

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DEEP RIVER TOWN HALL

Regular Meeting -- February 14, 2012

Attendance: Selectmen Dick Smith, Angus McDonald. Also: Margo Hilfinger, Rich Strukus (*videography*); Art Thompson, Fran Strukus, Rich Nagot, Sally Carlson-Crowell, Joe Mizejeski (*Deep River Town Hall Auditorium Restoration Committee [DRTHARC]*); Charles Stannard (*ValleyNewsNow.com*)

This regular meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Dick Smith.

Minutes: Regular Meeting – January 24, 2012

Motion by McDonald, 2nd by Smith, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 24, 2012.

APPROVED 2 – 0

Deep River Town Hall Auditorium Restoration Committee (DRTHARC):

Art Thompson, Chairman, referred to a motion made by the Board of Selectmen at their regular meeting of January 24, 2012, to offer the DRTHARC the possibility of retaining the services of LinaLynn Schmelzer, who had served as Coordinator under the direction of the former Deep River Town Hall Restoration Association, Incorporated. If the DRTHARC wished to keep Schmelzer in their employ prior to the availability of funds of the former Restoration Association, the Town would underwrite her salary temporarily under the condition that the DRTHARC would later reimburse the Town.

The DRTHARC was apprised of the Selectmen's offer, and Thompson reported that it had been discussed at the DRTHARC meeting of February 9, 2012. Based on the present lack of activity in the auditorium the DRTHARC voted not to accept the offer. Thompson explained that at this point the Committee can take care of scheduling or other coordination needs.

Thompson reported that the DRTHARC had elected officers at their first meeting: Art Thompson, Chairman; Bruce Edgerton, vice-Chairman; Kim Olson, Secretary; Janice Kmetz, Treasurer. To date they have held three regular meetings and called two special meetings, with their next regular meeting scheduled for February 16th. Members have visited theaters in three historic buildings to see how they operate, how they have dealt with building and fire codes and to study their physical layouts: The Kate (Old Saybrook), the Goodspeed (East Haddam) and the Chester Meeting House.

The DRTHARC had anticipated that the transfer of Association funds might entail a lengthy process. However, the DRTHARC found that the Association's 1979 charter of incorporation included language that upon the Association's dissolution their funds would devolve to the Town of Deep River. The language was reviewed by Town Attorney Jane Marsh and the Connecticut Attorney General's office has been asked to confirm Attorney Marsh's opinion. All funds have now been consolidated into a single account at the Essex Savings Bank. The total in the account is approximately \$261,000.

Thompson reported that members have met with Building Official Richard Leighton & Fire Marshal Keith Nolin. The two areas of greatest importance are installation of fire doors at the top of the Grand Staircase at the entry to the Orchestra floor and at the entrance to the Mezzanine. Handrails that meet today's building codes will be required on all stairways, as well as protection of some low-set windows. The front of the Mezzanine will also have to be addressed. The DRTHARC has been assured that all impediments to full use of the entire space (including the Mezzanine) can be removed when all safety issues have been resolved..

Smith noted that back in the 1950s public safety considerations rendered the entire space unsafe for any occupancy. The installation of both sprinkler and fire alarm systems in the 1990s, at a cost of approximately \$75,000, permitted limited use of the Orchestra level only, with a maximum occupancy of 130. The Mezzanine's use could be only for operating the sound and lighting systems.

Both Nolin and Leighton assured the DRTHARC that, with fire doors, railings and other alterations in place, the entire auditorium would be usable. The cost of putting all of these safety features in place will be a large factor, especially bearing in mind the necessity to ensure that all alterations are compatible with the historic nature of the space. The Selectmen expressed their pleasure that the committee is being so active and so mindful of the historic aspects.

Thompson noted that one of the most difficult issues will be the multi-purpose uses the Selectmen prefer. Since seating was limited to the Orchestra, the balcony seats were brought downstairs. The metal frames were stripped and cleaned, the wooden seats and backs were refinished and the seats were affixed to the Orchestra floor. In past times, when public safety codes were far less stringent than today's, seating in the Orchestra was on banks of folding seats, four to a bank. They were easily removed and stored for dances and other events that required empty floor space. Under current codes seating in the Mezzanine must be permanently fixed to the floor. Seating in the Orchestra may be removable.

Thompson concluded by reporting that DRTHARC members, as they visited other venues, took note of ways that other theaters had devised to deal with this same issue.

Appointments:

McDonald moved, 2nd by Smith, to reappoint Smith to the Estuary Transit District, for a term to expire in January 2015.

APPROVED 2 – 0

Resolution:

Following discussion, McDonald moved, Smith 2nd, to approve the following resolution.

RESOLVED:

“That the Town Meeting of the Town of Deep River hereby ratifies the action of the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials to become a council of Governments at their meeting of July 27, 2011, toward that end, the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials formally adopted section 4-124i to 4-124p, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, in accordance with the procedures set forth in section 4-124j of the Connecticut General Statutes, and that this newly established Council of Governments be called the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments.”

APPROVED 2 – 0

(A series of discussion points in Q & A format appears on the following pages):

Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments: Questions & Answers:

Q: What are we voting about?

A: The Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials (CRVCEO) voted on July 27, 2011 to become a Council of Governments. We are ratifying that vote. Connecticut law requires any agreement among towns to be confirmed by the legislative body of each town.

Q: What is CRVCEO?

A: CRVCEO is a group of the chief executives of Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, and Westbrook. It was formed about ten years ago, when a vote was held in each of these towns to form this group. The group includes two state regions, the Connecticut River Estuary Region and the Midstate Region. It facilitates collaborative agreements on such matters as cooperative purchasing and mutual aid, joint grant applications, and information sharing.

Q: Why was CRVCEO formed?

A: It was formed for several reasons: first, the towns of this region have much more in common with each other than with the areas surrounding us, which include larger cities such as Hartford, New Haven, and New London; second, these 17 towns, acting together, give our area a stronger voice in dealing with the state and the federal government than they would have individually; finally, the town leaders wanted a forum in which to discuss matters that affect our area.

Q: What is a Council of Governments (COG)?

A: A Council of Governments incorporates the functions of the regional planning agencies and the councils of elected officials. Federal and state transportation funding will flow through the COG; the COG will perform regional planning and provide services from mapping to Household Hazardous Waste collection; and it will give us a powerful voice at the state level.

Q: Why form a Council of Governments now?

A: The 17 town leaders have been discussing this option for many years. In the last few years, however, the state legislature has considered several measures that would reduce the number of regions and regional planning organizations in Connecticut to fewer than the current 15. Some proposals have suggested as few as five regions. Under such plans, the 17 towns would be separated and folded into districts centered on much larger cities. The members of CRVCEO decided to take the proactive

step of establishing our 17-town COG to protect our regional identity and organization.

For the next two years, the state will provide funding to help defray costs for regions that decide to voluntarily consolidate and form a COG. As the first region to take this step, we expect to be awarded funds that will help significantly to defray the costs of the transition.

Q: What guarantee do we have that once we form this group, the state won't change it?

A: While there are no guarantees, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has been tasked by the legislature with recommending a regional structure for the state, and OPM has indicated that it will recommend no changes to any regions that voluntarily consolidate now. OPM will not have to look at these boundaries again for 20 years (that is, until 2032).

Q: Will there be any savings to the towns?

A: The towns currently make a per capita contribution annually to support our Regional Planning Agencies, the administrative arms of CRVCEO. We anticipate that there will be savings as two offices will be consolidated into one and some employees have indicated they will be retiring.

Q: Where will the offices be located?

A: A formal location has not yet been selected, but the plan is to locate CRVCOG centrally in the lower Connecticut River Valley. Since the CRERPA offices are currently in Old Saybrook, the new location will likely be closer to East Haddam.

Q: What about the structure of the new group and its duties and responsibilities?

A: Formal transition planning hasn't begun, because until formation of this new COG has been ratified by the towns, state statutes don't really allow for serious transition planning (Sect 4-1241 of the Ct. General Statutes). However, no town will receive fewer services than it does now.

Q: How will this change affect me?

A: It will have little direct effect on individual citizens. What it will do is give our towns more local control over our own destinies. Of course, the cost savings will benefit the town budget and tax rate.

(End of Q & A)

Special Town Meeting:

A Special Town Meeting has been scheduled for 7 pm, February 28, 2012, to act on the following:

- 1] Approve the amount of \$31,320 for services rendered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation for the Village Street Bridge project.
- 2] Approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED:

“That the Town Meeting of the Town of Deep River hereby ratifies the action of the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials to become a council of Governments at their meeting of July 27, 2011, toward that end, the Connecticut River Valley Council of Elected Officials formally adopted section 4-124i to 4-124p, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, in accordance with the procedures set forth in section 4-124j of the Connecticut General Statutes, and that this newly established Council of Governments be called the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments.”

APPROVED 2 -- 0

Audience of Citizens – Any Other Business to Come Before the Board:

Richard Nagot advised the Selectmen that the catch basin sumps in the vicinity of 240 to 245 Westbrook Road appear to be filled with sand. He also expressed his concern about vehicles speeding on Westbrook Road. Smith replied that he will check the catch basins and that he would advise the Resident Trooper and Officers Lewis & Sypher to maintain their visibility in the area. In addition to running radar.

Adjournment:

McDonald moved, Smith 2nd, that the meeting adjourn at 8:07 pm.

APPROVED 2 -- 0

Respectfully submitted,

Richard H. Smith,
First Selectman

RHS/jk