There was a regular meeting of the Bloomfield Town Council held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, April 25, 2022 via Zoom Webinar virtual meeting platform.

Present were: Mayor Danielle Wong, Deputy Mayor Gregory C. Davis, Councilors Joseph Merritt, Kenneth McClary, Rickford Kirton, Shamar Mahon, Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, Anthony C. Harrington and C.F. Politis

Also present were: Stanley D. Hawthorne, Town Manager, Sharron Howe, Assistant to the Town Manager, Keri Rowley, Finance Director, David Melesko, Director of Leisure Services, Nancy Haynes, Risk and Purchasing Manager and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Guest was: Gail Nolan, Family Resource Center

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRESENTATIONS

There were no announcements or presentations.

CITIZENS' STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

The following individuals expressed concerns regarding speeding and wrong way driving on Brookline Avenue. Residents are requesting some traffic calming measures such as speed bumps. The Bloomfield Police Department is aware and have deployed speed shields and monitoring on this street. Residents are also requesting more signage to be placed on the street, to inform drivers on this “One-Way” street:

1. Shirrell Jackson, 102 Brookline Avenue
2. Paula Jackson, 57 Brookline Avenue
3. Matthias Samuels, 98 Brookline Avenue

4. Gail Riley, 8 Maple Avenue, expressed concerns about street construction hours, possible Town Ordinance change request for residential neighborhoods.

REPORT FROM COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEES

Administration & Education – A Special Meeting may be scheduled in the near future.

Public Safety – The next subcommittee meeting will be held on Monday, May 9, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.
Committee on Committees – Councilor DeBeatham-Brown noted that the Town Clerk is still in receipt of interest forms from both Town Committees and new leadership for the Democratic Town Committee that will take place in the near future.

Finance – Councilor McClary gave a brief overview of the last subcommittee meeting held on April 18, 2022. Topics discussed included: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Engagement Plan. The next subcommittee meeting will be held on Monday, May 23, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Land Use & Economic Development – Councilor Harrington gave a brief overview of the last subcommittee meeting held on April 19, 2022. Topics included: Sale of 15 Douglas Street, Community Investment Fund, RFP release for the Plan of Conservation, 10 year update and the request for extension submitted for the Affordable Housing Plan.

Golf Ad-Hoc Committee – Councilor Kirton gave a brief overview of the last meeting held on April 13, 2022. He informed the Council of the resignation of long-term Golf Course Superintendent, Mark Mansur from the Wintonbury Hills Golf Course. Mr. Mansur will pursue future endeavors with his family.

The golf course opened on March 17, 2022 for the 2022 season!

Community Services – Councilor Harrington gave a brief report from the last subcommittee special meeting held on April 20, 2022. Topics included: Location of Summer Concerts, Summer Bridge Work Program, Community Uplift Restoration Program. A special meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

FY 2022-65: Discussion and Possible Action regarding Location of Summer Concerts

It was moved by Councilor Kirton, seconded by Councilor Merritt and voted unanimously to move the Summer Concert series back to the Town Center for the summer 2022 season.

There was an ensued discussion regarding the importance of relocation back to the Town Green. Several Councilors expressed concerns about supporting small businesses and restaurants. It was noted that bringing the Summer concerts back to the center of Town is a sense of nostalgia.

NEW BUSINESS

FY 2022-67: Consider and Take Action regarding the Approval of the Application for the School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grant Program (Priority School Readiness Municipalities)

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor DeBeatham-Brown and voted unanimously to approve the signing of the School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grant.

There was a general discussion regarding the importance of early childhood opportunities in Town. Mrs. Gail Nolan, Director of the Family Resource Center clarified space allocations and cost for the various facilities that are eligible for this grant funding.
FY 2022-68: Consider and Take Action Regarding the American Rescue Plan Act – Standard Allowance of Loss Selection

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor Mahon and voted unanimously to elect the standard allowance option under “Replace lost public sector revenue” category of eligible uses as outlined by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Final Rule for all funds received through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.


Councilor Kirton commented on the reporting and monitoring of grant funds, the difference between hiring a consultant or utilize in-house staff. He also noted that the goal should be to maximize the $1.6 million dollars to benefit the Bloomfield community.

Ms. Rowley explained the benefits for hiring a consultant to manage the reporting and monitoring of this grant funding. In addition, the purpose of the consultant is to perform risk mitigation, provide technical assistance, regulate compliance issues and interpret the ARPA final rules from the IRS.

FY 2022-69: Consider and Take Action Regarding Request for Survey (Rockwell Park Planning Project Community Outreach Survey)

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor Harrington and voted unanimously to approve the request the survey (Rockwell Park Planning Project Community Outreach Survey).

There was general discussion regarding the outreach efforts to inform the public of this survey. Several suggestions were made regarding digital media outlets, social media platforms, e-mail blasts, print media, Bloomfield Public Libraries.

A suggestion was made to create a way to engage the high school students and collaborate with Bloomfield Public Schools.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Rowley gave a brief overview of last month’s financials, March 2022.

Councilor Kirton inquired about adjustments that are made with the Grand List. It was noted that adjustments were made due to the various tax appeal settlements.

REPORT FROM MAYOR

Mayor Wong thanked all Councilors, Town Manager and Town staff for participating in the two sessions held for the Council Retreat, April 12th and 14th. Thank you to Mr. Joseph Seymour, Consultant for facilitating in depth conversations in team building and identifying objectives and goals for the development of the Town Manager’s evaluation process
REPORT FROM TOWN MANAGER

Mr. Stanley D. Hawthorne, Town Manager gave an overview of his bi-weekly report, referring to the bi-weekly report sent to the Council from April 22, 2022 (see attached). He noted that these reports are posted on the town website for public review under the Town Manager’s webpage.

Mr. Hawthorne gave a brief overview of upcoming community events and Town updates:

- **Annual Town Meeting** is scheduled for Monday, May 2, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. He mentioned the recent State legislation regarding municipalities to conduct remote meetings. The current Governor’s Executive Order will expire on April 30, 2022.

  Town Administration made the decision to provide a “hybrid” option for the Annual Town Meeting. The in-person location will be the Human Services Facility, 330 Park Avenue.

- **Key Vacancies**
  - Human Resources Director – The application deadline closed with the success of soliciting 12 (9 out of state and 3 in-state) viable candidates. Interviews will occur over the next few weeks.
  - Building Official – Mrs. Kimberly Rogers submitted her letter of resignation. Her last day of employment will be April 29, 2022. Human Resources will begin the recruitment process for this vacancy. Currently, we have a shared position with the Town of Simsbury to cover any incidental cases until the position is filled.

- **Flexible Working Arrangements** – A major topic of discussion nationwide with the consideration of remote working from home. Some additional research is needed to compare the flexibility of the various proposed work schedules.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Councilor DeBeatham-Brown, seconded by Councilor Mahon and voted unanimously to approve the minutes on April 11, 2022.

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor Mahon and voted unanimously to approve the minutes on March 28, 2022.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Mahon noted that it is important to educate our young people early. He congratulated Councilor DeBeatham-Brown on her acknowledgement from the West Indian Social Club. Councilor Mahon thanked all Councilors for their efforts and input during the budget process. He expressed disappointment with second half of Bloomfield Messenger article published on April 15, 2022, recognition should be given to all involved.
Councilor Politis commented on the overall FY 2023 budget process and upcoming State of Connecticut tax cuts and capping mill rates for motor vehicles. Municipalities must rely on its residents to make up the difference. It is concerning to remove from the Town to the State, for controlling streams of revenues. There are other ways to provide relief, reductions on income, sales and gas taxes.

Councilor Kirton echoed the sentiments of Councilor Mahon, congratulating Councilor DeBeatham-Brown of her acknowledgement of service, he commended her. He also commented on the FY 2023 Budget relative to the need for more Affordable Housing in Town. Councilor Kirton mentioned the challenge of high property taxes and the barrier it is causing on homeownership for middle class families.

Councilor Merritt stated his support for the Summer Bridge Program. He stated that scholarships should be granted beyond summer sessions to further their education.

Councilor Harrington commented on great sessions with the Council Retreat. He noted that in recent weeks, the Council subcommittees have discussed the need more affordable housing in Town. He also expressed excitement about the Capital Workforce Partners – Summer Bridge Program with the Town of Bloomfield and Goodwin University partnership.

Councilor DeBeatham-Brown encouraged all to support the Lions Club Plant Sale on Saturday, May 7, 2022 at Bloomfield Town Hall for Mother’s Day. In addition, the Bloomfield Summer Bridge Youth Program in partnership with Goodwin University and Capital Workforce Partners is a great concept and she is hopeful that funding is secured.

Councilor DeBeatham-Brown also encouraged Bloomfield families to participate in the Community Uplift Restoration Program, beginning with Mental Health component. She commented on the overall budget process and encouraged residents to let their voices be heard at the Annual Town Meeting on May 2, 2022.

She ended her Council comments with a quote, “It often requires more courage to dare to do right than to fear to do wrong.” - Abraham Lincoln

Councilor McClary commented on the budget forecast on how the budget would impact residents and change the trend line provided relief to the residents, concern with censoring Councilors, Economic Development Director, Goman & York, Bloomfield Chamber, supporting small businesses

Deputy Mayor Davis thanked the Brookline Avenue residents for speaking out about traffic concerns and hazards. He stated that the Public Safety Subcommittee will address those issues, in conjunction with the Traffic Calming Committee. Deputy Mayor noted that the Council Retreat was more unified as a united Council. He mentioned his frustration with selective acknowledgement for certain Councilors, when all Council should be recognized for their hard work and effort in passing the FY 2023 Budget.
Mayor Wong applauded Town Administration and staff on an excellent FY 2023 budget season. She commented and addressed the complaints from residents residing on Brookline Avenue. Mayor also identified the need to have more affordable housing units in Town.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Councilor DeBeatham-Brown, seconded by Councilor Merritt and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.