

MINUTES OF THE JOINT CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE 7:00 P.M. REGULAR MEETING ON TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2020 VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE (PER EXECUTIVE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT)

Public access made available through live streaming on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4_xey3QjJmwe57R_6K94Dw

Public comments accepted at Comments@cheshirect.org and by voice mail message at 203 271-6638. Video will be available on Channel 14 and on demand at www.cheshirect.org as soon as possible.

Present

Robert J. Oris, Jr. Chairman; David Borowy (Budget Chairman), James Jinks, Sylvia Nichols, Timothy Slocum, Peter Talbot, David Veleber, Donald Walsh.

Staff: Sean M. Kimball, Town Manager; Arnett Talbot, Asst. Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; John Gawlak, Parks and Rec Director; Elizabeth Mayne, Program Supervisor; George Noewatne, PW Director; Walter Gancarz, Town Engineer.

Chairman Oris called the meeting to order at 8:21 p.m.

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.

4. PROPOSED FY 2020-2021 OPERATING BUDGET, ANNUAL CAPITAL BUDGET, FIVE YEAR EXPENDITURE PLAN

General discussion and review of departments as needed.

Parks and Recreation Department/Community Pool – John Gawlak and Elizabeth Mayne and Sheila Adams

Mr. Kimball advised the Parks and Rec and Pool budgets were further reviewed and adjustments made.

Page 161 – Mr. Gawlak informed the Council on the rationale for combining supplies and service line items among divisions and presented some cost decreases.

Program Materials #5204 – \$20,000 Town Manager recommendation; an increase of \$2,800 from prior year's expenses. Mr. Gawlak decided to decrease this line item by the \$2,800.

Printing #5207 - \$12,000 request; \$10,000 Town Manager approved; this is for direct mail of the 11,000 brochures three times a year; \$3,800 per mailing; \$12,000 total; the \$2,800 decrease from #5204 was moved to #5207 line item.

A/E Maintenance #5403 - \$5,498 – this line item takes care of the recreation management software (RecTrac); this year the department moved to a cloud version of RecTrac; annual total cost is \$13,663 annually; the Recreation portion of this software has a cost of \$6,473; the Pool portion is \$4,301.

From recent discussion with Mr. Kimball, there is potential to move this entire cost to the Apex budget. If this does not happen...formal request was \$10,498 including the pool...actual cost is \$6,473. Town Manager approval is \$5,498. The department would need an increase of \$975. The pool line is now zero and needs to be restored by \$4,025.

Personnel – The department Secretary is retiring on May 22, 2020, and Mr. Gawlak wants to eliminate this position. He wants to retain the Program Coordinator position and bring it to full time status (from part-time), for 4 FTE (down from 4.5 FTE). There was reconfiguration of the department office space by PW crews for office staff.

The differential between the Secretary and Program Coordinator position was cited by Mr. Gawlak. Secretary, \$52,762; Program Coordinator, \$47,524.

In his budget recommendation, Mr. Kimball noted that the Secretary position and Program Coordinator are both funded. The savings would be \$52,762. There are more savings to be realized; a number of other positions have “0” funding or are lapsing for one year.

Rental/Lease #5405 - +\$1,898. Port-o-let rentals are in the budget for use at Dodd, Doolittle, Highland and Cheshire High School for July to November and April to June for the convenience of rest rooms for sports participants and public.

Celebrations – this line item has a significant increase. Summer Concert sponsorships were ongoing with \$3,000 to \$4,000 realized in the first week, and this is on hold due to the pandemic situation. Power Station was awarded the contract for production of the concerts, including use of their Showmobile.

Camps – Mr. Gawlak has participated in national/state calls about camps, and awaits information from the Office of Early Childhood & Management on the camp situation. If there are camps they must stay within the CDC guidelines of 30 campers, social distancing, area of refuge in bad weather, PPE, sanitation, temperature monitors, etc. Some towns are not opening anything...camps, beach fronts, pulling off picnic tables, shuttering rest rooms. Mixville Park gives the social distancing, but there is no area of

refuge from a storm or rainy day. Discussion has centered around not offering camps, offering a Play Care type program, doing a survey to past participants and Cheshire residents asking if they want to send kids to camp, what can be offered, and if they want this kind of experience. There is no specific answer at this time.

Ms. Mayne explained there could be costs incurred with operating camps, i.e. thermometers. Staff cannot be reduced; the number of campers will be reduced; and guidance is welcomed from the Council on spending more money with less generation of revenue.

It was noted by Mr. Borowy that there are families who want camps so parents can go back to work and kids can have a wholesome program. If camps can be offered safely and reasonably they would be supported. Right now, the expense is still in the proposed budget, and on both sides it is a significant amount of money. The survey information will be helpful for the Council.

Regarding #5204, Mr. Walsh asked about the \$2,800 difference, and it looks like an \$19,800 increase.

Mr. Gawlak explained the two line items were merged...Administration and Program Materials. Without camp these lines will decrease.

If camps are scheduled, Ms. Mayne said that now is the time for ordering materials and equipment, tee-shirts, etc. Camp starts in the current fiscal year. If there are no camps, the expenditure will freeze. For 2021 full summer camps are in the budget.

Community Pool, Page 171 – Mr. Gawlak is taking a tough look at staffing; positions are currently in furlough status; there will be review of having fewer positions for a pool opening on July 1st. One position is Head Lifeguard which will be balanced against other positions. A determination will be made pending the general fund subsidy.

WPCD Page 125 – George Noewatne, PW Director

Electrician Position (to full time 40 hours a week) – Information was sent to the Council on the increase in hours for this position. The result is \$12,200 net increase; \$68,450 plus benefits and savings in WPCD overtime of \$9,000, line item #5105.

Mr. Slocum talked about the Electrician position, spreading out duties, and his being in the same union as other WWTP employees. He questioned whether this was appropriate use of the Electrician, and said that years ago, Public Works had an Electrician split between the PW Department and Treatment Plant.

The Council was told by Mr. Noewatne that there is no Electrician in the Public Works Department and has not been for 16+ years. The Electrician at the treatment plant is a heavy duty Electrician...not your residential type Electrician. He services things from

generators to large motor, large electrical plant, pump station work, is flexible, and is very strong in this area of responsibility. He is not used on building sites. The Operators are flexible, do large plant and sump pump work...check pumps, clean pumps, insure there are no issues, maintain the treatment plant and pump stations, and pump stations are ready to go and working.

Mr. Gancarz clarified that there are different levels of Operators and the Electrician performs some of the lower level Operator duties.

With the Electrician working only 30 hours week, Mr. Walsh asked about using outside Electricians for work he is not capable of doing, or paying overtime to him.

Mr. Noewatne is not aware of any outside electrician work, and the Electrician is not doing overtime work. The \$9,000 overtime line item is for the Operators, not the Electrician.

Regarding the overtime number, Mr. Oris said he struggles with more hours and more positions in this budget, and questions the reliability of the overtime number stated. He is not sure he can support the extra hours even with reduction in overtime and savings.

Mr. Noewatne will ask Supt. Hallier to recheck the numbers, and be conservative as these numbers must be supported next year. There is confidence the \$9,000 is a fair amount of savings. The plant is staffed 24/7 and there is overtime for weekend stand-by work. He cited an example of overtime with a 2 a.m. alarm for a blocked sewer or manhole cover that popped off...it is hard to predict.

Without an absolute return on investment for taxpayer dollars, Mr. Oris will not support extra hours in any department.

Line item #5302/utilities/electric is a big expense and Mr. Jinks questioned the possible increase in electrical usage with more people at home now. The number is \$398,000.

The Council was informed by Mr. Gancarz that the biggest change has to do with virtual meter and credits from the solar field. This knocked \$60,000 out of the electricity costs. He does not see a significant impact on the usage at the plant or pump stations.

Town Engineer Position – Mr. Oris said this is a big change, and asked about the benefits of a full-time person and alternatives for hiring outside engineering services firm for a period of time and the impact. A full time Engineer is \$154,784 with benefits.

The Council reviewed the current situation with a part-time Town Engineer working 20 hours a month. Current cost - \$26,657; or an Engineer working about 23.8 hours a month; full time Engineer budget increase would be \$128,126.

Options – 1) full time Town Engineer; 2) part-time Engineer (retiree) for 28 hour position, 4 days a week, with no benefits. This would allow for the demands of the Town Engineer job.

The benefits of having a full-time Town Engineer (on spread sheet) were cited by Mr. Gancarz. They include taking advantage of upcoming grant programs to stimulate the economy, performing more in-house engineering work with savings going forward. In the last seven (7) years the town received \$17M in grants, savings of \$450,000 with in-house work...and the importance of having someone to do the engineering work, saving money rather than costing money. He said the 4-day work week was good, and with one day a week there is not enough time to get all done.

With elimination of the Assistant Town Engineer position the department will have three (3) positions.

Mr. Kimball explained the Assistant Town Engineer is moving to the position of Capital Project Manager...there is no elimination but movement to another position.

When the job description is written for the Town Engineer...if it is put in the budget...Mr. Slocum asked if Mr. Gancarz would write the job description defining the skill set to secure an Engineer.

Mr. Gancarz is willing to assist, write and modify the job description, and include required skill sets and job duties to include writing grants.

There are options on the table for a full-time Engineer, 28 hours a week Engineer (20% savings without benefits), Engineering Consultant, or combine PW Director and Town Engineer position.

Budget Committee Chairman Borowy noted the time is coming for decision points for Council and BOE review and decisions.

Executive Session

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Mr. Borowy

MOVED that the Town Council enter Executive Session at 9:15 p.m. to include Town Manager Kimball, Asst. Town Manager Talbot and Asst. Town Manager Zullo to discuss personnel issues.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

The Council exited Executive Session at 9:58 p.m.

5. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Veleber; seconded by Ms. Nichols

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk