

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2015 AT 7:00 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Personnel Committee Chairman Thomas Ruocco; Committee Members Robert J. Oris and Peter Talbot. Council Members - Patti Flynn-Harris and Liz Linehan.

Absent: Sylvia Nichols, Tim Slocum, David Schrumm, James Sima.

Staff: Town Manager Michael A. Milone

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll. A quorum of the Personnel Committee was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. TOWN MANAGER'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Mr. Milone expressed appreciation to the Council members for meeting with him to discuss his performance review. He distributed information to the Council, which included the basic performance evaluation form used with employees. Mr. Milone stated employees must meet goals and objectives, have a certain skill set for measurement on quality and quantity of work, initiative, supervisory and communication skills etc. The evaluation form and categories of skills can be used for the Town Manager's performance.

In the handout document there are categories listed i.e. quality of work, understanding of job functions, accuracy, errors, level of determination, analyzes and understands, etc. which helps distinguish individual categories. The handout includes a document on objectives -- expectations of the Town Manager in FY14-15, and outcomes which Mr. Milone feels he met the established objectives. He tried to quantify them, putting in qualitative information, so there was context in looking at the five goals he was tasked to meet.

Stating he did not meet all the markers set forth, Mr. Milone identified some of the things he did not achieve to the level he wanted. The Town Manager's employment contract is included as part of the documentation to the Council. A history of the Town Manager position salary adjustments will be updated and submitted to Council members.

Financial Operation - is the single most important operation of town government; the past year was most successful; Cheshire got a AAA rating from Standard & Poors and Fitch; Town went to bond sale with 2nd lowest interest rate in history, with significant savings in debt service; premium of \$773,000; debt service reserve up to \$6.1 million; refunded bonds with savings of \$250,000. A primary/top goal for Mr. Milone was to go out to bid for medical benefits, and this was done, with significant results, lower rates,

and moving all insurance to a fully self insured program. The Town had a good trust fund balance of \$1.9 million and BOE fund balance of \$600,000 at year end.

Claims audit started in September; it is still not completed due to difficulties with Anthem Blue Cross; and medical benefits consultants also had difficulty getting information, breaking the encrypted code; and the audit should be completed soon.

Surplus - indication was a \$500,000 surplus; it is now over \$1 million; tax collection revenue was higher than estimated, coming in at 99.8%; FEMA grant and other grants were received; biggest saving on the expenditure side was the freeze put in place on all departments since April 2015, resulting in \$250,000 in savings. Cheshire Police Department had more retirements; there was unanticipated savings from performance contracting program; and additional surplus money can be directed to debt service reserve. The \$700,000 budgeted in revenue for FY 15-16 must be covered, and funds over that amount can be directed elsewhere. Fund balance is at \$9.7 million, 9.4% of the operating budget, well over the 8% target. Rebates from performance contracting provides another opportunity to reduce some expenses in the capital budget or do more projects. This is \$10 million in the program which would have had to be funded.

On the energy front, the Town's engineering group has done an incredible job, led by Mr. Gancarz and Mr. Noewatne. They actively undertook the street lighting project and solar farm initiative.

Objectives for Financial Stability and Sustainability were achieved in one way or another. There will be an automatic three year review of closeouts for capital projects, and this has been instituted. The community pool budget is stabilized with insurance proceeds, and will have a slight fund balance. Mr. Milone hopes for better control of pool facility expenditures. He cited some prior issues and problems, noting there will no longer be a bubble cover taken down and put up each year, with savings of \$50,000, and pick up of 4 to 6 weeks of revenue. Swim lessons with Ms. Adams are ongoing at Elim Park, and it has been successful.

Council Questions and Comments

Mr. Oris asked where the Town stands on the medical benefits trust fund policy.

Mr. Milone replied that the Budget Committee met on this issue, and Mr. Schrumm tasked him to "put into words" what was agreed to by the committee and staff. This is almost complete, will be submitted to Mr. Schrumm for review, and if approved can be adopted by the Council in September.

The financial documents put out by Town staff are nationally recognized --budget and audit report. This is important because it is recognized by the rating agencies.

Regarding the Town lawsuit against the State/DOC, Mr. Milone reported the hearing with the Claims Commissioner has been moved to January 2016.

Programs for Staff Morale - Mr. Milone commented on there being a variety of programs, presentations, initiatives for staff...using "enrichment" rather than "professional development". There is a wellness program, yoga classes, art classes on town time, lunchtime walks, involvement in decision making with a 6 employee Wellness Committee. A "Mindfulness Program/Workshops and Exercises" was very significant, successful and appreciated by staff, with the next phase forthcoming.

Town Manager's Professional Development - Mr. Milone submitted his program summary for ICMA; he sends ICMA his learning report, about 34 pages, and 50 hours of identified workshops, reading, etc. and shared the report with the Council. In his involvement with webinars, staff works with the Town Manager, followed by discussion.

To maintain his credentialing status, Mr. Milone must go through a 360 degree assessment. He will ask Councilors to participate in a survey through ICMA, identifying 25 people from various walks of life to participate in the survey. ICMA has a list of skill sets in which town managers should be competent, and survey questions will be asked from this list. From that, ICMA will identify the person's strengths and weaknesses. Next year, Mr. Milone will build a program based on those weaknesses, with direction from ICMA into core areas needing work, recommending certain programs to strengthen any deficiencies.

Newsletter - this continues to be enhanced; communication is important to Mr. Milone; and he would like to get out around Town more, visit satellite offices, and plans to accomplish this in the coming year. Upcoming - National Donut Day for Town Employees, Message of the Week goes out each Monday, new courtyard for employees w/tables and umbrellas. Mr. Milone suggested a Council meeting in the courtyard.

Staff meetings do "go on the road". Mindfulness workshop will be in Mr. Milone's back yard; there was a meeting at Mixville Park 2 months ago; meetings have been held at the Parks Department and Library. Mr. Milone has a goal to hold more meetings outside Town Hall.

Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness - highlights include the Police Department reorganization and high ranking of Cheshire CT. Mr. Milone expressed pride in the high ranking of Cheshire as a place to live and work. He commented on the great job being done by Chief Dryfe, his reorganization of the CPD, recognition of officer skills, the quality of police officers on staff and their integrity, passion, and willingness to do a good job for the Town. Once the CPD Rules and Regulations are completed, Chief Dryfe plans to get the department accredited.

Questions and Comments

Mr. Talbot informed Mr. Milone and the Council that his company, Cox Communications, did a grant presentation to Manchester P.A.L., and he spoke with the Chief who stated Cheshire got an excellent Police Chief in Neil Dryfe.

Mr. Milone stated that he knew the CPD needed a new face in a Police Chief. He informed the higher ranking officers of his choice of Neil Dryfe, who said they checked on him, and found out he was a top notch professional police officer.

Regarding Ten Safest Cities, Mr. Talbot said Facebook has the ten most boring towns in Connecticut with Cheshire ranked #10.

Technology - Mr. Milone expressed appreciation to the Council members Flynn-Harris and Talbot who serve on the Technology Study Committee, and their work and support of the technology upgrade program.

Succession Planning - Mr. Milone said he is starting to target retirements without personal contact; department heads are putting in place their succession planning; there is a list of employees, their age and years of service. These are the vulnerable positions there is planning for the future of these jobs, and seamless transition. Technology benefits have resulted in less manual tasks, but learning a process on a computer rather than with a flow chart. Technology has enabled retrieval of files, finding documents and information from past years. Knowledge transfer can be difficult, and the webinars recommend interviewing employees about what they do, processing tasks, how to handle certain situations, especially those that are repetitive, cross-training staff, etc. Development of policies is important to the Town, and a significant part of best practices is having policies in place.

Another part which is not talked about too much is "culture transfer", and Mr. Milone said succession planning and sustainability are similar concepts. With sustainability we are trying to establish a strong culture, people following a certain ethical code, best practice regimen, and established expectations through the policies...i.e. 8% fund balance, debt service under 10% of the operating budget, etc.

Social Media - Cheshire has a Facebook and Twitter committee; website will be updated by Town staff from Library, Parks, PW and Ms. Talbot, along with a consultant.

Automated Sign Board is up and operational at the Youth Center/Parks & Rec Department site.

Bedding Plant Capital - Mr. Milone hopes to have more involvement from the growers to increase the attention and traction on this recognition for Cheshire. Everything coming from town government has "Bedding Plant Capital" printed on it.

Projects - Mr. Milone noted that there are many projects underway. WWTP upgrade is coming on time and on budget, thanks to Supt. Dievert and Town Engineer Gancarz.

Community Pool - galvanized steel delivered to the site; construction starting soon.

Linear Trail extension - this project is going very well; signs will be going up soon; should be ready by November 1st; restroom at Jarvis Street (Clovis restroom); State starts their section of the trail in September; expect completion by Fall 2016; trail will go up to Southington.

Open Space Management and Land Acquisition Policies - Mr. Milone has discussed these policies with the Council at prior meetings. He noted they are important as they relate to how property is acquired and then managed.

Town Center Sidewalks - almost completed; Town Hall parking lot will be repaved and completed shortly. Town Hall courtyard was part of this project.

Mixville Park - the park looks very nice; when bridge goes in it will change the park, and make dam aesthetically attractive; people will be able to walk around the park area; project was done within budget.

Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on Eagle Scouts involvement with the Mixville Pond project with their project, and the great job they did.

Mr. Milone discussed what "he did not do"...and this includes non-expansion of the amount of photographs and videos for the web site; staff will be asked to take photos of Town events or programs, forward to Ms. Talbot for the web site. This will provide the public with visuals of what Town departments are doing.

Ms. Flynn-Harris said the web site is too wordy, has too much on it, and should be changed.

There is much that can be done to make photos on the web site more appealing and Mr. Milone said the web site will be undergoing changes.

Meeting with all Council Members - Mr. Milone said he never completed this expectation. He also wants to get out into the field and meet with Town staff.

Outreach Program - Mr. Milone commented on the videos of Town board and commission meetings; this gave volunteers more visibility; it is hoped this program will enhance involvement of volunteers, make them feel appreciated and part of the overall operation of the Town.

Mr. Milone expressed disappointment in not getting many of the policies adopted, and the Fire Department situation with volunteers.

Before adjournment the Council discussed how to move forward. Mr. Talbot suggested getting the documents from Mr. Milone before going into the deliberation stage at another meeting.

Mr. Milone will send Councilors copies of the FY 2015 goals and objectives, and the history of the Town Manager's salary.

For the record, Mr. Oris stated that working with Town Manager Milone over the last few years shows his management in a very fiscally prudent way, manages with a high level of integrity and commitment to the community. He commended Mr. Milone on these traits; said he is a great asset to the Town; and Cheshire is better for having him as Town Manager. Although there are times of disagreement, Mr. Oris knows Mr. Milone's heart is always in the right place; he is a consummate professional, and makes the Council's job easier and more effective by providing detailed information in a timely fashion. Mr. Oris said he is proud, as a Councilman, to work with Mr. Milone who is doing a great job and has his full support.

Mr. Milone told the Council that it was a difficult decision on whether to move to Cheshire when he was New Haven Finance Director. But, he said you cannot do the Town Manager's job in the right way unless you live in the community.

The issue of Mr. Milone's personal time being used for his work requirements was raised by Ms. Flynn-Harris, and she commended him for his dedication to his duties.

Mr. Milone discussed having a project without giving it the time it deserves, and this being a big challenge for him. He does work from home and at the beach, but enjoys his work, especially that which cannot be done in the office environment and distractions.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris.

MOVED to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk

