

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 2017 AT 6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84
SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE, CT 06410**

Present

Timothy Slocum, Chairman; Michael Ecke, Sylvia Nichols

Council Members: Chairman Robert J. Oris, Jr.; Vice Chairman Paul A. Bowman; Jeff Falk, Peter Talbot (left at 6:50 P.M.)

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Finance Director James Jaskot; Fire Chief Jack Casner; Deputy Chief Don Youngquist

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. CAMPION AMBULANCE CONTRACT

Town Manager Michael Milone stated that the Campion Ambulance contract was up for renewal and a draft contract marked up by the Town Attorney was included in the meeting packet. Although past services have generally met the terms of the contract, a concern was brought to his attention by a citizen who received ambulatory services and asked to be transported to another hospital. The responders did not comply with his hospital of choice request and made disparaging remarks about the hospital.

Sylvia Nichols asked if the Cheshire Fire Department had any issues with Campion's service. Jack Casner responded that sometimes when experiencing multiple, simultaneous calls, there are sometimes delays with the second ambulance. Chief Casner also noted that, by State statute, emergency medical service (EMS) providers are determined by the State Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS). Campion was designated as Cheshire's primary service area responder and the Town must contract with them accordingly.

Paul Bowman followed up on Michael's comments about service, stating that he had personally experienced responders discouraging him from transport to a hospital of his choice, followed by disparaging remarks about the hospital. He also commented that he was billed for services not covered by his insurance. His insurer said that Campion was under a network agreement and that there should be no additional cost to him. Paul wondered where citizens can go if there are questions or concerns on billing. He said that he was OK proceeding with a contract renewal, but wanted to bring attention to these service concerns.

Tim Slocum stated his preference to stay with a five year contract. Michael Milone suggested some provisions to include in the new contract including a requirement for periodic reports on response times and complaints, a list of equipment and number of employees, and protections in the event Campion was sold.

Silvia Nichols asked if the Town could get out of the contract for any reason. Jack Casner stated that either party can terminate the agreement for cause with a minimum of sixty days notice. In accordance with State statutes, the Town would have to prove that Campion was negligent in performance of the contract, in which case the OEMS would find another provider.

Chief Casner emphasized that Campion's dispatch handles the EMS calls, providing medical instructions when needed. Cheshire's dispatch will transfer calls to their dispatch and the Town pays for this additional service. Otherwise the Town would have to train its dispatchers to perform these services.

Michael Milone stated that the current Fiscal 2017 year contract, which was a one-year contract extension, is for \$217,200, or \$18,100 per month. The pricing requested by Campion for the new contract had the wrong dates, and the dates needed to be moved out a year. While the contract is being negotiated, the Town approved a three month contract extension at the June Council meeting with a 2% increase over the fiscal year 2017 pricing. Chief Casner highlighted that the contract includes a guaranteed paramedic. It would be cheaper without this provision, but it provides a higher level of comfort to our residents.

No action was taken by the Committee. Jack Casner was charged with moving forward with the contract process.

4. DISCUSSION RE: FIRE TRUCK PURCHASING PROCESS

Chief Casner and Deputy Chief Youngquist were present for this agenda item.

Chief Casner said that the Houston Galveston Areas Council (HGAC) purchase option is similar to the State Administrative Services and COG. Numerous other municipalities in Connecticut have utilized this service, e.g. East Hartford, Stamford, and Bridgeport. He has been in touch with some of the other towns and all their comments have been favorable.

Don Youngquist highlighted some of the pros of utilizing HGAC to purchase a new pumping engine, including the savings of staff hours by not having to generate specifications and a shorter delivery timeframe.

Tim Slocum stated that in effect, HGAC replaces the use of a consultant.

Chief Casner said that there is a limited ability to customize vehicles and that the purchase would be for the basics. Most importantly, this process would significantly increase the purchase turn-around time.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Ecke

MOVED to forward agenda item #4 to the full Town Council for approval.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. F.Y. '18 BUDGET OPTIONS FOR MITIGATION OF POSSIBLE STATE MUNICIPAL AID REDUCTIONS

Michael Milone distributed handouts including Options for the Mitigation of Possible Significant State Municipal Aid Reductions,

Tim Slocum asked if the Town was advertising for any positions that have the potential to freeze. Michael responded that the only ad currently in circulation was for a part-time library clerk position. There is also the potential for up to four retirements this year under a retirement incentive in the Town Hall Union contract.

Michael reviewed some of the options to compensate for the loss in State aid including not contributing \$850,000 (\$1.1 million net of \$250,000 designated for a reduction in General Fund debt service) to the Capital Nonrecurring Fund this year. Another option would be to not use any of the \$125,000 of contingency funds in the operating budget. Michael also provided a summary of Town and Board of Education cuts at .5%, 1%, and 1.5% of the budget. He then summarized the current status of reserve funds, and potential increase in tax revenue if the Town were to increase the collection rate, up from the current 99.2%. The last resort would be to consider a supplemental tax bill. There is proposed legislation by the State and a referendum may not be required.

Michael briefly summarized other information provided in the packets. Several versions of five year budget projections, one assuming status quo debt with no new schools and no non-tax revenue growth, one with revenue loss of \$2.5 million, and one with revenue loss of \$5.0 million. There were also summaries of tax increases for various taxpayers for each of the three scenarios. He said that the projections were very conservative. Although the five year historical average budget increase for the Town and Board of Education was 2.85% and 2.33% respectively, the fiscal year 2018 increase was much less, only 1.1% and 1.05%, due in part to staff reductions and reorganizations.

Tim Slocum asked if Michael could confirm if a referendum would be required in light of proposed legislation. He also suggested that increases in debt service expenditures could be mitigated somewhat by approving rather lean capital expenditure plans going forward.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Tim Slocum; seconded by Mr. Ecke.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

ATTEST:

JAMES JASKOT