

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE 7:00 P.M PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION ON TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018, IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Timothy Slocum, Budget Committee Chairman; Committee Members Jeff Falk and Sylvia Nichols. Council Chairman Robert J. Oris, Jr., Vice Chairman Paul A. Bowman, Council Members Patti Flynn-Harris, Thomas Ruocco, Peter Talbot, David Veleber. Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Arnett Talbot, Assistant Town Manager.

Dept. of Education: COO Vincent Masciana; BOE Members Ms. Fabiani, Ms. Sobel and Mr. Grippo.

1. ROLL CALL

Chairman Oris called the meeting to order, and read the emergency notice into the record.

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. ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF A \$40,000 DONATION FROM THE YMCA CHESHIRE SWIM TEAM FOR THE POOL GIFT ACCOUNT FOR THE PURCHASE OF STARTING BLOCKS.

MOTION by Mr.Slocum; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves Resolution #041718-1

RESOLUTION #041718-1

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council accepts and appropriates a \$40,000 donation from the YMCA Cheshire Swim Team for the Pool Gift Account for the purchase of starting blocks for the Community Pool.

Discussion

Chairman Oris expressed appreciation for this generous gift from the Sea Dogs Swim Team. The gift will go a long way to insure the pool continues to be a successful facility.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. DISCUSSION RE: PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019 OPERATING BUDGET

Handout – 4/17/18 – Summary of Decision Packages

Town Manager Milone distributed the handout which showed opportunities for expenditure reductions or revenue enhancements, and reviewed them with the Council. The summary report was modified to reflect changes from last week's review of expenditures and revenues.

Town Attorney, Employee Benefits (Police Pension) and (Medical Benefits) items were recommended by the Council.

Library – Find replacement funds for the \$23,600 cost of Sunday hours. Mr. Milone noted there will be savings in the positions of Director and Senior Library Associated being vacated.

Performing & Fine Arts - \$10,000 revenue increase.

Fire Department/Fire Marshal – fees for plan reviews and for pumping water; these are open items to be discussed at April 18th meeting; other items for discussion are insurance carrier reimbursement for CFD services, and fee schedules from other towns.

Recreation – Facility use fees +\$20,000; summer concert series - \$5,000 reduction.

Community Pool – Amenities, \$5,000 to \$37,000; open item; capital expenditure budget item.

PW Automated Trash Collection - \$48,672 to \$97,344; Mr. Milone reported on a productive meeting with the vendor, A.J. Waste and town staff; operation concerns were addressed; there were answers to Council questions; there was information generated about bulky waste pickup, and analysis from other towns that have similar service.

PW Leaf Collection – PW Director Noewatne has compiled information on leaf collection and will review with Council on April 18th; \$15,500 is the cost for this service.

PW Snow Plowing Contract – this budget item will be reviewed on April 18th.

Hazardous Waste Drop-off – the town is going with NVCOG for this service; savings of \$19,843.

Finance/Fund Balance Utilization – increase funding by \$200,000; there was Council support to use more fund balance; question is how best to use the funds.

Debt Service – Additional resources to be discussed.

Revenue Modifications - \$126,000.

General Services/Electronic Media Consultant \$61,503.

Library – Sr. Library Associate, 25 hours per week; \$47,240; fund for six months.

Reclassification of Electrical Inspector – net increase \$8,772; open item; discuss at April 18th meeting.

Human Services – three (3) positions (2 Counselors and Senior Social Worker); open items to be discussed on April 18th.

PW Maintainer - \$83,276; to be discussed.

Library Director – new hire will have a lower salary level, \$10,000 savings; could be used towards the \$23,600 funding for Sunday hours.

Library Clerk - \$12,090; fund for six (6) months.

Assistant Town Clerk – position increased to 35 hours per week; ranges from (\$575) to \$14,258; 35 hours = \$7,500 increase; 20 hour per week Assistant Town Clerk position eliminated.

Town Engineer – 50% of salary supported by WPCD (\$8,138).

Public Works and Fire Department Overtime – item to be discussed.

Special Election Stipend – open item.

PW Rebuilding Truck – more information on April 18th.

Public Works Dept. items/information and review with Director Noewatne and Town Engineer Gancarz.

Cheshire Fire Department – open items to be reviewed with Chief Casner and Fire Marshal Andrews.

With regard to the time needed to adopt a budget by April 24th, Mr. Slocum asked Councilors to consider extending the adoption date to April 30th.

Mr. Oris noted there is more work to be done, and if there is extra time the Council should take it. More work must be done on the BOE budget.

Mr. Talbot shares the concerns, and suggested the Council review as much as it can, and reassess the situation on Thursday, April 19th.

Mr. Veleber asked where the mill rate and percentage budget increase would be if the Council did nothing else.

Mr. Milone explained there would be a potential budget reduction of \$785,323; increase in the budget would be \$2,388,860, 2.20% (From 2.92%); mill rate would be 32.86 mills. Average taxpayer would be assessed at \$7,659 (current \$7,444); tax increase of \$215 or 2.89%; this is a reduction of \$76 from the proposed \$291 and 1% reduction.

Referring to slides #6 and #12, Mr. Milone cited the following:

Slide #6 – Five Year Revenue Comparison – FY 2019 recommended \$3,174,183, 2.9%.

Slide #12 – Using the model based on \$300,000 Town and BOE \$487,000, budget adjustment of \$911,323; Revised mill rate (from Town Manager's mill rate) 32.86 mill.

This is where we are today without conversations about the BOE and impact on the BOE budget. Mr. Ruocco said there must be a proportionate way for reductions on the BOE side.

Mr. Oris reiterated his concerns about taxes increasing and impact on taxpayers. The Council is hearing that these are maintenance budgets with a 3% increase or 1.25 mills. He will not support this increase, wants to see half of that number, look at a 2% increase and what it would be for Town and BOE, and will not support a 4% increase.

The Council requested information on a 2% increase for both General Government and BOE...with mill rate and increase to average taxpayer. General Government 2% cut is \$595,000 from \$1.208M; BOE 2% cut is \$580,000 reduction. The BOE cut \$400,000 from the proposed budget Medical Trust Fund item; there are other places for reductions (personnel i.e. Math Coach). 2% may not get the budgets to where everyone is comfortable, and Council may want to go lower.

Mr. Milone said the revenue enhancements will offset further reductions needed.

Campion Ambulance – Mr. Bowman asked about this issue, and another vehicle.

Mr. Milone briefly reviewed the contract issues; assumption is 3% increase from current contract; the contract will be discussed in executive session on April 18th. There was discussion with Campion on another medical service vehicle, 95% response time (versus current 90%). Campion representatives have contacted Chief Casner to reopen conversations. Funds can be taken from contingency to supplement the appropriation; more information will be updated and available to Council.

The issue of users of the Library, Dog Park and town fields was raised by Mr. Bowman, who asked for information on resident users of facilities, utilization of facilities, where reductions can be made. Without this information and full understanding of the impact on services and economics to keep services, he said decisions are difficult to make.

Mr. Milone is trying to break down the service costs for as many departments as possible. He will provide information and updated information.

Mr. Bowman requested a list of stipends appropriated in the budget as to department and amount. He cited Civil Preparedness at \$7,500 as an example of a stipend.

These are few and far between, and Mr. Milone said it is usually someone filling in for someone else.

For the average taxpayer and home price, Mr. Bowman asked for the actual house value...is it \$300,000 or \$400,000 for the house.

The average house assessment is \$214,286, which is 70% of the market value which would be \$306,123.

Fund Balance – Mr. Slocum asked about utilization of more fund balance; it is currently at \$800,000; \$1M was used last year; there was discussion about using fund balance for bulky waste pickup costs.

Bulky Waste Pickup – last pickup costs were \$160,000 for A.J. Waste pickup, and the town directly paid \$110,000 disposal costs.

There must be evaluation of the bulky waste pickup, and Mr. Slocum said this money should not be spent to pick up trash. Taxpayers do want this service, but we are talking about cuts and savings, and \$270,000 could be used towards reductions in the budget. Mr. Slocum supports \$1M appropriation from fund balance.

This is a wish list item which people want revived, and Mr. Oris said in light of the financial status of the town, it would be hard for him to approve this item. Town departments and BOE are being asked to make cuts, and adding back bulky waste at nearly \$300,000 is not a necessity. He would rather take the fund balance and apply it to the budget. Mr. Oris stated his concern about using the fund balance...that it is unknown year to year...and to continue to use it to offset ongoing expenses, is a worry. Without the fund balance where we want it to be, there will be a problem funding ongoing expenses. He supports using it, but is leery about using more than the \$800,000.

Stating his agreement, Mr. Talbot said he supports bulky waste on a yearly basis, it is nice to have, but not a must have. With talking about better utilization of fund balance he agrees it should not go beyond the \$200,000...and not go over \$1M. Nothing is budgeted for bulky waste, so it is not something being taken away.

The Council was informed by Mr. Milone that A.J. Waste will provide costs associated with bulky waste for any year of the contract that is extended. If the contract is

extended, he will give numbers for extended years, without an obligation for the Town. There are still ongoing negotiations regarding automated trash pickup, which will be discussed in executive session.

Pool Amenities – The amenities for the indoor pool are devices for climbing, jumping, racing around, a climbing wall in many variations from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Mr. Milone explained the challenge with the pool is lagging revenue, and the deficit will be more than projected. As part of the capital budget there will be ideas to integrate and provide more recreational activities at the pool, such as sand volleyball, bocce, ground amenities for seating. Fees are at the maximum.

It was stated by Mr. Slocum that the number is \$5,000 to \$37,000 encompassing all the items...but the \$37,000 should not be in the budget. The Council agreed on zero for the pool amenities, and looking at them as capital budget items.

Ms. Flynn-Harris pointed out that this was in the CEP last year, including bleachers, about \$90,000 but denied.

The bleachers are in, and Mr. Milone noted the Council approved the \$40,000 appropriation for the blocks.

Even if these amenities were approved, Mr. Bowman said they would not be for this season.

In that regard, Mr. Milone can check with Ms. Adams, and it's possible the time line could be fast for ordering and delivery.

The consensus of the Council was to use \$200,000 more from fund balance for the FY 2019 operating budget.

Mr. Falk considers bulky waste an amenity, which he supports, but not in this year.

Media Coordinator - \$61,503 (\$80,000 w/benefits). This could be a part-time position, and Mr. Slocum said the decision should be made by the new Town Manager on whether the position needed or not. At the present time, Ms. Talbot handles these responsibilities.

Mr. Milone suggested this item be discussed at the April 18th meeting with a presentation of additional information.

Economic Development – Mr. Veleber has sent Councilors an e-mail about economic development as a way to reduce the burden on taxpayers. He asked about doing more in this budget to enhance economic development and grand list growth, while keeping the mill rate low for businesses. The EDC is implementing the Muldrow report. He questioned if there is something in the EDC budget to be addressed, i.e. more people,

more resources available, to help foster the business environment, and market Cheshire to other businesses.

This is an issue which can be addressed by Economic Development Coordinator Jerry Sitko. Mr. Milone will invite him to the April 18th meeting to discuss this with Council.

Mr. Bowman talked about the process for developers for projects, and adding the Electrical Inspector to full time Building Inspector. He believes there are other ways to enhance economic development, fast track the process, have a better understanding of fees, impact on plan reviews (already part of the fees), fire fees component. Mr. Bowman said all of these things go into supporting economic development, but they are not in a comprehensive package.

**5. DISCUSSION RE: PROPOSED ECONOMIC INCENTIVE.
EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

There was no executive session.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Mr. Veleber.

MOVED to adjourn the special meeting at 8:30 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk