

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING AND SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2012,
6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE
CT 06410**

Present

Budget Committee: David Schrumm, Chairman; Michael Ecke, Thomas Ruocco.
Council Members: Tim Slocum, Patti Flynn-Harris, Andy Falvey, Sylva Nichols,
James Sima, Peter Talbot.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Gina
DeFilio, Deputy Finance Director; Michelle Piccerillo, Director of Human
Services.

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. FY 2012-2013 OPERATING BUDGET

HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT, YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE
PLANNING

HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT – Michelle Piccerillo, Director

Pages 143 (tab book) and 54(summary book

Mr. Milone commented on the consolidation of two departments, with each department having its own history with previous budgets. Going forward, everything is consolidated in the Human Services Department Budget. The sum total of all the non-salary line items for two departments, if aggregated would be \$99,860. Salary would have been \$687,963. 27th payroll value was \$25,224.

Page 33 (summary). All social services represents the noted departments. The net appropriation was \$765,629; it is going to \$765,611. The estimated savings with combination of two departments is about \$30,000. The numbers have not changed much other than the savings realized with two departments coming together. There are economies of scale and efficiencies which will make it a better operation.

Micelle Piccerillo reviewed the changes. The position of Senior Center Coordinator was eliminated, and the position of Senior Services Coordinator was created, with one Director of Human Services. The only other personnel change was an increase of 5 hours for one clinician to assume some of Ms. Piccerillo's counseling cases. There are counseling interns working in the department.

Ms. Piccerillo informed the Council that the transition was not without challenges, and during Storm Alfred the staff managed the emergency shelter for a week, 24/7. The staff came together as a team and people went above and beyond what needed to be done. There was a cooperative effort between the Town staff, Police and Fire Departments, Department of Education to handle this emergency.

Senior Center – the facility was without a program supervisor until a few weeks ago and someone has been appointed to this position. There is a positive collaboration between the Town staff and senior center staff working with a single director.

Some inter-generational programs have been put together between middle school students, special education students at the high school and the seniors.

The risk list of senior citizens will now have inclusion of the Code Red system.

Mr. Milone commented on there being more of a link between the Town and Senior Center, with a better line of communication open.

Accomplishments – Ms. Piccerillo reviewed the youth activity at the Yellow House under the direction of the Middle School Program Coordinator and Program Supervisor. Weekend programs are offered to middle school students and attendance is up 24%; and the mentoring program is always filled.

Social Services Department provides clinical services to school children, grades 1 through 12. The interns assist in this counseling service along with professional staff.

Mr. Milone reported that the department has developed an intern relationship with Central Connecticut State University, Southern Connecticut State University, and Springfield College. This relationship has saved the Town thousands of dollars, and Ms. Piccerillo has mentored these people very well.

Social Services/Crisis Intervention – Ms. Piccerillo stated that the department responds to increased demand for services, accesses available resources, and employs one intern who works on processing energy assistance applications. There was a slight increase in these applications this year. Energy assistance grants have been reduced. The department went out into the community and donations for fuel assistance were received.

There is a rise in domestic violence at the Police Department and a social work spends much time working with the police on these cases.

Performance Measurers – The Adopt a Family program was reduced to 205 families this year. There is assistance from the Cheshire Community Food

Pantry for food for families. The number of food vouchers decreased this year because the annual food drive had limited resources. The department is looking into securing more grants for this program.

Senior and Transportation Services – there is a focus group at the Senior Center working on programs. The center has a newsletter, gets out surveys, and there are plans to streamline the membership process. The at risk list will be updated with Code Red. There are three inter-generational programs planned, along with planning for a special education program. The supervisor is working on programs for the younger senior, 55 to 65, on off-site activities. The department has applied for three grants for purchase of two mini-buses, which would cover 80% of the cost of the buses. Plans are being developed to renovate the basement of the senior center, possibly into a billiards room, and a grant is being sought for this purpose.

As part of the consolidation, two committees were involved – Human Services and Youth Services. The work of the committees is being explored to make them more goal oriented. Human Services Committee membership was reduced in order to have more productive meetings with a quorum present. Youth Services Committee will be handling Alcohol Awareness Week and youth activities.

With regard to the youth programs, Ms. Flynn-Harris would like to insure there is a calendar of activities posted at the Yellow House. Also, she wants to look into what needs to be done to this building for youth activities. The house is open 6 days a week.

Mr. Schrumm asked about the fuel vouchers and what percentage comes from the State and private donations.

In response, Ms. Piccerillo said it is about 50-50. There were 300 energy assistance applications this year, and the funding was \$125 to \$500 per grant.

Senior Center Demographics – Ms. Piccerillo commented on the fact that interests are changing at the center as the demographics change, even slightly. There is a need to address technology issues, have technology programs, and more programs for the younger seniors. There is a focus group working on a survey to get information on preferred activities and programs.

Mr. Milone stated that the appropriation for the Senior Center elevator is \$110,000, and the PBC is going out with an RFP for the design build.

TOWN COUNCIL – Arnett Talbot; pages 1 (tab book) and 76 (summary book)
Ms. Talbot reviewed this budget, stating there is a slight decrease due to efficiencies with advertising and printing being done in-house. The equipment line item at \$2,000 is the same as FY 11-12 budget.

Councilor Talbot commented on looking into PURA grants which are available for equipment to town governments and education facilities. Schools have tapped into this grant. Mr. Talbot said that the Cox engineer could help with this project.

TOWN MANAGER'S DEPARTMENT – Arnett Talbot, Page 3 (tab book),
72 (summary book)

Ms. Talbot reported that this budget decreases by \$2,976; 27th payroll cost was \$13,807; the net increase is \$10,831, 2.8%. In the FY 11-12 appropriation there was no raise for the Town Manager, and the FY 12-13 does not have a raise for the Town Manager built in. This department budget is 99.6% salary. The work is labor intensive; the staff serves the public, Town Council, and Town staff, and the scope of work continues to expand as the government becomes more complex. The department handles labor negotiations, hiring, RFP functions, purchasing, technology project, and is involved with the GIS, emergency storm response, revaluation, Linear Park, treatment plant.

With communication being the key, the department has enhanced communication with staff, public, Council and others and continues to do this.

For overtime, the department controls and monitors overtime, initiated administrative efficiencies which help reduce overtime, and in the last 6 years the overtime has been reduced by 60%. There are two people in the office for overtime and they try to take comp time when it is possible.

Mr. Milone explained that his office is open 10 hours a day, and flex hours have been implemented for full staff coverage. This has worked out very well.

Web Site – the Town Manager's department manages the web site. There will soon be video clips on the site, and now the site is easier to access.

TOWN ATTORNEY, Arnett Talbot, page 80

Ms. Talbot stated that this budget increases due to several cost drivers such as the 9 lawsuits including the ones on the barite mines. There were also tax appeals cases, and Historic District Commission regulations which took up a lot of legal time and fees. The technology agreement was complex and required legal review. Murtha and Cullina assist the Town with personnel and labor negotiation issues, the legal issues for the pool, and the firm works to get the legal costs down.

Mr. Slocum questioned other items for the Town Attorney allocation to other departments.

In reply, Ms. Talbot said that Town departments pay fees to the town attorney, such as the WPCA, Retirement Board, and fees can also be charged to a project.

Mr. Milone advised that Tax Assessor Panagrosso wants to hire an appraiser to reexamine the method used to value commercial property, and this could reduce the appeals after the upcoming revaluation. The Council was informed that every month there is a report on the legal fees incurred by the Town. The BOE has separate legal fees for its business.

PUBLIC HEALTH, Ms. Talbot, page 211 (tab book)

There was renegotiation with the Campion Ambulance contract which saved money without loss of any services. Chesprocott could be looking for an increase in their fees and a 5% increase was built into the budget for this expense this year. The Town pays its fees quarterly based on per capita.

(Mr. Sima entered the meeting at 7:15 p.m.)

Town Manager Milone reviewed the following budgets with the Council.

TOWN CLERK

This budget decreases by \$11,000; 27th payroll was \$8,435. On page 11, line item 5103, there was savings realized with a staff transfer and a retirement, and other wise this is a status quo budget. There is an increase in the non-salary expense for fronting the upcoming election, and services for land record costs. Last year the revenue generation projection was \$455,000, and revenue was at \$440,000. This year revenue is estimated at \$467,000, with some coming from the revenue sharing grant.

Mr. Milone stated that with the retirement of a staff person in the Town Clerk's office, Ms. Soltis put together documentation which reinforced the need to fill this position.

ELECTIONS

The 27th payroll was \$3,431; the total budget increase is \$7,659. Line item 5106 should be labeled "Other", and this is the expense for people working on the primary and presidential elections this year. More people are needed and 2 or 3 people are hired to work a few weeks during this time period.

Non-salary related items included \$600 for moving expenses, \$800 for card stock for the elections, \$600 training, and supplies for additional voters. The increase was \$2,600.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT, Director James Jaskot and Deputy Director Gina DeFilio, pages 48 (summary book) and 19 (tab book)

This department includes Accounting & Treasury, Collector, Assessor, Audit, General Insurance and Information Technology.

The 27th payroll was \$38,822; the budget increase is 2.6%, \$1.6 million.

Overtime is budgeted at \$39,000; it was \$34,000 last year. Mr. Jaskot said the department tries to keep overtime down and he monitors the overtime. In the past year he has been without a deputy director, without an accounting clerk for a year, and other staff has stepped up to assume duties putting in extra work hours. This is the first time in 5 years the department is fully staffed.

There was a conversion in the pension trust from Bank of America to M&I Corp; all trust documents were updated; two new trusts were instituted for OPEB and the firefighters. There were three FEMA submissions this year; significant reporting for financial statements; technology was a big imitative this year, and Apex was hired to assist with updating technology and bring on new initiatives.

Mr. Milone noted that the Finance Department had cut backs of 20 work hours per week in staffing, and this has affected the overtime. He said he makes more demands on the Finance Department than other departments. He commented on Mr. Jaskot being a good mentor and there being a great deal of cross training in the department.

Mr. Jaskot informed the Council that he has had high school student interns working in the department, doing a good job, at no cost.

Non-salary expense included a shredder at a cost of \$350.

TAX COLLECTOR, page 24 and 25

The overtime is increasing in this budget and is estimated at \$7,000; 15 hours per week of staff time have been cut from this budget in the last few years. Line item 5409 shows a slight increase in DMV delinquent tax payers and outsource of tax bills. There is some savings on mailings at a reduced rate, and savings of \$200 per month for postage is realized.

TAX ASSESSOR, page 26

The overtime in this budget is flat. Account 5211, Reference Material, is budgeted at \$3312.

AUDIT, page 29

The budgeted cost is \$28,000, +\$1000 from last year; the Town is in the 3rd year of a 5 year contract with the auditing firm. The total contract is \$56,000 and is split between the Town and BOE.

GENERAL INSURANCE, page 30

This account increases \$11,263, a 7.5 % increase across the board; some insurances increase 10% and some 5%. In April or May the Town will have the final numbers.

Mr. Milone commented on the insurance staying flat for the last few years. The Town has two safety committees – Town Wide and Executive, and they do a good job managing risk within the Town. Cheshire never filed a claim until the pool collapsed. At this time there is no resolution from the insurance company on the dehumidification situation at the pool. The Town has received everything that has been claimed on the bubble issue, and the business interruption claim is not yet settled.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, page 31

This budget has the largest increase in the Finance Department. The Town pays one half of the cost of the network administrator (BOE pays half) and one fourth of the coordinator costs (BOE pays three quarters).

Line Item 5401 – the Town hired Apex Technology, \$32,100, for the software and hardware conversion and to look at how the operation is managed, the manpower, maintenance contracts. This is in the process right now. For the Munis contract alone the Town pays \$40,000, and Apex is looking at the maintenance agreements, will determine if they are all needed. Most of the consultant contract will be charged back to FY 2011. There are 18 months left on the contract with Apex through June 2013. The cost for Apex is split with the BOE. \$125,000 is the annual cost for maintenance contracts.

Mr. Milone stated that Apex was asked to take a look at the Town's organization because it was thought the Town was not properly staffed for technology. It is hoped there will be a resolution for the staffing needs in time for next year's budget. Apex has spent a great deal of time putting out fires or preventing fires from starting. As a result some operational things have not been moved forward. Mr. Milone expects that the I.T. Department will look different in terms of the nature of the positions, salary levels, and BOE staffing. We are not staffed properly. There will be a complete review of all the maintenance agreements by Apex.

Ms. Talbot said that Apex is now managing priorities and in-house staff time to address our needs. The in-house staff has become more efficient and effective and priorities come closer to mirroring our needs. Everything is being monitored and tracked to get a better idea of what we need.

Help Desk – most employees have access through e-mail or telephone call to Apex on any issue through the help desk, during normal business hours and extended hours, for any problems or questions. Apex then takes the problem or question, decides the most efficient solution, dispatches Towns staff, monitor or access remotely to the equipment. If it is critical they dispatch one of their engineers to find the solution. Through Apex the Town has found out the inadequacies in the accounting system relative to backup and support, and there is resolution of the issues.

Ms. Flynn-Harris stated that the Town I.T. staff is pleased to have this additional technology support and security from Apex.

According to Mr. Milone, Apex coordinated the efforts between the Town and BOE. Apex is developing titles, job descriptions, range of responsibilities etc. within the I.T. Department.

Mr. Milone will have all of the technology expenses put together for the Council to review on Wednesday.

Page 32 shows the bulk of the cost of the I.T. Department; there is an increase of \$40,000 for the detailed description of items on page 32. This is close to last year's expenses. The increase is due to costs for the fiber tech lines, and \$11,000 for the Zcaller for the Munis software.

GENERAL SERVICES, Ms. DeFilio, page 37

The 27th payroll was \$172, .76% increase. Postage increased \$71,000. The Town is looking into getting an independent sorter for the mail, which will decrease postage costs. Mr. Jaskot will be reviewing this and advise the Council.

Copy Usage – there are new machines and more things are being done in-house. There is a new contract for the postage meter, with savings of \$2,100. Postage costs have decreased over the last few years due to e-mail and other technology.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT – this budget increases by \$13,474, 2.74%; 27th payroll was \$27,000.

Energy Commission – this budget increases by \$3,120. The Energy Star program has something to do with grant money received to maintain data on the web site. The commission wants the Town staff to manage this process, but it cannot be done by staff. It will be maintained by an outside accountant during the year for the historical data.

Mr. Schrumm commented on the Planning Department being slow.

In that regard, Mr. Milone reminded the Council that he eliminated the Assistant Town Planner position a few years ago, and slightly increased the hours of the Zoning Enforcement Officer. The department is about to undertake the start of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Milone said he would have the information the Council requested for the Wednesday meeting, including position adjustments, technology costs, monthly disbursement of medical benefits into the trust fund, revised rates going forward,

analysis on the debt relative to the pool and WPCD, overtime for the last 2- 4 year cycles.

Mr.Schrumm asked Councilors to e-mail to him any adjustments, changes, recommendations on the budget.

The Council will discuss the single stream recycling program in executive session with A.J. Waste on Wednesday.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Ruocco; seconded by Mr. Ecke.

MOVED to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk