the things other people may be too afraid to say.” I don’t tolerate bullies, no matter how many there are or how loud they get. It’s easy to take shots at someone when you know they can’t take a shot back at you. Or take offense or feign indignation when someone does hit back. It’s easy to twist facts or misrepresent your position as non-partisan when clearly, it is not. It’s easy to be negative all the time. Covering your ears and shouting “No” doesn’t require the real work to find and implement solutions. You know what would be historic? Giving free lunch to every kid, year-round.

I’d rather focus on our future, where we give our cops, firefighters, teachers, and our kids everything they need. Make NK a safe, welcoming, place people want to move to. That’s why I want to help, so we can find the right path to saying “yes.” Because “No!” is not a platform. “No!” isn’t going to fix our schools no matter how many emails are sent or how many people read a public statement. Now, if you feel offended by any of the things I just said... well... These things need to be said. I will always proudly, stand up to the bullies who promote, either overtly or under the thin guise of town pride, any hate, bigotry, discrimination, injustice, intolerance, or violence.

I believe our kids matter. Trans kids matter too. Refugee kids matter. Jewish kids matter. Kids whose families are currently lower-income matter. Black and brown kids matter. All of our kids matter, equally, and they all deserve our best.

Thank you for your time.”

President Mancini suggested that prior to any motions the Council have a discussion regarding the pros and cons of the candidates.

Councilor McCoy stated that the Council received an email from Donna Lico who is unable to attend tonight as she is quarantined. She requested that her email be read into the record as follows:

“Dear Town Council and School Committee Members,

Although I submitted a letter of interest for the vacant school committee seat, I am unable to attend tonight's meeting due to illness. It is a great disappointment to me that I am too sick to attend this very important meeting but being in a public place would put others at risk so I must remain quarantined. I have written below what I would have said during public comment if I were able to be present.

As an active career science teacher of 33 years, parent of young adults, and homeowner in North Kingstown for 22 years, I believe I have a background and skill set that would enhance the composition of the current School Committee.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Being able to listen and discuss different opinions without animosity is a skill that is absolutely necessary when serving the public and it is something I am practiced at. Also, because my first degree was a BS in geology, I tend to think like a scientist and reading research is something I find enjoyable. When making a decision, I start by learning all I can from verified, unbiased sources but when the decision will impact other people, I also seek to understand their perspectives because it is important for all voices to be heard in community decision making. I feel my practice in well informed decision making makes me a valuable team member.

If the Town Council believes that I would bring skills and knowledge to the School Committee that would be beneficial at this time, then I am happy to serve our community in that capacity.

Thank you for your time.

Best,
Donna Lico”

Councilor McCoy stated that he would not read the names of those who have submitted letters/emails endorsing candidates and asked that they be included in the minutes. He further stated that the Council received emails in support of:

Megan Reilly – approximately 111 emails/letters
Sarah Kelly-Palmer – 38 emails
Lee Domaszowec – none
James Halley - none
Donna Lico – 1 email
Debra Lukacsko – 1 email

ENDORSEMENTS FOR MEGAN REILLY

Name (Last, First):

Alexander, Sue (2x)
Benson, Michael
Booth, Cindy (2x)
Capasso, Francis H.
Cotter, Elizabeth
Cushman, Joyce (2x)
Donnelly, Jennifer

Arreolla, Kalen
Bergenstock, Jason
Booth, David (2x)
Chandler, Courtney (2x)
Cotter, Thomas
D’Amico, Ronald
Donnelly, William

Bennett, Vicki (2x)
Bessinger, Ramona
Brown, Shirley
Charlton, Renee
Crist, Ron
Diaz, Laurie
Duprey, Florentina

Dwyer, Shala
Ellis, Kelly
Forbes, Karin
Giacchi, Tracey
Given, Curtis
Jackson, Marie
Jones, Robert
Kuzminsky, Karen (2x)
Lonquist, George
McAlear, Jan
Macomber, Mary (2x)
Martone, Rob
Muio, Tiffany
Mumford Jr., Paul
Muto, Michael
O'Leary, Dan
Pelosi, Helene
Reposa, Mike (2x)
Reposa, Jill
Ross, Tucker
Rowlett, Jennifer (2x)
Salvatore, Karen
Serrecchia, Cara

Edwards, Lisa
Feroldi, Brian
Frye, Christina (2x)
Gibbons Jr., John
Hart, Barbara
Jackson, Robert
Kinnes, Richard (2x)
Leavitt, Lisa Marie
Lussier, Peter
McHugh, Charles R.
Maher, Nancy
Mascaro, Vanessa
Morgan, Thomas
Murphy, Heather (2x)
Nigri, Nancy
O'Leary, Madline (2x)
Post, Christine
Raymond, Steve
Richard, Lisa
Rowlett, Benjamin
Sabourin, Carol (2x)
Sams, Mary Mudge
Sheehan, Janet

Ellis, Brian
Feroldi, Katie
Gatlin, Jacqueline
Given, B.
Hirsch, Teresa (2x)
Johnson, Meredith
Kizlinski, Andrew
Leavitt, Scott
Lynch, Bailey
MacLeod, Tiffany
Martone, Kara
Miller, Erik (2x)
Mumford, Andrea
Muto, Linda
Nigri, Peter
Odell, Brian (2x)
Pucino, Joan (2x)
Renehan, Edward (2x)
Ross, Beth Hill
Rowlett, Kate
Sabourin, Robert (2x)
Schaefer, Carl

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

ENDORSEMENTS FOR SARAH KELLY-PALMER

Name (Last, First):

Albernaz, Jordan	Anderson, Linnea	Baltzer, Taylor
Benedict, Mary Ellen	Bradner, Andrew	Coleman, Britany
Cornillon, Peter	DiMario, Alana	Doering, Peter
Duffy, Lori	Garcia, Lisa (2x)	Geertman, Anne
Geertman, Paul	Graham, Kris	Guarino, Kathleen
Guzas, Emily	Haskins, Kimberly	Hildebrand, Lisa
Hill, Diane	Ho, Kay	Katz, Patricia
Simmons, Martha	Layton, Kathleen (2x)	McDonald, Paul (NKNEA)
McGeoch, Beatrice	Manock, John	Marzilli, Shanna
Mason, Serena	Mohanty, Sulina	Oczkowski, Autumn
Ryan, Kelley (2x)	Schmerer, Kahlia	Sgouros, Tom
Sherman, Nancy Whyte	Thomson, Noeline	Valverde, Bridget
Worobec, Mary		

ENDORSEMENTS FOR LEE DOMASZOWEC

Name (Last, First):

None received

ENDORSEMENTS FOR JAMES HALLEY

Name (Last, First):

None received

ENDORSEMENTS FOR DONNA LICO

Name (Last, First):

Sgouros, Tom

ENDORSEMENTS FOR DEBRA LUKACSKO

Name (Last, First):

Carr, David (Wallkill Valley Regional High School)

President Mancini thanked Councilor McCoy and stated that he believes that we have enough information to make an informed decision.

Councilor Anderson stated she speaks as a social worker and does not work with Sarah Kelly-Palmer but is very familiar with her agency, the work she does, and her professional reputation. She thinks that sometimes we don't realize that social workers can do many things and she appreciates that tonight Sarah illuminated all the different hats social workers can wear and why she so uniquely qualified for this position. In some of the letters of support we received for her, it was mentioned several times her understanding of trauma and child and family mental health which is so important and speaks deeply to her own values as a social worker. She further stated that is only a small reason of why she is supporting Sarah tonight. The biggest reasons are what she laid out in her comments tonight. Her role as an administrator is such an essential organization to our state that cannot be overlooked. The services that she ensures reaching some of our highest needs children, adults and families cannot be overlooked. In her role, she is accountable to multiple accrediting and regulating bodies, governmental agencies integrating feedback and requirements at a fast rate and with ever shifting deadlines, targets and funding sources. The rule to draft policies and procedures in a way that is evidence based for this role is complex and challenging. These are the skills that Sarah will bring to the School Committee and are so important and so few are prepared to bring. She feels fortunate that Sarah has applied for this position.

Councilor Mandel stated that we have great candidates, and we are lucky to have such great people willing to serve on our School Committee. His sense is that this is not a popularity contest, which happens in November when the people of the community can vote for the candidate that is the most attractive to them. To him there is a high value in non-partisanship, and he wants to do the best for the kids, the committee, and he wants someone who can work well with others. While several candidates would excel, the one that jumps out to him is the one who has the most relevant experience and that is Debra Lukacsko who has served for an extensive period of time on a school committee in New Jersey. She received raved reviews from the Superintendent, has the motivation to participate here, she is retired and has the interest to do this. Again, we have excellent candidates; however, Debbee seems to be the one who can contribute in a non-partisan way.

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

Councilor Page stated we have received many emails regarding this appointment, and she tried to respond to most of them. Being that she was on the School Committee for eight years, she feels that the group of people on the School Committee need to be able to work together in collaboration in order to get things accomplished. We have someone who will be coming in January and that committee will be completely different in November. The person that we appoint needs to be able to work with the group that is already there. We are blessed to have a great group of people who are willing to serve. She is looking for someone who is willing to collaborate with the committee members already there and there will be a quick learning curve. The voters will have the opportunity in November to vote on four of the five seats. Based on the experience that Sarah Kelly-Palmer has, she would advocate for her.

President Mancini stated that he would like to thank all the applicants for caring enough about our community to apply. All have different diverse set of skills, all of which would be an asset to our community. He would like to recognize the over 140 letters of support for these candidates, but he does agree with Councilor Mandel, that this is not a popularity contest. For him, this is the third person the Town Council will be replacing in 17 months. He finds that troubling and has caused him to reflect on the skill set needed for a successful School Committee Member. In analyzing this issue, he reflected on his own experience and concluded that nothing can prepare you for this job other than having the experience of having this job. That was the reason why he voted for former Senator Sheehan and believes that is why the whole Council voted for him. In his opinion, the only person that has the skill and experience required for this appointment is Debbee Lukacsko. She was elected to a public-school board twice and spent 7 years in office and there will not be a steep learning curve. He further stated that she has a master's in nursing and was a medical director for a college. The School Committee has continually expressed the concern of the health and mental health of the student body. Ms. Lukacsko's professional experience in the medical field will be an asset for our School Committee. The concern that Ms. Lukacsko has not lived in town prompted him to speak with Ms. Lukacsko and asked her to provide some references of which she provided 3 names. He was able to speak with all three, one being Dr. Edward Card who served on the Board of Education with Ms. Lukacsko who said "Ms. Lukacsko was a tremendous asset to the Board and the Administration, and her healthcare background was especially useful to the School Committee. The second reference he spoke with was Mr. Wayne McWilliams who was also on the Board, and he said she came to meetings well informed, was always prepared, and had a wealth of knowledge on the issues discussed. The third and final reference he spoke with was David Carr,

the Superintendent of the high school in that region, he too had glowing comments on Ms. Lukacsko. Her references made him feel comfortable that she is the best person for the job. For these reasons he has named on the concerns of the turnover on the School Committee, he is advocating for Ms. Lukacsko.

Councilor McCoy stated that the basic qualifications for this position outlined in our charter, is that the person must be a qualified elector of the town, which all candidates have met that qualification. He would also echo the comment that the citizens will be electing four people, three to serve 4 years and one to serve 2 years and the appointment we make tonight is only until December. He further stated that to him, the financial experience and knowledge moving forward is extremely important. He agrees with Councilor Mandel's comments that this is not a popularity contest. At this point, he would agree that the best suited candidate for this appointment is Debbie Lukacsko.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor McCoy and by roll call it was

VOTED: To appoint Debra L. Lukacsko, 344 Shore Acres Avenue, to the School Committee to December 2, 2024, to fill the unexpired term of Thomas G. Briody in accordance with Section 903 of the Charter.

Councilor Anderson	-	No
Councilor Mandel	-	Yes
Councilor Page	-	No
Councilor McCoy	-	Yes
President Mancini	-	Yes

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

23. Resolution discharging current Conservation Commission Members

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

WHEREAS, the Town Council voted to amend the Conservation Commission's charge to incorporate protection of town groundwater resources and infrastructure used to distribute high quality drinking water; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council voted to dissolve the North Kingstown Groundwater Committee and discharged members of their duties but strongly encouraged them to apply to any open positions on the Conservation Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Town Council directs the Town Clerk to advertise appointments to the Conservation Commission for all seven (7) Conservation Commission positions; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the current members of the Conservation Commission are strongly encouraged to apply to all 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 Clerk shall send letters to the current members of the Conservation Commission and prior members of the Groundwater Committee strongly encouraging them to apply for the Conservation Commission; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the current Conservation Commission members are discharged at the time the Town Council re-appoints all positions of the Conservation Commission; however, the current members can continue to meet until such time the new members are appointed; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of North Kingstown owes a debt of gratitude to all past and present members of the Conservation Commission, particularly longstanding members for their service to the community.

24. Letter of Support

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: That the Council sends a letter of support for URI Ocean Engineering's Application to the BRIC 2023 Grant Program for incorporation of the ASCE 7-22 Standards into ongoing Climate Change/Resiliency Modeling Efforts.

25. Request for a Class B-Full Alcoholic Beverage License Increase

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To receive and file the request by Overabarrel LLC, dba Barrique Wine Bar, 7610 Post Road, Unit 5, to increase the Class B-Full Alcoholic Beverage License Limits from 29 to 30.

26. Correspondence – as of 2:00 p.m. today

01/14/24 – Liz Finneran – Dollar Store in Wickford

01/15/24 – Elena Tillman – Trash in Allen's Cove

01/16/24 & 01/22/24 – Karin Ingrid Miller Melton PhD – Dollar Store in Wickford

01/16/24 – Mary Worobec – Climate Action and Our Towns

01/22/24 – Dave Andrews – “Jug Handle” Concerns & Route 4

JANUARY 22, 2024

BOOK 111 PAGE

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Jeannette Alyward
Town Clerk