

1. The Meeting of the Town of Plymouth Town Council, **February 25, 2008 was called to order at 7:00 p.m.** by Mayor Vin Festa in the Community Room, Town Hall. In attendance: Councilwoman Jacqui Denski, Councilman Peter Giancesini, Councilwoman Jeannine Jandreau, Councilwoman DiAnna Schenkel, Councilman David Sekorski, Mayor Vin Festa, Robin Gudeczauskas, Council Clerk. Also present, David Barbieri (Capital Improvements), Carl Johnson (Vice Chair of Municipal Facilities Committee and member of Planning & Zoning), Bill Kuehn (Town Planner), Steve Mindera (Waterwheel Commission), David Philbrick (EDC and Waterwheel), Craig Stevenson (Economic Development Consultant), Ralph Zovich (Board of Finance).
2. Fire Exits Per CT General Statutes, Public Act 03-231, Section 29-381 – Noted for the record.
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Share Committee's Work and Status With Regards to Capital Improvement Projects:

Mayor Festa thanked those in attendance for coming with input in terms of developing Plymouth's future, what we represent and how to move in that direction to achieve goals.

1. Capital Improvements Committee has been charged with keeping inventory of capital improvements with an annual report due to Council every December. In September they begin putting plan together; charged with maintaining and annually updating plan, inventory through questionnaire, using public dollars for capital projects; update annual list of needs, extent of public infrastructure, buildings, parks, other public lands, adequacy of major pieces of equipment, etc. They evaluate and rank each request and assign allocation and submit recommendation. In 2007 they began work early in summer, sending out questionnaires and at that time ran into quorum issue and lack of board secretary and therefore had no report for December. Currently putting plan together and will have that in March for Board of Finance and Council. Currently have 60 items totaling over \$6 million, i.e. tasers, fire stations; and a number of others not including the new high school; about \$330k in current year's budget and several items to be requested in upcoming budget.
2. Economic Development Commission and Waterwheel Committee which is sub committee of EDC; industrial and commercial level and primary focus of industrial park is to get newer activity in construction, new business in industrial park. Noticed trend that older buildings on the market have quick turnover; new tenants come into existing facilities rather quickly. Have new concept working with Craig Stevenson and Bill Kuehn in a conceptual design with a developer. They have the support of Northeast Utilities who has offered a grant to facilitate this development conceptually. Currently have four new buildings to be underway this spring and summer in the new park. The EDC is taking an active interest in the business community with the major aspect being the revitalization of Route 6/Main Street and feel the town has a good strong center core of community with proper infrastructure of dining, shops, etc. and feel sidewalks are needed. The EDC/town has applied for STEAP funding and have another project to queue up which is the corner of Main and North Main with the construction of a new pharmacy which will change the face of downtown and the Waterwheel Park Phase 1 development

this year. Developing funding sources is another avenue currently researching; the Brownsfield partnership is assisting with environmental assessment currently at Waterwheel Park but with other areas also. Look for additional funding sources for the waterwheel. Have \$10K for assessment of BJ Tool and anticipate report shortly on environmental impact. Have also connected with a grant writer who identifies all grants in the State of CT and is putting together an overview of grants we could be eligible for.

3. Municipal Facilities Committee – Their main charge of this special committee under the Mayor is to look at Prospect Street and Main Street Schools, what to do with them when they are turned over from the BOE when no longer educational facilities. Have had presentations from YMCA and the Boys/Girls Club and rough estimates on renovating. Looking at costs vs. benefits to the town; the BOE wants to break up the property and keep the fields; the seniors want an area; and the second part of the charge is to look at facilities in town and make recommendation/suggestion on what various departments need, how much space they have, how outdated they are. Trying to do what is best for the community.
4. Planning and Zoning – Recently revised Zoning Regulations and working on Subdivision Regulations in association with Public Works who is working on road standards. Bill Kuehn stated Planning and Zoning role per statute is to make sure everything done in town is within Plan of Development and every municipal project is reviewed by the Commission and every new project requires special permit from Planning and Zoning.
5. Public Works – not in attendance.
6. Waterwheel - under auspices of EDC for funding and management. Currently have a signed contract for engineering work for Phase 1; conceptual work already accomplished. Working on portions of Phase 2 and funding with \$313,000 in fund which will come down during this year, and along with grant writer for EDC who will get on track to apply for more funds for other appropriate grants.

Mayor Festa thanked everyone for attendance and input.

5. Formal Discussion with Town Council Members and Workshop Participants – Jeannine Jandreau questioned Dave Philbrick on when are we to get buildings knocked down to have decent looking Main Street. Dave Philbrick – Work to date includes exam of decrepit buildings on Main Street and identified pollutants in property, cost for removal of materials expected to be about \$11,000 and this item will be going out for bid soon. Cannot remove slabs so as not to disturb sub soils which are contaminated. Need to address contaminant source which needs to be identified; have DEP consultant assisting and the approach taking is due to sensitive nature of property and surrounding properties. Currently working with BJ Tool on borings but have been denied access to Kirkwood property to do borings. BJ Tool is moving out of building and business is closing. Bill Kuehn stated sequence of work is that of phase development vs. phases of study. Peter Giancesini stated (a) older schools are coming off line and uncertainty as they are being used and hearing talk. Carl Johnson stated the first floor of Main Street School would need to be renovated up to code to be multi use, i.e. offices, etc., and to be handicap accessible with cost in the range of \$2.5 million. (b) We have Prospect Street School designed at the turn of the century and Main Street School a 1930's design and will we get feelers out to

developers on ideas for the property; and feels that PSS and MSS would need fields included in sale but the BOE wants those fields. It is a benefit to the town to sell as one entire parcel. (c) The BOE is still in the school, wants another space and they own the house in the corner by the high school. Is it feasible or not, he does not know. Carl stated they are now in stages of looking at what to do and cost vs. benefit. Jacqui Denski asked if PSS is considered a historical site. Bill Kuehn stated no as it was built in 1904. It is a massive building and extremely hard to alter any wall space in interior because of structure. It would make a good apartment building of some sort; the MSS site has more value for development because more options associated such as larger site, building does not have an historical look as PSS does, commercial zone and could be offices, housing, retail, many uses and more value in marketplace. Dave Sekorski noted we have resources available and talking is a positive step in the right direction. He asked (a) Dave Barbieri with all the items on the towns' plate, when was the Capital Improvements threshold dropped from 100K to 5K and how was that done. Dave Barbieri stated the Town Council amended the original charge. (b) EDC if concept of moving into existing buildings is less expensive than building new, he is curious to have feedback on what we are doing with the modular place on South Main. Bill Kuehn stated there are two properties and the lower half was purchased by men from Stamford who are opening a recycling operation and going through the lengthy process of obtaining DEP permits; will be handling construction debris and will either bring the railroad line into large building or put a shed over the railroad line so that all operations will be internal. The upper half is American Modular and they have disappeared in the last few weeks with all valuable assets and left the trash behind. Back taxes with them is a big issue, A New York firm is buying the property. Craig Stevenson, EDC consultant, stated there is a distinct demand for existing industrial property in Plymouth and he can fill vacancies in buildings. American Modular was not communicating with the town and the town was not aware of their decision to depart. Once the deal with clean up issues is resolved, the condition of the property and opportunity to refill is there and he looks forward to doing that once we identify the new owners. Dave Philbrick noted O/Z Gedney is another case in point and the property has been in negotiations for 6 – 12 months but it will happen. Councilwoman Schenkel asked if anyone considered through use of municipal buildings or industrial park to approach cell tower firms and get income generated from those; for example, downtown development so that we can have wifi for downtown. Mayor Festa stated he is working with department heads, meeting with Bill, Tony, Terry Vigeant, USDA, Rural Development, and looking at grant opportunities. From discussions, there are programs out there and finding them is not too early and at some point in time we are losing ourselves because grant applications are due immediately and by the time we do a feasibility study the submission time has passed. We need to start to do the application processes for some of these organizations; we need to look at particular components; we should not separate fields from schools because it is not marketable; land in back of town hall, with USDA and Small Cities Block grants we can do a town hall addition with plans that are already prepared to create a new police department, renovate bottom and upgrade codes to include senior center. There are programs to enhance work of each commission and relative waterwheel and sidewalk component. During the communal breakfast, community people brought forward many ideas such as the Lions Club who will take the corner piece near the waterwheel and develop it with trees, shrubbery, and benches in honor of deceased members of the Lions

Club. Component suggested of brick sidewalks along waterwheel site in that corner piece and an organization such as Lions can sell bricks and use money for funds for their organization. Veterans would like to do more than what is done in this community and at the monument they will do a brick sidewalk in the park; and a concrete walk along signpost as students/adults cannot get to it in inclement weather to update the signboard. A number of groups have raised issues and ideas to move along and give life again, renovations at schools, seniors have come and not pleased with idea of going to Main Street School and would as soon stay here; they note a chairlift was put in for renovation list to make accessible, feeling is it is haphazard and half an issue to them; need to do discussions in communities to give people the opportunity to voice feelings. Ultimately the townspeople will be responsible for funding revenue sources; sadly hearing more and more on taxes and taxation and people can no longer afford properties. Issues need to be addressed. Pleased to hear upswings on economic development and movement forward. Have spoken with Linda and the town attorney to be aggressive on back taxes issue such as South Main Street. Have set aside money for the town attorney to get moving forward; Fall Mountain people have asked to do foreclosures by neighbors who would purchase adjacent property to make their property larger, and that would put property back on tax roles and some of those are 15-20 years in arrears. Realize we need more of these meetings. Town projects need to go to Tony Lorenzetti and town commissions to get property approval beforehand.

6. Presentation and Discussion With Rural Development Representatives – Craig Stevenson, Plymouth's Economic Developer and Chair of the CT Rural Development Council; have kicked off the community assessments with the purpose to further the mission of the Rural Development Council; they are 1 of 30 nationwide with purpose to help small and rural communities connect with resources at federal, state, local and private sector. They publish a resource directory on an annual basis, training for economic development and land use officials in an effort to connect communities to resources. Model successful in other states is community assessment which brings in experts from federal, state and private sector; holistic development of town, needs, from identifying projects and putting in order. Process after tonight will be a community tour. Craig introduced representatives who will be working with Plymouth: Ruth Fitzgerald, owner of a planning firm to help develop land use regulations, natural resource planning and preservation, cultural or historic building plans, community outreach; Don Poland, planning consultant, urban geography and planning; registered lobbyist; neighborhood and housing. John O'toole, community developer with Northeast Utilities and Ansonia mayor who accomplished redeveloping downtown. Assessment process given with tour of town and stops to be organized for ½ day, evening town meeting to get audience input, issues will be discussed and record what they say to assist in writing recommendation report and identify resources. The committee will be available by phone or email to answer questions or provide referrals at no charge. A slide presentation given noting need to list strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Discussion held to create lists:

Strengths: rail access, strong volunteer community, frugal, being small community, highly skilled workforce, new high school/education, rural ambience and atmosphere, geographic location, toll free calling to Hartford, hour from anywhere, Rt 6/8/72/84, cable access highly advanced, 18 business park ready sites, business friendly, history, proud historical

business, great leadership/mayor, recreational opportunity and support for expansion and support personnel, strong businesses committed to community and well known throughout the world, ties to present and future.

Weaknesses: below per capita and medium family income state average, limited tax base, limited land available for development, land is finite, tax increases and lean budget, weak environment affects us from attracting potential business to community and need improvements along Rt. 6 to encourage new buildings, lack of parking places, lower economic demographics of town, no retail support downtown, Rt. 6 understated for traffic in community; lack of pedestrian foot traffic due to danger; need bypass route where downtown could be traffic controlled area, third lane in middle for traffic turns, responsibility of maintenance/appearance of business park, not proactive enough, lack of Lake Winfield/recreation facilities.

Opportunities: update currently Rite Aid plaza with street level buildings for small businesses to be street level, one of the best town planners in the State of CT, and very good economic development consultant, natural resources, demographic upwardly mobile, 2 schools off line to be available for private sector development; waterwheel project, business park association recently formed (Plymouth Industrial Park Association) looking to work together on safety, security, appearance yet dealing with electrical/phone issues and high school opening concerns; connectivity with sidewalk ordinance/sidewalk improvements, atmosphere of communication between government, commissions, people to create goals of community for the future, STEAP grant application to address Rt. 6; Lock Museum, façade improvement and main street revitalization; Terryville Trust parcel, increased diversity on business and residential side and newcomers pushing quality of life issues in the positive direction and need to tap into energy of new people; recreation department is trying to get community involved, waterwheel park is historical heritage and setting for future of historic dams that need repair i.e. Lake Winfield, Fish & Game upper pond, preserve dams and ponds to preserve community, cost of living here is value compared to others which needs to be communicated, aging demographics can be an opportunity for economic growth and to attract more of this; commutability; tie in to gateway of Litchfield County for historic time period for revolutionary war cemeteries, D. Atwater, lock museum, fall foliage – set up tour with other towns; work force, town web site is high quality, public school website is user friendly for parents.

Threats: unfunded federal and state mandates, i.e. No Child Left Behind; American Disabilities Act; education drain on budget and increasing needs of senior population and need for housing; financial strength as 50% of budget from grants and governmental transfers; tax burden on residential property owners; policy needed or mechanism to generate knowledge on back taxes for communication to mayor and town council, delinquent taxpayers; volatility of politics in town for lack of consistency in town government; community to participate in recyclables already in place vs. resistance to change such as trash pick up vs. transfer station; Charter Revision needs to review past history and is also an opportunity for commissions to review history; limited parking and traffic in downtown area; current worldwide economic conditions.

7. Open Discussion For Individual Participation To Present Ideas, Concerns or Suggestions

Dave Philbrick gave overview on Waterwheel Park, what will be done during each phase, funding, maintenance. This project is complex and public does not have understanding of what is being done, how and suggestion to incrementally build it to be useable as project evolves. Mayor Festa stated we need to reeducate the public on many issues. The town is losing money because we do not recycle in our homes, schools, etc. and will get the word out through field trips, Channel 21 program on recycling. Bill Kuehn had a suggestions regarding Lake Winfield and to put summer concert series there overlooking lake and get people out there to see it; hold events there and sit on hillside.

Ralph Zovich thanked the Mayor and Council for hosting this session and relayed his ideas; a) regardless of park and social issues and quality of life issues do not lose focus of strategic plan and plan of development. We need commercial and industrial growth; cannot continue with tax increases on residents; b) does it improve critical infrastructure. Anything that improves should get positive checkmark; c) beautiful project is waterwheel and need site revitalized; however, it takes two commercial properties off the grand list; school facilities disposition, suggest bring property back on grand list and make productive.

Council members thanked public for participation of all those attendees.

Need to take perspective on feelings about our community; take particular segment and give objective image. Plymouth is a progressive community and moving forward; need positive attitude. Start tonight with format developed and next do long range plans and prioritize issues/projects and stick to list.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn by Councilwoman Schenkel; second Councilwoman Jandreau and the vote unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Gudczauskas, Council Clerk