

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.**

VIRTUAL MEETING

**This meeting can be viewed live at
youtube.com/c/CheshireChannel 14 or on Channel 14**

**Public comments can be made virtually via zoom.us/my/townofcheshire,
via e mail at Comments@cheshirect.org,
and by voice message prior to the meeting at 203-271-6638.**

Present

David Borowy, Chairman; Jim Jinks and Tim Slocum
Staff: Sean M. Kimball, Town Manager; Arnett Talbot, Asst. Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; John Gawlak, Director of Recreation

1. ROLL CALL

Chairman Borowy called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll was called and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. Acceptance and appropriation of \$813.23 from The Chamber of Commerce Scarecrow Contest to the Human Services Gift Account for general purposes.
4. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$7,000 Historic Documents Preservation Grant.
5. Acceptance and appropriation of a donation of \$250 from Rosemary Hoffman To the Human Services Gift Account for the Adopt-A-Family holiday program.
6. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$5,342 grant from the Western Connecticut Coalition Local Prevention Council for substance abuse prevention activities.
7. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$30 donation from the Registrars of Voters To The Human Services Gift Account for general purposes.
8. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$300 donation from Coldwell Banker to the Human Services Gift Account for the holiday program.
9. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$170 donation from Town Hall Employees Dress Down Fund to the Cheshire Fuel Bank.

10. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$10 donation from Elizabeth Agocs Holler To the Human Services Gift Account to be used for the Senior Center.
11. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$40 donation from Severino Fasulo to the Human Services Gift Account to be used for the Senior Center.

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Mr. Jinks.

MOVED to approve agenda items #3 through #11, and forward to the full Town Council for approval.

Discussion

Mr. Slocum explained that #4 is grant funding for preservation of land records in the Town Clerk's office. A portion of these funds comes from the conveyance tax payments and is given back to the town.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

12. Acceptance and appropriation of a \$14,500 donation from Cheshire Lights Of Hope to the Human Services Gift Account to help our residents in need.

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Mr. Jinks.

MOVED to approve agenda item #12 and forward to the full Town Council for approval.

Discussion

Mr. Borowy acknowledged this large donation from Lights of Hope and Don and Jennifer Walsh to the Human Services Gift Account.

Mr. Slocum noted the donation comes from the organization's fund raising events throughout the year. He expressed appreciation for the generous donation.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

13. Discussion re: parks and field use charges
Recreation Director Gawlak introduced the discussion on modification of the fee schedule for ball field use, specifically for commercial and non-resident organizations. Since his arrival in Cheshire 19 months ago, Mr. Gawlak has looked for ways to increase revenue in the Recreation Department. He recommends increasing Cheshire's fee structure to that of similar towns. Currently, the town's fee structure is very low; there is no component to charge renters for overtime costs for field prep or having a PW Maintainer present; and the increased fees would include maintenance, utilities, insurance and administrative oversight.

The rental requests come from commercial entities, sports teams, Quinnipiac University and many other groups. Under his proposal, Mr. Gawlak has a "Priority 4" category for non-profit non-resident groups. For one (1) field the rate would be \$75 per hour (vs. \$25) and one (1) field with lights the rate would be \$90 per hour (vs. \$40).

Mr. Gawlak cited fee structure comparisons with surrounding towns, with Cheshire on the low end. He said the market bears increasing fees for commercial and non-resident entities. During a non-typical season (spring, summer, fall) the department collected \$8,200. Under the proposed new fee structure the revenue would have been \$24,600...\$16,400 positive differential. Mr. Gawlak talked about creation of an Enterprise Fund to handle the rental income, which would be used to maintain and upgrade ball fields. Any account balance at end of the fiscal year would go into the General Fund.

By going to the higher market rate, Mr. Slocum asked about loss of revenue with groups not renting the ball fields. He noted less use of the fields is also good for the field conditions.

Stating that is correct, Mr. Gawlak said fields would be less beaten up. \$75 an hour is reasonable, and he said people will still rent Cheshire fields, and the department will see a spike in revenue.

Mr. Jinks stated some commercial users come to Cheshire because it is inexpensive to rent fields. He asked which town fields are used by renters.

Mr. Gawlak said all fields are used...Cheshire Park, Bartlem Park, MacNamara Park, and some fields at Quinnipiac Park, which has five (5) multi-use fields.

The committee was informed by Mr. Kimball that out of state teams have used Cheshire fields; some requests come from professional teams; and Cheshire is attractive due to its central location. He noted these teams have the ability to pay more for field rentals.

With additional revenue in the department, Mr. Gawlak explained that he met with Mr. Kimball and Mr. Jaskot regarding forming an Enterprise Fund, changing how programs are now handled, and pull in the facility rentals for extra money for Public Works and park improvements or facility improvements. These improvements could be grass seed, fencing, clay, signage etc.

If this is approved Mr. Jinks asked if some funding would go to the travel basketball league to cover their costs for use of school buildings.

Mr. Gawlak explained that is paying for an operational expense vs. maintenance or facility improvement...this would be referred to Mr. Jaskot or Mr. Kimball. When he worked in Wallingford CT, anything taken in for facility rentals had to go towards facilities. Money on the program side could address issues with travel basketball.

According to Mr. Kimball this is a budget discussion issue. Mr. Gawlak wants an Enterprise Fund, circulating funds back into the facilities. The Budget Committee will hear more about this proposal in the 2021 budget discussions.

The idea of charging users for PW services and facilities would be supported by Mr. Jinks.

Mr. Borowy commented on a travel basketball representative at a Town Council meeting talking about the high fees for use of school gyms for practices and games.

The committee was informed by Mr. Kimball that this is the travel basketball team, and issues date back a few years. The team uses BOE facilities, and the issue arose due to the fee structure of the BOE for their facilities. There is preferential lower cost use of these facilities by the Parks and Rec functions. The team books the facilities through Park and Rec and the town needed a way to recapture those funds. A Park & Rec staff member opens the building and is present for practices and games. This is different from field usage.

Mr. Gawlak suggested the town take over the travel basketball program and directly sponsor the program. He said the town sponsors rec basketball, and the travel team could be a component of the program.

This is something to be taken up with the Parks and Rec Commission, and Mr. Slocum said it could be worked out with the Commission and staff.

Regarding fees, Mr. Borowy does not want unreasonable fees...these are public facilities with some state grants. He asked for the Commission's view on the fee structure increase.

Mr. Jinks recommended the fee structure increase for two (2) years, and out-of-town teams paying a higher fee.

From his experience, Mr. Gawlak said teams will still come to Cheshire, and there is an opportunity to create field revenue. This money would be used for field improvements. He reported that the Commission supports the fee structure increase, and voted unanimously on the issue at the last meeting.

Mr. Slocum supports the increase in the field use fee structure.

Mr. Borowy supports raising the fees to a reasonable level one (1) time.

Chairman Oris stated this issue needs more time and review, and is not ready for Town Council approval at the meeting later in the evening.

The field use meetings with teams and groups start in late January and Mr. Gawlak asked for Council direction by end of January. Last year there were public meetings, with Public Works and the Parks and Rec Commission present for multi-use fields and large diamond baseball, small diamond, Little League Softball. The meetings were well received, and this is the time when he entertains requests for spring and summer field use. With any change in fees he would like to have it in place by end of February.

The Budget Committee agreed that this matter go to the full Town Council for review.

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Mr. Jinks.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk