

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING, 6:30 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019, ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84
SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE, CT 06410**

Present: Council members Rob Oris (Chair), Tim Slocum (Budget Committee Chair), Paul Bowman (Vice Chair), Patti Flynn-Harris, Sylvia Nichols, Tom Ruocco, Peter Talbot, David Veleber.

Absent: Jeff Falk.

Staff: Town Manager Sean M. Kimball, Finance Director Jim Jaskot, Assistant Town Manager Arnett Talbot.

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m., and a quorum was determined to be present.
2. Pledge of Allegiance was presented.
3. Discussion re: FY 19-20 Operating Budget.

Elections. Registrars Tom Smith and Susan Pappas were in attendance. Mr. Kimball explained that the proposed Elections budget was mostly status quo, and that he had cut funding requested for a municipal primary. Ms. Pappas clarified that their salary would be addressed next year in response to Mr. Slocum's question. Mr. Smith explained that the department might need two additional poll workers for same-day voter registration if the Town Clerk's office is unable to assist due to staff cuts, for an estimated cost of \$550 to \$600, although Mr. Oris was hopeful that the Town Clerk's office would still be able to provide the help.

Library. Library Director Beth Crowley was in attendance. Mr. Kimball introduced the Library budget, with some increases in salaries due to a few staffing changes. Ms. Crowley provided details on Library usage, which is extensive (see attachment #1). She explained that some statistic could have been impacted by the renovation project, but the completed project has provided some great new, well-used spaces. In response to Mr. Oris's question regarding lack of quiet space, Ms. Crowley explained that there were quiet areas available, and she would be sure to let the staff know to make patrons aware and to ensure low noise levels. Ms. Crowley, in response to further questions, explained that digital materials were not replacing paper, that the Library does not supply the books for the Senior Center library, and that they were continuing to pursue a solution to the lack of parking issue.

Mr. Talbot questioned why the total FTEs declined, but the budget was still going up. Mr. Kimball explained that two positions had gone unfilled and unfunded for half the FY 18-19 year, and a full year of funding of those positions created the increase in funding from FY 19 to FY 20. Mr. Oris requested details on this, including salaries, and also indicated he would like to see more efficiencies.

Mr. Talbot asked about the reduction in 5204 Program Materials, and both Mr. Kimball and Ms. Crowley indicated that this was one of the decisions made to lessen expenditures, and felt that this could be controlled without harming services. Ms. Crowley reviewed their participation in a consortium, their policy of making new materials available to residents first, the higher than average circulation statistics, and the financial and programmatic support provided by the Friends of the Library; Mr. Oris emphasized that it was important to have a return on our investment, which was our fiduciary responsibility, and to provide the services that the public wants.

Mr. Bowman asked about Library revenue, which Mr. Kimball clarified was \$21,000. Mr. Slocum reiterated that most of the budgetary increase was in salaries, and also asked for an explanation of the changes in per capita costs, which Mr. Kimball will provide.

Artsplace. Artsplace Director Joan Pilarczyk was present. Ms. Pilarczyk presented information on the Artsplace budget, revenues, and programs. She explained the need for staffing hours (see attachment #2) to cover the wide variety of highly popular and successful classes, workshops and programs. She submitted a ten year revenue history (see attachment #3) showing significant revenue increases. Ms. Pilarczyk stated that more staffing was needed to support the programming that is increasing this revenue, and that the \$7,500 for additional daytime hours for a part-time employee would be offset by reductions in various line items; Mr. Kimball said he supports this offset. Mr. Bowman suggested that signage identify Artsplace as a “school.”

Ms. Flynn-Harris asked about the Town Manager’s \$5,000 reduction in the 5403 Auto and Equipment Maintenance line, which Mr. Kimball and Ms. Pilarczyk explained was for an audio visual system that was not necessary, and for which they would find an alternative. Mr. Oris asked if there is a fee difference for non-residents; Ms. Pilarczyk said yes, non-residents were charged an extra \$10 for all programs. Mr. Oris requested a review of the fee structure.

Recreation. Program Supervisor Elizabeth Mayne and Program Coordinator Chris Rusack were in attendance. Mr. Kimball explained that this was mostly a status quo budget request, and included a consolidation of program materials and program services funding for celebrations and events into the Celebration division budget, to better identify and analyze those expenses. He explained that he did not recommend the increase of the Program Supervisor position to full time for budgetary reasons. Mr. Oris requested the amount necessary to fully fund this position full time. Ms. Mayne mentioned that the shift of the Parks maintenance did not eliminate Recreation’s responsibility for administration of the Parks. She also stated that there has been no uptick in activity to rent school facilities through their department, but

Mr. Kimball explained that we wouldn't see that until June when groups were booking for the months ahead.

Pool. Aquatics Director Sheila Adams was present. Ms. Adams said that the Pool revenue is \$75,000 more than this time last year; the amenities have helped bring in patrons and swim meets. Additional outdoor amenities could help boost summer revenue, which had declined when the Pool was no longer an open facility in the summer. Mr. Oris asked for details on return on investment for these amenities, which he indicated appeared to be cost-effective, and said this was a great turn-around story. Mr. Kimball reviewed a history of Pool revenues (see attachment #4).

Public Health. Mr. Kimball explained that the Campion contract was still an unknown, and we assumed a 3% increase for the budget request. He stated that we had also assumed a 3% increase in Chesprocott, but their proposed fee of \$9.65 per capita represents an 11.5% increase. Mr. Kimball will get an explanation for this increase, and will confirm the adopted fees. Mr. Oris requested information on the Chesprocott Board and their structure; he feels the Council needs to interact with them. Mr. Kimball also presented a capital assessment from North West Connecticut Public Safety Communications Center, Inc. (NWCPS) of \$15,000 over three years at \$5,000 per year which the Town received today; Mr. Oris requested more information on this assessment. These unexpected additional costs will increase the budget request for Public Health to \$520,048.

Councilors agreed that Administration and Finance will be discussed at a future meeting.

4. MOTION by Mr. Veleber, seconded by Mr. Talbot to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. Vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Arnett Talbot
Asst. Town Manager