

# Town of Ashford

*Established 1714*

## REGULAR SELECTMEN'S MEETING MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2023 at 7:00 P.M. ASHFORD TOWN OFFICES, ROOM 304

**To be held in person and via ZOOM**

### MINUTES

1. Call to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. Members present: Falletti, Phillips, Silver-Smith  
Guests: Paul Varga, Tess Grous, Matthew Grous, Sherri Soucy, Peter Ralston
3. Hear from the public:
  - Mr. Grous requested an explanation of why his second letter was refused for publication in the Ashford Citizen. He requested that his letters be attached to these minutes. Falletti informed Mr. Grous of his understanding that Ashford's Counsel and Mr. Grous' attorney would discuss his concerns raised.
  - Peter Ralston presented the BOS with a letter opposing the zoning regulation amendment currently before the PZC. He requested that a copy of his letter be attached to these minutes. He has forwarded a copy of his statement to the PZC.
4. First Selectman's briefing
  - The BOS will present the general government budget to the BOF on Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.
  - Hard copies of general government budget packets were available to members of the BOS late Friday afternoon.
  - Falletti announced that the Capital Projects Committee would meet on Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the upper level meeting room of the TOB
  - Delivery of the Ashford School fuel tank has been confirmed to arrive on June 16<sup>th</sup>
  - Ashford School roof: Interim funding for this project will be arranged through one of the Town's banks, or self-financed.
  - Jim Rupert will convene a meeting of the Ashford School Building committee. He intends to invite the E.O. Smith roof project Clerk of Work.
  - Falletti reported that diesel fuel oil pricing has been locked in at a savings over last year
  - DPW gasoline dispenser is operational
  - PZC public hearing on PZC zoning regulation amendment has been continued to 3/13/2023.
5. Acceptance of the minutes of Regular Meeting of 2/21/2023. The BOS will consider approval of these minutes once the video of that meeting is posted on the website.
6. Hear from Boards, Commissions, Committees
7. Old Business
  - A. Status of after school childcare program as proposed by the Recreation Commission.
    - Employment applications (3) have been emailed to members of the BOS and to Dave Roston and Sherry York. Silver-Smith volunteered to chair the interview committee. The committee members will be Dave Roston, Sherry York, Roger Phillips, and Karen Zulick. Silver-Smith commented that the expenditure and revenue figures included for this program in the Recreation Commission budget should be replaced with \$10 in each line and that she would recommend that creation and funding of this program be taken to town meeting.

8. New Business

A. 2023-2024 budget and request to BOF for extension of presentation date:

- The BOF agreed to extend the general government budget presentation to Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Sherri Soucy gave the BOS a tour through the general government budget package.
- Increases to budget are:
  - Department 110-11000 – Bd of Selectmen – 55513 – Printing & binding to \$35,200
  - Department 225-48000 – Youth Services – 51330 – Director Salary to \$64,854
  - Department 110 – 34000 – Transfer Sta – 51422 – Part-time salaries to \$94,210
  - Department 110-34000 – Transfer Station – 55513 – Printing & Binding \$5,000
  - Youth/Social Services – Increase salary line to \$59,420
  - AVFD Chief Varga explained the increase in that budget from 383,195 to 452,665
- Silver-Smith moved approval of the 2023-2024 General Government budget request in the amount of \$3,845,804 which represents a .11% increase over the 2022-2023 budget for presentation to the BOF. Phillips seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Capital Projects Committee update: Silver-Smith moved approval of the following appointments to the 2023-2024 Capital Improvements Committee: Paul Varga representing the Ashford Volunteer Fire Department, Cindy Ford representing Ashford School, Judi Austin representing the Ashford Board of Finance, Joe Kalinowski representing Ashford Public Works, First Selectman William Falletti and Chuck Funk as the public representative. Phillips seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

C. Board and Commission appointments:

- Conservation Commission- Alternate vacancy term of which expires 11/21/2023
- Economic Development Commission – two vacancies terms of which expire 2/02/2025
- Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission: 1 vacant Regular Member seat the term of which expires 6/01/2025; 2 vacant Alternate Member seats terms of which expire 6/01/2023
- Zoning Board of Appeals – 1 Alternate Member seat term of which expires 11/05/2025
- Recreation Commission – 1 Alternate Member seat term of which expires 4/01/2023.

D. Silver-Smith moved addition to the agenda of action on tax refunds. Phillips seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Phillips moved approval of the following tax refunds citing CGS 12-129: Wanda Fabian in the amount of \$10.00 and Ally Financial in the amount of \$323.72. Silver-Smith seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

E. Agenda items for upcoming BOS meetings

F. Adjournment at 9:30 p.m.

Ashford Board of Selectmen – Regular Meeting  
Monday, March 6, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85993997050>  
Meeting ID: 859 9399 7050

Dial by your location  
+1 309 205 3325 US  
+1 312 626 6799 US  
+1 646 558 8656 US  
Meeting ID: 859 9399 7050

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdEHN3d5U2>

From: Peter Ralston  
39 Nagy Rd.  
Ashford CT  
06278

To: Ashford Board of Selectman Ashford Zoning Board  
William A. Falletti Richard S. Williams  
Cathryn E. Silver-Smith Jeffrey A. Silver-Smith  
Roger T. Phillips  
5 Town Hall Road Ashford, CT 06278

3/6/23

Notice of Opposition to the following Zoning modification request :  
PZ-23-1 Text Amendment Application: Article 300-14 (definitions) and Article  
300-17D (Interstate Interchange Development Zone). Applicant Campanelli  
Rodolakis LM Acquisition, LLC & Ashford Realty Trust, LLC.

Reason for opposition:

1. The above application omitted text amendment application for the following:  
Article 300-19 section A subsection 1 items b, c, and d., subsection 2 items a, b,  
c, d and e., section E subsection 1 and 3.
2. The zoning application on file for public viewing is not signed or noted of fee  
collection by a Zoning Official (page 3), and the permit processing form (page 4)  
in entirely blank.
- 3 No print notification for either public hearing 2/13/23 or 3/13/23 was published,  
in violation of CGS Chapter 214 Zoning Sec. 8-7d. Hearings and Decisions.
4. No provisions per CT Public Act 21-2 (senate bill 1202) Section 149 subsection  
(b) were followed by the Ashford Zoning Commission in making on-line only  
meetings available to the public.

Based on the 4 listed reasons PZ-23-1 should be withdrawn as both the applicant  
and the zoning board did not follow the state statute requirements.

In addition to this letter being my notice of opposition, it is also my written request  
for item 4 to be provided for me and fellow residents of Ashford.

Respectfully,  
Peter Ralston  3/6/23

Dear Ashford Community:

I began my tenure as Pastor of Westford Congregational Church on January first of this year. Some of you are probably wondering: "Isn't there supposed to be some sort of installation ceremony when a new Pastor starts his ministry?" You're right. It hasn't happened yet, and there's a very good reason why. His name is David, and he is very important to me.

I grew up in the church, but in my teenage years I started to wander and doubt. I wanted to live life my way, free from the constraints of my parents religion, and I did. I wasn't a nice person back then. I was a liar and very selfish. You would have found me in church every Sunday, obedient and respectful on the surface, and sneaking out the back door to do things that I knew were wrong, and I didn't care.

I am the oldest of five children. My younger sister and I were on a similar path, until she became a Christian. I thought, "Yeah... right." Then I watched her whole life change. She wasn't the same person anymore. The change was drastic enough to get my attention, and I was curious enough to investigate. So, I went to the Bible study where she "found Jesus." It wasn't long before I ran face first into the Truth. I was 15 years old in that Wednesday night Bible study when a prayer of faith changed me.

I followed my sister to youth group where David J. was the youth Pastor. He is a remarkable man. When I hear the word disciple it's his face I see. David saw right through me, and spoke the truth to me with a genuine love that started to change me. For the last 32 years I've watched him live the Gospel as we have worked together in the church. These days David serves as the director of "Loved By Jesus School" in Ghana Africa. He continues to impact young lives with the love of Jesus.

David is currently in Ghana. He left just after Christmas and isn't expected home until the end of March. My installation service is scheduled for the 16th of April, following the return of my long time mentor and friend from the mission field. You are welcome to attend, meet David and share this special day with me.

I hope that you have people like David in your life. People who love you enough to ask hard questions and call you out when you wander off the path. People who see the good things in your life and make a point to encourage you in them. Friends that you can call on when things get rough. Friends who will laugh with you, and cry with you too.

In my 47 years, I've learned the value of friendship, relationship and community. I've grown to cherish the things I ran from in my teenage years, because a clearly defined moral framework is essential to living well. I want to belong to a group of people who are gathered together around a common truth and pursuing a common good. People who call each other family, have each other's back and genuinely care about each other. We're not perfect, but we strive to do better and live up to the things we believe.

I hope you have a strong community structure around you and a family that cares about you. If you need one, I know where you can find one! There are several churches in Ashford. In each of them you will find a family and a community that is waiting to invite you in. Church is a place where you can belong. It's a place to find Truth. It's a place to find some things that are worth living for and a group of people who will support you on your journey toward that best and highest good. Come to church on Sunday, you are welcome here!

~Pastor Matthew Grous, (959) 995-1705, PastorMatthewWCC@gmail.com  
Westford Congregational Church, 368 Westford Hill Rd, Ashford, CT  
Sunday worship service, 10:30a.m.

Dear Ashford Community:

Ever wake up and think: "How in the world did I end up here?" Or look around and wonder: "How did I get this far off course?" You set out with a goal in mind, or some worthy end to pursue and somehow over the course of time your carefully laid plan to succeed has come totally unraveled.

My father once told me, the Devil rarely blocks our way with large easily identifiable barriers. He's smarter than that. He'll walk right beside you, whispering in your ear all the while applying the slightest pressure in the wrong direction. Like a ship at sea, sailing into the smallest crosswind, the pilot doesn't even bother to compensate for it and at the end of the journey it's miles off course.

My father was a brilliant man with a degree in Aerospace Engineering and he loved the Lord Jesus. I looked up to him. I lost my father just before Christmas last year. He was here to see my ordination as an elder at Westford Congregational Church. I remember the feeling of knowing that he was so proud of me that day. I wish he could have been here to watch me preach my first sermon as Pastor of the church. I know it would have meant the world to him.

I miss my dad. It's that time of year... time to reflect. Time to assess our progress and set a few goals. So dust off your journal or take out your vision board and ask yourself a few questions. Is your ship still on course? Where do you find yourself at the beginning of a new year? Are you where you want to be? Is life all neat and tidy, or are there some things that are out of joint?

There's a story in the Bible of a kid who got way off course. He's called the prodigal son. He set out in the wrong direction, with all the wrong goals and motivations. His "wake up" moment comes near the end of the story, in a "distant land," up to his eyeballs in the mud and the mess. Whether you find yourself just a little off course or in the completely wrong world, up to your eyeballs in the mud and the mess, the path back is still the same. It's the path that the prodigal son walked... back to the Father's house. Because that is where we can find real direction for our lives.

You see, the Christmas story doesn't end with the baby in the manger. He grew up to be the most influential moral teacher of all time and lived a life of incredible significance, and self sacrifice. He faced the brutality of the cross with resolute courage because He loves us. Then He conquered death and hell and rose from the grave. If you need some fixed points of reference to navigate by, I know where you can find them. His teachings are full of life changing ideas, and he is still changing lives today.

You and I were made to strive toward something. Just ask your friend with the Psychology degree. Human beings achieve the greatest satisfaction in life as we approach the goals we set. And there's no better path for us in life than to identify the highest possible good that we could achieve and strive toward it.

As you consider this new year and path that you will walk through it, I encourage you to find your way back to the Father's house. Come to church this Sunday! It doesn't have to be our church. Go back to the place you used to attend. Go back to the church your earthly father brought you to. If you've never been to church, give it a try. You'll find Truth there. You'll find real meaning, purpose and direction for your life. If enough of us take the time to reorient our lives around the things that really matter, we can make a real difference in 2023.

Dear Ashford Community:

As the incoming Pastor of Westford Congregational Church, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is Matthew Grous. My wife Tess and I moved to Ashford in 2018 with two of our three children, two dogs and two cats and absolutely no idea what God had in store for us here!

I was born in Manchester, CT in 1975, the first generation born in America on my Mother's side, second on my Father's. I trace the roots of my faith back to my paternal grandmother and the Episcopal Church. I have attended church since childhood and faith has always been a part of my family life, so when we moved to town it wasn't a matter of whether or not to attend church, but where. We settled in to WCC soon after our arrival.

It was the churches heart for prayer that drew us in. My wife and I have been involved in several churches throughout our 22 years together and prayer has always been a major focus of our ministry. We were warmly welcomed by WCC and encouraged to expand on their foundation of prayer. I also joined the worship team, and when one of the churches elders stepped down from his position, Pastor Anderson asked if I would take his place. The church ordained me as an elder in March of 2020.

The season of Covid was a season of change for WCC. It began with the live-streaming of our church services and included the construction of our new church steeple, the re-installation of the bell that survived the fire of 1988, and the re-writing of our church manual. After months of work the new manual was unanimously approved and signed on July 31st of 2022. The biggest change for me, however, came in June of this year when Pastor Anderson announced his retirement and suggested me as his replacement

I came to faith in my teenage years, walked a prodigal road for a time and made a train wreck of my life. I was in Illinois in 1997 when, from rock bottom, I told Jesus that if He would take me back, I would give all of me. Over the last 25 years I've had the desire in my heart to be a Pastor, but have never felt "called" until now. Honestly this isn't what I thought "the call" would look like. There was no angelic messenger, no trumpet in the clouds, no audible voice from a burning bush, only His clear, quiet leading and my only possible answer is "Yes, Lord."

From the first time I drove past the Church I have known in my heart that God has got a plan for WCC and for Ashford. Our Congregation continues to pray "His Kingdom come, and His will be done," and He continues to surprise us. You may have an idea of what Westford Congregational Church is, but God is doing new things.

WCC is committed to being a house of prayer, committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and committed to experiencing God in our daily lives as we join Him in the work that He is doing all around us. We are a small (growing) family, in intimate personal relationship with the God who spoke this universe into being and there's room for you here. I invite you to come and worship with us. Come and hear God's word. Come and see what God has to say to you. You are welcome, and we look forward to meeting you.

Pastor Matthew A. Grous  
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Ashford, CT 06278  
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