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East Haven

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

EAST HAVEN, CONN

Stacy Gravino, CTC

TOWN CLERK

East Haven Town Council Minutes

East Haven Town Council held its regularly scheduled meeting Tuesday, June 2, 2020, which will commence at 7:30 p.m. or immediately following certain public hearings via Zoom in order to transact the following:

Chairman Deko called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Item #1

Roll Call-14 Present. 1 Absent (Ruggiero).

Staff Present-Edward Lennon Police Chief, Patrick Tracey Deputy Police Chief, Stacy Gravino Town Clerk, James Keeley Interim Finance Director, and Michael Luzzi Town Attorney.

Chairman Deko read the Zoom process with regard to the Governor's Executive Order.

Chairman Deko requested the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence for our Country, our Town, and everyone affected by the Corona Virus and the terrible acts that are taking place in our Country.

Item #2

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to approve minutes of the May 5th, 6th, 19th, 20th, and 21st. Special Meeting.

Councilman Santino second the motion.

Chairman Deko made a quick statement and thanked the clerk for her time and efforts. He is also working on downloading the Zoom meetings; it's not very easy to do. He then thanked everyone involved in the budget process.

Vice Chairman Pacelli voiced his gratitude to the town council members, the Mayor and his administration for all their hard work during these unprecedented times. While being so transparent and forthcoming with the budget process and reaching out to the public in every possible way. He commends all of the members of the council, along with all the boards and commissions, administration and Mayor Carfora.

Roll call vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Approved

Item #3

Subcommittee Reports:

- a. Education, Library and School Building
- b. Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
- c. Finance
- d. Public Services, Parks, and Recreation
- e. Urban Renewal/Housing

There are limited sub-committee reports due to social distancing.

Councilwoman Cesare indicated the students are continuing distance learning.

Councilman Santino indicated the playscape at Deer Run School is still going forward and public works did a great job opening the town beach.

Item #4

To consider and act upon an ordinance entitled violation types and penalties as outlined in Chapter 11, Article II (Stopping, Standing, and Parking), Section 11-16 and Section 11-17.

No action necessary/Public Hearing remains open.

Item #5

Vice Chairman Pacelli read the following: notification pursuant to Chapter 5 of the Town Charter regarding Town Engineer and Director of Public Services.

Chairman Deko recognized Town Attorney Luzzi who stated the interim town engineer is Jonathan Bodwell who has done a significant amount of consulting with many towns. At this time he's doing a great job working as the interim engineer; along with those duties he is creating a job description for that position and it will be advertised and vetted properly through Civil Service. It will also be listed with CCM. We are trying to generate as much interest and talent for that position. It is our hope that Mr. Bodwell will consider taking that position; it would be a very positive situation for the town if he threw his hat in the ring. Since, Kevin White was working as the Town Engineer and the Director of Public Services, in early May the Mayor wrote a memo to all department heads, which was received by our Town Clerk Stacy Gravino stamped and recorded pursuant to Chapter 5 Section 3 of the Town Charter that the Mayor can act as a department head on a temporary basis. That provision is in the Charter just for this reason so that we can create an updated job description and appropriately advertise for the position. The Mayor can do this because the charter allows for it; he is allowed to perform the duties of any of the department heads without meeting the professional requirements. It is a temporary situation and he does not receive any additional compensation. We need your approval that Mayor Carfora can act in the position for no more than 60 days and Jonathan Bodwell will be the interim engineer.

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to approve Mayor Joseph Carfora, act as Director of Public Services pursuant to Chapter 5, Section 3 of the Town Charter.

Councilman Santino seconds the motion.

No public comment.

Councilman Maltese asked for the spelling of Mr. Bodwell's name.

Councilwoman Parlato asked the Chairman when he sent an email with regard to these events.

Chairman Deko stated approximately 2 weeks prior and he can resend it.

Roll call vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Approved

Item #6

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to consider and act upon setting a public hearing date for July 7, 2020, for “An Ordinance Transferring \$25,000 To Acct. #01-113-0694 Other Contractual Services, From Acct. #01-885-0689 Contingency.”

Councilman Santino second the motion.

Roll call vote-all in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Approved/Public Hearing Date Set 7/7/2020

Item #7

To consider and act upon any other matter that may come before the Council.

Councilman Santino moved to add to the Agenda: The formation of an oversight committee of the East Haven Town Council for blight issues to consist of 7 members to include the Chairman and Vice Chairman and one member from each district.

Vice Chairman Pacelli second the motion.

Voice vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Approved to be added

Councilman Santino stated this is being created to oversee the blight in their district. A lot of times a complaint is made and we need to follow through on those complaints. He believes that it would be a great asset to the community to clean up the blight within the town.

Chairman Deko stated according to our standing rules we are allowed to add a subcommittee by a vote. We will formally call this the subcommittee on blight and he is in favor of this sub-committee. He will choose one member from each district and the Chair and Vice Chair as members. He does not want this to turn into exposure of our residents and as you know it is subject to FOI. The information would be through the Zoning Enforcement Officer and submitted to the sub-committee. It is important during the sub-committee reports we do not state addresses, just blight status. No public humiliation, but it is important to keep the town looking nice. If someone needs help we should try to assist with correcting the blight situation.

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to create a sub-committee of the East Haven Town Council with regard to blight complaints.

Councilman Santino second the motion.

Councilwoman Lesco thinks this is a great idea.

Councilwoman Capotorto agrees that it is a good idea.

Councilwoman Glassman agrees this is a good idea. Would this sub-committee report on the Zoning Enforcement Officer's enforcement during our sub-committee reports at our regular meetings on all the violations he acted on.

Chairman Deko indicated that is the intent. Again, this is not for public humiliation. This was Councilman Santino's recommendation for this sub-committee to have a report monthly of the status of each violation.

Councilman Glassman asked if the Zoning Officer will participate with the sub-committee meeting.

Chairman Deko stated, no.

Councilwoman Glassman asked what if there is an issue in my district, how would she be aware. Doesn't Mr. Soto have to be included as part of the meeting.

Chairman Deko stated you will receive a list of violations in your district from the Zoning Officer.

Inaudible

Chairman Deko stated you can report any blight you see just driving through town.

Attorney Luzzi stated that blight is a very delicate topic, there is a difference between homes that are bank owned and there also blight situation where there are families that are struggling, and mental health issues related to blight. It is a very delicate topic. I don't anticipate this would have participation from our ZEO and he would be willing to be the liaison for the delicate work that is being done and would create a buffer for a number of reasons. The protection of some individuals because he believes there are elements of blight that are extremely personal and difficult to deal with. He did state during his budget presentation as it relates to blight that is primarily bank owned. There is a certain sensitivity to some families dealing with blight. At best consider Attorney Luzzi the liaison between the sub-committee and Zoning Officer.

Councilman Santino stated he does not want to give the wrong impression this is an oversight committee to follow-up on an original complaint.

Councilman Balter indicated he is a bit confused. What does this oversight committee do that we are not already doing. I'm sure Zoning hears from council people every day and I follow through not only on blight. He asked that this be tabled until the next meeting for a clearer presentation of how this is going to proceed.

Chairman Deko this is nothing more than adding a sub-committee.

Councilman Balter stated he understands and likes the sound of this but we can go to a BOE meeting and we then have something that we can report on. Similar to what Councilwoman Glassman was saying; if he were to go to a Board of Financing meeting he would have something to report on.

Chairman Deko stated that ZBA hears all the blight complaints.

Councilwoman Cesare believes the intention is good but the problem is that she has had issues come through her and emailed the Zoning Official, with no reply. Recently, on May 7th. She sent an email to Mr. Soto and it is June 2nd. and has yet to receive a reply. That is why at the budget hearing meetings I asked him if he has enough help and did not get a reply. My issue is how overloaded could he be.

Chairman Deko asked if she had followed up that original email.

Councilwoman Cesare indicated she had not, but felt as a councilperson she was entitled to an acknowledgment. He didn't even say he was busy and would look into it.

Councilman Santino stated this committee is going to request a monthly report on blight so they don't stay in limbo.

Councilwoman Cesare stated that her other concern is if Mr. Soto isn't answering her what's he doing to the residents and they deserve to be heard.

Councilman Santino stated that is why we have to answer to the people who voted for us; we are doing this for the residents who have made complaints and this way they can be followed up.

Vice Chairman Pacelli indicated he is in total agreement with Councilman Santino. He wanted to voice a concern where developers come into town to develop and don't get their approvals and leave the properties in disarray. It is a good idea to receive a monthly report to the council but I don't think we can take on the role of the Zoning Officer. We should make the Town Attorney the liaison so that we can get the status of complaints.

Councilwoman Hennessey agrees with Attorney Luzzi that it's a delicate matter in many ways. The names and addresses should be kept private because there could be underlying issues and if there is a situation it can be reported at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. Is it a good idea to have the council oversee the violations, but let's not forget it's Zonings job and their final decision. She thinks if we address the matter in a way that helps but not interfere then it would be a good idea.

Councilwoman Parlato asked if there is still a Blight Commission?

Chairman Deko said that it's a Blight Appeals Commission, but ZBA can hear blight complaints.

Councilwoman Parlato said she's listening to everyone and we are going to request reports from the Blight Commission and then Council is going to follow up on the complaints, is that what she is hearing?

Councilman Santino when a complaint is filed in your district you will get an answer as to the status by the end of each month. Without getting a report each month we can't get back to those residents who contacted the council with their complaints.

Councilwoman Parlato stated then just like the other sub-committees we report on each month.

Councilman Santino agreed.

Chairman Deko made a correction that Planning and Zoning hears blight complaints not ZBA.

Councilman Pompano asked what is the scope of this; would a noise ordinance fall under this capacity.

Chairman Deko stated the police department enforces the noise ordinance.

Councilman Pompano stated at the next meeting he would really like the scope of this committee's responsibilities. It seems to be the underlying theme of what exactly is the purpose of this committee.

Chairman Deko stated that if the sub-committee is approved then he will set and send the parameters to the members of that committee.

Councilman Balter stated he was hearing different things on what this committee is going to be. He wants to support this but he does not know exactly what you are asking this council to vote for other than a sub-committee for blight. Therefore, he recommends we table this until the next meeting when you have outlined all the responsibilities and the process of how this committee will operate at the next meeting. He doesn't believe there is enough information to vote. At this time he made a motion to table.

Councilwoman Glassman second the motion to table.

Chairman Deko stated there is a motion on the floor with a second.

Vice Chairman Pacelli stated we should check with the Attorney Luzzi for clarification.

Councilman Balter asked for clarification from the Town Attorney.

Town Attorney Luzzi indicated that the motion to table takes precedence over the previous motion.

Chairman Deko requested a roll call vote for the motion to table by Councilman Balter and a second by Councilwoman Glassman.

Roll Call Vote-7 In Favor (Lesco, Capotorto, Glassman, Maltese, Balter, Parlato, and Pompano)
7 Opposed (Deko, Santino, Cesare, Pacelli, Hennessey, Ranfone, and Butler)
No Abstentions.
Motion Failed

Chairman Deko recognized Donna Richo, 67 Charnes Drive, stated that there is no need for another sub-committee, where you will have to get the information from the Zoning Official. Why not have a report submitted by the Zoning Official every month.

Lorena Venegas, 73 George Street stated she has had issues with blight and asked many members of the council for help and only one stepped up to help except Vice Chairman Pacelli. There is no need to create an oversight committee when ZBA already takes care of blight issues. Numerous letters are sent out for violations you go to the Zoning Department to see the violations. It's a zoo, it is not organized. We don't have a system in town that tracks blight. This oversight is just adding to the government you are not doing anything that's going to benefit the residents.

Karen Martin, 15 Oak Grove Road believes this is a great idea and gives accountability. She also understands Councilman Balter's concerns on how this committee will function. She also agrees it should not be a shaming session at a town council meeting

Attorney Luzzi indicated that we are evaluating how they handle blight on many levels, including resurrecting the Blight Commission.

Chairman Deko stated he does not want this to be a policing

Mark Conte, 62 Wood Terrace it sounds like you may all be in favor of this even though the vote did go that way. He believes some bullet points need to be put together so that it is effective for everyone concerned. Many of the residents have told him how they don't like the way the town looks. This a simple oversight committee no different than other sub-committee. It needs to be determined how it will be an active measure.

Chairman Deko clarified that there is still a motion on the floor to approve the creation of the Blight sub-committee and the function of that committee to be determined at a future meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Councilwoman Glassman made a statement that she is in favor of addressing blight but this should have been tabled. We should have received notice and have some information based on the function of this committee. She has concerns and questions. She will vote yes but we should have received some type of information.

Councilman Santino stated this is just to form the committee the functions will be determined.

Roll Call Vote-11 In favor. 3 Opposed (Balter, Pompano, and Ranfone)
Approved

Lorena Venegas, 73 George Street she is worried about all the zoom meetings and the videos that are nowhere to be found. Not enough notification and backup for meetings for the public.

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to adjourn.
Councilwoman Cesare second.
Voice vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.
Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta A. DeLuca
Council Clerk