

CCC 111 / MICROSOFT "TEAMS"
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

May 18, 2023

PRESENT Don Bell, Chair, Councillors Angie Parkinson and John Morrison

ABSENT

ALSO Jason Marshall, Town Council Clerk
PRESENT

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

Chair

MOTION By Angela Parkinson
seconded by John Morrison

to **appoint Don Bell** as **Chair**
of the Community Engagement Committee.

Motion carried 3/0

Secretary

MOTION By Don Bell
seconded by John Morrison

to **appoint Angie Parkinson** as **Secretary**
of the Community Engagement Committee.

Motion carried 3/0

ADOPTION OF RULES GOVERNING MEETINGS

MOTION By Angie Parkinson
seconded by John Morrison

to **adopt** Robert's Rules of Order as the rules that shall govern
parliamentary procedure at all subcommittee meetings, with the exception
that (1) the Chair shall not be required to restate the motion of any
Council member unless requested by another Councillor, or when in the
discretion of the Chair, such restatement is necessary to avoid any
confusion as to the motion; and (2) where such rules are in conflict with

the provisions of the State Statutes, the Town Charter, or Town Ordinances.

Motion carried 3/0

ESTABLISHMENT OF MEETING DATES

MOTION By Angie Parkinson
seconded by John Morrison

to **hold** meetings at the **call** of the Chair.

Motion carried 3/0

STORAGE OF RECORDS

MOTION By Angie Parkinson
seconded by John Morrison

to **store** records in the Town Council office.

Motion carried 3/0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 6, 2021

MOTION By Angie Parkinson
seconded by Don Bell

to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2021 Community Engagement Committee meeting.

Motion carried 2/0 (abstain: Morrison)

OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS TO SPEAK

None

NEW BUSINESS

Review of Structure and Goals of the Community Engagement Committee

The Chair stated that this is a new committee created by the council after the 2019 election with the purpose of discussing ways that the Council as a whole could more effectively communicate with residents.

As the committee was formed, three main goals were put in place: (1) to mentor a full representation on Boards and Commissions, (2) establish new methods of listening and communicating with residents, and (3) develop a comprehensive report of methods of

communication with residents. Quarterly meetings with the public were planned, but unfortunately the Pandemic occurred shortly thereafter.

In 2020, a series of Town Hall meetings with the Council were held with the purpose of hearing resident concerns and open communication which led to goals set forth under the Forward East Hartford initiative. In addition, the Council approved an increased budget for communications by the Administration, which the Chair feels has been successful thus far.

The Committee discussed the Council's efforts to continue to meet residents on their terms and highlighted the recent acts by the Social Services department to provide information directly to residents in person with information on services offered by the Town. The Committee's goal should be to continue exploring opportunities to communicate with residents.

Additional proactive ways to improve communication with residents and sharing of information were considered, including attending public meetings such as the PTA or other community groups, as well as showing more of a presence at public events. The Committee discussed establishing a more formal method of providing advisory counsel to the Administration through regularly scheduled meetings to review goals and share results of communication outreach.

With regard to the goal of working towards full representation on Town Boards and Commissions, the committee discussed opportunities to reach out to various community groups to share information more proactively about the role that Boards and Commissions play in impacting the Town, and agreed that input of current members would be helpful to establish a stronger outreach pipeline. The Committee agreed that a formal invitation to current Board and Commission members to the next scheduled Community Engagement Committee meeting would be useful. In addition, the Committee considered a more direct approach of outreach to community groups focused on similar interests to specific Boards and Commissions that lacked full representation, as an example to reach out to conservation groups with information on the Inland Wetlands Commission.

The Committee discussed the challenges of the Council in being more visible in the public due to time constraints as working professionals with other commitments. Options for better visibility discussed included adding QR codes with a direct link to the Council's webpage and meeting calendar on business cards and larger buttons or markers for the Council to adorn at public events identifying themselves as Council members.

In addition to a regularly scheduled meeting with administration to discuss communication outreach, the Committee proposed a more detailed look into the actions of each Board or Commission be introduced to the public, with the possibility of a short video presentation or a highlight in the East Hartford Pulse newsletter.

The Committee considered the opportunity to host social engagements similar to the regularly scheduled "Coffee with a Cop" events held by the Police Department. A bi-partisan walk through East Hartford was unanimously supported, with the goal of uniting the full Town Council to meet residents at various neighborhoods and spend time in

conversation with them, convening together at a local coffee house or restaurant as a destination.

Discussion of Council Social Media Engagement

The Committee reviewed the Town's current Social Media presence and that of other municipalities. Research provided showed almost no online presence specific to Town Councils in the area. While providing a unified platform of messaging could be beneficial, the Committee agreed that partisan challenges, as well as individualized messaging would make such a project difficult.

The Committee decided that next steps would include sharing the evening's discussion with the rest of the Council and to schedule another committee meeting for June, inviting Board and Commission members and the Administration's communications team to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By John Morrison
seconded by Angie Parkinson

to **adjourn** at 7:21 p.m.

Motion carried 3/0

C: Town Council
Michael Walsh, Mayor