

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 6

Matthew W. Coppler

*Belle Isle City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

July 31, 2023

Colin Baenziger
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Subject: Belle Isle City Manager Recruitment

Dear Mr. Baenziger:

Please accept this letter and attached resume as an indication of my enthusiastic interest in the position of City Manager for the City of Belle Isle. The position represents an incredible opportunity to work with and lead an organization that strives to make Belle Isle a first-class city. With over three decades of successful experience as a dedicated and results-driven City Manager, I believe my extensive background in public management, team leadership, and strategic planning aligns perfectly with the requirements of this role.

Throughout my career as a City Manager, I have honed essential skills in personnel management, employee development, and fostering a collaborative work environment. My ability to engage and motivate teams has led to consistently high levels of performance and employee satisfaction. I am eager to leverage my experience to contribute to the continued success of the City of Belle Isle.

My proficiency in comprehensive planning, budget management, and resource allocation has enabled me to navigate complex challenges and deliver exceptional results for the cities I have served. Additionally, my advanced analytical skills allow me to make data-driven decisions and identify areas for process improvement, enhancing organizational efficiency and productivity. I am confident that my unique skill set and passion for fostering a positive work environment make me an ideal candidate for this role.

In April of 2022, I decided to step back from my role as City Manager for St. Clair Shores to rejuvenate my passion for public service. During my time away from public service I realized how much I missed working with elected officials and staff in betterment of a community. I am now searching for an opportunity that will let me use the skills and experience I have gained throughout my career and work alongside a motivated team of professionals striving to enhance the organization so it can provide high quality services to the community. I believe Belle Isle would be an ideal fit.

Thank you for considering my application. I would welcome the chance to further discuss how my qualifications align with the City of Belle Isle's goals during an interview. Please find my resume attached for your review.

Sincerely,

Matthew W. Coppler
(860) 394-8979
3510 Fountain Circle, Apt 308
Auburn Hills, Michigan 48326
Mwillco23@gmail.com

Matthew W. Coppler

Innovative and pro-active are the trademarks of my career spanning thirty years in public management. I consider my strengths to be comprehensive planning, team management, advanced analytical skills, and a driving desire for continual improvement. Additional areas of expertise include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✦ Government Regulations and Relations | ✦ Public Relations and Media Affairs |
| ✦ Finance, Budgeting & Cost Management | ✦ Contract Negotiations and Strategic Alliances |
| ✦ Policy and Procedure Development | ✦ Strategy, Vision & Mission Planning |
| ✦ Human Resource Management | ✦ Team Building and Performance Improvement |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2019 – April 2022 *City Manager/Human Resource Director*
St. Clair Shores, Michigan

St. Clair Shores is a community of 60,000 located in the Detroit Metro area. The city employs 300 plus full-time and part-time workers. The General Fund Budget for FY 2021-22 was \$39,000,000. St. Clair Shores is a resort community located on the shores of Lake St. Clair, that swells in population during the summer with sport fisherman and boating enthusiast.

Notable Accomplishments

- Initiated modernization of information technology infrastructure and digital information management posture.
- Worked with the Tax Increment Finance Authority to plan and begin construction of a \$7.8 million Pier extension and Park improvement project.
- Working as the City’s representative on the regional emergency dispatch board to improve the quality of services and ensure an important emergency services operation meets expectations.
- Handled all aspects of labor relation matters, including the negotiation of six collective bargaining unit contracts.
- Led efforts to reduce health insurance cost through negotiations with bargaining units and working directly with employees on health and wellness initiatives.

2015 – 2019 *City Manager/Human Resource Director*
Lincoln Park, Michigan

Lincoln Park is a community of 37,000 located in the Detroit Metro area. The city employed 100 plus full-time and part-time workers. The General Fund Budget for FY 2018-19 was \$23,719,778. Lincoln Park is a financially distressed city that was released from State of Michigan Receivership in 2017.

Notable Accomplishments

- Lead city representative to the State of Michigan Department of Treasury Receivership Transition Advisory Board.
- Implemented collaborative budget process that has resulted in greater transparency, higher accountability, and a General Fund undesignated fund balance that has grown from \$300,000 to more than \$4.3 million in three years.
- Restructured Emergency Manager initiated retiree health care plan to reduce cost to city while increasing level of benefits to participants.
- Secured over \$800,000 in grants from the State of Michigan for waterline repairs, facility repairs, and a new fire engine.
- Lead City negotiator for seven collective bargaining units representing city employees.

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2006 - 2015 *Town Manager*
Enfield, Connecticut

Enfield is a community of 44,654 located in northern Connecticut on the Massachusetts border. The Town government employs approximately 500 full and part-time employees. The General Fund budget for the Town of Enfield is over \$120,000,000.

Notable Accomplishments

- Lead Representative to the Capital Region Council of Governments Sustainable Cities Grant Initiative.
- Worked with State and Federal elected officials to secure funding for important Town projects including Public Safety Radio Upgrades, multi-modal transit center planning, and miscellaneous road projects.
- Facilitated organizational restructuring due to the loss of over \$5 million in state funding.
- Developed self-insured healthcare program that reduced both overall town costs and employee out of pocket costs.
- Partnered with Superintendent of Schools on share services initiative resulting in the combination of Information Technology Department and Building and Grounds Department resulting in significant savings and increased level of services.
- Developed and led organization wide safety program that reduced the number of workplace injuries, reduced overall workers comp cost, and created an open environment for employee engagement that resulted in innovative opportunities to streamline town operations.

2001 - 2006 *City Manager/Personnel Director*
Batavia, New York

Batavia is in Western New York between Buffalo and Rochester. Batavia's population is 16,256 and employs 180 full and part-time employees. Batavia's annual operating budget was over \$20 million.

Notable Accomplishments

- Facilitated Batavia City Centre/Genesee Country Mall redevelopment plan and construction.
- Lead City representative in partnership with New York Department of Transportation for the \$22 million reconstruction of New York Route 5/Main Street.
- Facilitated and Coordinated Citizen Action Team Planning process that involved 88 citizen participants reviewing eight important issues impacting the City's future.
- Introduced the following initiatives that are being studied by the city: Community Broadband Wireless System, Municipal Electric Utility, Swan-Masse Industrial Complex Redevelopment, and the Batavia Iron and Metal Environmental Remediation Study.
- Working with Genesee County and the Town of Batavia and Town of LeRoy on Shared Services Program that include assessment services, fire and ambulance services, and dispatch.
- Handled all aspects of labor relation matters, including the negotiation of five collective bargaining unit contracts.

1997 - 2001 *City Manager*
Louisville, Ohio

Louisville is a growing community located in northeastern Ohio. It has a population of 8,900 and employs 40 full-time employees and 35 volunteer firefighters. Its annual operating budget was over \$9 million.

Notable Accomplishments

- Facilitated revitalization program for downtown, securing input and funding from private and public sources.

Matthew W. Coppler

- Developed financial restructuring strategy to realign operating expenditures to coincide with revenue expectations.
- Facilitated strategic planning process for senior citizen services provided by City, outlining the needs and desires of program eligible citizens for a twenty-year period.
- Lead representative for development of the Community Plan.
- Developed and implemented strategies design to provide more information regarding city operations (newsletters, special brochures, etc.) and allow for citizen input on city operations (neighborhood block parties, community visioning sessions, etc.).

1994 - 1997 ***City Manager/Health Director***
Gallipolis, Ohio

The City of Gallipolis is a historic community along the Ohio River. It has a population of 5,100 and employs 70 full-time employees and 40 volunteer firefighters. The annual operating budget was \$7 million.

Notable Accomplishments

- Facilitated a revitalization program for downtown creating a partnership between downtown businesses and the city.
- Secured grants to begin road reconstruction, improve parks and ease traffic problems along major thoroughfares in preparation for expected growth of the community.
- Successfully negotiated contracts with FOP and AFSCME Unions representing 40+ employees, regaining management rights that had been lost over the years and providing positive incentives to improve employee performances.
- Developed a preservation strategy for historic residential and commercial structures.

1992 – 1994 ***Village Manager***
Carlisle, Ohio

The Municipality of Carlisle is a community of 5,000 people situated in the Great Miami River Valley, 15 miles south of Dayton. Annual operating budget was \$2 million.

Notable Accomplishments

- Lead agent for the Municipality in negotiating the sale of the regional wastewater treatment plant.
- Worked with developers and property owners to stimulate both commercial and residential development.
- Secured nearly \$400,000 in grants.

1991 – 1992 ***County Planner***
Henry County, Ohio

EDUCATION:

Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Master of Public Administration, May 1992. Concentration: Small Local Government Management and Economic Development.

Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Bachelor of Arts, May 1989. Major: Political Science with specialization in Public Administration. Minor: History.

Section 6

Candidate Introduction

Matthew W. Coppler

EDUCATION

Master of Public Administration, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio
Bachelor of Art, Political Science, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

EXPERIENCE

City Manager/Human Resource Director, St. Clair Shores, Michigan	2019 – 2022
City Manager/Human Resource Director, Lincoln Park, Michigan	2015 – 2019
Town Manager, Enfield, Connecticut	2006 – 2015
City Manager, Batavia, New York	2001 – 2006
City Manager/Public Safety Director, Louisville, Ohio	1997 – 2001
City Manager/Health Director, Gallipolis, Ohio	1994 – 1997
Municipal Manager/Finance Director, Carlisle, Ohio	1992 – 1994

BACKGROUND

The City of St. Clair Shores is a built-out bedroom/recreational community located in the northeastern area of Metro Detroit. The contains 11.6 square miles with a population of 58,200 citizens. The General Fund budget my last year was \$37,790,399 with a total budget of \$112,554,966. The City of St. Clair Shores employs approximately 300 full and part-time staff members. I directly supervised 15 staff members. Situated between I-94 to the west and Lake St. Clair to the East, St. Clair Shores draws both boating enthusiasts as well as fisherman from April to October. St Clair Shores is 96% residential, with the remainder of uses being retail, services, and light industry. St. Clair Shores is very proud of its parks and recreational opportunities, boasting three waterfront parks, a large outdoor multi-use field facility, a two-sheet ice arena, and ten neighborhood parks. Because of its outstanding financial stewardship, the tax rate remains lower than most surrounding communities, it offers a high service level, and maintains a General Fund unassigned balance of nearly 60% of annual expenditures.

The three most significant issues facing St. Clair Shores are:

- 1) Flooding caused by storm events. Due to the historic high-water levels of Lake St. Clair, the city has experienced significant waterfront and street flooding during large storm events. The city operates 44 storm pumps located in key areas that are responsible for keeping water out of resident’s homes and from flooding highly traveled streets. The age and the limited capacity of these pumps has resulted in the need to upgrade and increase the operational capacities of the stormwater system within the city.
- 2) Separation of Stormwater and Sanitary Sewers. Nearly 30% of the city is served by a combined storm and sanitary sewer system. With the historically high-water levels of the

Matthew W. Coppler

lake and increased frequency of significant stormwater events, residents in these areas are experiencing sewer backups in their basements, resulting in unsafe living conditions and financial loss.

- 3) Succession Planning for retiring key Department Directors. In the upcoming year, the city will see the retirement of its Library Director, City Assessor, Finance Director, and Police Chief. The labor market for these positions in Michigan is very tight resulting in difficult recruitments to fill the vacancies.

Belle Isle appears to be a financially secure community with a number of opportunities/challenges that align with my skill set and experience. My extensive background in handling municipal finances will help ensure the city's long-term financial stability, while my leadership on infrastructure projects will contribute to resolving resident issues. I'm at a point in my career where I am not looking for the next big thing, I am looking for the right fit where I can provide long-term management and leadership in a community.

I believe that each organization has its unique personality, requiring different approaches for success. What is successful in one organization may not be successful in the next. However, there are certain characteristics core to my management style. Accountability is necessary for an organization to thrive. To achieve this, every employee must know what is expected of them with clear and defined goals set so they understand where they are headed. My role as leader of an organization is to provide general direction, support and resources to the department directors and their staff. To do this requires a lot of communication, flowing both ways, so I can provide what is necessary to them and so I can help steer them in the proper direction. I expect my department directors to be able to operate on their own but understand that they are a part of a larger team with greater goals, and thus must act within the organization's framework. This framework is created by syncing the desires of the Mayor and Council, the abilities of the staff, with the needs of our residents. This is done in a collaborative manner, getting input at the very beginning from all those involved in the process.

My former staff would say that I was fair, honest, and that I listened to their points of view. I feel decision making should be a collaborative process, bringing in varied points of views, which lead to the best possible decisions.

My former elected officials would say that I provided thoughtful advice on policy matters; that I set a positive tone for the organization, treating employees and residents fairly and equitably; I managed the finances of the city/town excellently and left the organization and the community better than before I arrived.

My strengths include motivation, inclusivity in leadership, consistency, and the ability to consider various perspectives. I approach every situation with a positive outlook and believe in achieving successful outcomes.

Matthew W. Coppler

If you were to ask those around me what my weaknesses are you might hear: I tend to take time and consume a lot of information when making a decision: I am not quick to give up on people, often providing many opportunities for failure before moving on; and I am sometimes focused too far down the road on situations, forcing a catch-up mentality to address more immediate issues that arise in the process.

I like to develop key performance indicators for all projects and programs the organization undertakes. Often a good measurement isn't just you are staying within the budget given. You have to look at the number of people benefiting from the program; are you delivering the service when it is needed; are you consuming too many resources to achieve the objective.

In Enfield, Connecticut we were able to renew a road reconstruction referendum project (totaling over \$100,000,000) three times. We also passed referendums for improving our wastewater treatment facility and the renovation and expansion of Enfield High School (a project totaling over \$100,000,000). These are just representative successes the Town of Enfield achieved while I was manager. But what lead to these successes were the goal setting programs we had in place that got the Town Council and staff (and in some cases the BOE) to agree to the what the priorities should be and how we could go about accomplishing these priorities. Additionally, we spent a significant amount of time engaging the residents on these priorities and what they meant to the future of the Town. We did this through numerous public meetings, open houses, staffing booths at community events, utilizing cable tv, and providing information on all social media platforms. To me the success was not the passage of the referendum, it was getting people together to focus on what needed to be done, development of a plan to achieve the goal, and then getting the public to support the goal.

The one regret I have during my career was not being able to bring the Mayor and Council of Batavia together in a way to help it achieve its true potential. During my five years there the Mayor and Council were very fractured, and I found it difficult to gain consensus on a path to follow. This held the community back and led to poor decision making. However, this did challenge me to learn find new ways to work with elected officials and prompted me to gain more experience in goal setting and visioning to help people focus on what they share in common rather than being stuck on what drives them apart.

There have been times in my career when employees have not been able to live up to the expectations of the organization. Usually this is caught early through periodic evaluations. At that early stage, employees are given remedial training or counseling. If performance is not improved after this, more frequent reviews are given and performance standards for shorter periods of time are provided. And if in the end, success with the organization is not possible, then separation of employment is the only option. I am reminded of a department director in one community who I recruited and hired. On the surface, he had the background, knowledge, and experience to be successful. However, he was over the largest department in the organization that had provided many visible, diverse services to the residents. Within the first six months problems began to appear within the department. We provided corrective training and opportunities to

Matthew W. Coppler

learn different techniques to improve his performance. Although there was some improvement, overall, the department was not performing up to expectations. I began regular meetings with him to discuss the department's needs and goals and to provide guidance. Still, the department was falling behind, and the only option left was to terminate his employment and recruit a more able person. I believe I did everything within my ability to help him become successful. But for the good of the organization termination was the only choice.

The challenges I see facing Belle Isle are:

- Working with other levels of government as well as partnering with surrounding municipalities on shared service and planning opportunities.
- Smart growth. With the increase in population in the metro area the city must find ways to accommodate this growth but not adversely impact the quality of life of residents. This challenge includes the need to accommodate the traffic streaming into and out of the city without negatively impacting the residents. Further, finding opportunities to expand the city to allow for responsible growth and open space opportunities.
- Protection of existing property tax base and finding opportunities to responsibly grow the tax base without raising taxes.
- Enhancing communication with residents. This is absolutely necessary not only to keep residents informed as to what is happening but to explain the actions the city is taking and present solid information as to why.
- Developing and leading staff to perform at the desired level determined by the Mayor and City Council as well as meeting the needs of the residents.

During the first six months, my efforts will be focused on:

- Educating myself on the organization, the community, and the individuals that make up Belle Isle. This also includes getting to know the laws of the State of Florida as they relate to operations of municipal government.
- Working with the Mayor and Council and our staff to understand the goals and needs of the city and its residents. This would include some short-term visioning (what do we need to accomplish over the next year).
- Reviewing the City's financial performance and data collection and benchmarking efforts to get an understanding of the City's abilities to meet the expectations of the Mayor, Council, and the residents.
- Meet a lot of residents and business leaders in Belle Isle so they can get to know me, and I can understand what they want from their city government.

I tend to develop very good working relationships with media outlets in the communities I work in. Local reporters have my cellphone number and I respond promptly and fully to their inquiries. I will work with the Mayor and Councilors to develop a communication strategy that will dictate the extent of my presence with media outlets. Professionally, there isn't anything in

Matthew W. Coppler

my background that would be embarrassing to Belle Isle if it became public. In my disclosure documents I did outline two items of a personal nature that I wanted the Mayor and City Council to be aware of.

I believe communication with residents is vital to establishing a trusted relationship with residents. To that end, I utilized all platforms available to the cities/towns that I worked. For instance, when St. Clair Shores was notified by the State that a number of our water potable water samples had high lead levels and that we had to notify residents, we undertook a communication strategy that included Twitter and Facebook updates as well as utilizing the City's cable tv channel to provide programming that explained not only what was going on but how the city was handling the situation and providing resources on how residents could address their concerns.

I do not anticipate anyone contacting the city with negative items about me.

In my life outside the job, I enjoy traveling, running, biking, hiking, training my dog Nyx, and reading great science fiction novels.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES I WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Honest
- Motivated
- Empathetic
- Innovative
- Diplomatic
- Positive

REASON FOR DEPARTING CURRENT POSITION

During thirty years of being a city/town manager, I never had the time to do extensive travelling (especially without the worry of what was going on back at the office). I was financially able, so I decided to step away and spend a year traveling and enjoying life without the worries and stresses that come with being a city/town manager. It provided me the opportunity to take stock of what I wanted to do in the future and where I wanted to do it.

CURRENT / MOST RECENT SALARY

My final compensation at St. Clair Shores was \$145,500, including vehicle allowance.

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
MATTHEW "MATT" WILLIAM COPPLER**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Oakland County, MI	No Records Found
Macomb County, MI	No Records Found
Wayne County, MI	No Records Found
Hartford County, CT	No Records Found
State	
Michigan	No Records Found
Connecticut	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Oakland County, MI	No Records Found
Macomb County, MI	No Records Found
Wayne County, MI	No Records Found
Hartford County, CT	No Records Found
Federal	
Michigan	No Records Found
Connecticut	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Michigan	No Records Found
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Credit

Excellent

Personal Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Sex Offender Registry

Not Listed

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed

Social Media

Nothing of Concern Found

**Background Check Summary for
MATTHEW "MATT" WILLIAM COPPLER**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
MATTHEW "MATT" WILLIAM COPPLER
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: Matthew W. Coppler

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?

Yes No

2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?

Yes No

3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?

Yes No

4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?

Yes No

5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?

Yes No

6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated?

Yes No

7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?

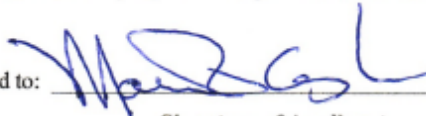
Yes No

8. Please list links to all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.

9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?

Yes No

10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to: 
Signature of Applicant

**Background Check Summary for
MATTHEW "MATT" WILLIAM COPPLER
Personal Disclosure Explanation**

Matthew W. Coppler
Disclosure Attachment

9. You will find two items from my personnel life that will reflect negatively on me. First, in 2007 I lost a home to foreclosure. In 2006 I took the Manager's job in Enfield, Connecticut. When I thought I had my house in Batavia, New York sold, I bought a house in Enfield. However, the financing for the buyer in Batavia fell through and I was left paying a mortgage on two homes. I was not able to afford both mortgages and fell behind on the home in Batavia. The bank did not want to work with me on it and it ended up in foreclosure.

The second item you will find happened in 2012-2013. My wife and I separated and ultimately divorced. During this time, I fell two months behind on my mortgage. The bank filed an action against me in the court to enforce provisions of mortgage agreement. The correction of this was already in place but they still filed. The issue was corrected promptly, and they withdrew the action.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 10. | 2003 (I believe) | named defendant along with Municipality of Carlisle, Ohio Homeowner sued City because of house being built on a former landfill. Case was ultimately dismissed |
| | 2007 | Bank foreclosure on house owned in Batavia, NY |
| | 2012 | Divorce |
| | 2012 | Bank foreclosure on Home. Suit dismissed after payments were made. |
| | 2014(I believe) | CREC sued the Town of Enfield on a zoning dispute and I was a named individual in the suit. It was later settled after I left employment. |

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Bill Lee – Former Councilmember, Town of Enfield, CT 860-966-2033

Mr. Lee was elected to the Council in 2005 and met Mr. Coppler when they interviewed him in 2006. The minority faction when Mr. Coppler was hired became the majority faction in the following election. Mr. Coppler continued to meet all the objectives in front of him and resolved many issues that had been piling up, not the least of which was an overhaul of the budgeting process and some big changes to financial operations.

Mr. Coppler’s job performance was very good, he did everything they asked or expected of him. They were pleased at the progress of community goals during his tenure. He introduced a way to set expectations with the Council on what could be achieved strategically and operationally. Setting expectations as a way to make government more predictable and consistent was his biggest strength in Enfield and what they valued most. He furthered revitalization efforts and took the economic development operation to the next level. He created leadership continuity within the organization because he realized the importance of it.

Overall Mr. Coppler’s hiring decisions were very good. He took some risks on candidates that were worth taking. One or two of them did not work out long term, but that does not reflect on him. Though he had much discretion in hiring, he did not come in and replace the whole staff. He crafted the team and added the talent he was looking for. He made good decisions generally.

Enfield wanted a change agent to clear up old issues and improve operations. Mr. Coppler was successful at initiating some much needed reforms that were very innovative while instituting a better decision making process. He held departments and processes accountable to themselves. Technology has come a long way and they have continued to innovate on the base that he gave them. Making operations consistent and predictable is his legacy in Enfield.

Mr. Coppler was visible and his children were active in the community. He was not necessarily the public relations face of the community but was generally around. He represented Enfield at the state level and with the regional policy and planning board. The Town had better representation on some regional efforts through his involvement. He encouraged Directors to participate in more organizations, be active at the state level, and be visible in the community, which was wonderful.

During Council meetings Mr. Coppler provided his professional opinion when it was requested. This frustrated some individuals because they wanted him to take responsibility for all aspects of a decision. He understood, however, that his role was to educate the Council on options when it was not his decision to make.

Everyone was accommodated when they came into Town Hall. Mr. Coppler brought in good employees and trained them, therefore increasing the professionalism of the office. He encouraged regular dialogue with the school system and superintendent. He led working groups between his team, the Council, and his counterpart on the Board of Education which contributed to the success he had in reforming the budgeting process.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Once a month Mr. Coppler produced a tick list of major goings on. He brought information to leadership to alert them immediately of public safety issues, bad news coming out of the capital, personnel strife, and employee disciplinary issues. When the media was going to print a story, he did a decent job of alerting Council prior to it breaking publicly. Overall, they were very pleased.

The week Mr. Coppler arrived, the Town was faced with a fairly significant contamination problem at one of their high schools. The issue took every available dime out of the fund balance at the time and was going to require massive amounts of investment to remediate quickly. Rather than a “hair on fire” approach, he realized it was a good opportunity for him to introduce himself to those in the state, district, public health officials, and the school system. He put together a fairly large team of people and walked them through the process. He managed a fairly significant public relations effort to alleviate fear. The process was public affairs 101. He managed the dollars, which had an impact on a few different budget cycles. He managed expectations on how to recoup the dollars and made sure that state assistance was available. He then followed through until it was paid. The process spanned four years and he kept everyone apprised of the progress every step of the way.

Enfield was attempting to work with the state on securing their place on a new commuter railway line. Mr. Coppler enjoys regional development and saw the line as a catalyst for Enfield. He made sure the planning and zoning team recognized the opportunity. He actively worked with the Commissioners, Mayors, and Executives in other communities who were vying for the same dollars and opportunity, which was a benefit to Enfield.

One of Mr. Coppler’s successes was in finance. He hired a new Finance Director and transitioned the assessment office to new leadership. On his watch the Town had a pretty significant refinancing of bond obligations. He was very good at explaining the options each budget cycle and what the impacts were. He introduced a tool where they could add and subtract items from the budget to see the immediate impact of decisions. He kept the fund balance adequately managed and capitalized to maintain a healthy bond rating. Enfield has not historically utilized bonding as much as they could have but, in his tenure, they prioritized efforts with road resurfacing. Mr. Coppler presented projects in a way that the Council and residents had good visibility on how the bonding was going to play out over time and the long-term impact. With the reforms they introduced, they were able to adopt a few flat budgets from a mill rate perspective but they saw new investment in items that were long overdue. He was also able to achieve public support for a mill rate increase, which is not easy.

Mr. Coppler was even keeled and hard to rile up. Mr. Lee saw him become upset once in ten years. It occurred in a public forum and his cheeks turned an interesting color of red, but he did not act out. The staff liked his management style, and never complained of outbursts. He had a good rapport with staff, and a comfortable and jovial relationship with them.

When Mr. Coppler was hired, he had some personal finance challenges in the move that did not play well with the media. Councilmembers who intended to select another candidate tried to

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

paint him unfairly. Mr. Lee is not aware of anything related to Mr. Coppler that would concern an employer. He was generally very well liked and left on good terms.

Mr. Lee would hire Mr. Coppler in a minute, he is a good Manager. He was on the younger side when they hired him but always came across as a wise professional which often worked to his advantage. He achieved all they asked of him. He was their longest serving manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Committed,
- Professional,
- Mild manners overall,
- Respectful of public and staff,
- Driven by the objectives he has been tasked with achieving, and
- Pretty humorous and fun to work with. Has a relatively good sense of sarcasm that he shares with leadership in appropriate settings, which helps cut through the tension.

Strengths: Taking an objective, evaluating it, and coming up with different solutions.

Weaknesses: He was very cognizant of what he needed to do but sometimes the new minority figuratively beat him up a little because they did not feel informed. However, if they were paying attention, they would have realized that he was tasked with certain goals. So, dealing with communication channels with a thorny town council was something he might have been able to do a little better, but he could not have made everyone happy all the time.

Thomas Karnes – Former Mayor, City of Lincoln Park, MI 313-999-7429

Lincoln Park went into an emergency management situation for financial issues in 2015 and they did not have a City Manager at the time. They conducted a nationwide search and narrowed the field down to two candidates. They hired Mr. Coppler. Mr. Karnes and Mr. Coppler worked very well together, better than anyone else Mr. Karnes has worked with. They did not always agree but they had a great relationship.

Mr. Coppler dealt with the Regional Transitional Advisory Board, which is a state board that monitored the City after the emergency manager left. Mr. Coppler had to make monthly reports to them and work with them to bring the City back up to standard. He brought fundamentals back to the City. For example, staff had to have a purchase order and the money had to be in the budget before they could buy something. He is very detail oriented and ensured that all the i's were dotted and all the t's were crossed.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Mr. Coppler was active in the community. He participated in festivals and went over and above what was expected. He took the lead on a storm water initiative with the County, which added to several million dollars, and played a significant part on the Board as the services transitioned. He managed employees well and was a positive force at City Hall. He was a good problem solver, he did not come down on the staff he worked with them to resolve the issues.

Mr. Coppler’s leadership was positive. He grew the fund balance to where they wanted it. The City is now receiving grants because of the relationships he built at the state level and with the treasury. For example, they received a 400k grant to design and build a new court building and police department. He was open to outside opinions and listened, analyzed the data, to see if it would work. He was not ostentatious, he was easy to work with and talk to. When someone comes to City Hall and he walked by, he greeted them and asked what is going on. He did not tell them he was the Manager, he just wanted them to have a positive experience at City Hall.

Mr. Karnes felt that a part time employee should be hired full time but Mr. Coppler had some concerns and did not believe it was in the best interest of the City. Even though they have a good relationship Mr. Coppler did what he thought was right in areas that he had responsibility for. When it was a Council decision, he did what they asked him to do.

They had a 20 million dollar bond but went into emergency management and lost their bond rating. They were unable to use that money to fix the roads, but Mr. Coppler found a way to get the bond done over ten years at 3 ½ percent, which is significant. They were able to move forward because of the research he did and the plan he implemented.

The final hiring decision belonged to Mr. Coppler and he chose well. He really did a great job for Lincoln Park, he was a smart man with many ideas. He motivated those he worked with. They discussed a Farmer’s market and Mr. Coppler inspired the staff to move the project forward. He was innovative while also maintaining the organization as a high level. He only implemented change to improve operations.

As President of the Rotary Club, Mr. Coppler was involved in the community. In fact, he was involved in the community in many facets. He made presentations to the police department on their use of Narcan which was successful. He was in a service organization and assisted in handing out US flags at the Memorial Day Parade. He attended Lincoln Park Days, Cinco de Mayo, Art in the Park, and the Thursday Night Concert Series. He was very engaging with the public. He was genuinely pleased to see residents, have conversations, and help them out. He listened politely and smiled. He represented the City at the wastewater authority and with the Transitional Advisory Board and did well in both regards.

Mr. Karnes works as a substitute teacher at the school. Mr. Coppler kept him informed primarily through email or text. After school Mr. Karnes comes to City Hall and they would sit down and talk about the issues for an hour or more.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

An employee wanted to continue working for the City but was being harassed and had decided to resign. Mr. Karnes was once a Police Chief and dealt with these types of issues, so Mr. Coppler asked his advice. They first determined why the Department Head did not follow procedure in taking the issue to human resources, which would open an investigation. They worked together to ensure that everything was done in the appropriate way.

The receivership transition was the largest problem that Mr. Coppler solved. He brought everyone together, generated reports and presented them to the State. They were scheduled to be under the state’s jurisdiction for two years but because Mr. Coppler did such a great job, they were released a year early. He improved the City website and helped them have a better presence on the internet. They filmed messages from the schools and various departments that are available online.

Lincoln Park had a massive storm where 950 homes were flooded. A few months prior to this storm Mr. Coppler revamped their emergency operations so everything was in place when the storm happened. He led the process and sent teams out to address the issues. At the next Council meeting not one person complained that something had not been done. The effort was significant and included arranging special pickups to haul away 500+ tons of damage debris. He did a great job leading the process and keeping everyone focused.

While you may see small signs of stress in Mr. Coppler’s expression, he does not verbally show any stress. He was never short with anyone and remained calm and even keeled.

Nothing in Mr. Coppler’s past has been controversial. He was an asset to Lincoln Park in every way. All the Councilmembers have similar positive opinions of his management, but might have different feelings about projects that did not get done.

Mr. Karnes did want Mr. Coppler to leave but it was best for his family. Mr. Karnes publicly shared appreciation for Mr. Coppler and his efforts during City addresses.

Mr. Karnes was not happy about going into the emergency management situation because they had a different option available, but the Council voted it down. However, the very best thing that came out of the emergency management situation was hiring Mr. Coppler. Mr. Karnes would hire him again. Whether the community is well established or one that needs repair, he will do a good job. He is a great fit for a community that has big dreams and wants to move forward.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Manages employees well,
- Good problem solver,
- Organization,
- Personable,
- Intelligent, and
- Inspires staff.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Strengths: Does not get worked up or take things personal, organization skills, worked extremely well with the state and treasury.

Weaknesses: He generally came in around 8 and stayed until 6 most nights. On council meeting nights he was at City Hall until 11. One councilmember criticized him for not being there right at 8, which is unfair because he did not have set hours and he always put his time in. He was a little frustrated over the criticism, which was understandable considering the number of hours he worked.

Chris Vitale – Mayor Pro Tem, City of St. Clair Shores, MI 586-801-4732

Mr. Vitale has known Mr. Coppler since 2019. The decision to hire Mr. Coppler was not unanimous. He came across a little stiff in his interview and some thought he was insincere because a few of his answers were non-committal. He was hired and they quickly realized that this assessment was not accurate. His stiffness is more of a charming awkwardness, and it does not come from pride or arrogance. Mr. Vitale is grateful they did not overlook Mr. Coppler, he was a great manager for their community.

The City has not had any issues with their staff, which indicates that Mr. Coppler made good hiring decisions. His decisions in general were also good. He was very innovative and brought ideas from other communities that he worked.

St. Clair Shores does not have a residency requirement, though Mr. Coppler purchased a home in the community. He is often out in the community and rides his bicycle around town as often as the weather allows. Former managers have come across as rude or arrogant, but he is self-effacing and always interacts very well with the public, even the difficult ones.

Communication is another area that Mr. Coppler excelled over previous managers. He instituted a ‘City Manager’s Follow Up’ during Board meetings so that he could keep them informed, and his work was always high quality.

During covid Mr. Coppler led the staff to resolve issues and address concerns. The City experienced flooding and high water levels, and he led efforts to provide residents with sand and sandbags. He did a good job putting it all together.

St. Clair Shores is very conservative with their budget and Mr. Coppler understood that immediately. He was one of the few managers they have had that preserved and even grew the surplus, which was much appreciated. He completed his work in a timely manner. He was free and honest in his communications with the elected officials, and while he sometimes blew steam now and again, he always behaved very professionally.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Through his work in government, and in common life events, Mr. Coppler has handled stress well. Nothing in his conduct or background would concern a reasonable person. He retired from St. Clair Shores. He worked well with every elected official.

Mr. Vitale wishes that they could hire Mr. Coppler again. Mr. Vitale enjoyed his time on Council the most when Mr. Coppler was the manager. When the Council received notice from Mr. Coppler, they first felt shock and then dread. He is a diamond in the rough and is very missed in St. Clair Shores.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Professional,
- Self-effacing,
- Friendly,
- Professional,
- Always neat in appearance, and
- Approachable.

Strengths: Follows through, always very polite and professional, never confrontational, carried out the wishes of Council without pushback, knew his role.

Weaknesses: He has a nice personality but he comes across a little stiff in situations where he has to be a salesman for the community. That said, he is very good with the budget, public works, and the nuts and bolts of projects.

[CB&A Note: Mr. Walby did not have time for a full interview.]

Kip Walby – Mayor, City of St. Clair Shores, MI 586-335-8818

Mr. Walby worked with Mr. Coppler from 2019 to 2022. Mr. Coppler was an excellent manager for St. Clair Shores and deserves high marks for his work there.

Overall Mr. Coppler made good decisions when hiring and in general, he is very smart. He was visible in the community.

Mr. Coppler has not been involved in anything controversial. Mr. Walby would hire Mr. Coppler and they were sorry to see him leave, he did an excellent job.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Detail oriented,
- Principled,
- Intelligent, and
- Hard worker.

Strengths: Very detail oriented, ethical, hard worker.

Weaknesses: Not the best people person.

**Christopher Bromson – Former City Attorney and Public Service Director, Enfield, CT
860-810-0017**

Mr. Bromson became the City Attorney for Enfield in 1999. He was the Town Attorney and Acting Town Manager when Mr. Coppler was hired in 2005. They worked together for the ensuing ten years. The Town Manager is typically over the Public Safety department but at that time they took over EMS service from the County and wanted to revamp the department so they asked Mr. Bromson to lead the change. He worked closely with Mr. Coppler on the transition.

Mr. Coppler was an excellent manager. Mr. Bromson has been in the community for over thirty years and can attest that Mr. Coppler is of the finest caliber. Mr. Coppler can recall detailed information on line items for each department during the budget process. He shepherded a high school project costing \$90 million. He also led public works and road projects, not only convincing the voters to vote for a referendum but also getting the bonds in place and seeing the projects through to completion. He was entirely responsive to citizens and elected officials, at all hours of the day. If an accident happened at 2 am he wanted to know about it immediately so he could inform the Council. He made sure the elected officials had up to the minute information.

Lincoln Park is small enough that they have had some nepotism in the past but not during Mr. Coppler’s tenure. He made thoughtful decisions and always hired the best person. Many that he hired are still in place. When making decisions in general he did not rush and was very thoughtful. He analyzed the information, was methodical, and puts the hard work into decisions to make them successful. He did the heavy lifting, which some managers are not willing to do.

Mr. Coppler was constantly looking for innovation. He brought in speakers to Director meetings and showed videos, one of a captain on a submarine who inspired his crew to become the best crew in the Navy. A manager has a tremendous workload, but he had a vision for the staff and took the time to inspire them.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

The Town had several workman’s comp injuries and their insurance skyrocketed. Mr. Bromson and Mr. Coppler brought in safety experts, trained employees, and provided courses to address the issues. Their efforts resulted in lower rates and are now a legacy.

Any community would be lucky to have Mr. Coppler when it comes to school safety. After the Sandy Hook shooting, he was the first manager in the state of Connecticut to create a security officer program which put a retired police officer in every classroom. They patterned the Connecticut state law related to hiring school security officers after their program in Enfield. Mr. Coppler was integral to the process.

Mr. Coppler is a family man, his children were in high school and on the swim team and track. He attended events and marched in the Memorial Day parade. He becomes part of any community he is in. He was very respectful with the public. He took the time to listen and hear them out. The staff was tasked with customer service, which was a priority to him, and asked to listen and resolve the issues. He was not a show off or braggart, he has a low key personality and a great sense of humor. He was loyal and hard working, he takes his job seriously and puts the community even above the staff. Public service is in his core.

Mr. Coppler was really good with budgeting and cutting costs. His memory was an asset. He was willing to invest in valuable programs. They joined metro traffic to be eligible for state and federal reimbursement but he looked for other funding sources as well. He accomplished tasks in a timely manner. He was a really cool, collected person. He never lost his temper and always remained calm. He was very patient with everyone.

Professionally Mr. Coppler has not been involved in any controversy. He has been through some challenges in his personal life that are no different from what many others have gone through, but none of these challenges would lead to anyone questioning his integrity or character. He left Enfield because he wanted a change and was looking for a new horizon.

Mr. Bromson would instantly hire Mr. Coppler. He was excellent in Enfield and can manage any community, including a large city like Dallas. Mr. Bromson enjoyed working with him and misses him. He was well respected by the Council, Mayors, and Directors and everyone in Enfield has a positive opinion of him.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Honest,
- Hard working,
- Good humored,
- Conscientious, and
- Family man.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Strengths: Great work ethic, mind for numbers, great at finance and budgets, great power of recall - almost a photographic memory, nice way about him – midwestern charm, low key, supportive of staff, excellent at preparing and giving presentations, following through on major projects.

Weaknesses: Works too hard and did not take vacation.

Steve Bielenda – Former Human Resources Director and Current Assistant Town Manager, Town of Enfield, CT 860-209-8916

Mr. Bielenda was hired by Mr. Coppler in 2010 and they worked together for five years. Mr. Bielenda has nothing but the utmost respect for Mr. Coppler.

They had a great working relationship. Mr. Coppler was very effective and gave Directors the autonomy to do what they needed to do and use their imagination. He did not micromanage employees, but he always had their back and did what was needed to get the job done.

In Enfield Mr. Coppler did not hire most employees, he deferred to Human Resources and the Directors, and then let them live with their choices. He did well hiring personnel at the Director level. Once he trusts the Directors he is hands off. His decisions are good.

Mr. Coppler keeps the organization functioning at a high level and is selectively a change agent when something is not to his standards, but not for the sake of change. He observes and takes everything in before making a change. When something is running well, he leaves it alone. He tries to bring staff along and accommodate them but will make the change with or without them.

Mr. Coppler attended parades and was fully immersed in local events like the farmer’s market. He was big on customer service and liked walking a part of town that had issues to see the improvements that were made. He and his family were completely embedded in the community.

Anyone who came into city hall could meet with Mr. Coppler, he had an open door and gave them time. He was even keeled and never became angry. He has a great deal of patience, he understands that ultimately he works for the public.

They spoke almost daily and kept each other informed. At times people went directly to Mr. Coppler to sidestep Mr. Bielenda but he deferred them back to Human Resources. He made sure the process was credible and did not play favorites.

Mr. Coppler is a leader, he is cooperative and works with others. He realizes that problems are best solved at the lowest levels because those in the trenches know what is happened. They have an executive safety committee that works with issues like workplace safety. Mr. Coppler never took over but he exerted influence when something was not moving forward. He trusted the Directors to resolve issues and asked for feedback and updates on the process.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Ambulance drivers had to carry an aluminum tank with oxygen, which is very heavy, in the backpack that they took on every call which led to a significant increase in workplace injuries. They only used the tank for 2% of the calls but carried it every call. After speaking with staff Mr. Coppler decided they could leave the tank in the van and grab it as needed. Injuries have decreased. He listens to staff because they have information that he does not know while also encouraging them to suggest ideas for improvement.

Enfield did not have a Budget Director, Mr. Coppler managed the budget. For five years they were flatlined and did not raise the millage rate, which was not easy but those were his marching orders from the Council and he accomplished it. He was very responsive to the Council and asked staff to immediately look into their requests.

Mr. Coppler was not involved in anything controversial and he left Enfield on his own volition. Mr. Bielenda is not aware of anything in Mr. Coppler’s conduct or background that would concern a reasonable person. The only person who might disagree with this reference was a cranky resident who hated everyone, but he has since passed away.

Mr. Bielenda would absolutely hire Mr. Coppler and highly respects him.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Good sense of humor,
- Dedicated,
- Hard worker,
- Very smart,
- Not a touchy-feely guy and is careful about who he lets in his inner circle, and
- Ethical.

Strengths: Silent leader, worked hard, led by example, tough when needed, had high expectations of every Director and made sure they met them but he accommodated them as needed.

Weaknesses: One time they had a miscommunication but they talked it out. It was very minor and due to style or nuance rather than being a weakness.

Debra McCarthy – Former Administrative Assistant, Town of Enfield, CT 860-324-1799

Ms. McCarthy was hired shortly after Mr. Coppler was hired in 2006. Mr. Coppler was an excellent manager, he is meticulous, great with numbers and has a memory like no one that Ms. McCarthy has ever met. He was always very professional. He made good decisions both in general and when hiring personnel.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

Mr. Coppler was innovative and a change agent in bringing the organization up to a high level, and then he maintained the organization at that level. He was always out in the community and attended almost every event, even grocery store events or social settings on the green.

When it came to sharing information, Mr. Coppler told Ms. McCarthy what she needed to know. As the secretary, she did not need to know everything that he knew. He was both a leader who rallied employees around the council’s vision and a manager who ran operations.

Customer service is very important to Mr. Coppler. He created and implemented a customer service policy. They framed the policy and hung it in every single office.

Mr. Coppler dug deeper into the budget than most managers that Ms. McCarthy has worked for. He was very responsive. He never showed that he was under stress, he always kept a calm and professional demeanor. He solved problems.

While Mr. Coppler had to have been involved in controversy, he was previously employed in Batavia, a very political town with an 11-member Council. He did not discuss any of these situations with the staff in Enfield. He left Enfield because he had been the manager for quite some time and no longer had ties to the community and he was ready for a change. They were sorry to see him go. Ms. McCarthy does not know anyone who would disagree with the comments in this reference.

Ms. McCarthy would hire Mr. Coppler, he is a good manager. He is very professional and did not bring his personal life to the office.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Smart,
- Innovative,
- Quirky,
- Personable,
- Outgoing, and
- Finance.

Strengths: Memory and working with numbers, very professional.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Edward Zelnak – City Attorney, City of Lincoln Park, MI 313-971-1565

Mr. Zelnak has known Mr. Coppler since 2015. Mr. Zelnak was the internal City Attorney and is now the external City Attorney. They spoke daily and during a crisis they even spoke on the

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

weekends. Mr. Zelnak was on the interview committee when Mr. Coppler was hired, and he was the top choice for everyone on the panel. He never promised them the pie in the sky, he just wanted to get the job done. Mr. Coppler was very adept at not micromanaging the organization, he allowed department heads to lead their division. They worked together on litigation, city issues, basement flooding, retiree healthcare taken away by the state, and police department issues. He understands more than anyone else Mr. Zelnak has known.

Mr. Zelnak has represented governments for over 40 years. Mr. Coppler is the most intelligent, efficient and brilliant manager Mr. Zelnak has ever met. Mr. Coppler is just incredible and he has it all together. He has the right mix of sensitivity to the public and elected officials, and common sense. He did everything he set out to do. His leaving was the greatest loss to the City, they have never had a manager as talented or skilled as Mr. Coppler.

Mr. Coppler was innovative, a change agent and he maintained an organization at a high level without wearing staff out. He was very laid back but highly motivated. The change that he brought to their City, which was in state receivership, was phenomenal.

Mr. Coppler was involved in Rotary, various community organizations, and with the school district. He met with potential developers and visited sites to see the issues firsthand. He made decisions after gathering all the information, and always made the right decision.

When it comes to working with the public, Mr. Zelnak never heard a negative word from a resident about Mr. Coppler. The citizens came to the Council meeting for entertainment as their community was a cross between Fernwood Tonight and Saturday Night Live. Residents get up to the microphone to bring up goofy items but Mr. Coppler took note of their concerns and addressed them. He remained energetic during entire tenure.

Mr. Coppler kept everyone informed through emails and texts. When the issue was private he asked Mr. Zelnak to call him. His financial skills were good and besides having a balanced budget, he made sure that they have reserves. They were in the negative when the state took receivership. He was able to bring them into positive figures without cutting services.

Many, many homes were flooded during a storm. Mr. Coppler had a crisis team ready to calculate damages and the cause, whether it was government system related or an act of nature. He arranged for the cleanup of furniture and followed through with the pickup. He negotiated favorable rates for the nine million tons of junk hauled away. Mr. Zelnak has lived in the community since 1978 and has seen several storms that caused flooding. Mr. Coppler was the first to handle the situation appropriately, he was incredibly impressive.

When Mr. Coppler took time off, he sent a memo stating where he was going and who was in charge. He checked in while he was gone to make sure everything was going well. He was more accessible and responsive than anyone in the community, including the elected officials.

Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler

During a physical altercation between two elected officials Mr. Coppler called Mr. Zelnak to come and help. By the time Mr. Zelnak arrived, everyone had calmed down. This incident was the only time Mr. Coppler asked for help, but he was able to calm them down without playing favorites. After they vented he took the blame for misspeaking even though the altercation was not his fault. He understood, though, that his apology helped the elected officials save face.

Lincoln Park’s demographics were mostly Caucasian in the past, but they now have a significant Latino population. Mr. Coppler did very well in making the newcomers feel part of the community. He promoted events that appeal to different community groups to help them become immersed in the City. He had open arms for everyone in their community and was too good to be true. He never sought media exposure and he was entirely perfect compared to other Managers.

Mr. Zelnak cannot think of any controversy related to Mr. Coppler and he would know if something was out there. They are building a new court facility for three communities and Mr. Coppler took the lead to make sure everyone was treated fairly and to avoid controversy. It is rare to see someone so in tune with the nerve centers. He was aware of what was going on and had tremendous experience in addressing issues and bringing everyone together. He was good at consensus building. His background was so clean.

Mr. Zelnak would hire Mr. Coppler, he is like the Dad on Leave it to Beaver. He is soft spoken and never raises his voice. He hired young college students and trained them as interns and then employees. Mr. Zelnak did not want to lose him and would give him a contract for life if possible. He is a brilliant Manager who understands people and how to put something together, even when the involved parties are at odds.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Humble,
- Brilliant,
- Empathetic,
- Friendly,
- Infectious smile,
- Deliberate, and
- Determined.

Strengths: Working with people, time management, not getting caught in wars, keeps peers on the same goal path to get things done, collaborative, makes things better.

Weaknesses: Works more than 8 hours a day and will not let others buy him coffee.

**Reference Notes
Matthew “Matt” W. Coppler**

Jennifer Richardson – Human Resource Manager, City of Lincoln Park, MI 734-778-0817

Ms. Richardson met Mr. Coppler in 2015 and reported directly to him until 2019. Mr. Coppler made good decisions in hiring and in general. Lincoln Park had an emergency manager before Mr. Coppler came on board and they worked together until the State decided that the City no longer needed the emergency manager. Mr. Coppler implemented many processes to keep the organization moving and going in the right direction. He continued to help the organization perform better and kept everyone on task.

Mr. Coppler was visible in the community, and he was great with the residents. He went to the counter to talk to them and returned their phone calls. He worked in the booth for every City event and interacted well with residents. He made runs to the store to get candy for the booth.

They frequently interacted in person as their offices were next to each other. Mr. Coppler was very interactive with the staff. He had good financial skills and accomplished tasks in a timely manner. Only people who know him well can pick up that he is feeling stressed, he handles difficult situations well.

A heavy rainfall affected a large number of homes with basement flooding. Mr. Coppler brought the emergency management team together and made sure that everything was moving in the right direction.

The new marijuana law has been controversial. Mr. Coppler gathered information for the Mayor, Council and staff. He has not caused or been personally involved in any controversy. Even people who do not agree with what they are being asked to do will say that he is a good manager.

Ms. Richardson would hire Mr. Coppler and wanted him to stay in Lincoln Park. He was a seasoned manager. He walked into an emergency situation and knew what needed to be done.

Words or phrases used to describe Matthew Coppler:

- Knowledgeable,
- Smart,
- Caring,
- Good leader,
- Easy to work with, and
- Experienced.

Strengths: Very easy to work with, very knowledgeable, makes himself available to the staff.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Macomb Daily, The (MI)
April 5, 2022

St. Clair Shores extends offer to city manager candidate

Author/Byline: Susan Smiley

St. Clair Shores City Council voted unanimously at its April 4 meeting to extend an offer of employment to Dustin Lent to serve as the next City Manager of the city.

Outgoing City Manager **Matthew Coppler** came to the city in July of 2019 from Lincoln Park and has chosen to leave city government and pursue a different career path. Lent is currently the City Administrator in Southgate, where he has worked since 2015.

Lent was one of four final candidates interviewed on March 28 by council members and city staff. More than 60 candidates applied for the job. "I was looking for the candidate that was the most like **Matt**," said Councilman Chris Vitale. "No one was happy that Matt wanted to move on, but we understand people have lives outside of us."

All councilpersons were in agreement that Lent was their top candidate. "We were all on the same page and ranked the candidates in the same fashion," said Councilwoman Candice Rusie.

Mayor Kip Walby complimented **Coppler** on his tenure. "I appreciate your top-notch professionalism," said Walby. "You jumped in with both feet and never lost a step. I appreciate what you have done and the city will miss you."

Rusie pointed out **Coppler** was tasked with running the city during the challenging COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. But, she said, he handled it all well. "The last two and a half years were not the best of times because of COVID," said Rusie. "There were a lot of great things but a lot of headaches and atypical circumstances. We are grateful for your leadership that helped us get through tough and unprecedented times. You handled it the best we could have hoped for."

Coppler complimented the city employees, Mayor and City Council members on their willingness to come together for the benefit of the city. "During COVID everyone stepped up and there was never a time when we were going through the different changes in regulations and policies that the staff was not there for the residents," said **Coppler**. "I've worked in city government for many years and this is one of the best cities I've ever worked in from the residents to the elected officials."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://www.wxyz.com/news/hundreds-of-thousands-spent-on-ongoing-rat-problem-in-st-clair-shore>

February 23, 2022

Hundreds of thousands spent on ongoing rat problem in St. Clair Shore

Author: 7 Action News

Rat sightings are nothing new in metro Detroit, especially in areas close to water. People in St. Clair Shores have been seeing more of these rodents running around, and the city has suggestions on how residents can help as they work to fight the issue. Residents say the rat issue is nothing they are getting used to.

"I looked closer, and it took off and it was a rat," Dave Efimoff, who lives on St. Gertrude Street, said. A couple days after seeing a rat on his street, he noticed small footprints in the snow. "I took pictures when we get snow and I have been seeing some tracks," Efimoff said. He posted the pictures to a Facebook group and was surprised by responses. "It also sparked a lot of conversation about how bad it is back here," he said. Underneath his posts, people who live in the community shared recent photos of rats they found on their property. One man commented saying "2 in 2 days." These sightings are nothing new for St. Clair Shores residents. "It's an issue that most waterfront communities have," City Manager **Matthew Coppler** said.

To help address the issue, the city offers residents black rat poison boxes. **Coppler** admits that more needs to be done. "We recognize that there has to be a better way to go about this. The status quo is not something we want to accept either," he said. **Coppler** told 7 Action News that the city is working on improving their current rat program. "We are probably spending \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year in just that program. And it appears that we aren't making a lot of progress in the elimination," he explained.

Coppler says through better enforcement and communication, the rat population can be reduced in the city. He says the key to this is the community working together, starting by keeping their yards clean. "Firewood — not having that on the ground is a huge issue because that really does provide good harborage. Or setting old equipment in your back yard," **Coppler** said.

Efimoff is also encouraging neighbors to do their part. "Keep things clean. I know that a lot of people want to feed the birds — that creates a mess and attracts other animals. Keeping the property clean. Keeping your home and your garage sealed to where they can't get into areas," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://patch.com/michigan/stclairshores/st-clair-shores-nets-473-000-infrastructure-grant-state>
June 3, 2021

St. Clair Shores Nets \$473,000 Infrastructure Grant From State
The money will be used for a pair of necessary projects, city officials told Patch.
Author: Joey Oliver

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer this week announced grants under the umbrella of the MI Clean Water plan, aimed at helping communities strengthen drinking water infrastructure. Among the Michigan communities receiving money from the state through the program? St. Clair Shores — which is netting \$473,750 in one of the grants. "The City is very fortunate to receive this funding from the State of Michigan," St. Clair Shores City Manager **Matthew Coppler** told Patch Wednesday. "It will go a long way in making the City's water infrastructure more secure and reliable for years to come and insure safe drinking water for our residents."

Coppler said the grant funding will be used in a two-pronged project, with more than \$343,000 going toward certifying the city's water service lines. In this project, the city plans to have a vendor go out and verify the service line material of about 375 houses in an attempt to identify and replace lead water service lines. "Verification will allow the city to more accurately develop the inventory of all service lines so appropriate resources can be budgeted to expediently remove the lead service lines in our community," **Coppler** said.

The second part of the grant will update the city's water asset management plan, **Coppler** said. The city's engineering firm will update all the field location gate valves, hydrants and connections, and use information from the service line project to update the city's GIS.

More than \$5 million in funding was distributed statewide for local projects, state officials said. "Since I first took office, I made it clear that we are going to rebuild Michigan's crumbling infrastructure from roads to pipes to dams across our state," Whitmer said in a statement. "As we put Michigan back to work, we're excited to provide our local partners with the support that helps us protect Michigan's water resources from source to tap. Making these investments into our most precious resource allows us to invest directly in public health, help jumpstart our economy, and protect the environment."

The MI Clean Water plan is a \$500 million investment announced by the Whitmer administration in October to rebuild the state's water infrastructure. The plan marks a significant investment after what some officials called decades of underinvestment in Michigan's infrastructure.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.downriversundaytimes.com/2019/09/20/lincoln-park-bids-farewell-to-Coppler-as-zech-steps-into-interim-role/>
September 20, 2019

Lincoln Park bids farewell to Coppler as Zech steps into interim role

Author: Sue Suchyta

Exiting City Manager **Matt Coppler** received praise and well-wishes at the Sept. 16 city council meeting, at which former Southgate City Administrator John Zech was named interim city manager.

Coppler, who accepted a position in St. Clair Shores, thanked the mayor and city council for their support over the past four years. “Whether you believe it or not, it has been truly great working with each and every one of you, and I think we have been able to work together to get a lot accomplished,” **Coppler** said. “I appreciate that. You made the job a lot easier, when you are dealing with people who understand what we’re trying to do, and I think each one of you understands the goals of making the community a better place.”

Coppler also thanked the city’s staff for their hard work over the past four years of his tenure in Lincoln Park, and expressed appreciation to the city’s residents. “When you look around the city today, the city is on the right path,” **Coppler** said.

Mayor Thomas Karnes kidded **Coppler** a final time about him not being the city council’s first choice for city administrator when he was hired four years ago. “It is fortunate how things work out sometimes,” Karnes said. “You have been a great addition to the city. We wish you the best, and success in St. Clair Shores. You will be remembered for a long time here.”

Zech of Canton Township, who will fill the position until a permanent city manager is chosen, likely for at least six months, has served as an assistant to the city manager in Plymouth, as city manager in Wayne, and as interim city manager in Allen Park. Most recently Zech served as the city administrator for Southgate, and as a board member of Lincoln Park’s Receivership Transition Advisory Board.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Voice
August 6, 2019

St. Clair Shores signs contract for new city manager

Author: Mitch Hotts

It looks like longtime St. Clair Shores City Manager Michael Smith will be running the city's operations for another couple of months. The St. Clair Shores City Council on Monday approved a contract for **Matthew Coppler** to become the new city manager. However, **Coppler**, the current city manager of Lincoln Park, has a stipulation in his existing contract calling for a 60-day notice of his departure before he can head over to Macomb County. "He hasn't provided that notice yet," Smith told councilmembers at Monday evening's meeting.

If **Coppler** signs the employment agreement as expected, he will become the administrative leader in St. Clair Shores in early October, officials said. According to the nine-page contract, **Coppler** will earn a \$135,000 annual salary. He will also receive \$500 a month for auto expenses, along with four weeks of vacation during his first year of employment and five weeks afterward. **Coppler**, who resides in Southgate, also must reside within 25 miles of St. Clair Shores. Including the cost of his fringe benefits, his total compensation package will be worth about \$190,235, according to the agenda packet.

Coppler will undergo an annual performance review by the City Council between April 1 and June 30. City Attorney Robert Ihrle said the council "has the authority to make adjustments" to **Coppler**'s contract following the review.

Coppler, who's originally from Ohio, has worked in Lincoln Park since 2015. He helped the city emerge from state control due to a financial emergency. He has developed a capital plan to restore roads, improve the city's water and wastewater utilities and address the city's aging buildings and vehicles. His resume includes city manager positions in Enfield, Conn., and cities in New York and Ohio.

Smith, who has been the city's top administrator since 2014, this past December announced his intention to retire in August. He had previously served as the assistant city manager for nine years. In 2018, Smith announced he planned to retire and has delayed his departure date at least once as the search for a new manager continued.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://wdet.org/2017/08/01/lincoln-park-released-from-receivership/>
August 1, 2017

Lincoln Park Released from Receivership

Author: Bre'Anna Tinsley

Lincoln Park has full control once again. The city of Lincoln Park has been released from financial receivership. The Detroit suburb declared a financial emergency in 2014 due to problems funding pensions and health care costs.

Matt Coppler is Lincoln Park's city manager. He says a lot of progress has been made under receivership. "Moving forward we are going to continue with those best management practices that we put in place while under receivership," **Coppler** says. "We're getting ready to redo our master plan, which is a big tool for us, from the development perspective and control the destiny of the city."

Coppler says Lincoln Park has already set aside about \$10 million to help fund pensions. But, he says there is still more work to be done in order for the city's pensions to be fully funded.

The state has also released Pontiac from receivership, 10 years after declaring a financial emergency there. An emergency manager ran the city from 2009 to 2013, and gave way to a transition advisory board in 2013. The board has been dissolved, and city officials now have full power to make decisions without state guidance. The Michigan Department of Treasury says Pontiac ended its 2016 fiscal year with a general fund balance of \$14 million.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)
March 22, 2019

Downriver officials mull the pros and cons of recreational marijuana

Author: Mark E. Lett

There's no rush among Downriver communities to clear the way for commercial sales of recreational marijuana. Since Michigan voters approved a ballot proposal in November to legalize recreational weed, nine Downriver communities have acted to reject or opt out of pot sales. Nine others are taking a wait-and-see position.

Among those opting to prohibit commercial sales of marijuana in their communities are Allen Park, Flat Rock, Gibraltar, Huron Township, Melvindale, Riverview, Trenton, Woodhaven and Wyandotte. Still reviewing their options are Brownstown Township, Ecorse, Grosse Ile Township, Lincoln Park, River Rouge, Rockwood, Romulus, Southgate and Taylor.

Lincoln Park is the most recent community to address the matter, holding a public hearing on March 11. The vast number of people who spoke were in favor of allowing marijuana sales in the city, with many talking about the influx of tax money the city would receive by allowing the sales. Some people gave emotional testimony detailing how marijuana allowed them to end their opioid addictions.

City Manager **Matt Coppler** said the matter would be decided "over the next few months," but Assistant City Attorney Amy Higgins had a message for everyone. "Everything about this is going to end up in court," she said, talking about how the voter-initiated marijuana measure has a lot of unanswered questions that likely will be decided by a judge.

A number of officials said they are looking to Lansing, and to their lawyers, for additional information to clarify the impact and liability of issuing — or denying — business licenses for recreational pot shops. Some communities are taking the issue to public hearings or meetings to gauge the sentiment of residents now, some three months after voters have spoken.

Recreational marijuana became legal in Michigan on Dec. 6. There have been no sales while state officials and regulators settle on the rules and regulations to manage the new market. Most observers expect that process to continue well into 2019, with sales likely to begin in 2020.

Voters in all but one Downriver community approved the November pot proposal. Only Grosse Ile Township — by a 51-49 percent result — rejected the measure. River Rouge had the highest percentage of voters in favor — 73 percent — followed by Ecorse at 68 percent. The Grosse Ile Township board is likely to "honor the expressed will of our voters" and pass a measure to prohibit recreational marijuana establishments, township Supervisor Brian Loftus said.

Loftus said the township likely will follow a model ordinance suggested by the Michigan Townships Association. That document proposes that violators be fined "not less than \$100 nor

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

more than \$500." Each day of a continuing violation would be considered a separate offense. Loftus said the township board will consider the measure "fairly soon."

River Rouge Mayor Michael Bowdler said his city allows medical marijuana facilities and currently has four of them. While those businesses have flourished, he said, he's hoping council members vote along with him not to allow recreational sales in the city. "We've not had one police call to any of the dispensaries that have been open for two years," he said. "I can't say that about my bars. They're called to those establishments once a month." As far as expanding and allowing recreational pot businesses to locate in Rouge: "I think we've got enough right now," Bowdler said. "In fact, I know we've got enough. But I'm only one vote out of seven."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)

March 22, 2019

State treasurer announces grants for four Downriver distressed municipalities

Author: Jackie Martin

Four Downriver communities are receiving a hefty chunk of a \$2.7 million grant awarded to a total of 11 municipalities through the Financially Distressed Cities, Villages and Townships Grant Program. State Treasurer Rachael Eubanks made the announcement March 22. Downriver cities receiving funding and what it will target include:

Ecorse: Public safety enhancement through repair of the municipal building HVAC system (\$200,000)

Lincoln Park: Public safety enhancement through the design phase for a new facility housing the Lincoln Park Police Department and the 25th District Court, serving Ecorse, River Rouge and Lincoln Park (\$342,500)

Melvindale: Public safety enhancement through replacement of police equipment, including Tasers, in-car cameras and body cameras (\$49,733)

River Rouge: Public safety enhancement through replacement of equipment for firefighters (\$271,335) and replacement of police vehicles (\$97,246)

Melvindale Police Chief John Allen called the announcement “welcome news” for the city. “We have aging equipment that we just can’t afford to upgrade all the time, unfortunately,” he said. “So this allows us to upgrade our Tasers – we’ll get 10 new Tasers and they should be in use probably by June.” Allen said the city has to officially accept the grant first, then it goes back to the state for a final approval. He said Melvindale City Administrator Richard Ortiz “aggressively pursued” the grant, which also will fund five in-car cameras and six body cameras. “This is fantastic for the citizens, for our department and for the city,” Allen said. “It helps us keep accountable and transparent, so that’s a good thing for us.”

In River Rouge, Mayor Michael Bowdler said the grants will help fund the city’s top priority. “Public safety for any city has got to be No. 1,” he said. “We’re ecstatic about receiving those grants. In the Fire Department, where the majority of the money is going to be spent, (some equipment) is 16, 17 years old. For the safety of the firemen and the safety of our residents, it was time to upgrade.” River Rouge Fire Chief Roberto Cruz said the money will be spent on new turnout kits, self-contained breathing apparatuses and small engine equipment. The River Rouge Police Department will use its grant to fund two police vehicles, Bowdler said. The city applied for the grants several months ago and will begin a bidding process to determine the best vendors to supply the “public safety enhancements.”

Matt Coppler, city manager of Lincoln Park, said the funds will be used to move a big initiative forward. "The money is going to be used for the schematic design for the joint police and 25th District Court facility," he said. "That, of course, serves not only Lincoln Park, but also River Rouge and Ecorse. This (grant) takes us from the preliminary feasibility study, which was

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

conducted late last year, to a point where we can get a better estimate of the cost and design."

Coppler said he's hopeful the design will begin this summer, after the Lincoln Park City Council adopts a resolution authorizing the grant and returns it to the state for final approval. He also said the city is still likely 18-24 months from breaking ground on the facility.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Matthew W. Coppler** is listed below.]

<https://duwauthority.org/2017/09/matt-Coppler-elected-as-new-duwa-secretary/>
September 14, 2017

Matt Coppler Elected as New DUWA Secretary

DUWA Board Announcements

Matt Coppler elected to serve as DUWA Secretary, replacing Dick Hinshon

On September 14, 2017 the Authority elected Lincoln Park City Manager **Matt Coppler** to serve as the Secretary for the Authority as of October 1, 2017. Mr. **Coppler** has been participating with DUWA as Lincoln Park’s Representative for several years. The election of a new Secretary was necessitated by the retirement of the current DUWA Secretary, Dick Hinshon.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)
April 3, 2017

Treated sewage water released into Ecorse Creek to alleviate flooding

Author: Dave Herndon

Several inches of rain poured into Lincoln Park late last week, overwhelming the sewer system. City Manager **Matthew Coppler** said the system was inundated during the rain but was operating at full capacity as the rains let up. **Coppler** said the sewage retention basin, which holds more than 20.5 million gallons of sewage, reached its capacity during the storm.

During the storms, starting at 9:30 p.m. March 30, the city was forced to release about 1.75 million gallons of treated, blended sewage into the Ecorse Creek. The release was over by about 11 p.m. March 31. The sewage was treated with sodium hypochlorohydrate and blended with the stormwater. The release into the river was to help prevent backups into basements and is in compliance with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality regulations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.michiganradio.org/law/2016-10-31/wayne-county-homeowners-who-fought-illegal-foreclosures-now-being-evicted>

October 31, 2016

Wayne County homeowners who fought "illegal" foreclosures now being evicted

Author: Sarah Cwiek

Brandy Gutierrez was evicted from her house in Lincoln Park. She says no one told her it had gone into tax foreclosure until it was too late. In Wayne County, tens of thousands of properties go into tax foreclosure every year. Most are in Detroit. But it happens in the suburbs too. Some suburban communities have started buying those tax-foreclosed homes, and turning them over to developers. But many of the affected homeowners didn't know that until it was too late to save their homes. Some tried to fight anyway. But this month, that fight came to a bitter end.

"I still have no idea how this could happen."

Brandy Gutierrez is exhausted. She's at work, hunched over a desk in the storefront office of a Dearborn roofing company. Right now she's the only one here, if you don't count the office kitten and bird. "Right over there on that couch is where I will be sleeping," says Gutierrez, "because I don't have a place to stay." Gutierrez was just evicted from the home she owned in Lincoln Park, a tiny city just south of Detroit. Even though she knew it was coming, the way it happened came as a shock. Gutierrez says she came home from work to find her house locked, and a 24-hour eviction notice pasted on the door. What remained of her possessions was broken and scattered on her front lawn. Everything else was gone. "My TVs, my tools, my jewelry, my cash at the house; all of that was gone," she said. "It's just, it's shocking, disgusting, and I'm still mostly clueless on what's going on, to be honest. I still have no idea how this could happen."

The story starts a few years ago.

Gutierrez and her husband moved from Detroit to Lincoln Park in 2009, paying cash for a two-story brick colonial in a nice, quiet neighborhood. But when they split up in 2013, Gutierrez says she discovered her husband hadn't been paying city property taxes. By that point, it was Wayne County's problem to collect them. So Gutierrez went down to the Wayne County Treasurer's Office and got on a payment plan. She says that over the course of about eight months, she gave them \$8,000. But when the summer of 2015 rolled around, Gutierrez knew she couldn't make payments for a couple months. So she told Wayne County. And she says they told her: that's ok. So long as you catch up by the end of the year, you're fine. But in September, Gutierrez got an eviction notice from a group she'd never heard of, called JSR Funding. And that's how she found out they had foreclosed on her house. "It was unbelievable," she said. "I was like, 'You said I had until December. And you sold it in June. And you didn't even tell me you sold my house.'" And the buyer? The city of Lincoln Park.

Cities turn to right of first refusal

The city exercised what's called the "right of first refusal" in the tax foreclosure process. It allows municipalities to buy back foreclosed properties before the county puts them up for sale in a massive online auction. "We've had a lot of people and companies purchase the [foreclosed]

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

properties, and they don't reinvest back in them. And for the most part they become rentals that we have to struggle with to try to bring up to the code the city requires," says Lincoln Park City Manager **Matthew Coppler**. **Coppler** wasn't in charge when Gutierrez lost her home last year. In fact, Lincoln Park had an emergency manager, Brad Coulter, at the time. Coulter bought dozens of homes through right of first refusal. Then he quickly turned them over to a local developer—JSR Funding. (Jim Budziak, an agent for JSR, declined comment for this story. His attorney could not be reached for comment). The idea was to avoid the property flippers and absentee landlords who so often pick up cheap properties at auction.

Lincoln Park isn't the only city doing this. In fact, it modeled its program off similar ones in other Wayne County cities, including Garden City, Redford Township, and Wayne. **Coppler** says JSR is required to invest in the properties before selling them. And so far, they're selling for prices that pull up local property values. "It is working," said **Coppler**. "We're getting the investment, we're getting new ownership property, people living in those things, which will help our neighborhoods." Lincoln Park exercised right of first refusal again this year. This time, **Coppler** says someone did visit the homeowners prior to the county actually foreclosing. And about half of them managed to avoid foreclosure at the last minute. But **Coppler** notes they have no obligation to do that. And he says there's no reason to think tax-delinquent homeowners could buy back their properties, either. "If they didn't have the wherewithal to take the action to save the property at that point in time, why would you believe that they can do it afterwards?" he asked.

A conspiracy to seize homes?

But Timothy Padden insists he could have. "If I would've got a notice on my door from Lincoln Park saying 'You got two weeks to pay this much or we're buying your house,' no doubt I could have came up with it, and I wouldn't be sitting here right now," Padden says. Padden is another Lincoln Park homeowner who's now been evicted by JSR. Like Gutierrez, Padden and his wife owned their home mortgage-free. But then they fell behind on property taxes. So Padden got on a payment plan with Wayne County. And he says that worked fine for a couple of years. Last year, there was some kind of hitch renewing the paperwork. But Padden says the treasurer's office told him not to worry--even after he spotted his home on the county's website, listed as a pending foreclosure. "I said 'I'll bring what money I have right now,'" Padden said. "They're like, 'No, wait until August 3rd, come down, bring 10% of what you owe, we'll put you on a new plan.'" So that's what he did. And then: "Got up to the window: 'Sorry, your house was sold three days ago. Or it was bought by the city three days ago.'"

Padden and Gutierrez have remarkably similar stories. And some think that's not a coincidence. 20 Wayne County homeowners all swore in affidavits to the same basic chain of events: That they were on tax-repayment plans with Wayne County; that the treasurer's office assured them they had more time to make payments; and that they never received any kind of foreclosure notice. Padden and Gutierrez are both plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit that accuses Wayne County, several cities that have used right of first refusal, and two developers (JSR Funding/Global Realty and HP SNAP Investment/Enterprising Real Estate) of plotting to illegally seize their homes. It sounds a little far-fetched, and Padden admits he's not even sure exactly what

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

happened here. But he says something was just not right. “I believed I was doing the right thing,” he said. “Filled out the same paperwork the same way. I just don’t understand why Wayne County would tell you to wait if somebody’s willing to come down there and pay them money.” All the defendants named in the federal lawsuit deny any wrongdoing. But the Wayne County Treasurer’s office insists these foreclosures were done by the book—even if they admit some homeowners may not have received foreclosure notices sent out by mail. (Wayne County Treasurer Eric Sabree declined an interview for this story, citing pending litigation. Now-retired Wayne County Treasurer Raymond Wojtowicz was in office until late 2015. Former Deputy Treasurer David Szymanski, who is named in the lawsuit, is now with the city of Detroit). State law requires that homeowners facing foreclosure receive notice by several means, included certified mail. By matching U.S. Postal Service tracking numbers, the federal lawsuit revealed that many of the notices the Wayne County Treasurer’s office sent out by certified mail were still listed as “in transit” by the post office, or had been mailed elsewhere. A Detroit News sampling of other foreclosure notices sent by certified mail found that more than half were never confirmed as delivered. Padden and some other plaintiffs fought their evictions in Wayne County Circuit Court, too. They managed to delay them for months, but finally lost the cases this month. Padden says it was a “long fight—but it’s pretty much over.” “At this point I don’t want my house back,” he said. “Compensation would be nice.” The homeowners’ federal case was dismissed over jurisdiction issues; that decision is being appealed, and the two sides are starting mediation.

Trying to start over

In the meantime, Padden’s family is split up while they look for a new place. Friends have set up a Go Fund Me page to help with relocation expenses. Brandy Gutierrez has also turned to online fundraising for help. But first, she’s looking to get her stuff back. On her lawyer’s advice, she went to file a police report at the Lincoln Park police station. “I’m trying to make a police report for all of the items that were took out of my house by a development company,” Gutierrez told the officer sitting behind the glass. And then she has to explain the whole thing all over again. The officer listens, but seems confused. Gutierrez starts to get a little frustrated. “That’s what I’m telling you,” she said. “They put a 24-hour notice on the door, Friday. I got off work and my stuff was out.” “I understand that,” the officer replied. “But what I’m asking you is, did the court give them the 24-hour notice for eviction? Was it the court officers who put you out?” “I have no idea,” Gutierrez said wearily. “That’s why I’m here.” The officer examined Gutierrez’s writ of eviction, noting the court’s seal. He told her this is probably not a criminal matter, and she should take it to the courthouse next door. She does—and comes back out in about two minutes. “I go in the courthouse, and they know exactly who I am,” Gutierrez said. “She tells me they do not have to give me 24 hours, and don’t you have an attorney? Call him.” Gutierrez seems resigned about it, though. This, she says, is pretty much just what she’s come to expect.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)
September 6, 2016

Class action lawsuit filed against Lincoln Park for recent flooding

Author: Dave Herndon

Flooding in areas of Lincoln Park has been an issue for decades. Floods described as "once in a lifetime" seem to happen much more often in areas of the city. "We've have 13 major floods in my house since I moved to Lincoln Park 18 years ago," Susan Lang said. "I can't believe we have to go through this all the time."

Lang's house was not among those that flooded Aug. 16, but she emphasizes with those who went through the process. "I've never sued the city," she said. "But I hope they all get what they deserve." She was referring to people who are involved with a class action lawsuit filed Sept. 6 on behalf of the residents near Council Point Park. That was pretty much the only area that flooded during the recent storm.

During that storm, more than 2 inches of rain fell in about two hours' time. The day of the floods City Manager **Matthew Coppler** said the system was inundated during the rain but was operating perfectly later that afternoon. "All pump stations are working with no mechanical issues," he said in a message on the city website. "The city's retention basin is also operating as expected with no reports of any issues."

In addition to water and sewage backups in basements, several city streets still had standing water Tuesday and into Wednesday. **Coppler** said the sewage retention basin, which holds more than 20.5 million gallons of sewage, reached its capacity during the storm. **Coppler** couldn't be reached for further comment Tuesday morning after the suit was filed.

Attorney Phillip G. Bozzo is leading the case for the residents, he also was the attorney of record in a similar suit filed in August of 1994 following a rainstorm. Residents who want to be involved in Bozzo's class action suit have to file a written notice by Sept. 29. Bozzo is holding informational meetings at the VFW Post 552, 1125 Fort St. in Lincoln Park, Saturday. The 30-minute sessions are planned every hour from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the front lobby of the building.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2016/04/20/lawsuit-denied-city-of-lincoln-park-mers-wayne-county-circuit-court-municipal-employees-retirement-system-of-michigan/83302838/>

April 20, 2016

**Pension system denied \$517K in lawsuit v. Lincoln Park
Lincoln Park's emergency manager stepped down in December after assuring Gov. Rick Snyder that the city's fiscal ship was on course. This week, a storm loomed in the form of a \$517,000 lawsuit. . .**

Author: Bill Laitner

In a lawsuit filed by the Lansing-based system that manages pensions for city workers across Michigan, a Detroit judge has denied a demand that Lincoln Park immediately pay more than a half-million dollars. The nonprofit MERS – or Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan – sued Lincoln Park last month in Wayne County Circuit Court.

“MERS was in the right church but they had the wrong pew,” quipped Lincoln Park City Attorney Ed Zelenak, after Judge Bryan Levy ruled Wednesday from the bench. Although the judge did not order it, the two sides should sit down to negotiate, Zelenak said. “I’m in the MERS system myself (and) we all want a strong pension system. We just need a payment plan that won’t hurt the city,” he said.

After the ruling, MERS said in a statement: “Lincoln Park has a contractual obligation to make sure the City has enough assets available to pay retiree pensions, so their employees can enjoy a secure retirement, which is why we have asked a judge to decide this issue.”

In an email to the Free Press, MERS spokeswoman Jennifer Mausolf left open the possibility that the big pension management company would amend its lawsuit and return to court.

The lawsuit sought \$516,000 plus attorney fees and court costs while alleging that Lincoln Park underpaid for months its payments to the pension system on behalf of city workers. The city argued in court documents that MERS raised its collection demands since the two sides inked a deal in 2010, even after the city began paying \$1 million more per year to make up for past years’ underpayments.

Lincoln Park’s former emergency manager — Brad Coulter, now CEO of the Detroit-based nonprofit Matrix Human Services — said that while he ran Lincoln Park, he increased the city’s annual pension contribution from \$2.1 million to \$3.1 million. “Now, they’re saying the'd rather have the city front-load this and pay more right away, and Lincoln Park just can’t afford it,” Coulter said Wednesday. MERS' lawsuit said that, if the city could not pay up immediately, the \$500,000 should be added to city tax rolls; but that would hurt property values and level a fresh threat at Lincoln Park’s recent return to fiscal stability, Coulter said. He stepped down as emergency manager in December, after assuring Gov. Rick Snyder that Lincoln Park's finances were stable.

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The city's goal is to rebuild its employee pension reserve from 20% funded to at least 50% funded, officials said. Lincoln Park City Manager **Matthew Coppler** said he planned to renew discussions he'd been having before the lawsuit with MERS executives, and **Coppler** said he was confident they'd reach a settlement out of court. "I think the emergency manager laid out what was a good plan (of payments) going forward, but I do believe that ultimately we're going to need to increase our pension payments," **Coppler** said Wednesday.

Between 15 and 20 employees pay into the pension plan, and they expect to retire with a traditional type of pension, called a defined benefit plan; while the rest of Lincoln Park's city workers – numbering about 45, all hired since 2004 — are covered by a new retirement plan, called a defined contribution plan, which requires greater deductions from each employee's paychecks and less from the city, **Coppler** said.

Former city treasurer and current City Council President Thomas Murphy said Tuesday that MERS "could've saved everybody a lot of legal costs and stress" by settling out of court.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)
December 22, 2015

Lincoln Park financial emergency resolved, according to State Treasurer

Author: Dave Herndon

Brad Coulter declared Monday afternoon that the financial emergency in Lincoln Park is over. Tuesday morning both the State Treasury department and Gov. Rick Snyder agreed. Coulter has been the emergency manager in the city since July of 2014, but his tenure officially came to a close Tuesday as he handed control back to city leaders, who will still answer to a transition advisory board. The board, officially known as the Receivership Transition Advisory Board, or RTAB, will stay in place at least until the city manages to \$2 million in the bank for emergencies. The board will be in place to oversee decisions made by local officials under Public Act 436. According to Terry Stanton, a representative of the state treasurer's office, there is no time frame for how long the board will remain in place. The city will have about \$700,000 in excess this year and is projected to add about \$200,000 a year to that total over the next several years. Both Ecorse, which transition out in 2013, and Allen Park which transitioned out in 2014 still have RTAB oversight. The board eventually will have to make one of two choices: Rule that the financial emergency is completely over and hand control back to the community or that the situation is again worsening and ask to have an emergency manager re-appointed.

When Coulter was appointed in 2014 the city was facing a \$1 million cumulative deficit and had yearly structural deficits adding to the total. In about 18 months he managed to right the ship, but doesn't take all of the credit. "I was able to keep doing some things that the City Council was already doing," he said. "The general fund balance is back to positive after the audit results from (last year) came in. Additional changes to help save money were instituted and the city should be positive for operations going forward." Coulter said some of the things that made fixing the cumulative deficit happen were one-time windfalls, like selling a small plot of land for a cell tower, but that cash along with fixing contracts and working with the budget should allow the city to remain financially healthy in the future. "Overall the city is in pretty good shape," he said. "The real key is maintaining property value. There aren't any additional costs that can be cut (from personnel). Head count is nearly half of what it was six years ago. We really need to maintain a base-level of city services."

Leaving the city in the hands of capable people was also a key point for Coulter to be ready to leave his position. "We have a really good city manager (**Matthew Coppler**) who is on board with the direction we're headed." With Lincoln Park transitioning out of state control, for the first time in more than 15 years there are no local government groups in the state with an emergency manager. Stanton said there are still three school boards with emergency managers, but no municipalities under state control. School districts under an emergency manager are Detroit, Highland Park and Muskegon Heights.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)

October 2, 2015

Lincoln Park moves forward with new city manager

Author: Jessica Strachan

Lincoln Park is one step further in the process of taking back local control after bringing aboard a new city manager who will help the city transition out of emergency management. Ohio native **Matt Coppler**, a town manager with nearly 25 years of experience, began his appointment in Lincoln Park last week and will give his first city manager report at the Lincoln Park City Council meeting Monday evening. "I've been meeting with staff and elected leaders and what I've seen is that they are very committed to bringing about the transformation needed in the city," said **Coppler**, who was recruited from his former job as town manager in Connecticut. "We have a great foundation of a hardworking city with a lot of good people to begin the process of building up our strengths in the city, so I think there's good potential." As city manager, **Coppler** will work closely with council members and staff to guide the city through its day-to-day operations as the city's state-appointment Emergency Manager Brad Coulter finishes his term in January.

In his first few weeks, **Coppler** said he will be taking his time to get to know the city, including its leaders, policies and priorities. "A lot of people want to see different things from a city manager, but I'm not the type to come in and say, 'This is how I want things done,'" he said. "I rather take a slower approach and see what is really needed. Sometimes it's a good thing when the government moves slowly because that allows you to slow down and think things through. With what we are doing here, we can't make rash decisions. They have to be well thought out."

Coulter, who remains the city's emergency manager until January and crafted the city's nearly \$40 million 2015-16 budget, said a city manager is an important role for any mid-sized community like Lincoln Park, which has a population of about 38,150. Coulter is expected to be a member of the state-appointed transition advisory board that will continue to guide the city's affairs for several years, working closely with **Coppler**. "The city's management was pretty dysfunctional with a lack of cooperation between departments and a poor attitude toward dealing with residents," Coulter said about coming to Lincoln Park in July 2013. "With the leadership changes made, along with an emphasis on cooperation and customer service, the city is now operating much smoother. It will be Mr. **Coppler's** challenge to maintain the city's forward momentum and make sure the new positive attitude takes hold. The city cannot afford anything less than a team effort." **Coppler** has never led a city under emergency management, but said Enfield — the town of about 45,000 people in northern Connecticut he led before coming to Lincoln Park — has an annual budget of \$120 million and many similarities to Lincoln Park, including similar demographics and homeownership rates, blight issues and revitalization goals. **Coppler** said planning and economic development are among his strong suits. His appointment runs through until Dec. 31, 2017, with an annual salary of \$125,000.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Matthew W. Coppler** is listed below.]

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
September 22, 2015

Enfield council wants to find a way to ban panhandling but allow firefighters to fundraise for MDA

Author/Byline: Annemarie A. Smith

In other business, residents and council members alike said goodbye to Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** and Assistant Town Manager Derrik Kennedy, both of whom are leaving Enfield for new opportunities at the end of the month. Monday’s council meeting was their last. **Coppler** has accepted a job as the town manager of Lincoln Park, Michigan, a city coming out of emergency management, while Kennedy has accepted a position as the town manager of Westerly, Rhode Island.

North Thompsonville Fire Department Chief Earl Provencher thanked **Coppler** for his nine years in Enfield, saying, “It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with **Matt**. I know other fire chiefs agree with this statement. I wish him best of luck, health, and wealth in his new location.”

Mangini thanked **Coppler** for his “time and your service to our community,” and Councilman Gregory Stokes added, “Best of luck. Wish you well. **Matt**, you have been very good with this town.” Councilwoman Carol Hall elicited some laughs when she acknowledged, “Working for so many bosses is an impossible task, so kudos to you.”

Kaupin first addressed Kennedy, saying, “Thank you for your two years of service. You worked under and for a great town manager,” before turning to **Coppler**. “It’s been an absolute pleasure working with you. I am totally always in awe at your commitment to the community. It was your job, but in essence it was your life, too,” Kaupin said. “Lincoln Park in Michigan, I read, has a lot of challenges, but they’ve selected a great town manager to take over there.” His words were followed by a standing ovation for the two men.

For his part, **Coppler** praised the town and its accomplishments. “Nine years has flown by,” he said. “In the way that my mind works, it flies by because there wasn’t a day without great challenges to be addressed.”

He left the council with a few words of wisdom. “We have a lot of issues, don’t get me wrong,” he said. “But if you continue to work as you worked the last nine years ... they are not insurmountable in any form.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

<https://thewestfieldnews.com/enfield-casino-venue-pitched/>
September 15, 2015

Mall casino venue pitched to town council

Author: Annie Gentile

Officials from the Enfield Square Mall on Sept. 8 presented the Town Council with a proposal for a tribal-owned satellite casino at their location directly off Exit 48 on Interstate 91. The proposal comes in response to a bill signed into law by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy in June that opened the doors for the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes to jointly issue requests for proposals from local towns and municipalities which might be interested in hosting a satellite casino. The two tribes have expressed interest in locating a casino somewhere along the I-91 corridor in north central Connecticut to compete for revenues and jobs with MGM Resort International's planned gaming operation in neighboring Springfield, Massachusetts. Should a casino be built in the corridor, the state would reap 25 percent of the earnings from slots and game tables and, as the casino would be built on state rather than tribal lands, food and beverages sold there would be subject to state tax.

Bob Steiner, senior vice president of Madison Marquette Real Estate Services, which owns Enfield Square Mall, along with the mall's general manager Marty Pelosi, made their pitch before an audience of about 50. They provided two potential plans for the 787,000 sq. foot mall, but stressed both are extremely preliminary. The first proposal would create an approximately 152,000 sq. foot, two-level, casino in the present Macy's Men's Furnishings and Home store, with a parking deck for 1,200 vehicles, a six-story, 300-room luxury hotel that includes a skywalk to the casino and a spa, and an additional 40,000 sq. feet for dining and entertainment.

The second proposal would create a food court from the space currently occupied by the Sears store and entertainment located in the space currently occupied by the Sears Auto Store. While Councilors had questions about additional policing needs and impacts to infrastructure in the mall area, as well as some individual reservations, they agreed to hold off on any decision until they have reviewed the conceptual renderings from Madison Marquette.

In August, MGM Resorts International filed a lawsuit against Malloy and other top state officials claiming the new law grants the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes preferential treatment in the process and is therefore unconstitutional. MGM reportedly would like the opportunity to participate in the competitive process but say they have been excluded. "The state is only considering a casino that would be tribal owned, so that legal challenge from MGM still needs to be worked out in the courts," said Town Manager **Matt Coppler**. "Part of the decision the Council has to make is that if the State is committed to allowing a casino on the I-91 corridor, they need to look at the various impacts if it came to Enfield. It's something the community has to weigh.

"Madison Marquette says they are committed to helping revitalize the mall and feel the casino will help bring in restaurants and other retail," **Coppler** added. "The mall itself has had its

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

struggles and is at a watershed moment for deciding what it will become.” The mall, which first opened in 1971, has not seen any major refurbishment since the 1980s, **Coppler** said, adding that it has become very difficult to fill it with the type of retail that is desired. Macy’s and Sears have been closing stores, and there needs to be some kind of reinvestment in the mall,” he said.

Coppler said there is still quite a ways to go, but it would be best if the proposed development could be designed in a way that would limit problems to neighborhoods. In part because the mall is already in a high traffic area and directly off Exit 48 of I-91, he said that would help limit traffic through local neighborhoods. “I’ve looked at other communities that have had this, such as in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. There the people saw it as a big economic driver but what they ended up building was self contained. By its very nature, this would not be the case in Enfield. But there’s still a lot to be decided and a lot of input to get.”

The Council plans to hold a community conversation at a yet-to-be determined date in late September.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
July 30, 2015

**TOWN MANAGER TURNS TO PODCASTS **
MATTHEW COPPLER'S AIM IS TO EDUCATE MANCHESTER RESIDENTS ABOUT
LOCAL ISSUES

Author: Michael Walsh

Matthew Coppler is bringing the town manager's job to the people. **Coppler**, 48, has embraced the technology available to him by starting his "Now We're Talking..." series of podcasts, which are audio interviews broadcast over the Internet. Launched on July 10 with a half-hour discussion about roads with John Cabibbo, the assistant town engineer, and Donald Nunes, a roads engineer in the public works department, **Coppler** is hoping his new project will help better connect his office to the public. "It's something we felt was a good medium to get more information out to the public," **Coppler** said. "It's a fairly easy medium for the public to listen to." **Coppler**, who has been the town manager in Enfield for nine years, already has a series of podcast topics lined up to record and release. Some of them might relate to upcoming issues, he said, while others are generated by the phone calls his office receives from the public. "There are so many different things going on," **Coppler** said. "We get calls from people about different things. Those can be drivers for future podcasts."

Coppler said that by introducing Cabibbo and Nunes to the public, residents might begin to better understand which departments handle what and who they can reach out to with specific questions. "Governments can do a very poor job of getting the message out to people about what's going on," he said. "This is a low-cost means to get more information out there. It at least is giving people an idea of where to go to get more information." He said he guides the interviews as if he's a resident and not the town manager. "When we sit down and talk about the outline of what we're going to talk about, we say, if I'm a resident, what kind of questions would I ask," **Coppler** said. "That's how we go about it. If we brought a resident in and said come up with questions...that's what I can represent. What would someone need to know?" Examples of upcoming topics for **Coppler's** podcasts include energy efficiency, water pollution control, facilities and programs like the Enfield Family Resource Center.

For each of those topics, **Coppler** said he's shooting for about 30 minutes of audio. He wants to get the message across, but not go so deep that the conversation becomes full of insider words only he and the guests understand. This is all part of **Coppler's** effort to find new ways to communicate with residents and make his office more transparent. "The thing we try to look at is how we communicate with the public, how they get our message and where they get our message," **Coppler** said. **Coppler** said he's going to try to release at least one podcast a month, but that during this initial period there could be four or five a month. He doesn't expect to run out of ideas for episodes. "There's a lot going on," **Coppler** said. "Some of it may seem small, but they're huge long-term."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://www.journalinquirer.com/mobile/towns/enfield/enfield-town-manager-to-leave/article_e9526294-360a-11e5-9308-933baa3796ea.html

July 29, 2015

Enfield town manager to leave

Author: Annemarie A. Smith

After nine years of service to the community, Town Manager **Matthew Coppler W.** announced Tuesday that he will resign from his post, effective Sept. 25, to become the city manager of Lincoln Park, Michigan. “The opportunity came out of the blue,” **Coppler**, 46, said in an interview on Tuesday. “I got a call from the recruiter working on it, started talking about the opportunity, and it seemed to be a really good match for my skills, knowledge, and experience.”

According to a news release issued by the town, **Coppler** gave his 60-day notice to the Town Council at a special meeting Monday night. **Coppler** said Tuesday that his departure comes at a good time, both personally and professionally. From a personal perspective, he said, it is a convenient time to uproot his family, as all of his children are grown and out of the house. “My kids are spread across the country now,” he said. Moreover, Lincoln Park is closer to Ohio, where **Coppler** was born and where much of his family still resides.

But **Coppler** also said the timing seemed right for Enfield. “We are between some timeframes, which will allow me to leave and have someone else come on and not lose any ground on what we are trying to accomplish here,” he said. He said the town is between budget seasons, it’s getting ready for three different referendums in November, and it’s preparing to consolidate Fermi and Enfield high schools next school year. “So if everything goes right, they will be able to get someone on board before these processes really pick up,” he said of his successor. Moreover, **Coppler** believes he is leaving behind a town well prepared to weather the change.

He came to Enfield in 2006, after five years as the manager of Batavia, a city of about 16,000 residents in upstate New York. Previous to his work in Batavia, **Coppler** worked for 14 years as a village or city manager around the country. He holds a master’s degree in public administration and a bachelor’s degree in political science from Bowling State University.

Since beginning his tenure in Enfield, he has ushered through a number of important projects, including infrastructure projects called Roads 2010 and Roads 2015, the new construction at and renovation of Enfield High School as it prepares for consolidation, and continued progress on the Thompsonville Transit Center. Additionally, **Coppler** said, he’s leaving the town’s financial house in order. “We’ve accomplished so many things that I’m proud of,” he said.

He credits much of his success to town staff. “We all developed really good working relationships,” he said. “We didn’t always agree on everything, but there was a mutual respect, and that really moves the organization along.” In fact, it is the personal aspect of his work — the staff, Town Council members, and residents — that he will miss most. In the news release he stated, “It has been truly an honor to serve as Enfield’s town manager for the last nine years. I

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

appreciate the opportunity that was given to me by the Town Council and have enjoyed the privilege to lead such a talented and dedicated team of town employees in providing the highest level of services to our community.”

However, **Coppler** looks forward to the chance to transform another community. “As a manager, it’s the lifestyle to not be in any one place for a long time,” he explained. “There is a desire in this career path to work with communities, take them as far as you can, and move onto others.” He believes his particular skill set will bring change to Lincoln Park, a community of about 38,000 residents that is under emergency management. In particular, **Coppler** said, his financial experience will be an asset to Lincoln Park, which is struggling under the weight of “severe financial issues.” “My traits and skills will be beneficial when they start rebuilding their financial abilities there,” he said. “There’s a lot of things that I bring to the table.”

According to the Southgate, Michigan-based News-Herald newspaper, **Coppler** will earn a salary in Lincoln Park of \$125,000, a slight decrease from his \$134,257 salary in Enfield. The News-Herald said that the starting salary for the position was listed at \$90,000, but because of **Coppler**’s experience and expertise he was offered more.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin said today that while Enfield is losing a major asset in **Coppler**, Lincoln Park is gaining one. “**Matt** has shown over the nine years that he has a tremendous grasp of our finances, and I consider that one of his biggest strengths — his ability to put a budget together, to understand the priorities of the community, the Town Council and staff, and incorporate that into a very methodical plan,” Kaupin said. “That’s definitely needed in Lincoln Park.” Kaupin also said that **Coppler** is simply a down-to-earth, well-respected member of the community. “For Enfield this is a loss ... but it’s a win for Lincoln Park,” Kaupin said. “They are lucky to have him.”

Already, Kaupin said, the council is beginning the transition process. First the council will engage a firm to conduct a national search for a new manager. “The council has already instructed the town manager to reach out to those organizations that are familiar with Connecticut but that have a national perspective,” Kaupin said. The hiring process typically takes three to six months, he explained, so the town is currently seeking an interim town planner. **Coppler** said he is working with the council on recruiting matters and hopes to be able to work with an interim manager before he leaves.

Kaupin said the council will appoint a search subcommittee, which will likely consist of himself, Deputy Mayor William Lee and minority leader William “Red” Edgar Jr.” The entire council will make the final hiring decision.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

News-Herald, The (Southgate, MI)
July 28, 2015

Veteran city manager chosen to lead operations in Lincoln Park after emergency management

Author: Jessica Strachan

Lincoln Park city officials announced Monday that a city manager has been selected and will begin by the fall. **Matt Coppler**, a current town manager in Connecticut with more than two decades of experience, will earn \$125,000 per year for duties that include implementing the visions of city council and staff, and serving as a liaison to the community.

Coppler was one of two candidates who interviewed before the Lincoln Park city council in June, after being recruited by the Detroit-based hiring firm TJA Staffing. Council members gave input, but the state-appointed emergency manager Brad Coulter made the final decision, working closely with the Michigan Department of Treasury. "Mr. **Coppler** brings 25 years of public management experience and will provide a strong stabilizing influence as Lincoln Park emerges from emergency management," Coulter said.

The starting salary was listed as \$90,000, but Coulter said that "befitting his expertise, and acknowledging the challenges involved with managing Lincoln Park," **Coppler's** salary was set higher. During his public interview, **Coppler** spoke of the importance of working closely and efficiently with city council members and staff, being transparent with the community, and having a commitment to implementing Lincoln Park's future visions.

"Planning and economic development are the things that really excitement me ... I know I can do those things here," **Coppler** said when asked why he was interested in moving his career to Lincoln Park. "What I see here is an opportunity to help you and to help the citizens revitalize the city and make it a great city." **Coppler** has never led a city under emergency management but said Enfield — the town of approximately 45,000 people in northern Connecticut that has an annual budget of \$120 million — has many similarities to Lincoln Park, including similar demographics and homeownership rates, blight issues, and revitalization goals.

He has been town manager in Enfield since 2006 and has a track record of securing funding for public safety upgrades, transit and roads. According to his resume, he also led organizational restructuring after losing more than \$5 million in state funding. "One of my strengths is facilitation, helping council and staff to come together, create goals and reach their goals," **Coppler** said. "It's all about setting priorities and goals and having the discipline to live up to the requirements and make sure you're meeting your obligations. Roads don't improve themselves, buildings don't improve themselves."

Coulter, who remains the city's emergency manager until January and crafted the city's nearly \$40 million 2015-16 budget, said a city manager is an important role for any midsized community like Lincoln Park, which has a population of approximately 38,150. Coulter is

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

expected to be a member of the state-appointed transition advisory board that will continue to guide the city's affairs for several years, working closely with **Coppler**. "Lincoln Park faced significant financial and managerial challenges while under emergency management," Coulter said, citing the city having "the worst funded pension system in the state" and inadequate general funds. "The restructuring changes should ensure that pensions are being properly funded and the general fund is positive, but, the budget is still tight and will require constant monitoring and management."

Lincoln Park has had a challenging history with filling and maintaining the role of city manager. The last city manager for Lincoln Park was Joe Merucci, who was appointed in May 2013 and served one year before leaving to accept a city manager position elsewhere in the county. Lincoln Park City Council interviewed several candidates last year to find a replacement, but could not agree and no one was brought in.

The city began searching again in March for a city manager. Coulter noted difficulty in finding the appropriate fit for the role and said it took "longer than expected." He believes the city better prepared for cohesive leadership after recent internal changes and refocused priorities that include city council actively promoting the city and the stabilization of property values.

"The city's management was pretty dysfunctional with a lack of cooperation between departments and a poor attitude toward dealing with residents," Coulter said. "With the leadership changes made, along with an emphasis on cooperation and customer service, the city is now operating much smoother. It will be Mr. **Coppler's** challenge to maintain the city's forward momentum and make sure the new positive attitude takes hold. The city cannot afford anything less than a team effort." **Coppler's** appointment goes through Dec. 31, 2017.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
May 15, 2015

Enfield council approves \$124.7 million budget, allocates funding for guards at three private schools

Author/Byline: Annemarie A. Smith

The Town Council on Thursday approved a \$124.7 million budget for 2015-16 by a 7-4 vote, despite contention over the reallocation of funds originally intended for the armed security guards in the public schools. The Board of Education decided Tuesday to end the armed security guards program in the public schools. But the council decided to allocate funding to continue it at the town's three private schools for the next two years.

The town budget represents a 3.94 percent increase or \$4.7 million more than the current year's spending plan, but about \$700,000 less than the \$125.4 million budget recommended by Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** in March. The council set the tax rate for 2015-16 at 29.89 mills, which represents an increase of 2.6 percent or a 0.76 mill increase over the current mill rate of 29.13 mills. A mill represents \$1 in taxes for each \$1,000 in assessed valuation of property.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin, Deputy Mayor William Lee, and council members Joseph Bosco, Carol Hall, Cynthia Mangini, Gregory Stokes, and Donna Szewczak voted in favor of the budget, which will take effect July 1. Council members Tom Arnone, Gina Cekala, Edward Deni, and William J. "Red" Edgar Jr. voted against it.

The council approved \$65.9 million in funding for the schools, which represents a 2.6 percent increase over the current year's \$64.2 million allocation. While the approved education budget is the same as **Coppler** proposed in March, Kaupin explained that the council agreed to fund certain information technology projects in order to free up nearly \$200,000 in the school board's budget. The school board in February approved a proposed \$68.8 million "maintenance" budget for 2015-16. The school board must now decide how to reduce its budget by \$2.9 million to implement the \$65.9 million approved spending plan.

Discussion about the school budget centered on the reallocation of funds intended for the salaries of armed security guards stationed in the schools. With the school board's vote on Tuesday to discontinue the armed security guards program in the public schools after the current school year, the council adjusted the \$661,809 it had allocated for the program down to \$125,983, which will cover the continuation of the program at the town's three private schools — St. Martha School, St. Bernard School, and the Enfield Montessori School. Officials at those schools were all in favor of continuing to have the armed security guards stationed there for the next two years. While Edgar proposed an amendment eliminating the budget for the armed security guards in both public and the private schools, other council members felt they needed to honor their promise to the three private schools. "Parochial schools have agreed to sign on, so we have

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

entered into a contractual agreement with them,” Stokes said. “I don’t think legally we can withdraw it.” Edgar’s amendment failed 4-7.

Edgar also proposed appropriating the difference between the proposed and actual armed security guard budget — over \$500,000 — to the school board. Deni, who was in support of the amendment, said, “We kind of shortchanged the schools last year. With the guards gone it’s the least we could do.” However, most members expressed distaste for funding the school board with the money from a program the board turned down. Szewczak said, “I’d like to fund the Board of Education, but not through the elimination of (the armed security guards). It’s not you get (armed security guards) or you get the money. These things are not tied together.” That amendment also failed.

The council instead decided to use some of the \$500,000 to fund “much-needed” capital improvement projects, including a renovation project at the Hazardville Institute. Hall said of the decision, “It’s unfortunate we have this money. I know I for one wished it was going to the schools for security ... But I’m excited about using this for the Institute.” She said the town will be able to complete a project that’s been waiting on the sidelines forever, as well as lowering the mill rate.

Because of the dissolution of the armed security guards in public schools, the council voted to revert Public Safety Director Christopher Bromson’s position from full to part time. His position became full time two years ago after the town began the school security program. His salary for the coming fiscal year was cut from \$117,300 to \$86,700.

Kaupin said the approved budget will not force the town to eliminate any jobs. Instead, he said, the budget allocates funds for two new Police Department hires.

As council members made their final statements about the budget before the vote, most admitted it was a difficult pill to swallow. Cekala and Mangini, among others, expressed the desire for more education funding. Many members, including Stokes, once again expressed frustration at the board’s vote on the armed security guards. Still, all said there were positive items in the budget. “At the end of the day, they always say a good budget is when you’re not totally thrilled about it,” Stokes said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
January 9, 2015

Enfield council amends town manager's contract

Author/Byline: Jonathan M. Stankiewicz

The Town Council on Monday approved an amendment to Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler's** contract, that allows him to choose whether or not to have the town pay \$10,000 into his retirement fund or take that amount in a lump sum each year. There was no discussion before the council's 8-3 vote on the amendment, with members William "Red" Edgar Jr., Edward Deni, and Gina Cekala voting in opposition. Before the vote, Edgar asked Mayor Scott R. Kaupin if the amendment was in lieu of the council's evaluation of **Coppler's** performance. Kaupin told Edgar and the rest of the council that the amendment was not in lieu of such a review, which is done annually. The amendment allows **Coppler** to take a lump sum payment of \$10,000 instead of the town paying the same \$10,000 into his retirement account. The amendment also allows that in every future year, **Coppler** will be able to decide whether or not to take the lump sum payment or have the money paid into his retirement account. He will have to make the decision prior to Nov. 1 each year. **Coppler** has opted to take the \$10,000 this year. He said Tuesday that the council had honored his request last year to accept the lump sum payment instead of the \$10,000 being paid into his retirement account. Kaupin said that the amendment "gives the town manager more flexibility in decisions that he makes over his retirement funds. "Each individual may prefer to make the investment decisions on their own," Kaupin said Wednesday. "This allows the town manager to do that with no additional cost to the town." As for **Coppler's** evaluation, Kaupin said he expects to start the process soon and send out review forms to council members this weekend.

Deni said Tuesday that he didn't vote for the amendment because he "didn't think it was fair." "I know everyone in the town doesn't have that option," Deni said. "Not everyone has an open contract. We don't just do this for everyone." Cekala said Wednesday that she voted against the amendment because she "didn't have enough information" on the original agreement with **Coppler** from when he was hired in 2006. "This was not a precedent I wanted to start," Cekala said, who's been on the council since November 2013. Edgar declined comment when reached by phone Wednesday. Deputy Mayor William Lee said that the amendment wasn't "new" to the council and that it had approved the same request last year for **Coppler**. "Once you agree on someone's compensation, how they receive that is really a bookkeeping discussion," Lee said Wednesday. "The town manager goes through a review process annually. This request is a fairly simple one." In October 2013, the council approved retroactive increases to **Coppler's** pay to \$134,257. **Coppler's** pay increased by 1.5 percent retroactive to July 1, 2012, and 1.75 percent retroactive to July 1, 2013. In 2006, **Coppler** replaced former Town Manager Scott Shanley, who is currently the town manager in Manchester. Prior to taking his position in Enfield, **Coppler** was the town manager in Batavia, New York, a position he had held since 2001.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
December 16, 2014

Enfield council approves changes to ethics ordinance

Author/Byline: Jonathan M. Stankiewicz

The Town Council on Monday unanimously approved amendments to the town's ordinance governing the Code of Ethics for the town, mostly providing updated language to reflect current state statutes.

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the goal of the changes -- made by the Ethics Commission -- was to "create clarity within the code" and provide updates as needed to reflect current state statutes. **Coppler** said the changes will go into effect roughly 15 days after being published in the newspaper, meaning they should be in effect sometime in January.

In a memo to the council, **Coppler** outlined three major changes that were recommended by the Ethics Commission.

Personal interest will now be defined as "an interest in either the subject matter or a relationship with the parties involved in a matter before the commission, which may impair the impartiality expected of any such employee or official." **Coppler** said there previously was no definition for personal interest and had been "left for interpretation" in the code. The council approved the removal of a 37-day requirement for a hearing after a complaint is filed for a more structured and consistent process, **Coppler** said.

Now, the commission -- after finding probable cause to believe a provision has been violated -- will set a hearing date within their rules of procedure.

Also -- to abide by state statutes -- the council approved reducing the timeframe applied to "later case interest" from two years to one year. Later case interest is used for public officials or municipal employees -- after their termination of service or employment with the town -- who cannot appear before any board, commission, committee, or agency of the town in relation to any case, proceeding or application where he or she personally participated during the period of his or her service or employment.

All of the approved changes to the ordinance governing the Code of Ethics are available on the town's website

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
December 3, 2014

Enfield officials say data is skewed in distressed municipality listing

Author/Byline: Jonathan M. Stankiewicz

Town officials are frustrated that the town has again been listed as one of the state's most distressed towns, since they believe the town's prison population -- which is included in the calculations -- skews the results. Town Council member Tom Arnone said during Monday's council meeting that he believes Enfield -- ranked 22 out of 25 of the most distressed municipalities -- wouldn't be on the list if the nearly 3,400 prisoners incarcerated at the three state prisons in town weren't calculated into the rankings released by the Department of Economic and Community Development or DECD. Enfield has been on the list for 12 of the past 15 years, according to the DECD.

Deputy Mayor William Lee said Tuesday that his concern moves past just the ranking. He questioned if Enfield has been missing out on large retail establishments "for years" due to inaccurate data from the state that research firms use to decide whether or not to move large stores into a town. "That's a negative impact that doesn't reflect the opportunity that might have existed in town all along," Lee said. "It sounds like this is a nationwide discussion around correctional facilities and large institutional populations that aren't really residents."

Lee said that "if the designation actually meant something it might be useful." He also said there's a longstanding trend that the state doesn't recognize the volatility that the prison population creates for towns with prisons. He said Enfield's prison population makes up 7.6 percent of the town's population. Enfield's total population as of 2013 is listed as 44,728 in the CCM report.

The conversation started at Monday night's council meeting when Arnone and Lee discussed a new report from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities or CCM that outlines the rankings. The report uses the DECD data to focus on towns that have particular needs and puts a spotlight on those towns for the state, CCM spokesman Kevin Maloney said. Maloney said that towns' prison populations "do have an impact" on the demographic of the community and can influence whether a town is on the list. The list includes cities such as Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport, suburbs such as West Hartford, and smaller towns such as Derby, Putnam, and Sprague.

Other factors included in the DECD rankings are a town's unemployment rate for 2013, the percent change in population from 2000 to 2010, and the percent change in per capita income from 2000 to 2012. CCM's report included much more information than what the DECD uses for its rankings. Enfield's per capita income in 2012 was \$29,866 and was ranked 142 out of 169 towns, while the average per capita income across the state was \$37,807. Enfield's unemployment rate for 2013 was listed at 7.5 percent, which ranked it 123 in the state out of 169 towns.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Lee said he's looking to have a meeting with CCM soon to figure out how the statistics are calculated and talk about the report in general. "We need to be focused on the criteria and data points that make sense to us as a community and then be true to ourselves by benchmarking them," Lee said.

Assistant Town Manager Derrick Kennedy said Tuesday that he's working to determine whether being on the list is a benefit or cost to the town. "If determined that it costs us more, then I will actively work to get us off this list," Kennedy said.

Maloney has said that helping the distressed communities could benefit the entire state. The municipalities are spread throughout the state and can drag down entire regions, while even affluent communities can benefit from whatever solutions the legislature provides, he said.

Arnone said at the council meeting that he would like to see a report without the prison population reflected in the calculations. "It's a little misleading," Arnone said. "We do have a lot of good news in here for our community." Highlights for Enfield that Arnone pointed out were that 3,262 local commuters travel into Enfield to work. "We're compared with Hartford and New Haven, who have tens of thousands of people come into their towns to work," he said. "We are really having a substantial amount of people coming into Enfield to work. I think that's bragging rights for the town." Arnone also said that the Enfield Police Department is doing an excellent job since the town's crime rate at 1,149 incidents per 100,000 residents is nearly half the state average of 2,433 incidents per 100,000 residents, according to CCM.

Not all town officials were alarmed at the news of the town being on the list again. Mayor Scott R. Kaupin said Tuesday that CCM is lobbying the town's legislators because they continually try to bring additional revenues into municipalities. Kaupin said he doesn't believe Enfield is a "distressed community." Kaupin added that the town is on "many different lists" and that the current designation "isn't the end of the world." "We pay attention to (Enfield) 365 days a year," Kaupin said. "We know what our challenges are and where we need to make improvements. That's what we work for all the time."

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the designation of being a distressed town "doesn't define a community in any way, shape, or form." "This is a good community," **Coppler** said. "There are always things to look at that we need to improve on."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
April 11, 2014

TOWN TO GET GRANT FOR INCENTIVE HOUSING \ - ENFIELD

Author/Byline: Mikaela Porter

State officials announced Thursday that Enfield would be one of nine towns to receive a \$20,000 state grant to develop an incentive housing zone in town.

Town Manager **Matthew Coppler** said the money will be used to hire a consultant to develop regulations that establish an incentive housing zone in Thompsonville. "What we get out of this is better housing stock," **Coppler** said. "It brings up the overall environment in the neighborhoods and allows for people working in our community to live there." **Coppler** said one of his and the town council's goals is to revitalize the village of Thompsonville.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy said the grants would cover pre-development, preliminary and planning costs associated with creating incentive housing zones, which Malloy said "promote both affordable and market-rate housing and mixed-use developments in residential and business districts." "These zones can help communities relieve congestion and avoid sprawl by creating more vibrant neighborhoods near businesses and existing transportation connections -- allowing people to walk or take public transit to work, to visit cultural attractions, or just to enjoy an evening out," the news release read.

The grants are funded through the Housing for Economic Growth Program, known as HomeCT.

Andover, Barkhamsted, Clinton, Guilford, Madison, North Stonington and Windsor Locks also received \$20,000 grants from the state. Canaan received a \$50,000 grant.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
October 23, 2013

COUNCIL OKS NEW SEWER USAGE FEES - ENFIELD

Author/Byline: Mikaela Porter

The town council unanimously voted to implement a new sewer usage fee starting in January that will charge residents and businesses based on the amount of water they use. In addition to passing the new fee, the council approved an amendment to the sewer usage fee ordinance that appoints a council subcommittee to review sewer connection charges for new homes or apartment complexes.

According to Town Manager **Matthew Coppler**, the connection fee proposed is about \$200 for a residential hook-up and \$350 per unit for apartment complexes and condominiums. The subcommittee will have until Dec. 31 to recommend any changes.

The new sewer usage fee is broken into three categories: a minimum fee for consumption of up to about 3,800 gallons, another tier for up to 20,000 gallons and a third tier for consumption of more than 20,000 gallons. Each homeowner's bill will reflect three months of water usage. The minimum fee is \$13; consumption up to 20,000 gallons will be billed at a rate of \$3.39 for every 1,000 gallons; and consumption of more than 20,000 gallons will be billed at a rate of \$5.08 for every 1,000 gallons.

Residents voiced their concerns at an August public hearing about the minimum fee, which was originally about \$50 per quarter. Since then, the town council has lowered the proposed fee to \$13 a quarter for about 3,800 gallons of water or less, which comes out to about \$50 to \$55 per year.

Residents who have their own septic system will not be charged. Those who have well water systems will be charged a different rate based on average residential use, based on about 16,000 gallons per quarter. The town's website features a calculator to help residents estimate how much they will owe the town for water use.

Residents with sewers are encouraged to become familiar with the water companies that service the town, the Hazardville Water Co. and Connecticut Water Co. Connecticut Water said the sewer fee change will not affect the water rates it charges users.

Implementing the new fee will allow the town to be eligible for federal and state grants to pay for upgrades to Enfield's water pollution control plant at 90 Parsons Road. During the second public hearing on the new fee Oct. 9, **Coppler** said the town needed to update its water and sewer equipment. **Coppler** said the 250 miles of sewer pipes and 16 sewer stations in Enfield hadn't been updated since 1972, and were overdue for 20-year recommended maintenance.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
June 18, 2013

Enfield council votes to increase sewer use rate on non-taxable properties

Author/Byline: Jonathan Bissonnette

The Town Council on Monday voted unanimously to increase the sewer use charge rate on non-taxable properties for 2013-14 to \$1.78 per thousand gallons of wastewater treated, an increase of 22 cents. The council, acting in its capacity as the Enfield Sewer Authority, voted 8-0, with Deputy Mayor Kenneth Nelson Jr. and Councilmen Joseph Bosco and Patrick Crowley absent from the meeting, which was held at Town Hall.

The rate, calculated through a formula based on the Water Pollution Control Authority's budget and the amount of wastewater treated, represents a 22-cent increase from the current rate of \$1.56 per thousand gallons, Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said.

Prior to the council's discussion and vote, a public hearing was held to hear comments on properties affected by the increase. Three people spoke, asking how the increase would affect residents in town. **Coppler** and Mayor Scott R. Kaupin said that the increase affected only non-taxable entities, such as prisons, churches, and government facilities. "This is strictly for the government users, not-for-profits, churches, state Department of Correction, and so forth," Councilman William Lee reiterated during the meeting that followed the hearing.

Kaupin said that some confusion among residents might have stemmed from the fact that the legal notice for the hearing did not specifically mention non-taxable properties. "There was no differentiation, and now you can see the confusion," Kaupin said. "That's why folks were here -- it just didn't differentiate that this was non-taxable."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)

May 16, 2013

Enfield council narrowly passes \$118.4 million budget

Author/Byline: Jonathan Bissonnette

The Town Council on Wednesday narrowly approved -- by a 6-5 vote -- a \$118.4 million budget for 2013-14, with most of the dissenters objecting to an increase in the tax rate. The budget represents a 3.6 percent increase or about \$4 million more than this year's spending plan. It is also \$2 million more than the \$116.4 million budget recommended by Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler**.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin, Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini, and Councilmen Thomas Arnone, Patrick Crowley, William Lee, and Gregory Stokes voted in favor of the budget. Deputy Mayor Kenneth Nelson Jr., Councilwoman Carol Hall, and Councilmen Joseph Bosco, Thomas Kienzler, and William "Red" Edgar Jr. voted against it.

In a separate but identical vote of 6-5, the council approved a mill rate of 29.26, which represents a 5.1 percent increase over the current mill rate of 27.84 mills. A mill represents \$1 in tax for each \$1,000 in assessed valuation of taxable property. "What is this going to do to our residents on fixed incomes or our businesses who are just barely getting by?" asked Kienzler, who voted against the budget. "The one need we must always consider the most is the need to be able to stay in our homes and continue to run our businesses." "All I can do for the taxpayers of this town is apologize," Bosco said. "I really feel horrible because people just can't make it anymore. When are we going to separate the wants, the needs, and what we have to do to get by?"

Hall said her dissenting vote "actually is really disheartening to me." "The argument comes when we have to increase the mill rate and nobody's willing to give up anything," Hall said. "It breaks my heart to vote no." However, some council members who voted in favor of the budget said that after a five-year period without an increase in taxes, the increase to the mill rate was due. "We held the line for so long and now it's time that we look at the issues and put our values where they belong, and the values have to be for the people of Enfield," Mangini said. "All in all, it's a good, solid budget."

"Over the last five years, we'd had a zero tax increase and in my estimation, in the last couple of years we should've balanced that out a little bit," Stokes said. "Because sooner or later it catches up because things become in place where you have to spend money." Nelson countered that, "People say five years and no tax increase I wasn't aware we had to raise taxes. I didn't know that was policy."

Prior to the vote, Kaupin told the council that he respected the opinions of each member, whether they were for or against the budget. "You put your heart and soul into the effort and I have no problem with your decision whatsoever," Kaupin said. "It's not an easy budget. No budget's easy."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Town government spending increased to \$54.1 million, which represents a 5.8 percent increase or roughly \$3 million more than the current year.

The budget set school spending to \$64.2 million, which represents a \$1.12 million increase or 1.8 percent more than the current year.

The budget also reflected the council's decision to have the town pick up \$750,000 of information technology costs the school system would normally have to pay. That would then permit school officials to reallocate the \$750,000 it doesn't have to spend on IT costs and use it to implement full-day kindergarten and reduce the number of expected layoffs from 30 to about 15. "We heard people asking for all-day kindergarten all-day kindergarten in my opinion has been the most dominating issue in this budget season," Kaupin said. "Almost everyone says they support all-day kindergarten. The additional funding to the Board of Education accomplishes this."

School board Chairman Timothy Neville said he was "very, very pleased" with the appropriation the board received. Neville said the ability to offer full-day kindergarten starting in the fall is "a big deal that will boost our offerings and give an incentive to keep kids in the town. "All worked hard and people came together to work on this and I'm thrilled and very, very happy," Neville said.

Edgar said that he voted against the budget because he said he "listened to the people" and would not approve a budget that included money for the armed security guard initiative About \$610,000 was included in the budget for the implementation of armed security guards in the town's public schools this coming school year.

Also included in the town budget was a \$1.3 million increase to the Public Works Department to purchase new equipment, including mowers, dump trucks, recycling trucks, and plow trucks.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
May 16, 2013

**BUDGET PLAN WOULD SLASH, ADD TO PAYROLL **
TWO NEW POSITIONS INCLUDED, BUT LONGTIME TOWN PLANNER'S JOB ON
CHOPPING BLOCK

Author: Amanda Falcone

The town council hasn't adopted a 2013-14 budget yet, but the town is already seeking to fill a new position -- assistant town manager of development services. The job advertisement was posted on the town's website April 15, and the town will accept applications through May 20. Town Manager **Matt Coppler** included the position in his \$116.4 million budget proposal for the next fiscal year. It is part of the reorganization of the planning and development service departments. The town council has until Saturday to adopt a budget for the new fiscal year, which will begin July 1. **Coppler's** proposal eliminates the positions of town planner and development services director and adds the positions of assistant town planner and assistant town manager of development services. The reorganization would lay off longtime town planner Jose Giner. **Coppler** said the reorganization will allow the town to recruit candidates with a higher level of management experience and a broader level of experience in town government overall. "We have met a lot of our goals, but there's still a lot more we need to do," **Coppler** said.

The position of development services director is currently filled by an interim director, Peter Brayton, who is also working as the community development director. Under **Coppler's** proposal, Brayton would remain employed by the town as community development director but would be asked to focus on the redevelopment of Thompsonville. Brayton currently makes \$67,350; that figure would rise to \$75,000 under the town manager's proposal.

The new position of assistant town manager for development services will oversee the building, community development, planning and economic development departments as well as code enforcement issues. Assistant Town Manager Dan Vindigni, who makes \$110,581, will remain in his position. He oversees the public works, recreation and library services departments. He also deals with capital improvement and energy efficiency issues, real estate transactions and customer care.

In its advertisement, Enfield says it is looking to hire a "self-motivated and well-rounded public sector professional with in-depth knowledge and experience in local government operations related to development services." Patience, clarity of thought and the ability to resolve conflict are necessary attributes, the town says. The person hired will be asked to attend all town council meetings and is required to have a master's degree in public administration or a closely related field and five years of "progressively responsible municipal experience." Candidates also could have any equivalent combination of education and experience, according to the job posting. The salary for the position is \$90,000.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)

May 18, 2012

Enfield council approves \$114.4 million budget

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

The Town Council on Wednesday approved a \$114.4 million budget for the 2012-13 fiscal year, a slight reduction over this year's spending plan and one that will result in the lay off of two town employees and likely cut positions in the school system as well. Mayor Scott R. Kaupin called it a "compromise budget," and he and several other town officials said they were disappointed in the amount of funding for education.

The new budget, which was approved by an 8-3 vote, cuts \$27,500 from the current year's budget. However, it's \$1.25 million less than the 1.07 percent increase Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** recommended to the council. Council members Joseph Bosco, Tom Kienzler, and Deputy Mayor Kenneth Nelson, all Republicans, voted against the budget.

The council approved the 27.84-mill tax rate **Coppler** proposed, an increase of about 16.6 percent. That increase was necessary, **Coppler** said, because of the lower value of taxable property following last year's revaluation. Because property values are down, most homeowners won't see much change in their tax bills.

The budget adds about \$430,000 to the school budget. That's a 0.7 percent increase, but it's \$550,000 less than what the Board of Education had requested and largely reflects an increase in the state Education Cost Sharing grant.

Kaupin said he thinks there are both positives and negatives in the budget. For example, he said he favored a larger increase for the school system but couldn't build a consensus. "I don't believe that anyone is totally happy with the budget," Kaupin said. "It's definitely a compromise budget, but it will continue to move Enfield forward and fund what our needs are."

School board Chairman Timothy Neville said he was disappointed in the budget that passed, noting that after four years of no increases there were "a lot of needs" in the budget. Neville said the school board, under both him and former Chairman Gregory Stokes, who is now on the council, tried to plan for the future and to plug a \$1.3 million hole in the budget they saw coming because of the expiration of federal stimulus funds. The board saved just over \$1 million from its budget -- about \$450,000 last year and \$627,000 this year -- to use in next year's budget to try to fill that gap.

While the council will let the board use the \$627,000 from this year for next year's budget, the \$450,000 the board saved was spent to cover cleanup costs related to October's snowstorm. Because of that, School Superintendent John Gallacher said the board has to find \$480,000 in cuts, which means it'll have to pull back on some of what they it to add and, he said, "I would anticipate there would be some staff reductions." Neville said that based on comments from last

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

month's public budget hearing, during which residents overwhelmingly supported the board's budget request, "we thought we were doing the right thing." "After year after year of cumulative budget cuts, our kids aren't going to be competitive with their peers in other towns," Neville said, adding that Enfield spends less per pupil than comparable towns and less than the state average. "We'll do the best we can with what we have, but I'm disappointed in the way it turned out."

Kienzler said that while he didn't support the budget, it was just a disagreement over a "small amount of money." He said he didn't support the amount given to the school board because last year "they didn't spend what they were budgeted."

Nelson said he was disappointed in the projected savings from the consolidation of the high schools and that he didn't want to increase school spending in the same year the town will be asking residents to approve spending millions of dollars for the consolidation at referendum. "We're supposed to be consolidating schools to cut costs," Nelson said. "The last four years we have proven it can be done. Why does the Board of Education all of a sudden need more money?"

Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini said that while she supported the budget, she saw it as "the lesser of all evils." She said she had to vote for it to preserve the additions she supported, but that "it wasn't a budget that I had hoped would pass."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)

March 1, 2012

Enfield manager to keep home; foreclosure dropped

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** will keep his Enfield home, a local bank's lawyer said Wednesday after the bank dropped a foreclosure suit it had filed in January.

Windsor lawyer John Wall, who represented New England Bank, confirmed Wednesday that the bank's withdrawal of its lawsuit, filed in Hartford Superior Court, settles the matter. He declined to provide additional details. **Coppler** declined to comment for this story, and his lawyer, Susan Williams of Enfield, did not return a phone call seeking comment.

The lawsuit, filed Jan. 12, claimed that **Coppler** hadn't made payments on the mortgage for his home at 254 Post Office Road. Court records say that **Coppler** took out a \$264,150 mortgage on the property on Sept. 6, 2006. According to local assessment records, **Coppler** bought the property for \$293,500, and the current appraised value is \$211,800.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin told the Journal Inquirer in January that the foreclosure lawsuit against **Coppler** didn't affect his or other Town Council members' faith in the town manager, saying that the council as a whole was "very supportive" of **Coppler**. "There's always more to the story than can be reported in the newspaper and what would be part of any foreclosure filing," Kaupin said in February. "Those matters are personal in nature. No one felt that it would impact his job performance."

Coppler began his tenure as Enfield's town manager on July 1, 2006. His annual salary is \$126,778.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
November 22, 2011

Enfield council sets aside \$2 million for storm cleanup

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

With work under way to collect the tons of storm debris still cluttering yards in town, the Town Council on Monday set aside \$2 million to help pay for the effort. Those funds will cover the costs of two contractors the town hired to coordinate and conduct the cleanup effort -- AshBritt Environmental and Science Applications International Corporation. The companies started work in Enfield on Friday. Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said that officials initially estimated the cleanup would cost around \$3 million, though now they're expecting a figure between \$1.8 million and \$2 million.

Because President Barack Obama declared a major disaster in parts of Connecticut, **Coppler** said that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will reimburse 75 percent of the cleanup effort in addition to full reimbursement along some roads. The town would be responsible for the other quarter of the costs, though **Coppler** said "there are rumors" that the state could reimburse a portion of that.

Coppler said the two contractors are working seven days a week and will work until Dec. 16 to clear debris. AshBritt started with 19 trucks and will increase that number to 50 by Wednesday. He said AshBritt collected 10,000 cubic yards of materials over the first weekend of the effort.

Residents should not worry about the number of passes on each street that AshBritt will make, **Coppler** said. Some residents have so much debris in their front and back yards that they can't fit all of it at the curb at once, but **Coppler** said the contract calls for AshBritt to collect all of the debris and not to make a set number of passes. "If they have to go back over an area 12 times, that's what they'll do," **Coppler** said. "If it's out there, we'll pick it up."

That is not the case for those who live along state routes, however, because the state is responsible for maintaining those roads. **Coppler** said the state was only planning to make two passes for debris pickup along those roads and that town officials are trying to find out from the state when their crews will make those passes.

Residents have until Dec. 16 to place storm-related vegetative debris at the curb for pickup. The debris should be placed as close to the curb as possible without blocking sidewalks, utilities, or mailboxes. The debris should not be bagged or bundled, and any branches or limbs thicker than 8 inches in diameter should be cut to lengths of less than 10 feet. Home and business owners may also continue to bring storm debris to the transfer station.

Town officials haven't yet set a timetable for storm-related cleanup beyond collecting debris. Councilman Joseph Bosco asked what town staff would be doing about "widowmakers" -- broken limbs dangling from trees that could fall. **Coppler** said the town was planning to address

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

those problems once the debris cleanup is complete, noting that because of the scale of the problem, work could continue well into next spring.

Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini asked whether the town would make any effort to remove limbs and trees that had fallen into streams, creating flood hazards. **Coppler** said that there is a separate FEMA process for those projects, noting that the federal agency could fully reimburse such efforts. While the town is beginning the application process, it has not yet begun work at the streams.

Coppler warned that the town and its residents must abide by FEMA rules or it risks losing reimbursement. The town can't use FEMA funds to clear storm drains, for example, and he said homeowners can't put non-storm debris from their yards at the curb. The contractors are paying close attention to what they collect, he said, and the town will not be reimbursed for non-storm items.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin asked what options are available for resident and businesses who incurred expenses related to the storm. Assistant Town Manager Daniel Vindigni said homeowners can call 211 to register information about personal hardships with the state, and **Coppler** said officials are waiting to hear from the state exactly what the process entails. **Coppler** also said he expects that the U.S. Small Business Administration will work with businesses affected by the storm.

Coppler said the town has already spent \$600,000 related to the storm for initial emergency operations that included the opening of shelters, road clearing, and overtime. He said the town will seek reimbursement of those costs as well.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
June 1, 2011

Enfield's E-TV streams live

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

E-TV, the town's local government access cable channel, is now streaming live on the town's website and on the air for subscribers of AT&T's U-Verse service. The live Internet stream began on May 20 and the U-Verse TV cable channel went live on May 26, according to Library Director Henry Dutcher, who coordinates E-TV. This isn't the first time video from E-TV broadcasts has been available online, but before last month, only archived videos of previously broadcast shows was available on demand. Dutcher said that while the availability of the on-demand videos has not changed, a live streaming video of E-TV runs on the town's website. He said the stream mirrors what's on the cable channel with a 12 to 15 second delay. On-demand videos of town meetings are generally available two to three days after the meeting, with DVDs available at the library in about the same time, Dutcher said.

E-TV is also available on TV on channel 99 for local U-Verse subscribers. The channel had previously only been available for Cox Communications cable subscribers. The government access channel became an issue in December when some residents began to complain that Cox's transition to digital transmission meant they no longer received the channel on their older television sets unless they purchased special equipment. The company offered a free converter box for older televisions for a limited time but Peter Talbot, the company's government affairs manager for the state, said the converter boxes were only available for customers who didn't already have Cox equipment for its digital cable service. E-TV is available on Cox for customers with digital service or a converter box on channel 16. Those customers without that equipment but whose televisions have digital tuners can tune in to E-TV on Cox digital channel 117.218, Dutcher said. U-Verse customers will not need any additional channel to see E-TV as it will be available with the equipment needed to get the AT&T service in the first place, Dutcher said.

The Town Council approved the deal with AT&T at the council's March 21 meeting. According to Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler**, AT&T agreed to reimburse the town for all the equipment it needs to broadcast the channel on U-verse. Because AT&T would also supply a three-year warranty, **Coppler** said, the only cost to the town would be the purchase of an extended warranty or the cost of replacing or repairing equipment after the expiration of the initial warranty.

To see the live video stream online or for links to archived meeting videos, click on the E-TV link on the home page of the town's website:

www.enfield-ct.gov

Dutcher said a second link will appear on the library's website in the near future.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
May 17, 2011

No tax hike in Enfield

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

The Town Council on Monday unanimously approved a \$114.38 million budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year while keeping the property tax rate stable for the fourth consecutive year. The budget represents a 1.15 percent increase or \$1.3 million more than the current year's spending plan. The approved budget is also a nearly \$500,000 increase over the budget proposed in March by Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler**. **Coppler** said that the council was able to add spending to the budget without increasing taxes because he expects more revenue from the state than he forecast when he prepared his initial budget proposal.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin called the spending plan a "consensus budget" and thanked town staff, residents, and his fellow council members for getting it passed. He said the difficult budget decisions the town made in recent years put the council in a good position to pass a budget without raising taxes. "With the taxes that will be going up at the other levels of government, I think the folks in Enfield will appreciate a fourth year of no tax increase," Kaupin said.

The property tax rate will remain at 23.88 mills, the same rate that has been in place since the fiscal year that ended in 2008. A mill is the equivalent of a dollar in taxes for every \$1,000 in assessed property.

All of the changes made Monday to **Coppler's** proposed budget were on the town side. The council approved without changes the \$62.7 million budget adopted by the Board of Education, the same amount of spending budgeted for the current fiscal year. With the town budget passed, the school board will begin fine-tuning its spending plan in the coming weeks and months. The council voted Monday to adjust capital projects spending in four areas. It reduced spending on refuse equipment to \$144,000, a \$256,000 decrease from the proposed budget. However, the council added more than \$364,000 for the purchase of recycling barrels, \$50,000 for a veteran's monument, and \$500,000 for town road work.

Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini thanked town staff for their work during budget season. "Going through the budget process is not an easy task and I'm just pleased that we were able to get through it successfully," Mangini said. Councilwoman Carol Hall said that the relatively small changes the council made to **Coppler's** budget -- a total of 15 amendments -- showed that town staff and the council were on the same page. "Usually we have so many amendments. I can't remember ever reading this little amount of amendments, which to me is a reflection on your staff and directors knowing the direction that this council really wanted to go in," she said to **Coppler**. "So, kudos to you and all your staff."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
January 25, 2011

Library head won't discuss censorship but says 'Sicko' will be screened

Author/Byline: Marcus Hatfield

Library Director Henry Dutcher on Monday said that Michael Moore's controversial documentary "Sicko" will eventually be screened at the Enfield Public Library but postponing it for now -- as some town officials wanted -- was in the best interest of the library. Dutcher, in his first interview since Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** lifted a gag order on him, would not, however, address questions about whether the Town Council's pressure to cancel the library's Jan. 21 screening of "Sicko," Moore's 2007 Academy Award-nominated documentary criticizing the American health care system, was censorship.

Enfield drew interest from around the world last week after the Journal Inquirer reported Thursday that the council, at its Jan. 18 meeting, pressured the library to cancel its Jan. 21 screening of "Sicko" -- the second installment of the library's nonfiction film series. Mayor Scott R. Kaupin also threatened to cut the library's funding if the film was shown, raising questions of whether the council had censored the library. The mayor asked **Coppler** to talk to Dutcher about canceling the film after four residents -- all members of the Republican Town Committee -- used the public comment portion of the council meeting to object to the screening.

Dutcher, in an interview at the library on Monday, said he chose to "take a step back" to retool the film series at **Coppler's** request because it was in the best long-term interests of the library. "Wednesday morning, we had a situation," Dutcher said, referring to the morning after the council meeting when he and **Coppler** decided to cancel the screening. "It's how you resolve the situation, the end result." He said that although the episode wasn't pretty, it provided an "amazing lesson" in how democracy works. "I personally think what we've been through has been very positive in the outcome," he said. "A lot of people say, if you see sausage made, you wouldn't want to eat it, but then you might be deprived of something you really like. Going through this might not be something you really, really like, but the end process is something that makes us stronger. That's a real positive thing.

Dutcher said that because he worked exclusively with **Coppler** throughout this process, he did not want to answer any questions about whether he thought the council had censored him or the library, saying that he didn't know that it was a "yes or no question." "I am focusing on the end result. I know someone would want me to say, No, answer that question," he said, adding that some of the feedback he has received has been criticism that he didn't take a stronger stand. That's not my province. My province is to make sure this library moves forward in the way we've always done. That's my role. "What would I have gained simply by showing a movie on one particular date?" he asked. Although he wouldn't say specifically what he would have risked by refusing to cancel the movie, he said "there was certainly a chance that the manner in which we would progress would be much more confrontational." Dutcher said he recognizes now that there were flaws in the film series, which was renamed "Friday Flicks." It had previously been known

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Matthew W. Coppler***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

as "Fun Flicks." Dutcher said the titles for the non-fiction film series that included "Sicko" were chosen months ago and, therefore, he had no idea that Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives would push through a vote on their initiative to repeal President Barack Obama's health care plan last week, the same week the film was to be shown.

Dutcher said that in the past the library showed two other Moore documentaries, "Bowling for Columbine" and "Fahrenheit 9/11" without any controversy. He said he and his staff focused on finding award-winning or nominated films with high profiles that dealt with "hot topics" such as health care, education, and the environment. In doing so, he said, he didn't create a balanced series. "We didn't get the balance," he said. "That's what we're working on." He said he expects to have his plan ready in the next week or so, well in advance of the next council meeting on Feb. 7, which is what council member wanted.

Finding balance is not always easy, he said. Sometimes, there are no obvious counterpoints to offer. For example, he said the library once hosted a presentation about deep-sea fishing, and he said he didn't know what would constitute balance in that case. He said he has considered several films to provide balance to "Sicko." One of the titles is called "Sick and Sicker" and is a documentary critical of the health care reform law promoted last year by Obama. Although both films focus on health care, Dutcher said it isn't clear whether they represent a balanced look at the same issue. He also gave the example of films about Islam, asking whether the library would have to show films about multiple religions to achieve the balance demanded by the council.

Kaupin said Monday that balance could be achieved by showing multiple movies or by supplementing the films with speakers. "Sometimes maybe you can't find balance -- maybe there's not another film that's credible, but you can find a speaker. You can find a presentation," Kaupin said. "Invite someone in from Johnson Memorial Hospital or Hartford Hospital or St. Francis and get their impression on health care."

Resident Kevin Fealy, in his comments at the Jan. 18 council meeting when he objected to the library's screening of "Sicko," said that although he felt cancellation was the right approach, if the screening was to go forward, there should be an opposing viewpoint offered. "If we do want to see differing points of view, I would suggest films like 'The Passion of the Christ' and other controversial movies would also be filmed or shown and advertised for viewing in a public venue like that on the tax dollar," Fealy said. Dutcher said that because the film series uses materials owned by the library or on loan from other libraries there is virtually no additional cost involved. DiPace said he's looking for someone to provide him with a copy of "Sicko" that he can screen for the public after the Democrats' meeting on Feb. 9 at Town Hall. Republican Town Chairwoman Mary Ann Turner said Monday that she has no objection to DiPace's plan. "Good for Tony. If he wants to invite me, I'll bring the popcorn," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
September 24, 2010

**COUNCIL CONSIDERS LEAVING HEALTH DISTRICT \ - TOWN MANAGER
ADVISES AGAINST IT**

Author/Byline: Melissa Traynor

The town council is again considering leaving the North Central Health District - an issue that has been mostly absent from meeting agendas since the council seriously considered the move in December. Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the town had adopted a resolution that would allow it to leave the district by June 30, 2011, and he advised the council to decide whether to stay or leave by Oct. 20.

Council members had expressed concern that the health district, which addresses public health concerns and enforces state health codes through permits and inspections, was sluggish in its response time for certain building permit applications. **Coppler** warned, however, that a council decision to withdraw from the health district this fiscal year would pressure the town to develop a comparable district on its own and solicit the membership of other towns.

As of Wednesday night when the council met, **Coppler** was not completely confident that the town could pull it off. He noted that work to establish the new district would have to be done at the same time that town officials work to develop a municipal budget for next year.

Coppler told the council that it needed to weigh the possible significant risks with the potential gains. "The risk is greater than the reward at this point," **Coppler** said. "We need to stay the course."

The town pays approximately \$181,000 each year to be a part of the current eight-town district and estimates that it would pay slightly more if it creates a new health district.

Although council members mostly agreed that the district still had problems to correct, not all were in favor of departing. Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini said that moving forward with Enfield's own district would place a significant amount of work on town staff. She also said it appears that the health district has made the appropriate changes that the town has asked for.

Deputy Mayor and Councilman At-Large Ken Nelson didn't agree and stated that there were too many problems to ignore, especially the length of time that district staff took to process permit applications. Health district Director William Blitz did not comment, other than to say that he believes the district has complied with the requests made by Enfield.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
September 4, 2010

Enfield outsourcing deals struck before layoffs - Union probes contracts

Author/Byline: Ed Jacovino

Contracts between the town and three area engineering firms to handle overflow work were signed last spring, before five employees in the planning and engineering departments were told their jobs were being eliminated. Now, those contracts are being used to outsource the jobs, Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said.

The move sparked a union investigation into whether it complies with existing contracts, and drew criticism from the group, which argues outsourcing is more expensive and results in decreased performance. Town officials are hopeful it will save taxpayers' money, and one Town Council member argues that research should have happened first. From all perspectives, the outsourcing marks a change in the scope of Enfield's government. Smaller towns completely use outside companies to handle their workload. Larger ones have more robust engineering departments and only turn to outside help for large projects or specific technical skills. "We're in a period where we do have to look very closely -- the trends are that government is doing more work with less people," **Coppler** said.

Enfield's contracts are with the firms Milone & MacBroom of Cheshire, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin of Springfield, and GM2 Associates of Glastonbury. Each calls for work "on an as-needed basis when projects cannot be completed by town staff due to time, staff, or other resource constraints or when outside expertise is required." They were signed in April of this year and are effective until March 2011. Of the five employees, three took an early retirement deal after learning their positions could be eliminated. Another two passed on the offer and were laid off.

Union investigates

Their union is investigating whether the outsourcing violates its labor contract. The group plans to request town documents outlining the bidding process and bills from contractors to the town, said Matt O'Connor, a spokesman for the Service Employees International Union and Civil Service Employees Association local 2001. The labor contract lets the town sign overflow contracts to handle the work its own employees can't finish. It also lets the town lay off employees as needed. It doesn't let the town hire outside contractors to take work away from its employees. "Where it becomes an issue is in a case like this when you have layoffs, eliminations," O'Connor said.

Coppler insists the two steps -- signing the contracts and downsizing the departments -- were separate. The bid for applications was put out in late 2009 when projects were stalled on staffers desks, he said. The applications were reviewed and approved before March, when **Coppler** proposed a budget that called for the layoffs. When **Coppler** was asked in May by the council how he planned to handle the extra work created by the downsizing, he said he didn't know.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

"This wasn't necessarily a scenario we thought we were going to be going with," he says now.

Coppler: outsourcing to save money

But for **Coppler**, the existing contracts sufficed and he hopes the outsourcing will result in an overall savings for the town. He plans to present an analysis of the contracts this winter as he prepares a new town budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

The union, on the other hand, contends that outsourcing means less dependable service for higher prices. "You lose a tremendous amount of accountability with services that are contracted out to private vendors," O'Connor said. The problem is that a town is in the business of serving its residents, he said. Companies are in business to make money. "It's the profit margin," O'Connor said.

He points to the hourly rates charged under the contracts:

* A project manager nets \$135 per hour under GM2's contract. Clerical work is \$55 hourly.

* At Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, the project engineer gets \$95 hourly. A landscape architect is paid \$115 hourly.

* And at Milone & MacBroom, the pay schedule is highest -- \$140 hourly for project managers and \$160 hourly for a construction manager's work.

Here's how much the town has paid each firm since the layoffs in June:

* Milone & MacBroom collected \$27,000, up from the \$9,000 it was paid by the town in the 2009-10 fiscal year and ahead of pace on the \$56,800 it collected in 2008-09.

* Vanasse Hangen Brustlin collected \$16,900 from the town since July, up from the \$4,500 it got from the town in 2009-10. It didn't have any contracts with the town in 2008-09.

* GM2 hasn't been paid since July. The firm also didn't do any work for the town in the two previous years.

It is unclear whether the figures include only work billed under the overflow contracts. The town has not responded to a request from the Journal Inquirer asking it to specify which work was on the overflow contracts and which wasn't.

Was it the best deal?

Members of the council will ask whether the town got the best deal for its money. Councilman David W. Kiner, a Democrat, had asked **Coppler** how he planned to handle the extra work caused by the downsizing. Kiner voted against downsizing the departments and against the town budget as a whole, in part because of what he called the "unknown" behind outsourcing. Research showing whether the moves would actually save money should have happened beforehand, not after, Kiner said. "We have no idea what this would actually cost the town in the long term," he says now. "It would be a shame for the Enfield taxpayers if we end up actually

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

paying more and we laid off taxpaying Enfield residents." Kiner points to plans for major road paving projects over the next five years. During the last round of roadwork, the town's engineering department handled much of the work. Now, more will be handled by private firms, he says.

But Mayor Scott R. Kaupin, a Republican, trusts that **Coppler** and other town officials got it right. If it turns out that outsourcing costs more than keeping employees on staff, then he and others on the council have said they're willing to change course. "We understood from the beginning -- when the proposed changes were brought forward for engineering -- that this would be handled by consultants," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
May 5, 2010

Enfield town employees compete to cut energy use

Author/Byline: Ed Jacovino

Employees at eight town buildings will compete for the next two months to see who can save the most electricity as part of a challenge sponsored by the town's Clean Energy Committee. "The whole idea is really to be an education experience for the staff," said Joel Cox, the town's assistant director of social services who is overseeing the project.

The employees are focusing on simple things, such as shutting off lights when they're not being used and turning computers off at the power strip, Cox said. "Right now, we're just doing small things like that," he said. The committee is calling the effort the "Municipal Facility Energy Challenge." It's being hailed as a way to reduce town spending and environment-harming emissions.

The effort kicked off Monday when town officials took baseline readings of their energy use. They'll take readings each week during May and June, and compare them to the same weeks last year, he said. The results will be posted on the energy committee's website:
Www.enfieldcleanenergy.org

There'll be small prizes for the building that saves the most energy, Cox said. The hope isn't to save lots of electricity or money but to teach people about which appliances use -- or waste -- the most electricity, he said. Each building will also have a device that can measure the electricity used by any one machine.

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** called the effort a way to save tax money. "Often in our effort to balance the budget we are forced to reduce the level of service or raise taxes," he said. "(This) allows municipal employees to work together to save money without reducing services or raising taxes."

The buildings involved are Town Hall on Enfield Street, the Enfield Child Development Center and the Village Community Center, both on High Street, the Enfield Adult Day Center on Beech Road, the Enfield Senior Center on Elm Street, the Angelo Lamagna Activity Center on North Main Street, the Enfield Public Library on Middle Road, and the Pearl Street Branch Library.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
April 13, 2010

Paying more for the status quo

Author/Byline: Kala Kachmar

To come up with the \$3.2 million that Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** says would be needed to keep the town's government and services operating at current levels, taxpayers would have seen their tax rate increase by 4.41 percent.

But **Coppler**, at the insistence of the Town Council, came up with a 2010-11 budget that will result in no increase over the current 23.88-mill tax rate.

The manager's \$112.8 million spending plan, now under review by the council, includes \$50.1 million for town operations, down from \$53.3 million in the current fiscal year. To do that, he has proposed eliminating 25 staff positions and curtailing a variety of town services, such as Dial-A-Ride and school crossing guards. The manager also proposed keeping school spending at its current \$62.7 million level, shaving \$700,000 from the appropriation sought by the Board of Education, which would have constituted a 1.24 percent spending increase.

Taxes would go up by 1.05 mills if the council decides to come up with the \$3.2 million needed to keep services and staff at current levels. A mill is the equivalent of a dollar in taxes for every \$1,000 of assessed property valuation -- meaning, as an example, that residents with \$200,000 of assessed property would pay an addition \$210 per year.

If the council additionally chose to give the school system all the money sought by the board, the tax rate would increase by 1.3 mills, or 5.45 percent. A taxpayer with \$200,000 of assessed property then would pay \$260 more in taxes for the coming fiscal year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
May 14, 2009

No tax hike in Enfield - Town Council OKs \$116.11 million budget

Author/Byline: Christine McCluskey

The Town Council on Wednesday unanimously approved a \$116.11 million budget for 2009-10 with no tax increase. The budget, which keeps the tax rate at its current 23.88 mills, includes \$62.71 million for the school system. The overall budget represents a roughly \$2.62 million decrease or 2.2 percent less than the current year's \$118.73 million spending plan.

Council members said Wednesday that while the economy made it a difficult year and the budget wasn't perfect, they were glad to have approved a plan with no tax increase. "The reality of the times do demand that we come in with no tax increase," Councilman David Kiner said. Deputy Mayor Ken Nelson Jr. thanked the town and school employee unions who agreed on wage concessions to save the town money in 2009-10.

Councilman Jason Jones noted the high public participation in this year's budget process, saying the council heard more from the community than it had in years. Councilman Patrick Crowley said next year will be even more difficult, and had a message for the parents who came to council and Board of Education meetings wearing red to oppose cuts to the education budget, including the now-shelved proposal to close a school. "Don't put away your red shirts, you've got a big fight ahead of you," Crowley said.

While the vote on the entire budget was unanimous, a few council members opposed specific pieces of the budget. Nelson said he voted against the education budget because, with the state budget still undecided, he's concerned that the legislature could decide to cut the \$28 million in Education Cost Sharing funds Enfield is expecting. "They could really hurt this community" if that happens, Nelson said. Councilwoman Cynthia Mangini said she didn't agree with the idea of distributing additional revenue unequally among departments.

Also on Wednesday, Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** announced that the union for certified and licensed non-supervisory professionals, which includes 54 town employees, had agreed to wage concessions. The town and union agreed to freeze wages for 2009-10, postponing the 3 percent wage increase that the contract had called for next year, and to add one year to the contract, so that it expires in 2013 instead of 2012. The town agreed not to lay off any members of the union in 2009-10.

The concessions will save the town \$71,000 next year. **Coppler** had said that he would cut that amount from the salary line in the budget for those employees somehow if concessions had not been agreed upon.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
October 21, 2008

Enfield Town Council votes to give manager 2 retroactive pay raises

Author/Byline: Stacey A. Silliman

The Town Council voted unanimously Monday to give Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** two retroactive pay raises, dating back to July 2007. Council member William Ragno, who had stepped out of the room, did not cast a vote on the pay raises.

Mayor Scott R. Kaupin explained that **Coppler** was awarded two pay increases, at 3 percent for 2007 and 2008, because the council did not conduct a formal review and pay assessment last year. Prior to the two increases **Coppler** was paid \$119,500 annually plus benefits as the town manager.

The increases will be retroactive to coincide with the town's fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30. Kaupin said the council plans to make sure it does an annual review of **Coppler's** salary and job performance in the future. "We're playing catch-up here and we'll be back on track with a normal annual review next year," he said, adding, "The town is in good hands with you as manager." The manager also received praise from Deputy Mayor Ken Nelson Jr., who said of the decision to give **Coppler** a raise, "This is well deserved."

Coppler left his position as city manager in Batavia, N.Y., in 2006 after he was hired to replace former Town Manager Scott Shanley by the previous Democratic-majority council. Shanley now manages the town of Manchester.

Kaupin served on the council sub-committee that chose **Coppler** from a selection of applicants to fill the administrative post.

During his first few months in town, **Coppler** instituted a "coffee with the town manager" program in order to talk with residents about their thoughts on the community's needs. **Coppler** holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He and his wife, Lisa, live in town and have three teenage children.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
August 14, 2008

Enfield to add hybrid vehicles to fleet

Author/Byline: Stacey A. Silliman

The town will soon be adding two hybrid vehicles to its motor pool, thanks to a clean energy grant from the state. Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the town has received a grant from the Connecticut Clean Fuel Program that will reimburse \$8,440 of the purchase price of up to four hybrid vehicles for the town. "We've been looking at things that conserve energy and the grant offsets the difference between the regular and hybrid versions," **Coppler** said.

The town, which also is planning to purchase replacement police vehicles later in the year rather than continue to lease, may also use a portion of the grant for those vehicles, **Coppler** said. He is looking into when the grant, which was received by the town a little over a month ago, would need to be used by in order to determine if the town will use it for police vehicles.

The only hybrid available on the state bid list at this time is the Ford Escape sport utility vehicle. **Coppler** said the town might decide to wait to purchase the hybrid vehicles until a new state bid list comes out, which may include additional vehicle options. "I'm not sure of the timeframe for purchasing the vehicles. If we go for the Escapes, we'll probably do it in the next month or so," he said, adding he thinks the new bid list will be out in September.

The Escape hybrid has an estimated miles-per-gallon rating of 34 in the city and 30 on the highway, according to Consumer Reports. In contrast to the SUV hybrid, the iconic Toyota Prius hybrid, which is a four-door sedan, receives a rating between 40 and 48 mpg. **Coppler** said the state bid lists tend to include only American companies' cars such as Ford, Dodge, or Chevrolet.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
March 6, 2008

**STATE MIGHT HELP CLEAN UP POLLUTED WELLS - TOWN SIGNS
AGREEMENT FOR TESTING AT 19-HOME SUBDIVISION**

Author/Byline: Larry Smith

The town council has agreed to a voluntary consent order with the state Department of Environmental Protection to help a 19-home subdivision with contaminated wells. Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the agreement allows the town to apply for a state grant to pay for an engineering report and preliminary testing.

The homes in the Still Meadow subdivision, off Broad Brook Road between Salerno and Rebecca drives, were built around 2001. The first traces of contamination appeared in 2004. State officials have found chemicals from a cleaning solvent and degreasers used by companies in a nearby industrial park seeping into the wells, Department of Environmental Protection officials have said. The state is providing bottled water, filters and well monitoring for 12 of the homes. Ultimately, it wants to connect the homes to a pipe that leads to the Hazardville Water Co., which would provide them with fresh water.

In a memo to **Coppler**, Kevin Neary, an environmental analyst for the DEP, said the town would oversee the testing but the work would be paid for by the state. Very little money, about \$60,000 for the grant application, would be required upfront from the town.

Deputy Mayor Kenneth Nelson, who voted against the agreement, said there are too many questions about what will happen with the project. "You're asking me to buy a business without knowing what it is," Nelson said. "That's absurd."

Coppler told the council that many of its questions can't be answered until after the preliminary work is done. He added that if the town chose not to work with the DEP, it could be ordered to do the project and that such an effort would be expensive. "I understand where you're coming from," **Coppler** said. "The alternative isn't the project doesn't get done. The alternative is it gets done and we have to come up with a way to pay for it."

Town Attorney Kevin Deneen said if the council decided not to approve the voluntary consent order the state could force the town to do the work and pay for it. "I agree with the town manager," Deneen said. "You're a lot better off walking arm in arm with them than having them stomp on you."

Council member William Lee said the council has been aware of the problem for a couple of years. "I don't personally have any misgivings about the state's ability to reimburse us," Lee said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
July 6, 2007

Enfield gets \$1 million from feds for sewer improvements

Author/Byline: Anne Pallivathuckal; Amy Grigitis contributed to this story

The town has been allocated \$300,000 of a \$1 million appropriation designated for a project that would correct the surface and groundwater infiltration into the town's sanitary sewer system. U.S. Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman and Mayor Patrick L. Tallarita held a news conference Thursday at Freshwater Pond on North Main Street announcing the funds, which were included in the Department of the Interior Appropriations bill. The \$1 million appropriation is part of that bill.

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said the money would be used as part of the town's \$3.7 million sewer system project. Specifically, the funds would be used for the work in the Thompsonville section of town.

The "fairly complex project" would remove rainwater and groundwater from sanitary sewers, separating the storm sewers and the sanitary sewers, **Coppler** said. "It's going to reduce the operations costs of the water pollution control plant," **Coppler** said, adding that because less water will have to be treated, the town will save money is electricity costs. "This will improve the efficiency of the plant as well as reduce long-term costs." **Coppler** said this project was one of the top priorities for town officials.

"We're absolutely thrilled," Tallarita said of securing the money. "It helps with the total improvement of the infrastructure," Tallarita said, making Thompsonville more economically viable and attractive.

Tallarita also emphasized the reduction in energy and chemical costs due to the lesser amount of water going to the sewage treatment plant. Having cleaner water also will help improve the environment, he said. Tallarita said the early stages of the project already are under way but now that federal funds have been secured, the work would be accelerated.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
May 14, 2007

Taxpayer leaders talk to investigator - Say questions about DPW didn't involve Mayor Tallartia

Author/Byline: Alex Wood

Two leaders of the Enfield Taxpayers Association say an investigator from the chief state's attorney's office has talked with them about allegations that refuse collectors working for the town's Public Works Department have been paid for hours they didn't work. But the two -- association President John D. Sheridan Jr. and Vice President Scott M. Vining -- also said this week that their discussions with the investigator had nothing to do with Mayor Patrick L. Tallarita.

The Hartford Business Journal reported this week that Tallarita was the subject of an investigation by the chief state's attorney's office. The Journal Inquirer has been unable to confirm that. Chief State's Attorney Kevin T. Kane makes a policy of not confirming or denying reports of investigations. His spokesman, Mark Dupuis, reiterated that policy Friday in response to questions from the JI about the Enfield public works probe. Kane's policy differs from that of at least one of his predecessors, John M. Bailey, who once testified that his office would confirm investigations.

Vining said weigh slips from the Ellington transfer station show that Enfield trash trucks often stop there between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. He said the transfer station is the last stop on their routes. Vining said the employees who work on the trash trucks are paid for eight-hour shifts that are supposed to run from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. But Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said that when the refuse collectors return from their routes, "the supervisory staff has other work for them." **Coppler** said he was unaware of any state investigation involving the town.

Vining acknowledged that the refuse collectors sometimes have additional duties after they reach the transfer station. At this time of year, for example, they are picking up yard waste and will make more than one trip to the transfer station in a day, he said. He has focused on Saturday overtime shifts in weeks with Monday holidays. He said there was such a shift on Feb. 17, the Saturday after the Lincoln's Birthday holiday, and that the employees weren't required to punch out. He said 10 drivers and two laborers were paid a total of \$3,221 for that shift, at time and a half.

There was another such shift a week later, Feb. 24, because of the Presidents Day holiday. Vining said he drove by the public works garage at 2 p.m. that day and saw no cars in the parking lot -- only one black sport-utility vehicle. He said 12 employees' time cards show that they punched out at 2:15 p.m. that day. Their supervisor punched out at 2:55 p.m., he added.

But **Coppler** said he has spoken to the town's employees about Vining's allegations and that they say they were at work when Vining alleges they were absent. He also said he has punched time

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

cards -- and that the employees say they punched them. **Coppler** acknowledged that employees sometimes are allowed to go home early "under extreme weather conditions," such as intense heat and humidity or cold and rain. "It's not every day," the town manager said. "I can't tell you what the extent is."

Coppler also said a number of employees come in well before the start of the work day, often on the order of 20 minutes early, to get prepared and start work as soon as their shifts begin. Although the employees punch in early when they do this, they aren't paid for the extra time, he said. He added that the town's salaried, supervisory personnel often work hours extra and receive no additional pay.

Sheridan was less detailed in his comments than Vining, saying only that he had talked to Janice Kmetz, a police inspector assigned to the Public Integrity Bureau of the chief state's attorney's office, about the public works issue. He said he feared that giving more detail would impede her investigation. Sheridan said Kmetz asked him if he was "aware of anything that had happened in the political arena in Enfield." He said he told the investigator he knew nothing other than what he had heard through the "rumor mill." He said there was no discussion of Tallarita. "This has nothing to do with Mayor Tallarita," Vining agreed.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Journal Inquirer (Manchester, CT)
March 28, 2007

Firm sues Enfield for breach of contract over library project

Author: Mike Cummings

A Cromwell-based construction company is suing the town for breach of contract over a project to renovate the exterior of the Pearl Street Library. The company, Pinney Construction Corporation, filed a lawsuit on March 13 in Hartford Superior Court. It is seeking payment and damages "well in excess of \$75,000." The town contracted the company in June 2006 to restore the exterior of the Pearl Street Library.

Pinney Construction was the sole bidder on the project. The contract was originally for \$344,347 and set a completion deadline of Oct. 2, 2006. A change order issued during the work raised the contract amount to \$361,065, Finance Director Gregory Simmons said Tuesday. The work included replacing or repairing the building's gutters, trim, roof, doors windows, chimneys, and entrance steps, according to bid request. According to the complaint, Pinney Construction claims the town increased the project's scope without extending the completion deadline. The contractor also claims the town continually obstructed its ability to complete the work on schedule and did not pay it for work done in accordance with the contract.

Town Manager **Matthew Coppler** did not return phone calls Tuesday to comment on the lawsuit. Pinney Construction's complaint details a dispute over the replacement of the library's front steps. The contractor says the contract originally called for the replacement of three of the seven entrance steps. It claims the town and its architect, Capital Studio Architects of East Hartford, took several months to approve the granite materials for the steps, which the contractor says hindered its ability to complete the work on time.

The town also increased the number of steps requiring replacement to seven, the contractor says. Pinney Construction says the town prohibited it from demolishing the front steps until the granite for the replacements arrived, which it says caused delays. The contractor says following demolition of the steps, it had to wait for the architect to draw schematics for connecting the new steps to the building's foundation, which it says hindered its ability to complete the work on time.

Pinney Construction also claims the town refused to adjust the contract to compensate the contractor for extra work, specifically, the demolition and rebuilding of the library's three chimneys. The contractor claims it "substantially completed" its work by the Oct. 2 deadline. It says the town refused to declare the project substantially completed until all of the granite steps were installed even though the public had full use of the library throughout the project "through a side entrance, and for the majority of time, through the front entrance utilizing existing steps."

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
September 5, 2006

**NEW TOWN MANAGER SETTLES INTO JOB, COMMUNITY
MATTHEW COPPLER SAYS HE WANTS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS ABOUT
THEIR CONCERNS, AND HE HOPES PUBLIC INPUT CAN HELP SHAPE POLICY
DECISIONS**

Author: Larry Smith

Town Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** has been on the job since July 1. **Coppler**, 39, who was city manager of Batavia, N.Y., where he worked from 2001 until June, holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from Bowling Green State University. He is married to Lisa, and they have three children, Bethny, 17, Catriona, 14, and Quentin, 12.

Coppler discussed his job during a recent question-and-answer interview:

How did you decide on a career in public administration?

Coppler: I was always leaning toward a public sector position. I actually started thinking I was going into law. But in college, taking a political science class, intro to public administration, and the professor was very involved. I got to know him better and got to hear some of the different ideas about public administration. I guess that's what led me down the road -- that interest in the public sector instilled from my parents, service to the community -- this was the best outlet that I saw.

What is your general philosophy in how you approach your job?

Coppler: I always try to listen and hear what all the issues are, get all of the facts, and make sure to pass on good information to the policy makers, which is of course the council. And then follow up. I think it's very important that you listen to people, hear what their concerns are, and try to address those the best way you can. Sometimes you can't, but you've tried.

What have you learned from your ``coffee with the town manager" sessions?

Coppler: I think besides attending, one is to get people to know me, introduce myself, let them know that if there are any issues they can give me a call directly and hopefully we'll be able to resolve it. The other side is to hear from the public and what they're thinking and try to establish two-way communication. We do a fairly good job of getting information out, but I don't know how good of a job yet we do getting information back to us on how people felt. But it's always a good way again to hear what people are thinking; it also identifies areas where we're not doing as good a job communicating what's going on as well, because there's a lot of misperceptions, misconceptions about why we're doing different things. That's a great way to address those and hopefully get the right message out there. I think we've been fairly successful; at the second [session] we had about 25 people. It was primarily people residing around the area where we had it. I think we're going to keep doing these for a long time.

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Has your learning curve become bigger or smaller?

Coppler: I think in terms of laying out where I thought I'd be at this point in time, I feel like I'm there. It takes awhile to understand all the nuances and have all the background. Unfortunately, as issues come up, they usually pre-date my arrival. It takes a little bit of time to go and get some research and find out why actions were taken or what the thought process was and look back at the policy. But, again, I think that's to the benefit of the organization of the town, because somebody asking a question that maybe the residents or the people that are involved in the policy may have been asking, too, but never had answered. So it allows us to go back over why we're doing what we're doing and how we're doing it. With that being said, life is about learning at all times. No matter whether we're in a position for a day, a year, 10 years, you should always be learning something about that.

Are there any issues you've determined that the town needs to address?

Coppler: I see in bringing myself up to speed there's things that we probably will be doing a little bit differently in the future. I can't think of anything right offhand that stops me in my tracks, gee we've got to change totally from what we're doing. I think we have very good leadership from the town council; we have great department directors; we have great employees working for us. [There's] definitely a lot of concern and care for the community from the employees and staff here. With that being said, I think you always have issues whenever you have an organization or a community to run. There's always going to be some issues that probably at some point will be changed. I'm just kind of taking in what's going on. Asking questions as to why we're doing what we're doing, and working with people to find out if there are better ways to do what we're doing and if there are, we move forward.

Has coming here in July made your transition smoother?

Coppler: We ended up actually having council meetings. I think there's been a lot of opportunities to interact with council members, slowly getting to know them, meeting with them, finding out what's good and what's bad -- some of their personal philosophies on government. So I think whether we had a lot of meetings or very few meetings, I could have handled it either way. It's going very good.

What are some things you think you need to get to know about Enfield?

Coppler: Obviously, in utilizing the "coffee with the manager" format and probably some other contact opportunities, just getting an understanding of how people feel about the community and what they think their strengths are and their weaknesses are. Getting that information is going to help formulate policy for the council so we can work together to identify the issues that we as a community need to address. I think that's a very important thing that comes out of these contacts with citizens is understanding what they're thinking and what they think we need to be doing. And then translating that, ultimately, into policy by the council. This council, they have a belief that our community can be better than what it is. Not saying it's bad, but we can become a lot better. Knowing what people are thinking will help them address and direct ultimately where we're going.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
July 29, 2006

OFFICIAL: `APPROPRIATE ACTION TAKEN' - DETAILS WITHHELD IN MATTER OF UCONN TICKETS

Author/Byline: Larry Smith

Town Manager **Matthew Coppler** has taken action against the town's public works director, who purchased UConn women's basketball tickets from a contractor. But **Coppler**, who has been town manager since July 1, won't reveal details of the action, saying he generally does not release information in personnel matters. He said he interviewed people and read all relevant reports before making a decision. ``We have reviewed it," **Coppler** said. ``There was appropriate action taken so [the situation] won't occur in the future."

According to a police report on the investigation, John Kazmarski purchased season tickets to the basketball games from Terry McCarthy, project manager for the McGuire Group, and some town employees occasionally bought tickets from him. But it wasn't until a town employee saw Kazmarski sitting in seats for individuals who donate \$5,000 to the university for the right to buy tickets that someone questioned whether he was violating any policy. A police investigation found that the purchases didn't reach the level of criminal behavior.

Mayor Patrick Tallarita said that although it is not the council's role to get involved with personnel decisions, he believes **Coppler** took the right actions. Administrative policies are handled by the town manager, and there was nothing in the situation that required council action, Tallarita said. ``I'm pleased with the way that **Matt** addressed the situation," Tallarita said. ``He addressed it in a professional manner." Tallarita said Town Attorney Christopher Bromson, who was acting town manager at the time of the investigation, made changes in administration policies to address the issue.

According to the police report on the case, which was closed in May, Deputy Public Works Director Geoffrey McAlmond sent a memo to Bromson in February citing a possible violation of personnel rules and procedures by Kazmarski. In the memo, McAlmond said a town employee saw Kazmarski at a Jan. 31 UConn basketball game sitting in choice corporate seats. The employee said he understood that Kazmarski paid for his own seats, but questioned whether a corporation was making the required donation to receive them. Kazmarski told police that he bought the tickets from McCarthy at face value for three years, the report said. Kazmarski has not commented publicly on the situation.

McCarthy told investigators that he donates \$5,000 annually to the UConn Club to be eligible to purchase the tickets. He buys tickets to both men's and women's basketball games, but retained only two for himself and sold the rest to co-workers, relatives and Kazmarski, the report said.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
July 20, 2006

SETTLEMENT STRUCK IN SCHOOL DISPUTE

Author/Byline: Larry Smith

The town council on Wednesday approved paying a Vernon-based contractor \$550,000 to settle a dispute over a construction project at Enfield High School. At a special meeting, the council unanimously approved the settlement with King Associates, the contractor for the \$6 million project that included a one- and two-story addition to the school. The dispute between the two parties had been going on since 2004. The town had been withholding payments to King Associates because some of the work in the project had not been completed by the opening of the 2004-05 school year. Another contractor had to be hired to finish it, Mayor Patrick Tallarita said.

Town Manager **Matthew Coppler** said the settlement is ``all being paid for within the confines of the project bond money." The settlement allows both sides to avoid spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees in court, Town Attorney Christopher Bromson said. Both sides had been trying work through a mediator since 2004 to resolve the dispute, officials said. Under the agreement, both sides release each from any future claims about the project.

Tallarita said it is as fair an agreement as both sides could get and is in the best interests of the town. ``This just puts an end to a chapter," Tallarita said. ``It's nice to conclude this; it was confrontational at times."

Coppler said most of the work on the project has been completed except for one issue with a leaky roof. The public works department is working to fix that problem, he said. **Coppler** said the town has paid \$141,000 in legal fees trying to resolve the dispute. Tallarita said the agreement had been discussed numerous times with the town's building committee, council members and town staff.

Town officials began withholding payments in 2004 when they weren't satisfied that work, which was supposed to be completed by the beginning of 2004-05 school year, wasn't done. The project included renovations to the library, administrative and guidance offices as well as some classrooms.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hartford Courant, The (CT)
June 7, 2006

COPPLER VOTED IN AS TOWN MANAGER

Author: Larry Smith

Matthew Coppler is now officially the new town manager. The town council on Monday approved the hiring of **Coppler**, 39. He was in Enfield over the weekend with his wife and their three children searching for a home and was at the council meeting during the vote. **Coppler**, the city manager of Batavia, N.Y., will start in Enfield July 1 and will get a \$119,000 annual salary. "I really look forward to some of the opportunities we talked about during the interview process," **Coppler** said. "I hope when we look back 10 or 15 years we will agree this was a good choice."

Coppler has more than 15 years of experience in local government; he has served as both a village and a city manager. He started his career as a planner in an Ohio town. "We look forward to having you in our community," Mayor Patrick Tallarita told **Coppler** Monday. **Coppler** has been city manager of the northwestern New York community of 16,000 since 2001. He holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

Republican Minority Leader Scott Kaupin welcomed **Coppler** to Enfield and said starting right before the town's Fourth of July celebration is a good time to see that the town is a good place in which to live. Kaupin was on the subcommittee that screened the applicants for the job. Assistant Town Manager Daniel Vindigni, who was praised by Councilman Ken Nelson, is serving as acting town manager until **Coppler** arrives. Town Attorney Christopher Bromson had been serving as acting town manager since November, when Scott Shanley was forced to resign.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
May 6, 2006

County, city still sorting out debt settlement

Author/Byline: Roger Muehlig

Genesee County figures the city of Batavia owes some \$59,000 from dropping out of the county's self-funded workers' compensation program at the end of 2003. City Hall, apparently, isn't ready to agree.

City and county officials met to discuss the monetary issue about two weeks ago. At that meeting, the city agreed in principle that it owed some amount of money, "it was just a question of documenting how much it was," Charles Zambito, chairman of the county Legislature's Ways and Means Committee, said Wednesday.

The county originally estimated the amount at \$44,000, but a check of the bills showed the actual amount to be about \$59,000, Kathy Jasinski, executive secretary of the county program, told Ways and Means. She provided the city with copies of the bills, she said, but hadn't gotten a response.

Most of the money is for state workers compensation board assessments -- operating money for the state board -- that generally run two years behind, Jasinski said, and for legal expenses for the city's withdrawal from the county program. Jasinski offered to send out a final bill, but Zambito, R-towns of Elba, Byron and Bergen, preferred to give the city two more weeks, until Ways and Means' next meeting.

City Manager **Matthew Coppler** said Thursday that the county figures included some "new things," like bills from 2002, that had not been in the mix before. "We're trying to make heads or tails out of this," he said.

Coppler said the city will probably request more information based on what the county provided. "They'll be hearing from us shortly, no doubt about that," he said.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
April 26, 2006

City about \$1 million - short, audit confirms

Author/Byline: Joanne Beck

It's like opening the barn door and letting the horse out. And then saying, oops. That's how City Councilman Rose Mary Christian describes the city's budget process. The city's financial woes have been gaining speed for some time now. And the budget door, so to speak, has been opened. "The horse is out," she said. "Financially we're hurting. It is a mess."

Christian's latest concerns stem from a phone call she made to city auditors Freed, Maxick & Battaglia. Auditor Don Gould told her the city's about \$1 million short, she said during Monday's council meeting. Gould was unavailable for comment Tuesday and did not return calls made to him.

Councilman Daniel Snyder questioned where she got the information from and if it was ethical to call the auditor. Christian said she can call anyone she wants to. "I represent my ward and I represent the taxpayers of my ward," she said. "I called because I wanted some answers concerning the water rate. I asked about the audit ... it will be presented in a couple of weeks. As of August 2005, we're about a million short. (Gould) said this didn't happen overnight. It's been years in the making."

Christian thought the city's audit should have been presented by now. It seems only fitting that those numbers are discussed before the next year's budget is adopted by April 1, she said. Council President Frank Ferrando disputed that. He thought audits have generally been submitted in May or June. According to city clerk minutes, last year's audit was presented to council March 28. This year's report is expected to be on City Council's May 8 meeting agenda.

City Manager **Matt Coppler** said a copy of the city's financial report was sent to all council members some time in March. The audit would have been presented earlier but there were scheduling issues with increased budget sessions and **Coppler's** time off in early April, he said. He confirmed that there is that million dollar gap from "a very difficult year" in 2004-05. "Not on the expenditure side, but on the revenue side," he said. "Leading up to the 2002-03 budget, there were many years of difficulties between expenditures and revenues. We started building back our reserves and then got hit with retirement (increases), and we began using our reserve funds. Batavia was one of seven (cities) who received no additional aid for that."

Some of the problem is the result of how incoming and outgoing money isn't recorded during the same fiscal year, he said. For example, the city spent about \$40,000 on its central corridor plan, but the grant that helped pay for it wasn't received and recorded until the following year. That would make 2004-05 look \$40,000 short and 2005-06 appear \$40,000 richer. When combining the two-year period "it's a wash," he said. That doesn't mean there's not a deficit, he said, and City Council's move to increase property taxes 5 percent will help to build back a reserve.

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cutting services and personnel isn't the answer, he said. "There's only so far you can cut. We've eliminated positions, cut back on projects ... the (5 percent increase) allows us to guarantee to have money to operate over the next year."

While Ferrando was surprised at Christian's \$1 million claim, he said he wanted to wait for the official audit report before reacting. He also was "set aback" that more council didn't support his suggestion to form a budget advisory committee. He wanted to assemble eight or nine nonpartisan citizens to give input during the 2007-08 budget process. The idea was shelved after a straw poll vote of 5 to 4 against. Councilman Charlie Mallow voted against the idea. He didn't want to "pass the buck on anyone" or use the committee as a scapegoat for an unpopular budget next year, he said.

Ferrando refuted the idea this group would be a scapegoat. That's not the intent, he said. "I felt that would have been a very important and smart move for council, to get a fresh look. I'm not looking for a group to make decisions ... but to see where the real issues are," he said. "The more we can broaden the democratic process, the more it can help us with a budget. I can't understand what the fear of council would be."

As for the 2007-08 budget process, Ferrando and other council members said they'd like to start "right away." Council asked **Coppler** to get a budget meeting calendar in place to start talking as early as May, Ferrando said. Christian believes a million dollar deficit would have roused her and other council members a bit more while discussing budget numbers earlier this year. "I think everybody would have been wide-eyed if we were presented with a different budget than the beautiful, glorious picture we had," she said.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: To view the entire case, please follow the link below.]

<https://www.leagle.com/decision/20051000162ohioapp3d8381906>

FIFTH THIRD BANK v. COPE

No. CA2004-05-059.

162 Ohio App.3d 838 (2005)

2005-Ohio-4626

FIFTH THIRD BANK et al., Appellants, v. COPE et al., Appellees.
Court of Appeals of Ohio, Twelfth District, Warren County.
Decided September 6, 2005.

Attorney(s) appearing for the Case

Statman, Harris, Siegel & Eyrich, L.L.C., and Lawrence A. Flemer, for appellants.

Rendigs, Fry, Kiely & Dennis, L.L.P., and Steven Hengehold, for appellees the estate of James L. Ross Sr., James L. Ross Jr., and the Gross Partnership.

John H. Engle, for appellee William Landis.

Freund, Freeze & Arnold and Kevin C. Connell, for appellees village of Carlisle and **Matthew Coppler**.

WALSH, Judge.

{¶ 1} Plaintiffs-appellants, Fifth Third Bank and Sharon Shelton, appeal a summary judgment granted in favor of defendants-appellees, the estate of James L. Gross Sr., James L. Gross Jr., the Gross Partnership, William Landis & Landis Engineering, Inc., the city of Carlisle, and **Matthew Coppler**, with respect to appellants' claims against appellees, arising from the allegedly faulty construction of the foundation for Shelton's house.

{¶ 6} In June 1993, while Cope was digging the foundation to the house on Lot No. 32, which was next door to Shelton's, Landis observed reinforcing rods sticking out of the soil there. As a result, Landis ordered Cope to dig a four-foot test hole to further investigate the lot's soil conditions. When Cope dug the test hole, he found roofing-material debris. Landis ordered Cope to dig further until he reached undisturbed material. Cope dug down an additional ten feet before he found undisturbed earth. On June 11, 1993, Landis met with Carlisle's city manager, **Matthew Coppler**, at Lot No. 32 and showed him the debris; Landis expressed his concern that the house on that lot was being built over a "major landfill." Landis's primary concern was that the debris posed a safety problem with respect to the area's groundwater; consequently he requested that **Coppler** place a stop-work order on the house being constructed on Lot No. 32 to further investigate the situation. Landis also requested that a stop-work order be placed on Shelton's house, since it was immediately adjacent to Lot No. 33. **Coppler** did not respond to

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Landis's request for a stop-work order. Nevertheless, before leaving the site, Landis told Cope that if the hole he had dug on Lot No. 32 "was filled with compacted gravel," then he "would approve a building on that site[,] assuming that * * * the water was not a continuing problem." Cope agreed to take out the roofing-material debris on Lot No. 32 and to replace it with compacted gravel, to ensure the structural integrity of the house built on the lot. **Coppler** also agreed to that solution.

{¶ 7} Four days later, Landis received a copy of the Nutting Report from **Coppler**. After glancing at the report, Landis again asked **Coppler** to approve a stop-work order on Lots No. 32 and 33 because of his concerns that the roofing-material debris posed a potential safety hazard with respect to both the underground water and the structural integrity of the foundations of the houses that were being built on those lots. **Coppler** told Landis that he was not going to address the water problem because it was the "county health department's problem," not the city's. He then told Landis "to go ahead with the inspections."

{¶ 8} Landis did not recommend to **Coppler** that "it would be advisable to dig out the foundation area around [Lot No.] 33" because he "didn't have enough information to make any kind of recommendation." Landis also did not order Cope to perform the same remedial measures on Shelton's Lot No. 33 that he had suggested for Lot No. 32, i.e., to remove the roofing-material debris and replace it with compacted gravel, because Shelton's house had already been built on the lot and it would have had to have been torn down to fix the potential problems with the foundation. Nevertheless, Landis made notes of his conversations with **Coppler** to make a record of his concerns about the groundwater and the foundations in case "problems did arise," and to make a record showing that he proceeded as he did only because **Coppler** ordered him to do so. Landis continued to study the Nutting Report, "looking for leverage" to change **Coppler**'s decision not to grant a stop-work order, with Landis's primary concern still being the safety of the groundwater. Landis even ordered groundwater testing at his own expense. Prior to final inspection of Shelton's residence, Landis reminded **Coppler** of the "potential serious nature of the groundwater problem." He provided **Coppler** with a copy of his report on the groundwater to which he attached a note, stating he "still had concerns." **Coppler** never responded to Landis's note.

{¶ 11} On April 18, 2002, Shelton and Fifth Third Bank ("appellants") filed a complaint against Cope and Gross Sr.,¹ as well as against Landis and his company, Landis Engineering, Inc. (together, "Landis"), alleging, among other things, breach of contract and negligence. On July 18, 2002, Landis brought a third-party complaint, seeking indemnification, defense and reimbursement of costs from the city of Carlisle. On December 17, 2002, appellants filed an amended complaint, naming as additional defendants Gross Jr., the Gross Partnership, **Coppler**, and Carlisle and alleging breach of contract, breach of the implied warranty of workmanlike construction, breach of contract as an intended third-party beneficiary, negligence, willful, wanton, and reckless misconduct, fraudulent misrepresentation, and violation of Shelton's civil rights, pursuant to Section 1983 et seq., Title 42, U.S.Code. All of the named defendants except Cope moved for summary judgment.

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

{¶ 12} On December 31, 2003, the trial court issued a decision granting summary judgment in favor of all defendants except Cope. The trial court found that the estate of Gross Sr., Gross Jr., and the Gross Partnership (collectively, "the Gross appellees") did not owe any duties to Shelton regarding the lot they sold to Cope, which she had subsequently purchased. The trial court also found that Shelton was not an intended third-party beneficiary of the contract between the Gross appellees and Cope, or the contract between Landis and Carlisle that called for Landis to perform building-inspection services for Carlisle. The trial court also found that appellants could not prove their fraudulent-misrepresentation claims against either the Gross appellees or Landis. The trial court further found that there was no evidence that **Coppler** or the city had acted in "a wanton or reckless manner such as to negate the statutory grant of immunity," to which it found they were entitled. Finally, the trial court found that the applicable statute of limitations for all of appellants' claims against the Gross appellees, Landis, **Coppler**, and Carlisle had expired. On May 3, 2004, the trial court entered a judgment formally granting summary judgment to the Gross appellees, Landis, **Coppler**, and Carlisle as to appellants' claims against them.²

{¶ 42} In this case, Shelton knew by late 1999 or early 2000 that something was seriously wrong with the foundation of her house. Since her house was only about six years old at that time, it should have been apparent to any reasonable person that the builder (Cope) and anyone responsible for inspecting the builder's work, including Carlisle and **Coppler** (along with acting building inspector Landis), were responsible for the damage.³ However, appellants did not file their action against Carlisle and **Coppler** until December 2002—well after the two-year statute of limitations had expired. Therefore, we conclude that the trial court did not err in dismissing appellants' action against Carlisle and **Coppler** on the grounds that it was filed outside of the applicable statute of limitations.

{¶ 43} In their final argument, appellants assert that the trial court erred in granting Carlisle and **Coppler** summary judgment on their Section 1983 claim, arising from their allegation that "Copper subverted Landis' authority to properly perform his functions as building inspector" on an "arbitrary and irrational basis," which resulted in the "deprivation of Shelton's property rights through a condemnation which would have never occurred but for **Coppler's** wrongful conduct." However, the statute of limitations for Section 1983 claims requires that they be filed within two years from the date of their accrual. *Browning v. Pendleton* (C.A.6, 1989), 869 F.2d 989, 992. Here, we conclude that appellants' Section 1983 claim accrued in late 1999 or early 2000 for the same reasons that appellants' action against Carlisle and **Coppler** accrued at that time. Because appellants did not file their Section 1983 claim until December 2002, their claim was barred by the statute of limitations.

Judgment affirmed.

POWELL, P.J., and BRESSLER, J., concur.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
May 16, 2005

Commentary

Author: **Matthew W. Coppler**

Editor:

I am writing regarding the May 3 news story titled "CATS prove tough to track" to clarify some items within the story. Though under one heading, this is really two different stories, both not quite providing the complete picture.

Since the story begins with CATS, so too will I. Regardless of the legal standing of the Citizen Action Teams (Community Action Teams), a concerted effort to keep this process in the public eye has been made by City Council and city staff. The Daily News was encouraged early in the process to be a part and provide coverage of the teams so all citizens could be kept aware of our progress.

As of the date of the article, seven of the eight teams had minutes posted, dating back to the beginning of the process through March. The minutes are meant to provide the teams a way to capture the information being presented to them and to capture questions and thoughts that were raised. The added benefit is they provide a window into the CAT process to citizens that are not able to attend, not a legal accounting of the meeting.

Any shortcoming in the process of making the public informed of upcoming meetings rests with me, not with these volunteer citizens or city staff that have been asked to go above and beyond. Contrary to the implication within the story that something is amiss, there is no conspiracy to be found behind this headline. Instead there are a large number of committed citizens, business people and city staff that are striving to create a better community in which they live. These individuals understand that the only way to create that future is to ask very tough questions that some do not want to address or would rather not be asked.

The second story within the story centers on the comments attributed to the International Association of Fire Fighters representative Michael Mullen. The CATs process began in October of 2004 and Mr. Mullen is just now beginning to voice his concerns, nearly seven months after the start.

I as well as City Council disagree with Mr. Mullen as it relates to the involvement of our citizens in reviewing the services we provide and the cost for those services. Often government is too self-involved and does not engage the people that are impacted by the choices it makes. It is sometimes forgotten that behind every tax dollar is a real person trying to make their lives better.

Mr. Mullen's claim that the teams are not getting enough information is incorrect. In fact, all the CATs have done a thorough job of seeking independent information. The team leaders have

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

approached their assigned task from the very beginning in an analytical manner, seeking all options, not just the one Mr. Mullen deems to be appropriate.

Lastly, the story leaves a lingering question that as a taxpayer I would want answered. Has the city acted improperly, as Mr. Mullen suggests, with \$900,000 from the ambulance fund? Every year the financial operations of the City of Batavia are reviewed by an independent auditing firm who does a complete and exhaustive evaluation of the city's finances. This audit is submitted annually to the New York State Comptroller's Office for final review. The \$900,000 referred to are revenues that are used to reimburse the general fund for operations of the fire department related to the ambulance service. On every shift, four firefighters are assigned ambulance responsibilities and provide ambulance service. We bill for this service, we accept revenues for this service, and we are able to reimburse the general fund for its expenses related to this service. If members of the city's fire department did not provide this service, we would have to hire 16 additional employees to provide the same level. The city for many years has been doing the same thing for general fund expenses related to both water and wastewater operations. In fact, before the ambulance service fund was created, this money was commingled with other general fund revenues. What the city did was present a clearer image of the service, how it is funded, and where the money comes from for the service.

As a citizen of this community I am proud of my fellow citizens who have answered the call of City Council to look at our community and its government to see if it can meet the challenges ahead. The greatness in any community is found not in the physical wealth or the aesthetics of the place, but in the commitment of the people to better their lives as well as the lives of their fellow citizens. These citizens understand our greatness as a community is in an individual's unwavering commitment to improve our future.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to clarify the aforementioned issue.

Matthew W. Coppler

City Manager

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
May 12, 2004

Commentary

Editor:

Batavia, like other Western New York Cities, is facing a variety of issues that could negatively impact the future of our community. However, there are many opportunities for us to create a community where citizens choose to live, work, and play and businesses can flourish.

Batavia City Council, recognizing that short-term solutions to these issues would not provide adequate long-term benefits, has decided to embark on a process to identify long-term strategies to address issues facing our neighborhoods, jobs, education, the expenditure of public funds, and many other issues important to our citizens and to our City. The result will be a community based, comprehensive and integrated plan to steer the future of the City of Batavia.

City Council is asking citizens to help create the motto and theme for this planning process. The motto and theme will be utilized in all promotions for the community based planning initiative and could be utilized for promotions for the City as a whole. Citizens wishing to participate in creation of a motto and theme for the planning process should submit their ideas in writing by the close of business on May 24 to: City Manager's Office, 10 West Main, Batavia, New York. Concepts can also be emailed to **Coppler@batavianewyork.com**. The selected concept(s) will be announced May 24 at the City Council Meeting.

Matthew W. Coppler

City Manager

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Buffalo News, The (NY)
March 12, 2002

CITY COUNCIL ADOPTS BUDGET FOR 2002-2003

Author/Byline: Bill Brown

The City Council on Monday without comment adopted a 2002-2003 budget that maintains the real property tax rate at \$7.66 per thousand for the third straight year. The \$20,413,143 spending plan is about the same as the previous year. The amount to be raised by local taxes -- \$3.35 million -- is unchanged.

While spending for services increases by 5.5 percent, City Manager **Matthew W. Coppler** said this will be offset by added revenue, largely a 10 percent increase in rates charged by the city-operated ambulance service and added emphasis on tax foreclosures. He told the Council that the city stands to gain \$626,238 in foreclosures on commercial and residential properties that have failed to pay taxes. Of this, he noted, \$180,000 has already been collected.

The only controversial issue to surface was a proposal to double the pay for Council members. On a vote to hold a public hearing in two weeks, only at-large Councilwoman Christine M. Fix voted no. She said it was "too soon" to change a city charter provision that voters only narrowly approved last November. That would have initiated for the first time a \$2,000-per-year stipend for the nine Council members. Fix said that the committee that recommended charter changes and rejected a \$4,000 a year in pay proposal should not be overruled so soon.

At-large Councilman Frank C. Ferrando said that "no one runs for (Council) because of the money involved." However, he added, the average pay for similar city officials is about \$4,000. But he said, "It's the public's prerogative to decide."

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
June 8, 2001

City awarded \$146,812 grant

The city has qualified for a \$146,812 state matching grant for its proposed Tonawanda Creek Park, officials said. The city applied last year for a \$500,000 grant from the state Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. The city sought the money to develop its planned Creek Park on land behind Genesee County Courthouse.

City Manager **Matthew Coppler** Wednesday received a letter confirming the \$146,812 grant, which will be administered through the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

City Community Development Director Edward Flynn said Batavia will get the funds once it submits its Creek Park plan to state Parks and Recreation and City Council approves it. The grant is a good beginning for the project, he said. "We need to figure out what we're going to spend the money on. It's enough to start something," Flynn said.

The state is awarding \$15.5 million in bond act grants this year. The state received 552 applications requesting funds for \$123 million in proposed projects, according to a letter sent to the city by Bernadette Castro, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation.

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Matthew W. Coppler
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily News, The (Batavia, NY)
October 21, 2000

Coppler, city get acquainted

Author/Byline: Paul Mrozek

City Manager **Matthew Coppler** spent his first day on the job getting the feel of City Hall. "So far, so good. I've already had a chance to meet with all of the staff," he said early Monday afternoon. "Of course I've been inundated with paperwork already," he joked. **Coppler**, 34, came to Batavia from his administrator's job in Louisville, Ohio. Louisville is a city of about 8,900 people near Canton, which is 60 miles south of Cleveland.

Coppler said his first priority is to learn the names of city employees, then familiarize himself with the city computer system. He also hopes to work quickly to fill the vacant assistant city manager's slot. **Coppler** said he plans to work closely with City Council in setting short- and long-term goals for the city. "I think it's a very important aspect of what we do, of course at the direction of council," he said.

Coppler counts as his strengths his experience in economic development, planning, capital improvements and organizational development. He has a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public administration, both from Bowling Green University.

Coppler has nine years experience in city management and also served in the county planning department in Henry County, Ohio. He is the fourth person to take up the city manager's duties in the past 7 1/2 months. City Manager Robert Knabel resigned in September, leaving Assistant City Manager Sean Stegall in charge.

Stegall stepped down in November, leaving the acting city manager's job to Public Works Director Len Walker. **Coppler** said he's seen good things in City Hall despite the instability at the top of the administration. "My assessment of the department heads is that there is good continuity. You have such strong pillars. "Things are still getting done, still a high level of service," **Coppler** said.

The new manager said he plans on having a long tenure in Batavia and hopes City Council feels the same way. "They want to have that continuity also," **Coppler** said. **Coppler**, 34, and his wife, Lisa, have three children, Bethny, who turns 12 in three weeks; Catriona, 8; and Quinten, 7. When he is not working, **Coppler** enjoys jogging, plus spending time with his family. After that, he said, "there's nothing else left." The new city manager is currently living out of a hotel. His family plans to join him in Batavia when the Ohio school year concludes at the end of May. City Council unanimously approved **Coppler's** hiring Feb. 27 at a salary of \$77,000 per year.

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Akron Beacon Journal (OH)

December 12, 1996

**MATTHEW G. COPPLER / LOUISVILLE / CITY MANAGER / BIOGRAPHY
/ AGE / DEVELOPMENT**

**GALLIPOLIS MANAGER SIGNS ON IN LOUISVILLE \ MATTHEW COPPLER, 30, A
BOWLING GREEN GRADUATE, TO DIRECT CITY AFFAIRS IN STARK COUNTY
COMMUNITY**

Author: Amy Reyes

He's young, energetic, experienced and apparently the right person to guide Louisville through the beginning of what could be a new era for its retail and industrial businesses. He is the new city manager, **Matthew W. Coppler**, 30. He has been manager for Gallipolis, a city of about 5,100 people along the Ohio River north of Huntington, W.Va. "He's young, very energetic, has a lot of good ideas and has experience with both economic and industrial development," Councilman Richard C. Grisak said.

Those were key issues in selecting a replacement for Robert Miller, who resigned in September to work as a financial consultant for nonprofit agencies in Washington, D.C. Louisville, Grisak said, is growing, and if managed properly, growth could continue for some time. Two of the city's largest industries, Ohio Transformer Corp. and Louisville Molded Products, are in the midst of expansions that will create more jobs. Ohio Transformer plans to build a plant costing approximately \$10 million, Grisak said. "We are a town that has recently been involved with a lot of (business and commercial) growth, and now we are hoping to shore up our retail business - bring new business to the heart of downtown Louisville," he said.

Coppler, who will begin work Feb. 1, was selected Monday from among 61 applicants from throughout the country. The list was narrowed to 11, then three, with assistance from Kent State University's Center for Public Administration. Miller, the previous city manager, was paid \$52,000 a year; **Coppler's** salary is similar, according to Mayor Thomas P. Zwick. "Any of the three would have worked out, but this younger gentleman seemed to work out well with our council," Zwick said. "I have worked with two younger city managers, and they were all well-educated, well-trained and work hard."

Coppler is a graduate of Bowling Green State University with a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public administration. He has worked in Gallipolis since 1994 and before that worked as village manager for Carlisle, about 15 miles south of Dayton. Before that, he worked as a planner in Henry County. "My wife and I are very excited about this. This is a very good opportunity for me professionally and for my family. My wife and I decided we needed a better environment for our family, and the Canton area brings that to the table for us," he said.

In Gallipolis, **Coppler** has been responsible for managing a \$6.8 million budget and 72 full-time employees, which compares with Louisville's \$8 million budget and about 50 full-time and 50

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part-time employees. His successes there include securing \$250,000 in grants for road construction, a new industrial park for Gallipolis and the start of a downtown revitalization project.

Councilman Richard Menegay said **Coppler** seemed to be properly prepared for the interviews, which was enough to win his yes vote. "He was very good at answering questions. He never hesitated. He seems to be very aggressive, and that is something we need," he said. Grisak added: "We have been blessed with two excellent city managers in the past, and we feel that **Matthew Coppler**, and his wife, will be another asset to the community."

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Dayton Daily News (OH)
July 1, 1992

CARLISLE'S VILLAGE MANAGER SEES MANY ADVANTAGES TO NEW POSITION

Author/Byline: Mary Sikora

Matthew W. Coppler sees a lot of advantages in coming to Carlisle to be village manager. For one thing, it will be his first full-time job since receiving his master's degree. For another, he'll make considerably more than the \$7 an hour he made working part time in Henry County as a planner. For another, the view is pretty nice. Most of his life **Coppler** has lived in northwestern Ohio, where people say, "On a clear day, you can see the back of your head. That's how flat it is." In southwestern Ohio, there's a little terrain, he said. "It adds to your enjoyment of living."

Coppler, 25, received his master's in public administration from Bowling Green State University in May.

Experience in school

While in school, he got some experience in his field, working in Henry County through a grant from the Center for Government Research and Development. Henry County Commissioner David Kolbe said the program gives a grant to the university for assistance to rural political subdivisions. Henry County uses public administration students for technical projects, he said.

Coppler was first tapped when the county received a grant to develop and economic development plan. When the county's previous planner found other employment a year ago, **Coppler** was asked to become the planner and director of the county's state public works program. "When I took the planner position, it was with the thought that eventually I'd go into city management," **Coppler** said.

But he knew he'd be paying his dues on the job in Henry County. "It's low pay, long hours and a lot of problems. (And), unfortunately, it's a tenuous position. It's not considered a full-time position, which allows them to get away without paying benefits. They're short on money and they have to cut corners wherever possible."

Looking since December

By last December, **Coppler** started looking for a manager's job. Among other places, he applied for a manager's post in Kewanee, Ill. - the position taken by John Kolata, Carlisle's departing manager. Three months after his last interview with a community, **Coppler** said he was sitting in his office commiserating with a friend. Optimistically, his friend said, "For every door that closes, there are two that open." "I can't buy that," **Coppler** said.

No sooner had he spoken than the phone rang. It was Kolata. "He said, 'You didn't get the job in Kewanee, I did.'" Kolata added, however, he wanted **Coppler**'s permission to submit his resume

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Matthew W. Coppler

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

to Carlisle. The council ended up looking at 40 resumes, Kolata said. "**Matt** kept making the cut. If he wasn't the highest, he was one of the highest. He ended up in the top two."

Coppler said, "I'm excited about getting started. The first thing I want to do is sit down with the council and the mayor and discuss their vision of what Carlisle is. "Being a planner, development is always on my mind. You always see things here and there." **Coppler** will make \$27,000 a year in Carlisle.

He and wife, Lisa, have two children, Catriona, born May 30, and Bethny, who is 3. They've been looking for a house to rent in Carlisle, "but, unfortunately, the rent is between \$600 and \$800. So we're still looking," **Coppler** said.

Meanwhile, they have signed a year's lease on a townhouse in West Carrollton. "I hope by the end of the year to move down to Carlisle," he said. **Coppler**, who arrived Saturday, will serve as assistant manager until Kolata leaves July 11.

Research Compiled by: Shannon Farr
 Colin Baenziger & Associates