

Joint City of Hartford / Town of Hartford Planning Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 14, 2021  
Council Chambers, Hartford City Hall  
109 N. Main Street  
Hartford, WI 53027

\*Please note: Video available from the meeting begins during last citizen appearance. No video is available of meeting call-to-order, minutes, or previous appearance speakers. Length of available recording: 30 minutes, 13 seconds. Also note that minutes are taken from recorded discussion; at some points members are not clear as to what event or person they are referring.

\*Members present: City of Hartford Mayor Timothy C. Michalak, Joint Plan Commission Member Maurice Strupp, Joint Plan Commission Member Dennis Regan; Joint Plan Commission Member Ralph Horst; Town of Hartford Planning Committee member Jim Williams standing in for Joint Plan Commission Member Steve Musinsky; City of Hartford Alderperson Dennis Hegy

Absent and Excused: None

Also Present: City Director of Community Development Justin Drew

\*Appearances: Female Citizen discussed previous cancelled meeting of November 8 cancelled October 25 [probably referring to November 2019]. Noted handwritten note from Mark McCloone [probably Supervisor Mark McCune] sent to Washington County Executive Committee. Noted that golf course annexation is a land grab if no City services are requested. Stated that Mayor Michalak is involved in a conflict of interest. Objected to presence of police officers at meeting.

\* Discussion Regarding Petition for Direct Annexation by Unanimous Consent Submitted by Washington County for Approximately 283.0 Acres Located North of the Rubicon River and South of Clover Road (discussion only)

Mayor Michalak requested comments.

Member Horst: The Town Planning Board turned it down but it never came to a vote by the Town Board. The concern was that Town residents living in a nearby subdivision did not want to see the park go. Josh Schoemann [County Executive] was at the meeting. Mr. Schoemann contacted you regarding the annexation so they could sell it. He should have let things play out, should have let the Town Board decide and permit them to sell the property but the Town was never given the opportunity. Did Josh Schoemann ask you for the request to possibly do annexation so they could get that parcel? Did Josh approach you with that?

Mayor Michalak: We've had many discussions, but cannot talk about annexation prior to them actually coming to us.

Member Horst: My biggest concern – we would have been able to have some discussion with the County on that parcel being split out for sale and keeping it in the Town but we have been denied that, it went into annexation. Why did this happen – why didn't the County let this play out? Let the Town deny it before Josh requests you to annex the whole thing into the City. Referred to a meeting in December of the County Administrative Committee, of which Mayor Michalak is chairperson, and referenced Supervisor McCune, stating that he asked Mr. McCune what the advantage was to the City.

Mayor Michalak: Land Value

Member Horst: If land is in the City its only advantage is resale. Is the big picture going to be that it is annexed to the City and then the County sells it to someone else? Mr. McCune brought up four years ago that golf courses are a waste of time, but Washington County Golf Course has made money the last two years. Concerned about the way the thing has evolved and is there an end result that we are not seeing?

Jim Williams: I do not believe that the City Plan Commission had all the facts when they met. The Town Plan Commission turned down selling off the park, the reason being that the land is very lowland, very likely that it will not perc and will need holding tanks. The land has little value. The main communication line that runs through the property will be very expensive to move. The golf course well pumps water into the pond continuously. Not convinced that the City Plan Commission had those facts. The City Plan Commission did not walk the property like the Town Plan Commission did.

Mayor Michalak affirmed that he had indeed walked the property.

Jim Williams: Do you agree that it is lowland?

Mayor Michalak: Some of it. High points too.

Jim Williams: The water on the high lands runs into the lowlands. All that parking runs into lowland. The property is not worth much, so what are you gaining? This is why the Town turned down the County, there is nothing to be gained. The land will not be easy to sell and you're taking away a park for nothing. When the County was miffed because the Town denied it then a resolution was drafted to not only annex the park but the golf course as well. The gentleman [not identified] who entered that resolution should have recused himself, there is a conflict of interest.

Mayor Michalak: Clarified that recusal is up to an individual and a board does not recuse a member.

Member Strupp: Very disgusted with Mr. Schoemann when he came to the Town Hall and explained why Washington County was annexing first. He said it was unanimous by the County Board and that's not true.

Mayor Michalak: True.

Member Strupp: The vote was 15 – 8; I communicate with board members still and they are unhappy with what's going on at the County; things are not run properly and it's terrible the way things are going on over there. Have been on Town and County boards for years and had a very good working relationship with the City for over 30 years. The County Board has no respect for the people who donated land to the County and now the County is planning on selling and developing donated land. They have already sold 2 or 3 parks, including the Marx Preserve. What is the benefit of bringing the golf course into the City? People who donated money and land for the golf course are very concerned about the property being developed. Was on the County Parks Board when the golf course was built; asked City to supply sewer at that time and they could not justify it. The grant money used to develop Family Park might have to be returned. The golf course is rated #1 in the State and they want to tear it up.

Mayor Michalak: Who told you that? I would never support that.

Member Strupp: Why did Mark McCune bring it up? It's coming, I have been in contact with County Board members and a lot are ready to quit because of what's going on.

Jim Williams: Adding to what Maurice said, a reporter put an article in the paper about the City Smart Growth Plan. It calls for park development in that area and now has to be amended because the City wants to break up the park. Doesn't that register as wrong? Your own Smart Growth Plan calls for park development and you have to amend it in order to sell off the park.

Mayor Michalak: Your own comment at the September 29 meeting mentioned that it does not make sense to maintain a park that serves 17 families.

Jim Williams: It doesn't serve only 17 families.

Mayor Michalak: The Town meeting raised the concern and noted that the park was paid for and maintained by the entire county for a very small group of folks. There was an option to do something with it and it was turned down. The City is looking at an annexation. We do not really have a history of turning down annexations. Your grief/beef is not with the City, it is with the County.

Jim Williams: You're rezoning it and the Plan Commission doesn't have half the facts. It is not used by just 17 families. There is stuff all over Facebook about City residents using the park and upset that this is happening.

Mayor Michalak: I have received lots of calls and emails, but not one from a City resident.

Jim Williams: Check Facebook, there are lots of City residents unhappy about this. I use this with my grandchildren. Hopefully City residents will show resistance at the January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Member Horst: The County is looking to get 3 lots out of the property. Since it is not on City sewer it would probably need a mound system which would only allow maybe one lot.

Jim Williams: Mound system or holding tank.

Aldersperson Hegy: The Smart Growth Plan does get modified frequently. It is done at the City's discretion when we see a need to do it. It is not cast in stone and does get changed on a routine basis. When the golf course was built it was originally proposed to be in the City, but the cost of running services out to the site was prohibitive. Utility services are not being added as part of this annexation. The park cannot be annexed without annexing the golf course because the park is not contiguous to any City border. I have fielded calls from Town supervisors and citizens, I have listened and will listen and will make a decision based on facts. I have not yet made a decision.

Member Regan: The City Plan Commission review is based on benefit to the City.

Member Strupp: There is nothing for the City to vote against, it is a benefit to the City with very few drawbacks. The City voted against annexation because of the possibility of having to run sewer and water out.

Jim Williams: Isn't there an agreement that states that the City has three years to bring sewer out to an annexed area?

Mayor Michalak: I would look for input from City Attorney Ian Prust on that questions, unless Mr. Drew has comments.

Mr. Drew: Has not reviewed the agreement for a couple of years and will need to talk to Ian; will get answer by January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Jim Williams: Response to Dennis Hegy – maybe you have to annex the golf course and the park but you don't have to eliminate the park. You're not gaining anything.

Aldersperson Hegy: That was just a comment on why the annexation has to include the golf course.

Member Strupp: It's a dirty shame what they're doing out there, it's a nice golf course and very busy, the parking lot is always full. Why would you tear up a beautiful golf course and put a subdivision in there?

[Members out of camera range voiced agreement]

Mayor Michalak: I am no stranger to looking at different points of view. I talked to Supervisor Ryan Krebs, who stands with opposition to this annexation, into running for supervisor. Please understand that I am not one of those leviathans that is going to stomp through everything and never look at another point of view when I am actually someone who encouraged one of your larger voices to get on the County Board. Police officers have been present at City meetings since before I was mayor, disparaging comments about police is a sad thing in a community that backs the badge. The City wants people to feel safe, I have supported and pushed for concealed carry in all Hartford Civic buildings. We would be crazy to develop the golf course, I won't vote for that. But – the golf course is a cork in a bottle, because it is on Town land, none of the land around it is available to the City. Townspeople tell me that they want to do whatever they want with their land but that seems to be only as long as it is kept rural. Once people come to town they want to shut the door behind them. Make sure you understand that you are living in a major metropolitan statistical district – there is no guarantee when you buy in a major metropolitan district – we are going to grow. The golf course is a very valuable property surrounded by properties whose owners may be interested in selling. Townspeople can band together and buy land and not

develop it, it's called the Free Market and someone with land around the golf course should be able to do what they want with their property including sell it. I am going to keep this a golf course and you can beat me up if I ever vote another way.

Member Strupp: My farm borders the City and I have been there 68 years. When Schwendimann Hills subdivision came in I talked to Gary Koppelberger about blacktopping Powder Hill Road – it still hasn't been done. If they can't handle what they've got why do they want more?

Mayor Michalak: A house and land valued at three quarters of a million dollars would not be built if we did not have paved roads. This is the first I have heard of not paving Powder Hill Road.

Member Strupp: I have talked to Steve [Volkert], Justin, the City Engineer, and Department of Public Works many times. Half of the road has been done, the other half is so rough, it should have been done 10 years ago.

Mayor Michalak: I will check into that.

Member Strupp: Drive down Powder Hill Road.

Mayor Michalak: Ok.

\*Adjournment: Mayor Michalak adjourned the meeting by call of chair.

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Justin Drew, Director of Community Development, City of Hartford