

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2017, AT 6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207-209, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Budget Committee Chairman Timothy Slocum and Michael Ecke. Absent: Sylvia Nichols.

Council Members: Chairman Robert J. Oris, Jr.; Vice Chairman Paul A. Bowman; Jeffrey Falk, Patti Flynn-Harris, Thomas Ruocco, Peter Talbot.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Gina DeFilio, Deputy Finance Director; Ramona Burkey, Library Director; Deborah Rudder, Deputy Library Director

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. PROPOSED F.Y. 2017-2018 OPERATING BUDGET.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE: *Town Council, Town Manager, Town Attorney, Town Clerk, Elections, Probate Court, Finance Department, Board of Assessment Appeals, General Services*

Summary Book - Page 44.

Town Council - This budget has a slight reduction, and is otherwise a status quo budget. Mr. Milone stated there are no funds budgeted at this time for the Town Manager search, and he hopes for no more than \$20,000 for this process.

Town Manager - This budget increases by \$26,000; one-half is for the reclassification of the Executive Assistant to Assistant Town Manager; the other half is raises for department staff; \$2,600 for salary adjustments. The Town Manager's raise is not included in this budget.

Town Attorney - This is a status quo budget; the five-year average has been \$329,000; expenses for the Charter Revision Commission are in the budget this year, but will not be in next year's budget.

Town Clerk - This is a status quo budget, and the only additional expenditure is for salary adjustments.

Elections Department - There is only one election budgeted for next year; this budget is down; and could be further reduced.

Finance - The position of permanent Tax Assessor has been vacant since October 2016. Diane Waller is Acting Tax Assessor. The position will not be filled for another four months; savings of \$28,000. Former Assessor, Mario Panagrosso, is a consultant to the Town, one day a week, cost of about \$350 per day.

Insurance - increases by about 7%.

Information Technology - big savings in equipment and maintenance account, about \$43,000.

Personal Property - \$6,500 removed for personal property audits. The accounts must be accurate, and random companies are used for the audits.

Probate Court - Budget increases by \$4,000 for office supplies. The Probate Court serves the Towns of Cheshire and Southington; expenses are shared; Cheshire gives the Court office space. Mr. Milone recommended revisiting this expenditure, and rotating the office space with 4 years in Cheshire and 4 years in Southington. The Court follows the school schedules for both towns.

General Services - This budget increases by \$30,398 for the requested position of Electronic Media Coordinator. Ms. Talbot reviewed the duties involved with keeping the Town's social media updated. She noted these are duties she has undertaken, but in her new position there is not enough time to insure social media (Facebook, Web Site etc.) is kept up to date. The Coordinator would be responsible for the Town's social media duties.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health - This budget increases moderately. Campion Ambulance contract has a 5% increase. Staff has met with Campion representatives, who want to re-engage with a three-year contract. Last year the contract was extended for one year. Once the contract proposal is received it will be given to the Planning Committee or Budget Committee to review and make a recommendation on how to proceed.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

MOVED to enter Executive Session at 6:45 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone, Finance Director Jaskot, and Assistant Town Manager Talbot, to discuss personnel issues.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

MOVED to enter Executive Session at 7:00 p.m. to exit Executive Session.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Handout 3/23/17.

Page 1 - Pool Fees. The proposed fee increase will be discussed further by the Council.

Page 2 - Tax Credit Program - This will be further reviewed by the Council.

Page 3 - Tax Credit Increases - proposal of a 1% increase in all the brackets, or 5% increase for eligible participants.

Page 4 - Tax Credit Participants - 499; Total cost to the Town - \$479,165.22. With a 1% increase total is \$483,956.87; 5% increase total is \$503,123.48. Mr. Milone advised that the Town income categories are higher than the State of Connecticut which have not been increased in 26 years.

With regard to the new position proposed for Electronic Media Coordinator, Ms. Flynn-Harris stated her support of this recommendation by the Town Manager. She commented on the EDC report which looked at a greater positioning of the Town, which shows the need for media support. She said some towns have more professional social media than Cheshire, and this is a serious consideration. The position would be in General Services and report to the Town Manager.

Mr. Milone informed the Council that the Town Manager's office does not have the resources for a more sophisticated web site and other media needs, and the duties fall on one person, Ms. Talbot.

The Council was told by Ms. Talbot that staff is in the process of upgrading the web site for town government. Daily accuracy is time consuming, and the quality and accuracy of content must be representative of what is on the web site. She cited some of the proposed responsibilities for the Electronic Media Coordinator position -- web site administration, oversight of upgrades, management and expansion of Facebook. Ms. Talbot said that as technology grows, the demand increases.

CULTURAL SERVICES: Library, Library Board, Performing and Fine Arts Commission - Page 72 Summary Book; Page 155 Tab Book.

Ramona Burkey, Library Director and Deborah Rudder, Deputy Library Director presented the information on the Library Budget.

Salary Account - CPL has one position of Library Associate frozen for a year, savings of \$25,272; another position is frozen for two months of the fiscal year; and there is a request for a 5 hour per week increase for the Senior Library Associate to 30 hours, cost of \$8,484 per year; and reclassification of a position to Deputy Library Director, cost of \$8,331 per year.

Ms. Burkey advised that the Library is open 66 hours a week, and she needs to insure there is a supervisory person on site at all times.

Equipment Account - \$10,000 increase in this account.

RFID equipment needs to be replaced over two years; \$20,000 in FY 2-17-2018; \$10,000 in FY 2018-2019. Mr. Burkey informed the Council that the RFID has made the Library incredibly efficient. She reported an increase in program attendance this year as opposed to prior years; a 450% increase in the number of digital materials checked out; and door count and visitors have increased.

Mr. Slocum commented on the effect of the State mandated contribution by the Town of \$3.5 million to the teachers' retirement plan. He asked about the 7-day a week usage of the Library.

In response, Ms. Burkey explained there is no savings with cutting Library hours; regular staff members will be working anyway; there would be reduction in part-time non-union people working less than 20 hours a week. There is a 25-hour per week frozen position in the budget. Ms. Burkey stated that the Library staff is skilled, versatile, provides professional services, and services the main desk. Part-time staff are clerical, and there would be cuts in part-time workers.

Mr. Oris said the frozen position is a Library Associate, L-4 classification, \$25,272 salary. With a \$4,604 cut from the Senior Library Associate position, the total cut is \$29,876.

With the RFID process, Ms. Burkey said there has been cut back on staff hours every time there is reorganization of staff. Last year the 15 hour per week Library Technical Assistance was cut; 19 hour page position was cut; and there is now 82% RFID self checkout.

Through marketing of the Library, Mr. Slocum said the facility is more of an entertainment and education center for the community, with meeting rooms full of activities. He asked if this keeps staff more interested in what they do.

Ms. Burkey reported that the vast majority of programs are paid by The Friends of the Library, such as concerts, performers, speakers, at a cost of about \$40,000 annually. She cited a current SAT preparation program for high school students, STEM coffee hours...and the need for 5 more hours per week for the Senior Library Associate who conducts these types of programs in addition to regular duties.

Mr. Oris asked about elimination of the frozen Library Associate position.

Ms. Burkey explained that the Assistant Director position would be reclassified to Deputy Director. The Library has lost two 25-hour per week people, but has been able to streamline the work process to insure the work is done. With the frozen position she will be able to manage at a base level of operation, without doing some of the things cited in the CPL Strategic Plan. One 25-hour per week position is frozen, and another

25-hour per week position is frozen for two months. The annual cost of the new Deputy Director position is \$8,331.

Mr. Oris noted that the Library has 33 employees at the present time.

The Library is open 66 hours per week, 7 days a week, and Ms. Burkey said staff manages three floors and multiple service points, outreach to the school system and pre-schools. Sunday hours are held 20 weeks a year.

Mr. Slocum asked about closing the Library at 8:00 p.m. some nights, which would be savings in hours of operation, and what cuts would be made under this possibility.

In response, Ms. Burkey said for Monday to Saturday, any significant savings require drastic cuts to the Library hours. She is open to this discussion, but does not believe there is a huge savings with a one-half hour cut at night. The Sunday opening of 4 hours a day is at a cost of \$1,000 per Sunday.

Stating these are very difficult budget times, Mr. Oris said there should be no talk about additional hours or positions in any Town department, in light of what the State is proposing to municipalities. The Council is looking for savings, not additions to the budget. The Library proposes one frozen position, one reclassification, and one request for additional hours.

Mr. Ruocco understands the opportunities for reorganization, but said we must be cautious on supporting additional compensation. He does not understand the addition of \$20,000 to someone's salary bracket. Mr. Ruocco appreciates what is being requested, moving people around to do new things, but is cautious about moving people into new reclassifications and compensations.

Mr. Milone said the changes make for savings and there is an impact, but the work must be done by someone. Where cuts are being made, there are additional hours, and Town staff is looking to spend less and find ways to be creative.

More must be done with less, and Mr. Oris said adjustments must be made due to the State's cuts and mandates to the Town. There is a need to find significant savings in the operating budget.

Mr. Talbot stated we must take advantage of people leaving Town employment. In the private sector, Mr. Talbot noted that a freeze means elimination of a position. The Town is cutting personnel through attrition rather than layoffs.

With the proposed changes, Mr. Slocum asked what they will mean to the Library.

Mr. Burkey advised that the Senior Library Associate position with increased hours to 30 per week is a versatile position. This person functions as the social media coordinator, works at the desk, conducts programs. She informed the Council that the Cheshire

Public Library has the best Media Department in the State, receives contacts from all over the world, provides technical instruction to people of all ages along with all the other services. Without more hours, the proposed position will be impacted, and can only benefit with the additional work hours.

According to Mr. Oris the Town may not be able to do more for people right now. The Library is the best in the State, but this is not the year to add more expenses. He understands the demand for more services at the Library, and the Council wants to service this demand.

At this time the 25-hour a week frozen position is being split amongst other staff people, and Ms. Rudder explained that desk hours need to be covered. Another 5 hours would help with back-up for what is being lost.

Mr. Slocum asked about the duties of the frozen position being filled by more highly paid people.

Ms. Burkey said there was reorganization of all duties, and the two vacant positions are in the same department.

At the present time, Ms. Rudder advised there is staffing 7-days a week. The 25-hour a week frozen position worked on public services, and more hours are needed to make up the gap.

Mr. Falk asked about the assistance of volunteers in Library services.

Some of the volunteer hours equal one full-time person, and Ms. Burkey said volunteers are not used at the desk due to privacy issues of patron records. Volunteers clean shelves, call people for reserved books, clean toys in the children's room, and are a big help with some duties.

Mr. Slocum stated that the Library changes may have to be put off for another year.

Performing and Fine Arts Commission - The increase in the Fine Arts budget is the transfer of the expenses associated with the theater program from the Parks and Rec Department. Classes and camps have been at Arts Place; administration and financing went through Parks and Rec; and now expenses and operation are being moved to the Fine Arts Department. The theater program will be one week of cabaret camp, and in future years the department wants to go back to the full theater program. The temporary part-time cost is \$6,000 in this department.

Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on Arts Place being very busy, with people coming from New York City to take their classes.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Falk.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk