

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

Wednesday, December 13, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor James Demetriades, Julia Aurigemma, Brian Bonneau, Stacy Dabrowski, Paula Luna, Al Waters

Also Present: Town Manager Salvatore

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Demetriades called the special meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

B. COMMUNITY FORUM

Members of the public are encouraged to attend to voice their ideas, concerns, or to provide feedback on any town related concerns.

David Masse, 37 Hicksville Road expressed concern regarding the food pantry and read the attached letter to the Council and provided photographs. See Attachment A.

Mayor Demetriades thanked Mr. Masse for his time and attention to this matter. He also thanked the Knight of Columbus for their food drive efforts.

James Rude, 25 Highridge Road addressed the Town Council and read the attached letter to the Town Council. See Attachment B.

Dierdre Daly, 63 Geer Street addressed the Town Council and stated that she agrees with the comments Mr. Masse made regarding the food pantry. She thanked him and the Knights of Columbus for their efforts and for collecting all of the food for those in need, but there is just no place to store it.

Michael Engratt, 1 Blackhaw Drive echoed Mr. Masse's comments. He explained that there has been approximately a 70% increase in the amount of people served by the food pantry since 2020. He explained that the Knights of Columbus devotes 80 hours per month during their food drive and he does not want their efforts to be done in vein.

Town Manager Salvatore explained that while the Town is extremely grateful for their efforts, the holiday season is when we get the most donations and is when we run out of room in the food pantry. He explained that we are using the previous highway maintenance facility as a storage place for the overflow of food until space is available.

A brief discussion took place regarding options for storing food when there is overflow at the food pantry.

Alice Kelly, 47 Willowbrook Road informed the Council that when she worked at Northeast Utilities, they encouraged monetary donations because it gives you more "bang for your buck" when you go to the CT Food Bank with the money. She added that she thinks food drives are great, this would just be another avenue to explore. She also wants to make sure we are providing our population with food they want.

Dierdre Daly, 63 Geer Street explained that the food that is brought in is terrific and is desired by those in need. She reiterated that the Town just needs a bigger space to store the food.

Mayor Demetriades read the attached letter regarding 53 Nooks Hill Road into the record. See Attachment C.

Diane Wiegert, 75 Geer Street expressed that the Town should not discount this food storage concern in anyway. She said that there is a real challenge for the people who need this food. She suggested adding shelves along the walls that are not really used. She also suggested adding food to a food bank on Amazon and people could contribute through Amazon.

Alice Kelly, 47 Willowbrook Road said that she found the letter the Mayor read into the record regarding 53 Nooks Hill Road interesting. She suggested that the Town Council look at funding. She recommended creating a fund for redevelopment that could be built up over time. She said over the years, the Town Council could put money aside into the fund. We need to have a vision and think in advance.

A brief discussion was held regarding where this line item would fall in the budget and which department would manage and oversee it.

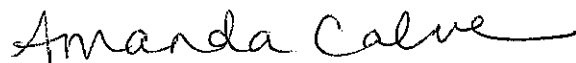
Mayor Demetriades closed the community forum.

C. ADJOURN

MOTION made by P. Luna and **SECONDED** by S. Dabrowski to adjourn.

The Special Meeting/Community Forum adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amanda Calve
Secretary

To: Mayor James Demetriades, Cromwell Town Council Members and Local Administrators

From: Knights of Columbus, DeSoto Council No. 6, Cromwell

Re: Cromwell Food Pantry - Infrastructure and Operations

Background

2023 is the fourth consecutive year of conducting an Annual Food Drive for the benefit of the Cromwell Food Pantry. The Food Drive is held for four consecutive weeks from late November through mid-December. During this time, we make three or more major deliveries to the Cromwell Food Pantry. In total, the weight of these deliveries is in excess of 3,000 pounds.

In addition to the non-perishable food and personal hygiene items that we collect, we also accept monetary donations (cash, check or gift cards). These funds are put to use during the months of March through September of each year to purchase items needed as requested by the Cromwell Food Pantry. We have an arrangement whereby the Cromwell Food Pantry sends us an email each month (March through September) listing items they are in need of. Over the last three years, we have spent approximately \$7,400 purchasing non-perishable food and personal hygiene items that were delivered to the Cromwell Food Pantry.

Issues/Problems

1. Lack of adequate space to accept delivery of donated items.
 - Deliveries to the Food Pantry are generally placed on the floor of the main hallway of Cromwell Social Services. (Food Drives sponsored by Boy Scouts and Knights of Columbus)
 - Storage of food on the floor of a public hallway is unsanitary.
 - Food stored in the hallways impedes safe foot traffic and presents a potential fire hazard.
 - Items stored in open areas (i.e., public hallways) allows the general public to freely access food and hygiene items intended for the indigent and struggling families in Cromwell.
 - The lack of storage is costing the Town of Cromwell money by not being able to accept all donations, and later having to purchase needed items themselves (March through October).
2. Lack of refrigeration and freezers.
 - Inadequate refrigeration to store perishable food items such as milk, eggs, butter, meats and vegetables.
 - Organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus, willing to donate such items are not able to, due to the lack of refrigeration and freezers.

Potential Options/Solutions to Consider

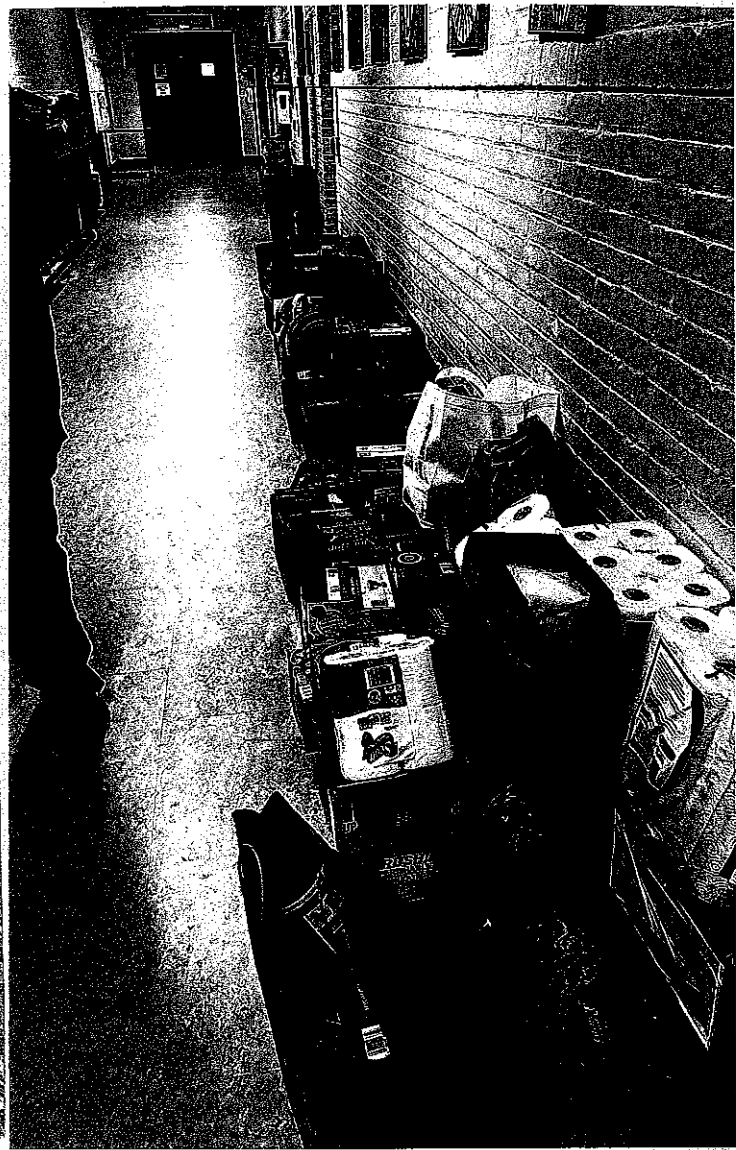
1. Designate a locked room(s) within the Cromwell Town Hall for only Food Pantry items where food from Food Drives by the Knights of Columbus and other organizations can be delivered and stored safely. Any designated room should have adequate racks and shelving to keep the food off of the floor.

2. Expand the current Food Pantry facility and/or relocate the pantry to an adequate space that can accommodate the donations by the various organizations and residents.
3. Purchase refrigerator(s) and freezer(s) to accommodate donated perishable food items.

Cromwell Food Pantry Statistics

(Source: Amy Saada, Cromwell Social Services)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CROMWELL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED</u>
2017	318
2018	348
2019	407
2020 (COVID)	307
2021 (COVID)	391



Comments from James Rude (25 Highridge Road)

Introduction: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the Mayor and Town Council in a “Community Forum”. Dialogue improves transparency.

Regarding the Organizational Cultural Assessment: Most of the information contained in the 2023 Town Council Recommendations PowerPoint are **transactional**- addressing the **tangible elements** of the report findings on the culture at Town Hall. Unfortunately, very little of the information contained in the PowerPoint address the **intangible matters**- meaning that any **transformational** changes to the culture are not likely to occur. I suggest that the newly elected Town Council consider whether the approach from the prior Town Council is appropriate. I am particularly troubled by the suggested solution to the surveillance camera feeds on the Town Manager’s desk. And please seriously consider a meaningful monthly update on what is happening related to the assessment- posted on the Town website.

Regarding the Gilead Community Services Legal Matters: The 2021 judgment against the Town of Cromwell for alleged discriminatory actions towards Gilead’s group home for persons with mental health disabilities is currently under appeal, with \$5.0 million of the Town’s \$15.2 million of fund balance restricted for payment of the judgment if the appeal is not successful. Such fund balance moneys have come from Cromwell taxpayers. While confidential information related to this appeal cannot be disclosed, please also consider a meaningful monthly update on what is happening related to the appeal (involving one-third (1/3) of fund balance)- posted on the Town website.

Conclusion: Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Town Garage on Nooks Hill Road

To: Cromwell Town Officials

From: Mark J. Burgess

Date: 12/12/2023

Re: Demolition of unsightly and deteriorated town building.

The town of Cromwell is heading in the right direction. Everyone's support of revitalizing/repurposing areas of Cromwell that have been neglected over the years has been noticed, and as a life long resident of Cromwell, I'm so happy to see these continued efforts.

An area in desperate need of help is **53 Nooks Hill Road** and its surroundings.

This is a historic part of town that very much needs to be brought back to life. As you drive through this area it's unsightly and run down. There is no proper lighting or sidewalks for pedestrians. Drainage is a huge concern and a safety problem during storms. The pumphouse next to New Pond needs a new roof. The Sewer Department building is unsightly, with a barbed wire and chain-link fence...The most egregious issue though is sitting on 53 Nooks Hill Road, an old town garage that is in complete disrepair and wasting precious space.

Town residents, local or not, do not want another business at this location. We would like to see a **repurpose of this location for recreational use**. This would consist of first demolishing this deteriorating building and reconstructing a pavilion and gazebo on site (which could be rented for events and parties). Also adding park benches, picnic tables, lighting and a fence around the pond would provide a nice option for residents in the area. Adding a walking trail starting at the waterfall, over which a beautiful wooden bridge could be constructed and winding around part of the pond and property for people to walk their dogs and/or socialize with friends and family, would certainly help this area which lacks walking paths for local residents.

Mark & Adrienne Burgess

72 Nooks Hill Road

Mark J. Burgess & Adrienne R. Burgess

Thomas H. Gault Jr.
66 Nooks Hill Rd

Joshua Ballestas

65 Nooks Hill Rd, Cromwell CT 06416

Wade & Luciana Preston 68 Nooks Hill Rd Cromwell, Ct. 06416