

**TOWN OF CROMWELL - TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
41 WEST STREET, CROMWELL, CT 06416
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, February 8, 2023 - 7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor S. Fortenbach, Deputy Mayor J. Henehan, Councilman Demetriades, Councilwoman J. Donohue, Councilwoman P. Luna, Councilman J. Polke, Councilman A. Waters

Also present: Town Manager Salvatore, Finance Director Sharon DeVoe, CMS Building Committee Chairperson Rosanna Glynn, Chief LaMontagne, Captain Sifodaskalakis, Public Works Director Spina

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fortenbach called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Council stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Luna suggested the change Under Agenda Item N. 2. Senior Services Commission, Anne Kaiser is a D, not an R.

MOTION made by A. Waters and **SECONDED** by J. Demetriades to approve the agenda as amended with the change to Item N. 2.

All in favor.

D. COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORTS/LIAISON REPORT/STAFF REPORTS

Mayor Fortenbach read the following report from Celina Kelleher Board of Education Chairperson:

- The Board met last night and unanimously approved the BOE Budget which had an increase of 6.96% over last year's budget. The main drivers were salaries including contractual obligations, benefits, special education costs and transportation. Inflation played a large role as our cost of services and utilities have increased significantly. The proposed budget will be submitted to the Board of Finance for review in accordance with our budget procedures.
- The Board also heard an update from CMS Building Committee Chairwoman, Rosanna Glynn, and we voted to increase the seating in the

auditorium from the standard 250 to 500 as was the intention of our Board when we discussed the auditorium.

- We voted to set the CHS graduation date to June 14, which is the last day of school for CHS. We meet again on March 14.

Director of Human Services Amy Saada submitted a written report to the Town Council. See Attachment A.

E. MAYOR'S UPDATE

Mayor Fortenbach read his report to the Council. See Attachment B.

F. TOWN MANAGER'S UPDATE

The Town Manager added the following to his report:

- The representative from Berry Dunn will be coming in next week for one on one interviews. She will spend a morning at the Highway Facility and an afternoon at the Library. The representative will also set aside evenings for councilors to meet with her if they would like to meet with her.

G. FINANCIAL/FINANCE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

1. Budget Report

Finance Director Sharon DeVoe was in attendance to present her report to the Town Council.

2. Discussion and possible action to approve an appropriation in the amount of \$54,000 within the CNR Fund for a Police Cruiser totaled in a motor vehicle accident.

Chief LaMontagne explained that a police cruiser was totaled and they need the appropriation to replace it. She gave the following breakdown of costs:

Our insurance company gave the town \$42,000, we were quoted \$6,000 to take out the equipment and reinstall it in a new cruiser, \$2,200 for the warranty, \$650 for the decals, and an additional \$2,600 for incidentals just in case. If there is any money left of the \$54,000 it will be returned to CNR.

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by J. Henehan to approve the Appropriation in the amount of \$54,000 from CNR to replace the Police Cruiser. **All in favor.**

3. CWPCA Northern Industrial Tier Sanitary Sewer Study Update - \$300,000 from American Rescue Plan for discussion and possible action.

Alice Kelly WPCA Chairperson and Rich Peck Sewer Administrator were in attendance. They explained their request in the amount of \$300,000 from ARPA funds for their recently approved sewer project from 105 Evergreen Road to Route 9. In the FY 2022-2023 Sewer Budget they approved \$1,000,000 of the \$1,300,000 needed for the project. Ms. Kelly informed the Council that there have been some sewer backups and this project will eliminate any potential for sewer back-ups and surcharges. She explained that the \$3,000,000 in their fund balance is for unexpected infrastructure issues that may arise. As their infrastructure is underground, the road will need to be dug up which is very expensive. Mr. Peck explained that area sewers are at their limit of capacity. This is a result of over development and major rain events. If we can increase the pipe sizes in the project, it will take care of the present flows. He recommended that this project be started before a developer comes in with a large project so that the Town will be able to accommodate them.

Mayor Fortenbach asked if this could be included under CNR items in the budget. He felt this was the appropriate place to address this as we are so close to budget time. Ms. Kelly agreed to this and reminded the Council she has done significant research on what ARPA funds can be spent on and the top priorities are water and sewer infrastructure.

Councilman Waters thanked Mr. Peck for staying on board part-time after his retirement to assist the Town until we find someone to fill the position.

4. Tax Refunds

MOTION made by A. Waters and **SECONDED** by J. Henahan to approve Tax Refunds #1-24.

In favor: S. Fortenbach, J. Demetriades, J. Donohue, J. Henahan, P. Luna, J. Polke, A. Waters

Motion carried.

H. CHIEF OF POLICE'S UPDATE

Chief LaMontagne was in attendance to present her update to the Town Council. She provided the following updates in addition to her report:

- We testified this year for an armed robbery that occurred in 2020. Detective Jones was assigned the incident. She did an amazing job, they found the person guilty of armed robbery and several other charges.
- Officer Cheiffo submitted his letter of resignation. They are now currently looking for four officers. Chief LaMontagne explained that the Town invests approximately \$200,000 into their officers so that they can become certified.

However, once they are certified they are able to apply for employment in other Towns.

- She congratulated Officer Jones for being nominated by the Saint Patrick's Day Committee as the Town Honoree.

I. PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Public Works Director Spina was in attendance to present his report to the Town Council.

J. CITIZEN COMMENTS *(limited to 2 minutes per speaker, please be respectful)*

Mayor Fortenbach read the attached letter from Beth Falcigno into the record. See Attachment C.

Mayor Fortenbach read the attached letter from Brendan Kruh and Kassandra Fruin into the record. See Attachment D.

Joan Foose was in attendance from CCD. She provided the Council with a packet. See Attachment E. CCD would like to paint wing murals in a few locations in Town. They will work with Parks and Recreation and the Town Manager to bring it to fruition. There will be a Coffee House on February 25th at 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Library's Belden Room, she encouraged everyone to attend.

K. NEW BUSINESS

None.

L. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. January 11, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by J. Henehan and **SECONDED** by P. Luna to approve the meeting minutes of January 11, 2023.

In favor: J. Demetriades, J. Donohue, S. Fortenbach, J. Henehan, P. Luna, J. Polke

Abstained: A. Waters

Motion carried.

M. RESIGNATIONS

1. Matt DiDomizio, CWPCA

MOTION made by A. Waters and **SECONDED** by J. Donohue to accept the resignation of Matt DiDomizio with regret.

All in favor.

N. APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS

Appointments:

1. Board of Assessment Appeals

- a. Jeffrey Serra (U), regular member for a term expiring 11/2023

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to appoint Jeffrey Serra as a regular member to the Board of Assessment Appeals for a term expiring 11/2023.

All in favor.

2. Economic Development Commission

- a. Chris Cambareri (R), regular member for a term expiring 3/2027

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to appoint Chris Cambareri as a regular member to the Economic Development Commission for a term expiring 3/2027.

All in favor.

3. Senior Services Commission

- a. Judith A. Norris (U), regular member for a term expiring 4/2025

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to appoint Judith A. Norris as a regular member to the Senior Services Commission for a term expiring 4/2025.

All in favor.

Reappointments:

1. Redevelopment Agency

- a. Paul Warendt (R), regular member for a term expiring 12/2026

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Paul Warendt as a regular member to the Redevelopment Agency for a term expiring 12/2026.

All in favor.

2. Senior Services Commission

- a. Judy Benvenuto (R), regular member for a term expiring 4/2024

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Judy Benvenuto as a regular member to the Senior Services Commission for a term expiring 4/2024.

All in favor.

- b. Anne Kaiser (D), regular member for a term expiring 4/2024
MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Anne Kaiser as a regular member to the Senior Services Commission for a term expiring 4/2024.

All in favor.

- c. Anne Jordan (R), regular member for a term expiring 4/2024
MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Anne Jordan as a regular member to the Senior Services Commission for a term expiring 4/2024.

All in favor.

3. Water Pollution Control Authority

- a. Eric Zeilor (R), regular member for a term expiring 1/2026
MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Eric Zeilor to the Water Pollution Control Authority as a regular member for a term expiring 1/2026.

All in favor.

4. Youth Advisory Board

- a. Margaret P. Schufer (D), regular member for a term expiring 1/2024
MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by A. Waters to reappoint Margaret P. Schufer as a regular member to the Youth Advisory Board for a term expiring 1/2024.

All in favor.

O. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- 1. Letter from DEEP regarding Watrous Park – New Middle School Construction
Town Manager Salvatore informed the Council that they received a letter in their packets regarding this item.

- 2. There was discussion regarding DEI Committee and possibly presenting some ideas in the future to bring the groups together and reinvigorate the members.

MOTION made by J. Polke and **SECONDED** by J. Henahan to add Agenda Item
P. CLIMATE AND CULTURE STUDY FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Discussion:

Councilman Demetriades asked what possible action would be. Councilman Polke replied that it would be to reaffirm what we told the firm to do, to let them proceed with the way they normally conduct business and not change our decision.

Councilman Polke expressed concern about an article published in the Middletown Press regarding the Climate Culture Study. He stated that the article mentions four former employees by name and with the title of the article including the words "Climate Culture Investigation", it is not fair to the former employees who served the Town well for years. He was under the impression that the Town Council voted that BerryDunn would have the discretion to extend interviews to former employees. He asked the Council if we are all still on board with what was decided or if we were going off track.

Councilman Waters said as he understood it, was that we were going to leave it up to BerryDunn to decide. The idea of putting the letter out was to have former employees come and be interviewed.

Councilman Henahan stated that this was supposed to be anonymous and now there are names out there.

Councilman Demetriades felt as though there is nothing for us to discuss and the ultimate decision is up to the investigator and climate/culture study surveyor.

Mayor Fortenbach said the Council was also under that impression. Councilman Polke added, we were all under that impression, however, the article in the Middletown Press does not seem to read that way.

Mayor Fortenbach informed the Council that he received a memorandum from Sondra Hathaway of BerryDunn in response to the article in the Middletown Press. He said, ultimately, she is looking for reaffirmation of our original charge, that it will be left up to BerryDunn to make the decision regarding who to interview and if they should include past employees.

Councilwoman Donohue expressed that she is confused and upset after reading this article. She reminded the Council that we had this conversation at length and everyone in the room agreed it would be left up to BerryDunn. This article is now interjecting into our objective to be unobjective.

Councilman Demetriades explained that they he, Councilwoman Luna and Councilman Waters thought by submitting the letter to BerryDunn, it would encourage them to talk to key folks who left the Town recently.

In favor: J. Donohue, S. Fortenbach, J. Henehan, P. Luna, J. Polke, A. Waters

Opposed: J. Demetriades

Motion carried.

Councilman Polke questioned how the names and the article got in the paper. Councilman Demetriades explained that after they received the memo that said BerryDunn would not be interviewing previous employees, he, Councilman Waters, and Councilwoman Luna sent a letter to BerryDunn asking them to reconsider their decision as they feel it is important that past employees are interviewed. They suggested four department heads for BerryDunn to interview that they thought would have valuable insight. He was then contacted by the Middletown Press and was asked to forward a copy of letter, which he did. He assured the Council that the intention of their letter was not to usurp BerryDunn's authority but to consider additional names of previous employees for interviews, but ultimately it is at her discretion.

Town Manager Salvatore called into question what the real motive is. He asked why only directors were mentioned if this is not an attempt to investigate him as the Town Manager without formally notifying him? Councilman Demetriades replied that this is not an attempt to investigate the Town Manager.

MOTION made by J. Demetriades to reaffirm the authority and discretion of the climate and culture surveyor to make a determination about who to interview and who not to interview.

Motion withdrawn.

MOTION made by J. Demetriades and **SECONDED** by J. Polke to reaffirm our original intent to give authority to BerryDunn to make determinations as to how they would like to carry out the Culture Climate Survey Study Investigation.

All in favor.

Mayor Fortenbach granted Councilman Polke a Point of Personal Privilege to make a comment.

Councilman Polke stated that other departments specifically, police departments do not discuss anything that is under investigation. He clarified that this is more

of a study than an investigation, however, our response to the press should be like other agencies, not to make a response until the study is completed. If done this way, it would be fair to everyone.

Q. ADJOURN

MOTION made by J. Donohue and **SECONDED** by J. Henehan to adjourn.
All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amanda Calve
Secretary



TOWN OF CROMWELL
SENIOR CENTER & HUMAN SERVICES
TOWN HALL, 41 WEST STREET
CROMWELL, CT 06416
(860) 632-3449 FAX (860) 632-3446

Memo

TO: Town Manager/Town Council
FROM: Amy Saada, Director of Human Services
DATE: 02/01/2023
RE: Human Services Director Report

Human Services:

A new Human Services Assistant has been hired and her start date is February 6th. Her name is Awilda Rodriguez.

Energy Assistance is in full swing and we are booked for appointments through February. As Eversource's rates increased in January, we are seeing a large increase in walk ins seeking assistance as well. All staff are trained to utilize EnergizeCT to show clients the different suppliers and assist clients with changing energy suppliers as the Eversource Supply rates have doubled.

Senior Center:

AARP tax preparation has begun this month. There are 8 tax preparers here each Monday for 4 hours preparing tax returns free of charge. This service books up very quickly!

This month we have the following special events in addition to all other regular programs.

- 2/9 Super Bowl Pre-Game Extravaganza
- 2/14 Valentine's Event
- 2/15 Lunch & Learn with Relay Connecticut as the speaker

Youth Services:

The following programs will be held this month:

- Family Plant Night 2/10
- Babysitter Safety 2/21

Valentine's for Veterans- youth got together to do valentines and will be delivered to Veteran's on Valentines day.

And much planning is going into the Family Resource & Preschool Expo which will be held on March 2nd in the gym. This will be a resource for families to seek out preschools, but also many other organizations serving youth will be in attendance.



Town of Cromwell Office of the Mayor

MAYOR'S REPORT

Date: February 8, 2023
To: Members of the Town Council
From: Steve Fortenbach, Mayor
Subject: Mayor's Report for 2/8/2023 Town Council Meeting

- The CMS Building Committee is continuing to move forward. They are working on cost saving measures based on the latest estimates that have come in.
- Town Hall has started budget season, working with all the different directors within Town Hall. We have our budget workshop scheduled for 2/28 & 3/1. Budget books will be distributed as soon as they are ready. (2/7 BOE budget was approved with a 6.9% increase)
- We are working with BerryDunn on the Town Hall climate study to hopefully deliver a fully independent assessment. The initial anonymous questionnaires were available for a couple of weeks. That portion of the study ended on Monday, February 6, 2023. Sondra Hathaway from BerryDunn will be on site the week of February 20th.
- The Athletic Field Committee had their RFP opened and the project was awarded. Work on completing the assessment of fields at the High School should begin soon.
- The Town continues to work on the West Street Sidewalk and Pierson Park projects.

Attachment C

From: Beth Falcigno <falcignob@glastonburyus.org>

Date: Feb 6, 2023 at 10:48 AM

To: Sfortenbach <sfortenbach@cromwellct.com>

Subject: To Be Read Into the Public Record at the Town Council Meeting (Middle School Project)

Good evening,

It has come to my attention that the estimate for the new middle school has risen quite a bit. While it is concerning and disappointing to me, it is not a surprise with how the economy is. As a parent of children in the school system and as a middle grade teacher, there is no hesitancy on my part in moving forward with the project, regardless of the rise in cost. If the project is postponed, prices could be that much higher when it is started again. I hope the town will continue to move forward with the middle school project, allowing our children to have access to the educational facilities that they need.

Respectfully,

Beth Falcigno

26 Iron Gate Ln, Cromwell, CT 06416

Beth Falcigno (she/her)

English

Gideon Welles School

Glastonbury, CT 06033

Attachment D

Dear Members of Town Council,

We purchased our home in Cromwell almost three years ago in part due to the robust school system which the town supports. We plan to start our family here and value education as one of our highest priorities. We have followed the Cromwell Middle School building project extensively, and firmly believe that it is necessary to construct a new middle school.

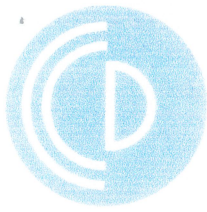
The current middle school is in a state of disrepair and is impacting the learning outcomes of Cromwell's students. It has recently come to our attention that the estimated expense of the project after value engineering will be approximately 25% higher than the initial figure approved at referendum. Although this figure is higher than what was approved, we believe that this project must move forward for the good of our school system and families in town. Additionally, the CMS Building Project committee has actively taken steps to meet directly with the architect to identify cost saving opportunities. With that being said, we know that the new estimate is not the final number and has the potential to look different after going out to bid.

If there is any delay in the town's decision to move forward with rebuilding our middle school, we are concerned that inflation will continue to balloon expenses and that we will miss the opportunity to strategically invest in our community. Currently, Cromwell residents will not bear the full financial burden of this project because we are likely to receive the State of Connecticut Office of School Construction grant. The grant process is sensitive, and if the project is delayed, the town risks being forced to resubmit the request for state aid. The CMS committee was also told that, if the project were to be delayed a year, the grant reimbursement rate assigned for next year is lower than this year. This would mean less money granted from the State and a higher expense for Cromwell residents.

Overall, we urge you to continue your support of this project without any lengthy delays that could be detrimental.

Sincerely,

Brendan Kruh and Kassandra Fruin
586 Main Street



CROMWELL CREATIVE DISTRICT

WINGS PROJECT 2023 PROPOSAL

Project Goal:

Educators and professionals in the social and medical fields, as well as parents, feel children today are struggling emotionally. Cromwell Creative District (CCD) sees this project as a fun, creative way to bring the town's attention to these issues. We would like to provide a platform where children feel encouraged to let their imaginations soar skyward. The project's inspiration is taken from a Disney Park display, where people stand front and center between two large painted wings such as a butterfly. In a photo, they become the butterfly.

Similarly, Cromwell Town participants will stand at the center of two wings and have their photo taken. With encouragement and a bit of imagination, they can appear to become that winged creature in their photographs.

These quotes exemplify this goal: "Choose to soar, choose to fly your dreams." "To fly high you must come out of the nest and dream high." These and similar quotes, *may* be displayed between sets of wings.

Resources:

By getting other nonprofits (NP) in Cromwell involved, our goal is to be inclusive and reach a broader audience. The NPs are:

Cromwell Arts Alliance (CAA,) Cromwell Children's Coalition (CCC), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), LGBTQIA and Lions Club

CCD will provide the signboard, cut to 4 ft. X 4 ft. for each wing with a designed wing outline to be filled in by each NP. Each NP will be required to include a logo from their organization. CCD will meet with each NP to oversee their designs for project cohesiveness. Designs offered by NP's will be approved by both CCD and the Town Manager. CCD will draw from our membership and previous town project participants to work on designs.

Materials needed: Paint*, Protective Sealant, Brushes, Sign Board, Locking clips to attach boards to fencing
**CCD will provide surplus paints as available.*

Painting will be done at the Senior Center Art Room with the permission of both the Town Manager and Director of the Senior Center.

Display:

Six different wings designs, each measuring approximately 11 ft. long (two 4 ft. wings displayed on diagonal), and 5.5 ft. high, will be temporarily attached to the chain link fencing at Pierson Park.* Each wing will have clips to attach and detach to the fencing. Wings will be displayed seasonally and will be stored away when not in use. Storage location TBD. Proposed areas for consideration are as follows:

- Chain link fence dividing football and baseball fields
- Tall fence parallel to Community Field Road
- Fence near playground

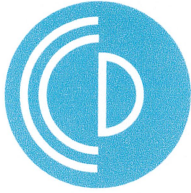
**See attached photos*

Proposed Timeline:

Pending permission, work to begin late February.

In Conclusion:

CCD requests no funding from the Town for this project. We take pride in continuing to bring attention to businesses #inthedistrict through the advancement of the arts and social awareness.

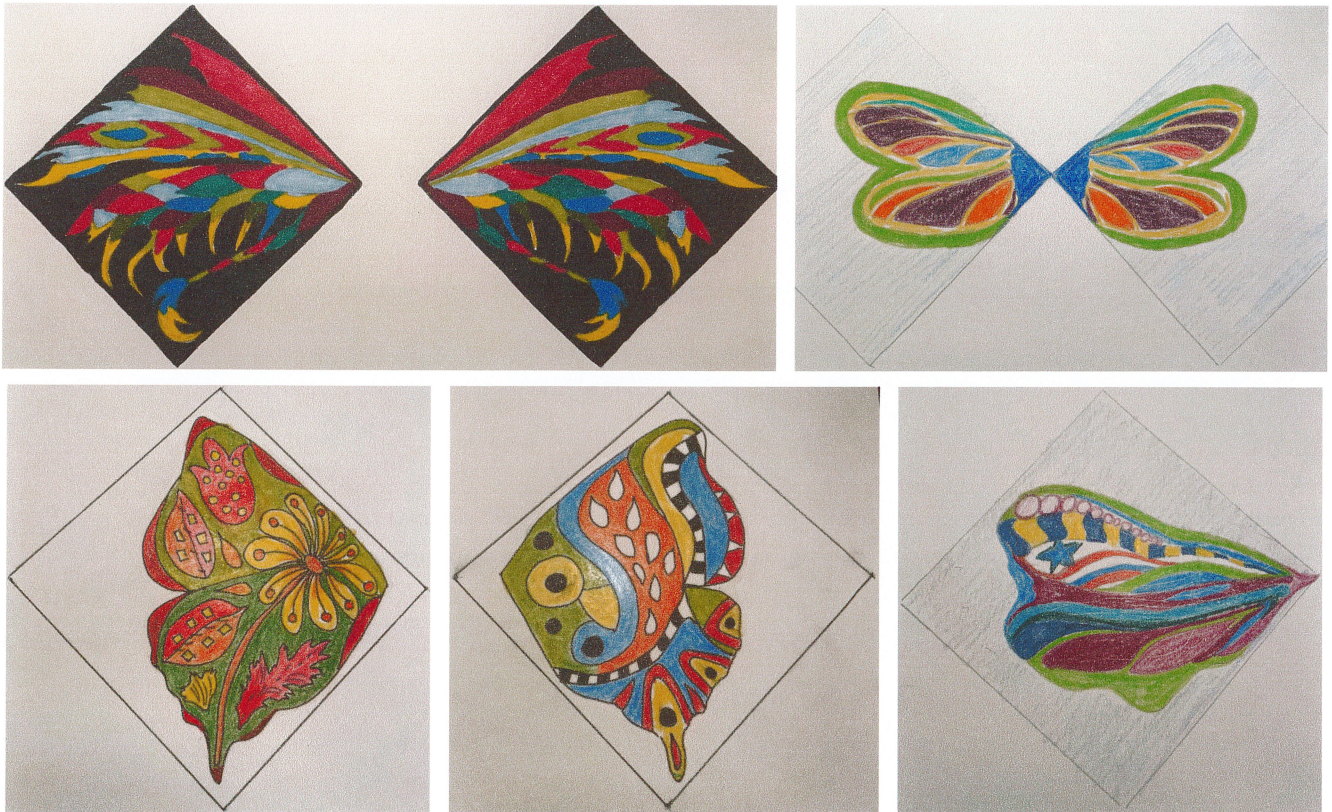


CROMWELL CREATIVE DISTRICT

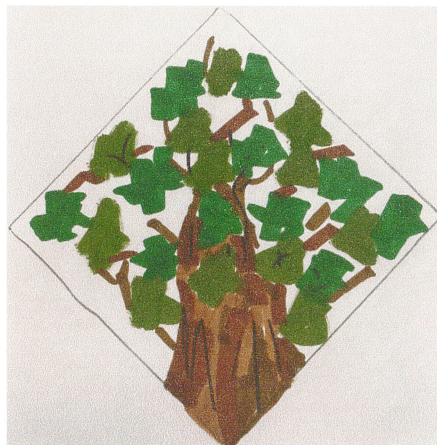
WINGS Mural Proposal

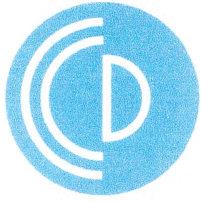
4'-0" squares will be set on the diagonal with two squares creating one set of wings. The diagrams* below represent some ideas, however, each nonprofit will have the opportunity to create their designs for approval.

*Some designs show only one side of a wing.



On the rear side of all wings, a tree will be painted





CROMWELL CREATIVE DISTRICT

First choice for WINGS location



Between football and baseball, 295 feet

Second choice for WINGS location



At side of football field, 185 feet; James Martin Dr.

Considered options, but less desirable for multiple reasons



Playground area: dirt at fence; ditch beyond



Back of football field: adjacent to construction area