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Phil Carroll, Vice Chair
Neil Chaudhary
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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Draft Minutes of the Legislative Ordinance Committee Meeting

The Ordinance Committee met on Monday August 11th, 2014 in Meeting Room 1 of the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Lane, Newtown. Committee Chairman Ryan Knapp called the meeting to order at 7:12 pm.

Present: Ms Jacob, Mr. Chaudhary, Ms. Romano and Mr. Knapp

Also in attendance: George Ferguson, John Voket of The Newtown Bee and two members of the public

Absent: Mr. Carroll and Mr. Girgasky

MINUTES: Ms. Jacob motioned to approve the minutes of the meeting of 3/26/2014. Mr. Chaudhary seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Jacob motioned to approve the minutes of the meeting of 4/7/2014. Mr. Chaudhary seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Jacob motioned to approve the minutes of the meeting of 4/9/2014. Mr. Chaudhary seconded. All in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Jane Callaway of Hopewell Rd: Spoke to the asset cap. She and her husband feel it penalizes people for saving. She and her husband have no children to take care of them should they need it and have saved to afford any necessary care. Other towns have no asset cap. People she knows are looking to leave Newtown and tax relief does help them afford to stay. Newtown needs to retain residents and she feels the asset test is inappropriate.

New Business

An Ordinance regarding the adoption of Connecticut General Statutes 4-124I to 4-124P to join the Western Connecticut Council of Governments.

Mr Knapp noted that there was not yet a document to have a vote on.

Ms. Jacob explained that we need to create a document to go through the ordinance procedure to formally join the Western Connecticut Council of Governments and it would be up.

Mr Knapp volunteered to work with our attorney and create such a document for our next meeting.

Mr. Knapp opened the discussion on the agenda item: Task of research as related to the setting of an asset cap for Senior Tax Relief as charged to The Ordinance Committee by the Legislative Council during the regular meeting of July 16, 2014.

Mr. Knapp explained the need to set an asset cap as by ordinance and that the task of this committee was to research and recommend a number to the full council. He spoke to his view that this would be a tool when the funding we were comfortable using to help seniors was insufficient, to see that the funds went to those most in need.

Mr. Chaudhary said that he believes that it should be set independent of utilized resources and based on a number that will see us only helping those we deem in need.

Ms. Romano said that this money should serve the people who need it most.

Mr. Chaudhary feels that making an asset cap decision based on how it is distributed is inappropriate and it should only be based on need.

Mr. Knapp noted that we have not had an asset cap for decades and does not want to set a disruptive number that would potentially exclude people, especially if we are currently including everyone who

applies with the level of funding we deemed appropriate and that we were comfortable with in the spring. He said that unless we have to, he would like to see us start with a conservatively high number and dial it in from there to something appropriate.

Mr. Chaudhary asked if anyone had any idea what number they would be comfortable with. No one had a good number, but all agreed that \$650,000 as in Fairfield's code is too low.

Mr. Chaudhary to research asset numbers for retirement.

Mr. Knapp noted that we live in Fairfield County and the numbers should be adjusted accordingly.

Ms. Jacobs to reach out to gather application information from the Tax Collector, via the Office of The First Selectman.

Ms. Romano to reach out to Fairfield and see how they came up with their number.

PUBLIC COMMENT: George Ferguson, 49 Tauton Hill Rd: Said that he is not in favor of an asset test and that we do not have the resources to do it fairly.

Mr. Callaway, Hopewell Rd: Noted that he has no children but has always paid taxes, the majority of which go to the school system. An asset test on seniors feels like a penalty. Noted the high tax burden in Newtown as their previous residence in Redding was more valuable, but now has lower taxes than their home in Newtown.

Mr. Chaudhary motioned to adjourn at 7:50pm. Ms Jacob seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan W. Knapp
Ordinance Committee Chairman