MINUTES OF THE JOINT TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010, AT 6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207-209, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Council Chairman Tim Slocum; Budget Committee Chairman David Schrumm; Budget Committee member Thomas Ruocco. Town Council members Justin Adinolfi, Anne Giddings, James Sima.
Absent: Michael Ecke, Andy Falvey, Timothy White.
Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Patti Lynn Ryan, Finance Director;

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. DISCUSSION RE: PROPOSED FY 2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET

YOUTH & SOCIAL SERVICES 76 and 179; Michelle Piccarello
Social Services Director Piccarello introduced her staff to the Town Council.

Mr. Milone reported there was an error in calculations for the Secretary’s position in this department, with the salary adjustment counted twice. The salary increase is $6,500 or 2.4%; the overall budget increases by $6,066 due to non-salary items decreasing. Most of the money in the non-salary portion of the budget is $20,000 for program services (recreation, education) and $12,000 in counseling services.

Counseling Services – this portion of the budget was $8,000 more in 2008 and $6,000 more in 2009. The department continues to have a significant increase in the demand for services, and has developed a partnership with Southern Connecticut State University for interns through the SCSU Intern Program. This has saved a considerable amount of money, $6,000 to $7,000 without the loss of quality of services.

Director Piccarello reported that the “Yellow House” has seen an increase in participation with kids coming more often. She believes this is due to the current economic situation in the community, and kids can come to the House without any charge. The activities at the House become more and more important to families whose children are not involved in sports, music or other programs. The department collaborates with Dodd Middle School and Cheshire High School in many areas of services. This year, the second round of the youth risky behavior survey was conducted on-line, with a savings of about $6,000 in labor costs.
There was access to a larger sampling of students and more accurate data will be available to compare to future surveys.

The department looks for grants, received a 9 month extension for the underage drinking program, and funds from United Way for energy costs for families. The Social Worker speaks with local organizations and churches on the services offered by the department, and there has been an increase in donations for programs such as the fuel bank and food bank.

The Social Services Department collaborates with St. Bridget’s Food Pantry to insure the increased demand for food is met. Ms. Piccarello serves as a member of the Food Pantry Advisory Board.

Mr. Milone commented on the concerns last year regarding continuing the food pantry, and said a better collaboration has been established with everyone brought together for a better program. The pantry is now meeting the needs of a wider group of people.

Internship Program – provides high quality social workers who have full counseling case loads, and this has eliminated a waiting list for services. This program has allowed services to the 5th and 6th grade population which is the age where issues begin to surface. This is all done without additional cost to the Town.

Ms. Piccarello and department staff work with the Cheshire Police Department and Education Department, and they are very supportive of the Social Service Department programs. These departments assist with the controls for underage drinking and tobacco compliance tests. Some bars and restaurants in Town were found in violation, and the department offers training to these businesses.

FY 2010-11 – Ms. Piccarello informed the Council that the department plans on taking on four interns next year, continue services to the schools, and will look for more funding through grants. The Program Coordinator position will be eliminated, but funds are needed to support the efforts of this position. There will be additional focus on providing structured programming which increases internal family support such as a mother/daughter book group, and continuation of reach out to 5th and 6th graders. The Crisis Intervention position at the Police Department will be utilized more, with continued flow of information to the Police Department, insuring cases through the Police Department receive a response from Social Services.

Mr. Milone explained that last year the position of Program Supervisor was reduced from 40 hours to 35 hours per week, and these hours cannot be reinstated with this budget. As service demands increase, the Social Services Department has less staff hours to work with. Mr. Milone stated that the Social Services Department is run efficiently and effectively by Director Piccarello.
Fees for Counseling Services – Ms. Piccarello informed the Council that she and Ms. Snyder achieved their State of Connecticut license as Marriage and Family Therapists, and are eligible to be on insurance panels.

Although she is not in favor of charging fees, Ms. Piccarello decided to look into the feasibility of charging fees from insurance for clients coming to the department for services. With a fee structure the department is open to audits by insurance companies, and reporting will be more complicated. To insure a fee program would be properly set up, she has spoken with a billing consultant about software and issues involved with insurance billing. The estimated cost of setting up a billing structure would be about $10,000 in the first year, and $3,000 to $4,000 in maintenance charges each year. Revenue could be generated, but the amount is unknown. It could be in the area of $20,000 to $40,000 annually. The billing function would require more staff hours and would be an administrative impact on the department. Ms. Piccarello said she would provide details and comparative studies with other communities to the Council. Stating she would prefer to continue as it is now, Ms. Piccarello would pursue the issue of client billing if the Town Council requested it be done. The billing would be for counseling services and not social services. However, Ms. Piccarello does not want to turn people away because they cannot pay for counseling services.

Ms. Giddings commented on knowing the advantages of collaboration between the Social Services Department and the schools, and said there will always be a need for social services in the community. For the internship program in her school system, there was a fee charged for the supervisor to observe the intern.

In Cheshire, there is no fee, and Ms. Piccarello explained that Ms. Bishop supervises the interns because she has an MSW degree.

Mr. Milone stated that there has been a savings of about $5,700 to $6,000 this year in the counseling line item of the budget with the services of interns.

Mr. Slocum asked about the primary services to the youth.

In response, Ms. Piccarello said it is adolescent and family counseling, and there is no tie in to adults unless there is a relation to a youth receiving services. The Social Services Department assists families with food, fuel, financial services and other needs.

In response to a question about how a child in the middle school is serviced when he/she has a major issue, Ms. Piccarello advised that if the child is “off the wall”, a call is placed to 911 for police enforcement. If a child is not in crisis or threatening, etc. then the crisis is dealt with at the school, and then the child is referred to Social Services for counseling. The case is evaluated, and if medication is needed the child is referred to a psychiatrist before supportive counseling services are provided through Social Services. The department
works closely with the schools, and 3 to 4 calls are received each day with referrals. The department conducts alternative to suspension programs for students caught with alcohol on school property, and counseling is provided. The CIU position at the Police Department typically handles domestic violence cases, a case where DCF is called in, drug overdose, etc. Once the initial crisis is handled, there is opportunity for follow-up counseling through the Social Services Department.

With regard to parent involvement, Ms. Piccarello informed the Council that, according to the law, Social Services can see a minor 6 times before letting a parent know the minor child is being seen. She does not like to do this, and does not do this unless there is a major crisis whereby the parent is incapable of parenting a child. For the most part, both parents are required to attend an initial intake, and they are kept informed of the child's progress once a month.

Mr. Slocum asked about the on-line survey and more participation.

According to Ms. Piccarello there is more participation because the survey process is better organized for this 2nd time. The high school is more acceptable to the survey; the middle school survey was successful last time; and there was more access to students with the on-line survey.

Last year there was talk about reaching out to churches and organizations, and Mr. Slocum asked about the effectiveness of this outreach.

It was very effective, and Ms. Piccarello said that the social worker has spoken to many churches and organizations and the response has been good. Ms. Piccarello stated that in the Cheshire community the generosity has increased as the financial situation gets worse, and people want to offer help to others.

The on-line survey results will be available in the Fall.

Mr. Schrumm stated that the fee issue came up a few years ago for services provided. There are concerns about getting involved with any insurance company because of audits and other things involved, and he said it may be better to continue without charging fees.

Ms. Piccarello said that most people who can afford private services do so, and do not choose to come to the Town for services. She is seeing more and more people without insurance these days due to loss of jobs.

**SENIOR AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**, 70 and 191, Doreen Pulisciano

On page 193, Mr. Milone noted that the Program Supervisor's position will be adjusted by about $4,000. The department budget is reduced by under $4,000. The Social Worker's hours were cut by 10 hours, and this is being reconsidered to a 5 hour per week reduction, and will be revisited by the Council in executive
session. Non-salary items are in program services for all the various activities provided to the senior citizens. There are many in-kind services also provided at no cost along with volunteer time for recreational support. The largest expense for this department is the auto equipment and gasoline for the buses. This budget is really a status quo budget.

Ms. Pulisciano commented on the Senior Social Worker's position being cut 10 hours to save money in this proposed budget. Some the social programs may not be needed because of private businesses and organizations offering them to the senior citizens. She cited some of these services such as the life line daily check to seniors to insure they are okay; the companion service which is now being done by agencies and businesses taking care of this service; and caregiver programs are being offered by hospitals. After looking at the 10 hour cut to the social worker's hours, Ms. Pulisciano said she realized it was too much, and is requesting a 5 hour cut back in the hours. The social worker helps senior citizens with the complex state and federal program (Medicare A, B, C, D) and people need assistance in filling out forms and the demand for the social worker's time increases. For many senior citizens their families are no longer available to assist them, and they look for support from the community.

Mr. Milone stated there is an important need in having the social worker available to assist a person in crisis, and a way must be found to make up the difference in the cost of the additional 5 hours a week.

The Council was informed by Ms. Pulisciano that the Police Department gets calls from elderly people, and then the social worker is called, makes a visit to insure the elderly person is alright or what the person’s needs may be. It is helpful to have someone available 5 days a week at the center.

Mr. Schrumm asked if a private non-profit foundation has been looked into for the Senior Center.

There is a membership association, 501(c)3 group at the Senior Center, and Ms. Pulisciano said it receives memorial donations into its account. All equipment in the Center is paid through this association, such as the television, Wii, coffee pots. The association meets monthly, has been in existence for 30 years, and spends money only for the Center.

According to Ms. Giddings this association is different because it does not have an endowment which could be set up and assist the Senior Center with donations to meet its needs.

Mr. Milone advised that there will be $6,000 more in revenue generated from the membership program in the next fiscal year.
Senior Center – this is an active center with 2,000 paid members with a $5 fee for Cheshire residents and $10 fee for out of town residents. The participation numbers continue to grow even though some programs were cut or reduced last year due to budget reductions of $4,000 in the program account. When programs are eliminated by outside groups such as Health Net’s exercise program, the Center is forced to continue programs and activities on a more limited basis, and last year this had a cost of $2,800. The Fall schedule was cut last year to 8 week sessions, with longer times between sessions, and the seniors were upset by this. After writing to local civic groups, about $1,500 was donated which helped with some of the programs. At the Center, some programs, parties, dances and entertainment are sponsored by local organizations, and lunches and dinners are also sponsored.

Last year the Center received an $80,000 grant from the DOT for two new buses. Cheshire and 7 other towns collaborate with the Greater Waterbury Transit District (GWTD) and last year there was a $250,638 grant to continue this program. This is free transportation for Cheshire seniors 3 days a week and 1 Saturday a month, in addition to what is provided by the Town.

AT&T sponsored the new computer lab which has a waiting list of people who want to participate in programs. Next year the Center will apply for a grant through the Naugatuck Savings Bank to sponsor a PACE class for people with arthritis who want to exercise. In December 2010 the Center will apply for replacement grant for the 5 year old bus. A gift account has been opened for programs so donations can be given to support programming.

Ms. Pulisciano reported that Mr. Kaiser at the Town Garage keeps the Senior buses in pristine condition.

It is hoped that more volunteer hours can be donated to the Senior Center which could generate annual savings of $48,000. The Board of Directors wants to expand the basement which was outfitted with utilities and mechanical requirements when the Center was renovated. The Board will look into a grant for this project. If the project is undertaken it will include updating the elevator and upgrading the generator system to insure air-conditioning for the multi-purpose room in case of an emergency.

Ms. Giddings asked about #5502 National Conference at $100.

Ms. Pulisciano said this money was taken out of the budget last year.

Mr. Milone said there was $100 for State programs, reduced from $1,100 in this line item.

Ms. Giddings asked about overtime at $650.
This was for the administrative assistant or program person who might have to work over their hours for a fair or night programs and Ms. Pulisciano said that they usually take comp time.

Mr. Sima asked about the Meals on Wheels program going down in cost, and said he hopes it does not decrease this program.

In response, Ms. Pulisciano said this is based on the congregate number of meals but the Meals on Wheels program is still there. These meals are heavy, and many people do not eat this much. The Center is more creative with its lunch program, offering salad and pizza, Chinese food, Subway sandwiches, and other offerings which the seniors like.

Regarding #5203 Supplies and Services at $6,000 increase, Mr. Sima asked if this is because the new vans are not available yet.

Ms. Pulisciano said the increase is because things are sent out to be fixed and Mr. Kaiser is now certified to repair handicapped lifts. More money is spent in town to do repairs and it is less costly. Mr. Kaiser is also certified to do the yearly inspections of the vehicles rather than going to the DOT.

There is a drop in #5208 of $3,500 and Mr. Sima asked if this is because less fuel is being used or fuel costs being lower.

Mr. Milone said this is a direct result of locking in a lower rate for gas, and a proportional decrease was made in all departments. The auto equipment has been under budgeted for a few years; in 2009, $6,400 was spent; and what is paid for is equipment with repairs and maintenance done at the garage.

With the reduction in the programs, Mr. Ruocco asked if this was due to budget decreases, and the senior citizens not being happy with these cuts. He asked about the level of services at the Cheshire Center compared to other towns.

According to Ms. Pulisciano the Cheshire Center’s services and programs are much better and there are more of them. With the reduction in the exercise program, she said the instructors donated their time to the Center.

With establishment of the gift account Mr. Milone said there is a way to handle contributions and they can be used to defray some of the budget cuts. For the computer classes there is a $50 charge per session and sessions are filled and conducted by professional instructors.

Ms. Giddings commented on recently retired people with expertise that could serve the Center.
Ms. Pulisciano said there are fewer professional volunteers than years ago, and most are getting payment for their services.

Mr. Schrumm asked about the three vans being dispatched through the Cheshire Senior Center and how this is done.

The process was explained by Ms. Pulisciano. A person needing a ride calls a day ahead, by 11 a.m., to the dispatcher to schedule the ride. The dispatcher makes the routes for the buses which take people where they need to go, and 3 buses go in 3 different directions. The dispatcher also does the GWTD routes so there is control of the bus schedules. There are now evening hours of transportation offered, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. through GWTD.

Mr. Slocum asked about #5411, Transportation, with payment of $1,500 to GWTD and another $553 for dues.

This is paid through the Jitney Bus Fund and Mr. Milone said the dues come out of the operating budget in case there are not enough funds in the Jitney Fund.

PUBLIC
Ray Squier asked about the bus trips taken in the van, and if they take people to doctors, hospitals, food shopping, and if people are picked up and brought to the Center.

Ms. Pulisciano said the buses take people where they need to go, and also picks them up to go to the Center and returns them to their homes. The number of rides is about 18,000; the number of individual riders is about 1,000 each year, and on a weekly buses, about 35 people are transported by the buses.

COMMUNITY POOL, 237 and 110, Sheila Adams and Bob Ceccolini
Mr. Milone reported that the pool budget is reduced by $49,000; the budget is $895,000; this is $60,000 less than the FY 2007 budget; and most of the reduction is due to the lower costs of natural gas from $232,000 to $190,000.

Mr. Milone commended Ms. Adams for her efficiency in operating the community pool and the building. There are five major areas of cost – natural gas, electricity, construction line item $48,000 (bubble), property maintenance $35,000 and building maintenance $55,000. Other than utilities all major costs have remained constant through the efficiency of Ms. Adams. Mr. Milone noted that the pool is a popular facility and a well operated facility. The programs are very successful and generate an enormous amount of revenue. A new triathlete has come to Cheshire’s facility because of the swimming/teaching expertise of Ms. Adams.

Community Pool – Ms. Adams stated that the new vinyl liner was installed; people comment on how good the pool looks; the interior work of the building
receives rave reviews; and the building is more efficient. The mission is to keep going in the right direction. Ms. Adams invited Council members to come to the pool and see what the pool operating is really like.

The pool facility has $1 days during school vacations and hundreds of people come to the pool. The $1 days are a great marketing tool and many people who attend ask about the membership, seasonal and year round passes, birthday parties and lessons. The swim programs this spring will be the largest ever held. Mr. Chase, the videographer, will be filming pool events for a marketing program, along with a 10 minute interview with Ms. Adams and Mr. Ceccolini, along with photographs and public service announcements. When people sign up for programs, the forms contain a release for photos, etc.

There is a new program at the pool called the Master Swim Team, and 45 people have already signed up, and more are expected. This Master Team wants to hold meets at the Cheshire pool.

For the possible construction cycle, Mr. Slocum asked if there has been consideration given to closure of the pool, cost of rentals for swim teams and programs, etc. and the loss of revenue involved.

Mr. Milone informed the Council there is a matrix, month by month, which shows the revenue flow so the subcommittee on the pool has a framework through which to work. There is also a matrix on the pool activities by month.

Regarding the new gas contract, Mr. Slocum asked about the impact in the coming year.

Page 241, #5303 – Mr. Milone said this shows the reduction in cost form $235,000 to $192,500 and the rates are locked in. For 2011 rates there should be further reductions in natural gas.

Mr. Sima asked about the pressure levels on the bubble when it is windy and how it is done.

Ms. Adams said she just changes the speed on the blowers.

Mr. Sima asked about the possibility of putting a VFD for windy days and lowering the speed.

To her knowledge, Ms. Adams said this has never been brought up and the pressure is lowered on dials outside the building.

Mr. Ceccolini said adjustments are made with the surge protectors for power outages. He will check into the VFD for the blowers.
Mr. Sima asked about the mechanical equipment.

According to Ms. Adams the amount of chlorine has been reduced but the cost of the product has increased. By State law the chlorine level must be kept at 1.0.

Ms. Giddings asked about the telephone line item #5301 at $2,500 noting there were no telephone costs in other department budgets.

Mr. Milone explained that the pool budget was set up as an enterprise fund. If this budget were in the General Fund you would not see this expense. The pool has a stand alone budget with a telephone line item, and all costs associated with the pool, except for debt service, are shown in the pool operating budget. This shows the true cost of operating the community pool.

In line item #5207, $240, Printing, Mr. Milone noted that there was a $2,400 savings through the efforts and collaboration of Ms. Adams, Mr. Ceccolini and Ms. Pilarczyk for the Parks and Rec brochure. Rather than mailing out the brochure it will be on the web site with hard copies available at Town Hall, Cheshire Library, Parks and Rec Department office, and ArtsPlace. A post card will be mailed to residents informing them of the program brochure’s availability. This endeavor resulted in a $16,000 savings, and it is expected to affect participation in programs because people know of their popularity.

Next year the pool subsidy will be $359,000 and Mr. Milone noted it was $455,000 in 2007.

Mr. Ceccolini explained that the pool subsidy is lower this year, and that Ms. Adams has found the best ways to run the facility. For example, she has adjusted the schedule for lifeguards on duty during slower and quieter hours, has increased the efficiency of the building, and there has been a reduction in the cost of natural gas prices.

The idea of collaboration with local gym facilities was raised by Mr. Schrumm, who asked if this has been explored.

Ms. Adams said it has not been explored, and the idea of cross-training is a good one, and she will look into this with the other gym facilities in Town.

With regard to the renovation of the building, Mr. Ceccolini said the cost was about $300,000.

The Council was informed by Ms. Adams that the attic is dry now after the renovations; there is no condensation; there is a vapor barrier; and this is all due to the building renovation. She advised that the rear door has been replaced.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT - 221 AND 58, Bob Ceccolini.
Mr. Milone stated that this budget is going down by $37,000; non-salary items were reduced by $57,000; and the pool subsidy was reduced by $45,370 (page 234). In FY 2006 the subsidy was $455,711, and it is $97,000 lower this year. There has been an effort to bring the department budget down. There is no rolling stock replacement in this budget, and this line item has a zero recommendation this year. Mr. Milone said it may be necessary to put rolling stock for the Town departments into the capital budget. Printing costs have decreased by $4,800. There is money in this budget for the gatehouse at Mixville Park. The Parks and Rec Department budget today is $33,000 less than it was in 2008, and Mr. Ceccolini has maintained the budget at lower levels. $5,000 was reduced from the summer help budget.

Director Ceccolini said he has held the line on the budget, and the fireworks and Camp Nerden are not in this budget. There is usually new equipment requested every year but this year there is no new equipment in the budget. In future years, some equipment will have to be replaced as the current equipment gets older.

Mr. Ceccolini stated that a new John Deere tractor is needed for the department since his crews maintain 6 parks, line and groom all the ball fields throughout the year, and take care of the Town and school fields. A new attachment from last year goes behind the tractor for grooming without using pesticides and herbicides as required by law. All department work must be organized, and the creeper gear on the tractor is needed. There is an organic fertilizing program in place.

Adaptive Program – this year there will be a few weeks of summer camp for this program, and it will be operated on a break even basis. This is the same way all the camps operate. The adaptive program is very popular, and the new director, Barb Costello, is doing a very good job.

The geese patrol is still ongoing.

New fields have been added at Bartlem Park without a request for another maintainer. With the new fields at this park, it will entail redistributing where the crew members work, and a new maintainer may have to be hired in the future. There is a tremendous amount of traffic at the new playground. Bartlem Park is always full with the use of the playground, lacrosse, baseball, pool and skate board park. The department’s programs are very popular, with adjustments made annually, and the summer camps are very popular.

On page 226 there is a breakdown of the summer camps, and the new Adventure Camp will be strictly for 6th graders. There are over 900 kids in the baseball program; and there are 18 teams in the high school intramural basketball program.

Fees – Mr. Ceccolini reported that the fees have not been revisited for several years, and he wants to keep the programs as reasonable as possible. In the
next year the fee schedule should be looked at. With a $10 increase per
program there would be about $15,000 to $20,000 revenue generated.

Regarding the fees, Mr. Adinolfi asked if a kid who cannot pay for a program can
still participate.

Mr. Ceccolini advised that a situation like that would be referred to Human
Services for review, and following this review a letter is sent to the Parks and Rec
Department on how to handle the situation. Almost every time people receive a
discount or no charge, and no one is ever turned away because payment is
difficult. All the sport leagues in Town do the same thing.

The new ball field at Bartlem is completed, and Saturday, March 27th is Field Day
for the parks. The new sod is on the field. Three nights a week the outfield is
used for youth Lacrosse programs.

Ms. Giddings asked about the installation of the camera security system and if
this is funded in the budget. She considers this a good idea.

There is no funding in the budget for the security cameras, but Mr. Ceccolini said
that the Police Department gift account, the Parks and Rec gift account and a
Youth Services grant will be used for the security cameras. The cameras would
cover the playground, fields, bathroom area.

Ms. Giddings questioned the $900 (page 224) for overtime in the budget.

Mr. Ceccolini explained that this is for office staff who must work during
registration time, get everything caught up and put in the books, and for vacation
and sick time coverage. Many times the overtime account is not used.

Account 5210, $200, Computer Training – Ms. Giddings asked for clarification on
this line item.

This is for secretarial training for new software on the Rec Track, and Mr.
Ceccolini explained that the person trained then trains the other staff. The
department takes credit cards, and staff must be trained on the Rec Track
programs. The goal is to have total registration on line.

Mr. Milone stated that the Town is looking to load E-Commerce for registration
and payments on line.

Account 5405, $1,100, Water Cooler – Ms. Giddings asked for clarification on
this line item.

Mr. Ceccolini said this line item is for water coolers in the building and at the
Linear Park.
Mr. Milone stated that the Sustainability Committee is looking to bring water in from the bathrooms.

Account 5502, $1,800, State and National Conference – Ms. Giddings questioned this line item and asked if people go to these conferences.

In reply, Mr. Ceccolini said he or a staff member have gone to these meetings for the last 4 years. There are 5 classes a day for 4 days, and much is learned and brought back to the department.

Ms. Giddings stated her opposition to national conferences this year due to the difficult economic times.

Regarding conferences, Mr. Milone said he tried to be very frugal looking at this line item in the budget, and did not want to cut the training budget back to zero and he was selective. He supports this conference because Mr. Ceccolini does not go every year, but rotates his staff and it is an immense opportunity to expose people to training. Some of the costs in this line item are for State meetings.

Ms. Giddings does not object to State meetings or quarterly meetings, but thinks that we are judged partly by public perception, and this is one area where the belt can be tightened. She understands the value of conferences and sharing information with others.

The cost of the telephones was questioned by Ms. Giddings.

Mr. Ceccolini said that telephones are supplied for the department at the Linear Trail and Mixville, and there are some emergency lines.

Page 231, Account 5105, $28,000, Overtime – Ms. Giddings asked about this line item.

Mr. Ceccolini stated that his crews are called in for overtime for snow removal. They clear all the Town parking lots, clear about 3 miles of sidewalks in Town, clear the Police and Fire Department parking lots, and clear the top half of the Linear Trail. A Parks and Rec Department crew member is on site at the pool during a storm.

It was explained by Mr. Milone that the department has a lot of snow removal responsibility. A few years ago there was an attempt to collaborate more between Parks and Rec and Public Works. It was an inefficient use of time for the trucks and crews. Public Works must clear the roads first, and Parks and Rec handles all the sidewalks and parking lots during a snow storm.
Page 233, Account #5408 – Ms. Giddings noted that the fireworks display still appears in this line item.

Mr. Milone said it should be removed from the description for this line item.

Mr. Schrumm asked about the new field across from Cheshire Park which was a project of Cheshire Youth Baseball.

This is a dead issue at this time and Mr. Ceccolini explained that the large donations were withdrawn due to the economic times. CYB has not given up on this field project. There is a five year time line, and then a five year extension for this project.

At this site, Mr. Schrumm said it is a sandy area, and he suggested excavating this sand and using it for the roads during a snow storm.

Mr. Ceccolini said the design was done, and it took a lot of the top slope and pushed it to the bottom. Milone and MacBroom did the plan for CYB.

Mr. Schrumm asked about some outside group involved with the Cheshire Soccer Club.

According to Mr. Ceccolini the Cheshire Soccer Club combined with Academia and they use our fields at a charge of $2,000 a year. Many Cheshire kids are on these teams and it has helped the soccer program in Town.

Regarding the equipment for the department, Mr. Schrumm suggested using a lawn mowing service since this would not involve any new equipment. This work could be given out to a subcontractor.

This will be looked at, and Mr. Ceccolini informed the Council there has never been a problem with the Parks and Rec union, and a grievance has never been filed. There have been volunteers and private groups doing work on the fields, getting projects done. In other towns the union would file a grievance on this work going outside the department. With regard to coordination between the department and the schools, Mr. Ceccolini said the fields are groomed for the baseball program. However, going further with this is beyond his line of responsibility.

Mr. Milone advised that there has been discussion with Dr. Florio about combined town services, and it may be time to revisit this issue.

For the snow removal work, Mr. Slocum asked if the equipment belongs to the Parks and Rec Department or Public Works.
Mr. Ceccolini said it is Parks and Rec equipment, and is maintained at the Public Works garage.

Mr. Slocum talked about the North End Parklet on Maple Avenue, and noted the vines are holding up the arbor. From a public safety standpoint it is old, and he asked if this falls under the purview of the Parks and Rec Department.

It does fall under the department’s purview and Mr. Ceccolini said he would have a crew member look into it, noting that the vines have been trimmed. Mr. Slocum asked about the storage on the Cheshire Park back field, and moving it out of there.

Part of this pile is the clay for the ball fields and Mr. Ceccolini said most of the debris has been removed.

Mr. Milone stated that the Parks and Rec Department revenue is expected to be $390,000 this year. The Town department revenue data is on page 95.

Mr. Ruocco asked about fees paid by groups using the fields, and how this compares to other towns.

The Council was informed by Mr. Ceccolini that Cheshire groups are not charged at all for use of the fields. Some of these teams have Cheshire kids playing on them. The soccer group uses Quinnipiac Field, and Mr. Ceccolini will get the breakdown from the soccer group on how many hours they are on the fields, and how many Cheshire kids are on these teams. The fees were established 5 or 6 years ago and have not been revisited since that time.

Dog Park – Mr. Schrumm stated that this project is on the agenda of an upcoming Planning Committee meeting. He has a problem with creation of another town owned park. He questioned whether thought has been given to leasing the land to the dog park and have the organization run the park themselves, without any liability for the Town.

Mr. Schrumm asked Mr. Ceccolini to pass along to the crews maintaining the Town Hall, the parklet at St. Peter’s Church, and other parklets appreciation for an excellent job.

**CPFA, 60 and 215. Joann Pilarczyk and Donna Lodinsky.**

Mr. Milone stated that this budget increases by $9,200. The non-salary area is up due to an increase in the program materials by $500, and program services by $1,800. These are the main accounts for the operation of Arts Place, and the operation is material intensive due to all the activity. There is a recommendation for an increase of 6 hours per week for the part time person at a cost of $3,700 (page 216). The increase in hours would free up the director to do things she must do and not clerical functions. The office is very busy, there is cash on hand,
receipts cannot be processed faster, and with the extra hours the clerk can move cash to the bank and get registrations to Town Hall.

Ms. Pilarczyk read remarks into the record, stating that Arts Place is an asset to Cheshire, and people coming to the facility also eat and shop in Cheshire. The mission of the CPFA Committee is to promote the arts in Cheshire. Fine art classes are run year round, serving people from pre-k to adults. The winter session had 29 classes, 17 professional artists, 226 students, and generated $26,000 in revenue. Last year Arts Place generated $96,000 in revenue. The Youth Theater program is held at Arts Place.

Operation of the art school with a small staff is difficult. In the budget, the clerk will have 6 more hours, is paid $12 per hour, and the position is not eligible for benefits. The director is scheduled to work 32 hours a week. There are gaps in staffing because the evening clerk cannot arrive until 6 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. so daytime working hours are split and someone is alone in the office. Ms. Pilarczyk said that another staff person is needed, and 5 hours more were requested for the secretary. Arts Place is using the Munis System. Staff working overtime receive comp time. The expense for another staff person can be covered by an increase in revenue. Ms. Pilarczyk asked the Council to consider her request for 5 more hours per week to 30 hours. She can apply for grants, offer additional programs such as the Famous Artist Workshop and document programs which will bring recognition to Arts Place.

Arts Place sponsors the Arts Field program which sends teachers to homebound Cheshire residents. There is a Friends 501(c) 3 group which helps Arts Place. There is teaming up with colleagues in Town such as the Library, working on the Second Children’s Art Challenge, high school internship program, cards to the Senior Center, professional development workshops with introduction of the art programs to Town employees.

The 22nd Arts Day was held recently with 675 people in attendance. Ms. Pilarczyk shared photographs taken at Arts Day with the Council. The CPFA budget is .001% of the total operating budget.

Ms. Pilarczyk commented on Arts Place working on the John Frederick Kenset program. She displayed a photograph which will be reproduced life sized through the gift account at a cost of $1,000 to be hung in the Town Hall lobby.

Ms. Pilarczyk requested the Town Council to give consideration to the Arts Place budget which is .001% of the operating budget.

In looking at the budget, Mr. Schrumm said that $96,000 in revenue was generated, with spending of $153,000.

Ms. Pilarczyk said she hopes to bring in more revenue in the next fiscal year.
A question was raised by Mr. Schrumm regarding “bartering” and if this has been considered, i.e. a volunteer works at Arts Place and receives free classes.

This is a consideration, but Ms. Pilarczyk explained that for someone to use the Town computers, they must be a Town employee. A volunteer could not do registration on E-Commerce, and must be familiar with the classes and teachers.

Ms. Lodinsky said Arts Place would like to have a full time volunteer coordinator to relieve the tasks done by Ms. Pilarczyk.

Ms. Giddings asked about the breakdown between residents and non-residents and if everyone is charged the same fee.

In response, Ms. Pilarczyk advised that non-residents pay an extra $10 for a class. In some of the sessions the classes had up to 30% non-residents.

Ms. Giddings asked about the maximum number of cars in the parking lot at Arts Place.

Ms. Pilarczyk stated that she does not want to share the parking lot with the dog park people. The parking lot is full most of the time, and at times people park on the grass.

The Council was informed by Ms. Lodinsky that the money raised at Arts Day will fund the CPFA scholarship to a high school senior who will pursue a career in the Arts.

4. ADJOURNMENT

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

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk