

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WORKGROUP**  
**REGULAR MEETING, June 12, 2023**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBER, NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER**  
**3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT**

*These minutes are subject to approval by the Work Group*

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Pat Llodra, Bill Brimmer, Ned Simpson and Maureen Crick Owen

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Mr. Brimmer on behalf of the chair Mrs. Crick Owen.

VOTER COMMENTS – None

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Mrs. Llodra moved to approve the minutes of the May 30, 2023 meeting. Mr. Simpson seconded. All in favor, motion passes.

**DISCUSSION WITH SOUTH WINDSOR**

Michael Maniscalco, Town Manager, South Windsor

Recording available at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gtTXNskpM819MZr7rkcg9C\\_BDznUnRqs/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gtTXNskpM819MZr7rkcg9C_BDznUnRqs/view?usp=sharing)

[At the Work Group's May 30, 2023, meeting Liz Pendleton, South Windsor Mayor joined the meeting. South Windsor has a Town Manager – elected Mayor form of government. It has had a Town manager for at least back to 1968]

Mr. Maniscalco started as South Windsor Town Manager in 2019. Prior to that he was Town Manager for East Hampton for seven years. With a master's degree in public administration, his first jobs were with non-profits. He became the executive director of an economic development organization. From there he moved into the Town Managers role in East Hampton. He described his contract with the town as an Evergreen Contract. There is no term limit but it has provisions for termination for cause and without cause.

Regarding attributes critical to success of a Town Manager, Mr Maniscalco identified understanding the political climate of the community and the players and their roles they fulfill. If a Town Manager jumps on board a political idea, things can turn sour quickly.

He indicated that living in and being part of the community is an asset. It helps a Town Manager make decisions. It also provides credibility to Town Manager regarding knowing the community. Mrs. Llodra asked if Mr. Maniscalco's Town Manager colleagues share his support for living in the community? He replied that it is a love – hate relationship about that. He understands the benefits and disadvantages. For him there have been more benefits. He gave an example of the most recent budget cycle where he could empathize with residents that his taxes are going up too. Most Town Managers across CT would agree to the benefit. Living in South Windsor is required by charter as it was in East Hampton.

Mr Brimmer asked about Mr Maniscalco's relationship with the Town Council. He described that they are the boss. It is his job to recommend, inform and ensure that they are making educated decisions.

Mr. Maniscalco described the annual formal review process. He presents a self-review which the council reviews. Throughout the year he uses the twice-a-month council meetings as a gauge of where things are. He gave an example. An after-school program the council wanted to expand, but there were budget challenges. He also has a lot of one-on-one discussions with council members. He has worked to know the council members very well and be able to forecast their reaction to issues.

Mr Brimmer asked if there were best practices he brought from East Hampton. Mr Maniscalco described the difference between the two towns where in East Hampton there is a budget referendum and in South Windsor where the council approves the budget. He did a lot of budget outreach in East Hampton. He brought a lot to the budget outreach efforts to South Windsor. For example an online budget dashboard which has been very well received.

Mr. Simpson asked what is the major consumer of his time as Town Manager? Mr. Maniscalco related that for the last couple years it has been the Corona virus. Now efforts focus on growing the Grand List, ensuring financial stability. He also spends a fair amount of time on HR issues that rise to his level such as terminations and disciplinary questions. Lastly, South Windsor, like other CT communities, has had to deal with high employee turnover. There is also a fair amount of time talking with the mayor and council members. Mr Simpson asked a follow-up on the growth topic asking about their POCD. Mr. Maniscalco responded that it is in the bailiwick of P&Z and the planning manager. If he had less confidence in that manager, he might be more involved.

Mr. Brimmer asked about HR. Mr Maniscalco has an HR director and one staff for about 200 employees throughout the year. There are about 30 more employees in the summer.

Mrs. Llodra asked who is the ceremonial face. The mayor is the public face. If Mr. Maniscalco gets invited to an event, he will typically ask the mayor. At times it will be a team effort.

Mrs. Llodra asked for his thoughts on the differences between the role of Town Administrator and Town Manager? To reply Mr Maniscalco said his exposure is to other Town Managers. If he were a Town Administrator, he would find it particularly hard to not have the ability to hire his own staff. He views it as more subject to politics. Employment should be based on merit not political connection. That said, he thinks it is a good way to tip your toe into the pool of professional management.

Mr Simpson asked about the Clerk of Council. Mr Maniscalco described how it has grown from a part-time role to a fulltime secretarial support for the mayor and council members.

## DISCUSSION WITH CLINTON

Karl Kilduff, Town Manager, Clinton

Recording available at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eIRuG4ACrq-ul8NY4LesWsOFGnWtwa\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eIRuG4ACrq-ul8NY4LesWsOFGnWtwa_/view?usp=sharing)

[At the Work Group's May 30, 2023 meeting, Chris Ansikovich, Chair of Town Council of Clinton joined the meeting. Clinton switched from First Selectman to a Town Manager - Town Council model in 2019. The town has a seven-member Town Council.]

Mr. Kilduff became Clinton's first Town Manager in January 2020. Immediately before taking the Clinton role, Mr. Kilduff was Executive Director of the CT Housing Authority. Earlier he was Town Manager of Darian and North Brandford. When asked about personal and professional attributes that are critical to success, Mr Kilduff highlighted soft skills. Navigating new relationships and creating relationships. His challenges included understanding what had been left undone, building a budget, and managing five union contracts. Then COVID hit.

Kilduff, does not live in Clinton. Residency is a decision that can be made by the Town Council. The subject comes up from time to time. There is strong sentiment against requiring residency on the part of some council members. They do not want the Town Manager to be sucked into local politics.

Mr Brimmer asked about lessons learned as the first Town Manager. Mr. Kilduff, who has previous Town Manager experience, indicated that it is all about looking at change. Being respectful of the past, but also addressing changes that need to be taken. This includes process and how things operate. Working with council and Board of Finance in their new roles. A new Town Manager needs to help them understand how they can excel. There were conversations that had not happened before. For example about fund balances, reserve policies, bonding vs pay as you go, and financial forecasts. Later in the discussion Mr Kilduff indicated the town's bond rating had been downgraded. It is now back up.

Mr Brimmer asked about how he is evaluated. Mr. Kilduff stated that in his contract there is an expectation of an annual review. This timing has slipped a bit. The review starts with a self-evaluation presented to the Town Council. There is no formal structure to how the council addresses this. For ongoing activity, he reports to the council twice a month. Mr Kilduff led the council through a goal setting process. This becomes something to measure against.

Mr Brimmer asked if much change was required when he first came on board? Mr Kilduff said, there was not much personnel changes. The previous First Selectman had settled the labor contracts. There has been some turn-over which has given him the chance to put his imprint on the executive team. And there was no town planner. Consultants were used. The community consensus was that planning should be done by staff. There was also the need for process improvement.

Mrs. Llodra asked about Mr Kilduff's contract. He indicated that the contract rounds out what is not in the charter. The first contract has a three year Town Manager term. Referencing earlier discussion on living in town, Mr Kilduff pointed out that an initial three year commitment makes the housing decision a bit challenging. The town is working on a charter revision that includes a move to five years. In his two previous Town Manager positions, there were no contracts.

Since Mr Kilduff has been both Town Administrator and Town Manager, Mrs. Llodra asked for his views on the two roles. In responding Mr. Kilduff pointed out that the administrative work is similar. However, there is flexibility with a Town Administrator who can adjust to the skills of the First Selectman. He noted that in Darian, the Town Administrator role, particularly in the budget process, is defined in the charter limiting

some flexibility. In Wilton, their charter does not address the Town Administrator role. With a Town Administrator it gets a little shaky when there is First Selectman transition.

Mrs. Llodra asked if he had a sense of whether town citizens are happy with the change to Town Manager? Mr. Kilduff thinks a lot of the public are happy. Under his tenure budgets have passed on first votes, which was not the history of the town. Consistency and visibility into town finances has improved. Even during COVID when there could not be a referendum, the town expressed support. In terms of service and response back to the public, that's working well. That wasn't always the case with the previous First Selectman model. Previously there was a revolving door or First Selectmen. In the short tenure, the First Selectmen didn't understand how things worked and the ins and outs of how town hall operated.

Mrs. Llodra asked if there was a sense the individual voters have lost some ability/power to select who leads them because the Town Manager is not elected. Mr. Kilduff stated he has not heard any of that. The town is still voting for the Town Council. That council gives direction to the manger. The council should be setting direction, policy and priorities. If the council isn't doing that it will put any Town Administrator or Manager in a very difficult position. Mr. Kilduff worked with the council on goal setting and other exercise to help them execute their role.

Mr Simpson asked about what the biggest time consumers for him as Town Manager are. Mr Kilduff indicated that time requirements vary. Right now, he is trying to settle union contracts. The town is not using outside council for this. Working on financial policies. He is also working on grant issues and spending of ARPA funds. It's kind of all over the place. Many of these things were not necessarily addressed before. Mr. Kilduff had experience doing these kinds of things and it was easy to stand-up solutions. He thinks Clinton was able to get ARPA dollars out to the community faster than other towns.

## OLD BUSINESS

Recording available at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wAgDRyf0MmN2HLbhwnGBrG7OeYAqMf9w/view?usp=sharing>

### Follow-up discussions re previous guests

Mr. Simpson asked whether we are receiving job descriptions and organization charts from the town we met with. Mrs. Crick Owen will follow-up

### Draft document re: why possible executive structure change

Mrs. Crick Owen moved the discussion to the draft report. Mrs. Llodra asked to talk through her draft of the Newtown Executive Structure section. Before further editing she wants to know that it is moving in the right direction. Mrs. Crick Own pointed out that Current Condition section is just speaking to facts. We all know what has changed. Mr. Simpson pointed out that voter comments have expressed the view that Newtown structure is not broken and does not need change.

Mrs. Llodra described her approach as building a scaffold. With that in mind she talked through what she had written. The Current Executive Structure states:

*Selectman is elected for a two-year term, serving with two elected selectmen in a three-person board (BoS). The FS is the CEO of the town. Connecticut state statutes delineate roles and responsibilities for the municipal CEO. In addition, the town charter may expand and further describe that local role. Newtown's Legislative Council (LC) is comprised of 12 members elected from three districts for two-year terms. The LC is the legislative body of the town as described by state statutes. It approves the Town Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and General Funds Budget which includes the Board of Education (BOE) budget as a line item. The LC drafts ordinances and executes a process to review and apply additions or changes to local ordinances and regulations. The BOE is comprised of seven members elected to staggered four-year terms. The Board of Finance (BoF) comprised of six members elected to two-year terms is advisory. It reviews the CIP and budget before those financial plans are considered by LC. Other bodies elected to manage town activities include the Planning and Zoning Commission and Alternates, Zoning Board of Appeals and Alternates, Police Commission, and Edmond Town Hall Board of Managers. Many appointed bodies and commissions govern other town functions vital to the community. Among these appointed government entities are Commission on Aging, Cultural Arts, Public Building and Site Commission, Community Center Commission, Booth Library, Board of Ethics, Inland Wetlands Commission, and more.*

After discussion, it was agreed to add a statement about Planning and Zoning role in establishing regulation/ordinances and creating the Plan for Conservation and Development (POCD). Where the POCD is an example of whether Newtown's executive has time for forward-looking activities.

Mrs. Llodra suggested the following addition to the Current Structure section noting that the numbers need to be verified and updated as necessary.

*In 2023, the Town of Newtown has 175 employees, dedicated to 17 departments. There are four employee unions. The FS office is staffed by an executive secretary and is the location for Human Resources led and staffed by one employee, the purchasing agent, and the Finance Department, led and staffed by 4 employees.*

This addition was supported by the Work Group.

In the Current Conditions section, which was earlier titled What Has Changed, Mrs. Llodra suggested that statements about: 1. no certainty of Newtown's history of long serving executives, 2) public sector salaries lag private sector, 5) impact of social media on the job, 6) population growth and 7) greater mobility of residence, while true are not relevant to the Work Group. Mr. Brimmer agreed. Regarding "attributes that make it an unattractive career," Mrs. Llodra would keep these statements as part of the background challenge. Mr Simpson pointed out that small businesses and entrepreneurs have the same attributes. But for the small business owner these are viewed as positives. Mrs. Crick Owen expressed a belief that business owners have control over their future. Mr. Brimmer questioned whether the statement "First Selectman is not a pinnacle position .." is relevant to what we are doing.

Mrs. Llodra walked through the three options that respond to "What Structure for Newtown's Municipal Government Best Meets the Demands of Current Conditions." 1) Continue with FS/Council, 2) Addition of a Town Administrator Position and 3) Adopt a

Town Manager System. For each option, Mrs. Llodra would have a Pro and a Con section.

The Work Group discussed what is or is not relevant to our recommendation, whether what we hear is “fact,” and use of assumptions. First Selectman compensation was an example.

Mrs. Llodra express the belief that the two big ideas in terms of conditions or challenges are the density and intensity of the role, and the pressures of day-to-day leadership mitigate against the time needed to plan.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 1. Next Steps

Mr. Simpson, and Mrs. Llodra should send their Common Thems to Mrs. Crick Owen for her to compile a single list.

Next meeting, Monday June 26, will be held at 3:30 pm. Leaders from Monroe and Greenwich will join that meeting.

VOTER COMMENTS - None

Mrs. Llodra moved to adjournment. Mr Brimmer seconded. All in favor, motion passes.  
The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ned Simpson