

MINUTES OF THE JOINT PERSONNEL COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2013, AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Thomas Ruocco, Personnel Committee Chairman and Sylvia Nichols
Councilors Tim Slocum, David Schrumm, Andy Falvey and James Sima
Absent: Michael Ecke, Patti Flynn-Harris, Peter Talbot.
Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager

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. TOWN MANAGER'S FY 13-14 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Town Manager Milone distributed copies of his goals and objectives for FY 13-14, Town of Cheshire Management Principles, and his cover memo to the Town Council of May 7, 2013.

Mr. Milone informed the Council on what drives him in the development of his goals and objectives. First - are the priorities and concerns identified by the Council over the course of discussion and meetings. Second – are the expectations established in the operating and capital budget in terms of goals and objectives, funding of priority projects, etc. Third – is the professional effort to implement best practices wherever this can be done.

Mr. Milone commented on the Town spending more money on technology initiatives, and he has incorporated them into what is trying to be achieved. Another important document is the Management Principles, which was developed as part of Mr. Milone's goals and objectives this year. During the past year there have been discussions with the Council about succession planning and sustainability. With this in mind, he developed a document which captures the critical elements of supporting succession planning and sustainability. This document was exposed to all department heads, and for a few months they all worked together with Mr. Milone to establish the final document. Mr. Milone used the Management Principles as a basis for incorporating and establishing specific goals and objectives going forward so the elements of succession planning and sustainability and best practices are applied wherever they could be applied.

TOWN MANAGER'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, FY 13-14

With these goals and objectives, Mr. Milone has added a few more, and they are noted in italic type.

I. Preserve Financial stability and *sustainability* of Town operations.

Mr. Milone noted that in this first goal he added the word “sustainability” as this describes what the Town is trying to achieve, financially.

- *Conduct a FY 14 operating budget financial impact analysis as soon as the State budget is adopted.*

Mr. Milone said the town developed a budget with some risk in it, but there is also an outline with options for fall backs etc. He knows there are concerns about uncertainty, but with the options laid out and things which have evolved over the last month, he believes things will work. It is a matter of what the Council wants and how they want it framed.

The Council was told that Ms. Talbot sent an e mail requesting a Budget Committee meeting next week before the Council meeting to start dialogue on where we are with the State budget, play out a few scenarios etc. It is expected the final State budget will not be out for at least a month, or a bit longer. By meeting, the Council will have in place general ideas, options to pursue, and decide if further evaluations or analyses are needed from staff.

- *Continue efforts to control non-discretionary spending, specifically relating to pensions, medical benefits, OPEB, workers' compensation and heart and hypertension*
- *Continue Debt Mitigation initiatives, specifically relating to the financial impact of the cost associated with the Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade.*
- *Continue Water Pollution Control Department cost recovery strategies and Prison contract negotiations with the Connecticut Department of Corrections.*

Mr. Milone stated that these three objectives/strategies are inter-related. The 2nd goal applies to non-discretionary spending, fixed costs, which are about 23% of the Town budget. He commented on trying to get all these in sync and under control. These are cost drivers and critical to where the budget goes, and they are hard to contain, and impact the mill rate.

The 3rd goal relates to the debt mitigation effort, how to use reserve funds to manage the increase and expenses associated with the Clean Water Fund loan for the treatment plant upgrade. And, at the same time continue to manage the Town's infrastructure so it does not get neglected. The fixed costs are critical, and even more critical is the management of the debt. There are three years to plan for the treatment plant debt; there is a solid foundation; but there must be assurance that the Town can build on the foundation of the reserve.

Mr. Milone stated it is important, in the next 6 months, that there be a strategy in place on how to use this money so we can begin to forecast out for 3 or 4 years. This could be a discussion during the capital budget, on how the money would be used, preserve it as long as possible, and manage the debt burden to the extent possible.

Another thing impacting all of this over the next couple of months during the capital budget process is the performance contracting initiative. It is likely the Town Council can use the performing contracting financing mechanism to pay for these energy projects and not have to bond them. This will take some pressure off the capital budget; some of the projects in the five-year plan will be rolled into the performance contracting initiative. When this is coupled with what is already in the performance contracting initiative, there is about \$3 to \$3.5 million of projects in the five-year plan that can be incorporated in to the initiative.

Mr. Milone has a legal opinion from Town Attorney Johnson which clearly indicates that, because of the nature of the way these projects are being financed, they do not have to go to referendum. This allows the Council to move this along at a pace without forcing a decision by August 31st, and also shrink some of what was in the five-year plan.

There are many moving pieces, and Mr. Milone said the major effort for the next two months is to move forward, comfortably for all, with the FY 14 budget once we know the State revenue. And, to come up with a capital budget that will continue to protect/minimize the Town's debt burden, protect the debt reserve, and use it in a planned fashion.

#4 – This is the D.O.C. issue and treatment plant, which are inter-twined because the more success we have with the State over what the Town has been asking for, the greater reduction in the debt burden. Mr. Milone believes we are likely to resolve the user charge back payment of 9 years. There is not much opposition, just a lot of questions. He believes D.O.C. will write a letter to the Council asking for waiver of interest on the debt, or for 80 cents on a dollar.

Regarding the contract and legislative initiative at the State, Mr. Milone reported that the House of Representatives passed legislation which forces OPM to renegotiate the contract with Cheshire. It now has to go through the Senate, and this year it has momentum, and it is hoped it will pass. OPM sat with Rep. Fritz and other town delegates and the bill was crafted together. It is critical to get this resolved in the next 6 months to a year, and relieve the debt burden on the treatment plant, for which loan payments start in February 2017.

- *Implement the energy audit/performance contracting project.*

This the next objective...implementation of the energy audit performance contract, and these are separate, but connected initiatives.

- *Conduct comprehensive overtime analysis and evaluation.*

There was a discussion on this issue during the budget process, and Mr. Milone realizes the importance of providing the Council with extensive and comprehensive information. This will be ready in about four weeks, with the information ready to be analyzed, other ways to deploy people, or utilize other resources to control overtime costs.

The other objectives/strategies in this section have been seen in the past and discussed.

II. Continue to provide programs that support staff morale and enhance effectiveness to ensure the highest level of customer service.

- *Expand wellness initiatives and workplace safety programs.*

Mr. Milone informed the Council on the wellness initiatives and work place safety programs. As a direct result of the Sandy Hook tragedy, work place safety is a high priority; training sessions were held; changes were made in all Town buildings; there are emergency panic buttons in all conference rooms; there will be police officers conducting safety training for the Council and all boards, commissions and committees. These training sessions will be held in the first half hour of upcoming meetings, and the Police Department will put together an ongoing sustainable safety program.

Wellness initiatives include a “Health Fair” which will be held next week for Town employees. The fair brings in health related vendors, review of employee benefits, coverages, exposures, and there are opportunities for physical fitness with \$250 payments for health clubs. There is an AFLAC program which has financial awards for wellness. Each year employees get 4 hours off work (non-charged) for pre-cancer screening. As the Town continues to promote wellness there is a reduction in health benefit costs.

- *Explore implementation of flex time to expand customer service.*

Mr. Milone commented on the prior extended customer service program with Town Hall offices open one Thursday a month until 7 p.m., and the fact that few people came to conduct business during this time frame. There have been issues raised regarding the Town Clerk’s office closing off copying of documents at 3:45 p.m. each day. Mr. Milone wants to work to restore and implement extra customer service hours every few weeks. This can be done with little or no cost through flex time and some staff working Noon to 6 p.m. or 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. one day every few weeks. The expansion of work hours is an important customer service component.

III. Improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

- *Utilize information technology enhancements to core services to create greater efficiencies and cost savings.*

This objective/strategy was discussed during the budget process. Mr. Milone noted that the Town is in the 2nd year of its technology initiative, and is at the point of implementation, at the desk level, the benefits of many things already done. There is good software in place with the CAD/RMS system, GIS will be ready, expansion of MUNIS utilization components. Information will be provided to the Council throughout the year that demonstrates that technology has distilled down to the desk level where people are taking advantage of the changes, the impact of efficiency, cost savings, expanded services, etc.

Mr. Schrumm questioned the use of e-Commerce for various Town departments, and asked for more specificity on this, and its expansion to all departments.

According to Mr. Milone the goal is to expand e-Commerce to all departments. The Library has started the program; Parks and Rec uses the program; the Tax Office will take a credit card, but there is no email payment available; and the program could be used at Arts Place. Regarding MUNIS, the department heads must take full advantage of the finance of their departments, and staff is working towards having them handle their own finances with this software. Mr. Milone advised that MUNIS also has a program to monitor overtime, on a simpler basis, and this is another module which department heads will use. The Police Department and Fire Department dispatch technology is up and running, except that equipment is not yet installed in the fire trucks. The police technology is working well and doing what should be done relative to reports being done in the cars.

Regarding the credit card payments, Mr. Milone explained that there is no charge to the Town for the fees, as they are passed along to the customer. He will check on the amounts charged and advise the Council.

Mr. Sima asked about employee morale and the FISH program, and if there is a follow up to this program to show the payoff with this program.

In response, Mr. Milone said it hard to measure effectiveness of this effort, and it is no longer referred to as the FISH program. There can be measurement with informal communications and relationships with employees, and engagement with people, less absenteeism, grievances, etc. He elicits feedback from staff, there is music in the lobby and the building, art work, staff has taken over responsibility of holiday parties and picnic (paid by department heads), secret pal program...and keeping people motivated and respected. If there is a problem, Mr. Milone said he is told about it because of the effect on happiness and productivity. There is plan to enhance the Council Chambers.

Town administration is being pro-active in coming up with a security plan after the Sandy Hook incident, and to demonstrate this concern to employees. The professional development program is being made more esoteric, development of stronger skills, and keep people motivated and more empowered. Staff meets once a month and their feedback is noted and considered.

A recommendation was made by Mr. Schrumm regarding "a job swapping program" for employees in different departments.

Mr. Milone said this has been considered for swapping jobs for a day, and this could lay the groundwork for a permanent swapping program. He has even given consideration to swapping jobs with another community.

- *Conduct an evaluation of fire service delivery and response time and potential implementation of expanded volunteers' stipend program.*

This was discussed during the budget process but was not supported by the Town Manager. This needs further study by Chief Casner, which could take about a year. The stipend would be for limited time periods for volunteers to respond to a call, stay overnight at a fire house, and receive extra points/credit.

Mr. Sima said the Chief should inform the volunteer firefighters that if they do not respond to a certain number of calls they will not receive the credits for the benefit programs. Mr. Milone commented on the fact that, maybe, there should be a better incentive system for points, and the Chief will be working on this over the next year.

There was a brief discussion the incentive structure for the firefighters, and Mr. Milone said he will look at the whole incentive based structure.

- *Initiate study of consumption-based Water Pollution control user fee.*

Mr. Milone reported that the Town has received the RWA data and can go forward with development of a new plan for user fees. Walter Gancarz, Town Engineer, will be working on this program, prepare a model for Council to review, and some people will have higher rates and some lower rates, based on water consumption data. The work product will be given to the Council and WPCA, and will be discussed in time for the December 2014 billing.

- *As part of management principles mission statement initiate a value analysis of departments' service delivery process.*

Mr. Milone referred to the Management Principals document. He explained that a trained professional development person (Doug Brown) will work with Town staff and do an analysis of services people provide to determine efficiency and how well things are done. Throughout the year, Mr. Brown will check with staff on progress of the initiative, and continue to provide professional development support. There is opportunity for over-lapping of the processes, and the consultant will review everything and assist with implementation of service delivery.

- *Expand review and institutionalization of key policies, processes and programs.*

Mr. Milone said this refers to the issue of succession planning and sustainability. This has been raised before, and Mr. Milone said this is creation of a model, a culture, a system that works and which people understand. If a person leaves, the system is sustained and is working.

IV. Enhance communication efforts to expand citizen awareness of and Involvement in Town government, and maintain high level of Communication with all stakeholders.

- *Utilize PEGPETIA grant to improve the production of and information disseminated by the local government access television channel.*

The town has received the PEGPETIA and Mr. Milone said staff will do an overview of what the grant involves, benefits to be derived etc. The current equipment in Council Chambers will be gutted and replaced with new equipment. There will be mounted cameras, remote control of the system from desktops, and the quality of the equipment will make the video and audio much better. The Town will need to go with someone very skilled in the use of this equipment and technical expertise to maximize the use of the updated equipment. In a short time, people will be able to see video clips on town department activities, programs and services.

- *Conduct, in collaboration with the Town Council, an outreach program with Town Boards, Commissions and Committees to improve communication, enhance effectiveness and ensure compliance with FOIA and Roberts Rules of Order.*

Mr. Milone informed the Council that some boards/commissions/committees need a well developed orientation session and indoctrination for members. The appointees from the town committees are not hired personnel, and it is hard to impose guidelines and structure on them. At the same time the importance of following Freedom of Information and Roberts Rules must be conveyed and instilled to appointees upon their appointment. Some boards, commissions, committees (members) do not take FOI seriously – talk about things not on the agenda, do not post timely agenda or meeting cancellation notices and meeting minutes are submitted beyond the state mandated time frame. These are all FOI violations. Mr. Milone noted that some members come to meetings with a different expectation than the role of the board or commission. Some people think they are members of a regulatory body, have opportunity to make policy, and direct staff. It is difficult to clarify this role because town employees are staff to them, and there needs to be better preparation for appointees, knowing when they are advisory, and they do not become a recalcitrant member. Attendance for some boards, commissions and committees is a problem, and the chair has the ability to dismiss people for poor attendance.

Ms. Nichols commented on the fact that the role of the board, commission or committee is not clear to its members.

There was a brief discussion about past sessions with board, commission and committee members on these issues, and it was determined that another meeting of this nature should be held. Mr. Milone wants to insure that staff's responsibility must be clarified from the start, and in speaking with staff, there are different roles or relationship with chair persons. For the issue of FOIA and compliance with Roberts Rules of Order, Mr. Milone wants to work with the Council and the town committees. Staff responsibility must be clarified right from the start, and the role of the Town Council liaison is an important one and must be codified.

Council Chairman Slocum suggested a meeting with chairs of the boards, commissions, committees and the Town Council. There would be a review of the rules which must be followed when conducting a town meeting. He will work on coordination of this meeting with the Town Manager's office.

V. Initiate, advance or complete key Town projects.

- *Provide necessary support and financial oversight of the Water Pollution Control Plant upgrade project.*

Mr. Milone commented on the reorganization of the PW and Engineering Department, and how well it is working. Mr. Gancarz is doing a great job, will bird dog the treatment plant project, look for savings with the project, and assist Supt. Dievert with oversight of the treatment plant project and protection of the interests of the Town.

- *Continue to expand and enhance the road infrastructure program, specifically through the utilization of revised Pavement Management Index Report and integration with GIS.*

Money has been given to upgrade this report, and Mr. Milone said it would be ready in late summer, and it will be integrated with the GIS. This will make it easier to work on the road projects and for Council to see the recommendations.

- *Through utilization of Capital Planning Account, conduct a comprehensive Town and Schools Physical plant/buildings assessment.*

This was discussed during the budget process and Mr. Milone said the plan is to do a comprehensive study of town and school buildings, as was done with the roads. With the energy initiative many of the items in the physical plant priority listing will drop out and become part of the energy project.

Mr. Schrumm recommended separating the town and school buildings with regard to the energy audit, and said the town infrastructure is not falling apart. He believes the Council would be getting into educational policy, i.e. rearranging rooms in a school, and he said the five year capital budget shows a view of what needs to be done with buildings.

Some of the work is reactive, not planned, and Mr. Milone does not want to face a year where things need to be done, and we do not have the resources, and other things must continue to be deferred.

Mr. Slocum stated that the town and school buildings cannot be separated as the Town owns them and the schools occupy them.

With the road repavement report, Mr. Milone said it defines the roads to be done, with ranges of 6 to 65, and people get an understanding behind the decisions made for road work.

- *Complete the property revaluation program and utilize third party review to limit appeals of commercial property values and the associated expenses.*

The Town will be hiring a third party real estate appraiser to limit the appeals of commercial properties following revaluation.

- Continue efforts to extend Linear Park project from West Main Street north to Jarvis Street *and construct parking lot.*

This project is moving forward and the construction of the parking lot is an added expense.

- *Complete CAD/RMS public safety software conversion and equipment installation.*

Mr. Milone stated that most of the software is in place, and now it is primarily equipment installation on the fire trucks.

A new objective/strategy was added by Mr. Milone.

- *To develop a plan for ongoing management, maintenance, and oversight of open space properties by coordinating the role of various Town departments and the appropriate boards, commissions, committees.*

The Council was told by Mr. Milone that he came to realize that we have management plans for most of the Town's open space, but they have never been taken and coordinated and integrated with the master plan of managing the facilities. He cited an example of better maintenance of the Boulder Knoll property; there are issues on our open space land with vandalism, squatters, dirt bike riders...and there are maintenance needs at some of the sites. Suzanne Simone and Bill Voelker will spear head this plan.

Mr. Milone said a public safety plan is needed to review the parks regularly, insure there is more of a police presence (not just on ad hoc basis). The Planning office has a role in this with limited responsibility under the Charter, so their role needs to be formalized. The Parks and Rec Department Director is the land steward. Money will be put into the capital budget this year to coordinate and fund a management plan for the Town's open space.

With regard to the performance contracting, Mr. Sima stated that Ameresco is hired, and the Council will be hiring ECG at its May 29th meeting.

Mr. Schrumm asked Mr. Milone to check on the Town fire trucks and questioned the need for each of them to have a computer on board.

In reply, Mr. Milone said that every fire truck that responds to a fire will have a computer with all the key elements to identify each house and every apparatus must have computer equipment installed.

Mr. Sima talked about a calendar of all Town government meetings posted on the web site.

This will be checked out by Mr. Milone, who noted that with new software this can be done. The dates and times of all regular meetings are to be submitted to the Town Manager's office by December – and if not done, this is another FOI issue.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Ruocco.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk