MINUTES OF THE JOINT TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 15, 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; Michael Ecke. Town Council members Justin Adinolfi, Anne Giddings, Andrew Falvey, James Sima, Timothy White. Absent: Thomas Ruocco. Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Patti Lynn Ryan, Finance Director; Arnett Talbot, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and FOI Officer; Superintendent of Schools Dr. Greg Florio; Gerry Brittingham, BOE Chairman; BOE Members Tod Dixon, Anthony Perugini, Peter Massey.

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 FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET.

Mr. Milone stated that in the past he has made minor reductions in the Board of Education (BOE) budget which affected non-program issues. Last year and this year he did not feel there was any room to further reduce any of the insurance accounts so the BOE budget was recommended to the Council as it was sent to him by the BOE.

Dr. Florio stated that the BOE recommended budget is a step beyond his recommendation, and Town Manager Milone has put together a reasonable and fair budget for the community. Dr. Florio has concerns about the impact of the budget on education programming. He requested the Town Council support the BOE budget because of its importance to the community.

A question was posed to the BOE members present at the meeting with Mr. Schrumm asking about cuts made to the budget and why they were made.

Tod Dixon, BOE member, reported that the BOE cut almost all discretionary accounts to as small a number as possible, and non-specific staff reductions. He said there are many things in the budget over which the BOE has no control, such as heat, utilities and medical benefits. 80% of the budget is staff costs, and any further reduction from the BOE budget will be in staffing.

It was noted by Mr. Schrumm that from Dr. Florio’s original budget, $1.8 million is staff and medical benefits.
Mr. Dixon advised that the budget also has workers comp, insurance and other benefits which go along with the salary accounts.

Mr. Schrumm said that the reductions were everything else, but no salary or benefits.

There was a $939,000 reduction in salary and benefit items, and Mr. Dixon said discretionary items included travel and training. He noted there are not many discretionary things left in the BOE budget.

The long term substitute account has a $100,000 increase from the FY2009 budget and Mr. Schrumm questioned why long term substitutes are needed.

It was explained by Dr. Florio that for long term substitutes the payment is at the teacher rate and not the substitute rate. The difficulty is in predicting how many long term substitute teachers will be needed, and 1 or 2 of them will eat up this account. The pool for short term substitute teachers has been controlled by using interns in the class rooms.

For the custodian account and student help, Dr. Florio advised that last year the BOE went to an outside cleaning service rather than using its own staff. During the summer months students are hired to do some of the grounds work and inside work in order to get everything completed before school starts. This money could be shifted into the contracted services account.

According to Mr. Schrumm the medical benefits trust account is the problem on the Town and BOE side this year.

The Council was informed by Dr. Florio that the BOE has done everything possible in the last few years to encumber money through expenditure freezes and other actions and put this money into the medical benefits trust fund to offset the insurance costs. The BOE began the year with $1.2 million in the trust fund, and as of the end of January it was down to $650,000.

Because of interest earnings the starting balances are slightly higher. The Town’s medical benefits trust fund began the year with $523,000 and at the end of January it was down to $106,000. The BOE started with $1.256 million and it is now at $664,000. Mr. Milone stated that documents show claims history by the month for both the BOE and Town, and the three year averages.

In the last few years, Dr. Florio said that trends are higher at the start of the year versus the end of the year, and February’s claims were a little better than expected. These are the months Anthem is using to develop projected future costs, and bad claims months affect this cost. The BOE will contribute $525,000
for the months of February through June to the trust fund, along with the retiree
direct pays (January to June) of $240,000.
Regarding the BOE contributions to the fund, Mr. Schrumm asked if there will be
additional contributions made to the fund.

Dr. Florio said he would be making this recommendation with the BOE, but he is
not sure of the amount of the contribution. If actual claims are higher than
expected, the increase must be built off of that.

Retiree claims are also paid from the BOE medical trust fund and Mr. Schrumm
said the retirees pay their own premiums under the allocation plan.

Under State law, Dr. Florio said the retirees can continue under the plan to age
65 when they are eligible for Medicare, and the State does offset their allocation
by a small amount. In terms of un-funded mandates, the BOE is self funded and
group rates are lower than the claims and the BOE is liable for the difference.
The older group members do have higher claims.

Mr. White said there is an annual C.N.R. account and recurring capital projects
fund where there is some play room.

Stating his disagreement with Mr. White’s comment, Dr. Florio said there is the
annual C.N.R. fund which is part of the capital budget. The special fund set up
by the Council for the BOE was for emergency repairs and maintenance.

The teacher’s salary increase from 1 ½ years ago was raised by Mr. Schrumm,
who asked if the BOE has tried to negotiate something to reduce the impact of
this contract on the budget. He stated there were no concessions.

According to Dr. Florio there were a series of discussions with the teacher’s
union representatives beginning in the Fall regarding this issue. He began them
knowing full well where it was heading. Dr. Florio expressed his concern about
FY 2011 and even more concerned about the 2012 budget.

Dr. Florio stated that his conversations with the teachers union was to look at
some way to moderate the costs over the next two years to address, on a longer
term basis, these issues. It was agreed to involve BOE members and Town
Councilors, since any decisions to be made would be made by these bodies. A
number of meetings were held. Dr. Florio said that one side would characterize
these conversations as producing some potential options and the other side
would present there were no viable option. Dr. Florio did feel strongly, and it
was expressed very strongly by him and those representing the political bodies
that what was needed was something to reduce costs. What was proposed by
the union was something that would defer costs. The union has brought forward
to the membership the concept of promissory days, which would be a reduction
of a certain number of days without pay in 2011, but those days would be paid
interest free at some point in the future. Also discussed was what other issues would come along with that. The union was willing to look at marketing the Health Savings Accounts (HAS) as a way to reduce costs. The BOE wanted to consider making the HSA mandatory. Dr. Florio said he is considering having discussions with the union representatives, keeping the lines of dialogue open. At this point the only offer on the table is the promissory days which would reduce costs this year but incur costs at some point in the future. The other issue which Dr. Florio said he would have is if there were other stipulations which came with this offer, i.e. if this is done teachers cannot be laid off or staff cannot be reduced. The discussions never got to that point. Dr. Florio is certain that any concession would have some issues or concerns which the union would want considered. Deferring the cost to a future budget did not seem reasonable so formal conversations on this issue have stopped.

With regard to the promissory days, Mr. Schrumm asked if these would be days without pay.

Dr. Florio said it would be a reduction of three days working without pay with payment sometime in the future. He did not feel it was beneficial to encumber a future budget.

Mr. Slocum stated that to the teachers union’s credit they did come forward with something, and it should be characterized as welcomed, but it was not felt to be supporting the overall need. Another thing which was stated was that the union did not want to open their contract, so this would make it difficult to bargain with.

This has been a contentious issue and Dr. Florio said if you asked any attorney representing the BOE, their argument would be two sides could agree to discuss a specific portion of the contract, and only that portion, and it would not have the entire contract be opened. If you fall back on the concept of mid-stream bargaining, which is defined in the law, it could be subject to mediation or arbitration. But, on this type of negotiation, one side said it would look at a salary change, but it would not allow it to be subject to mediation or arbitration, this could be agreed to. There is a difference of opinion on how things can proceed. The local union is being advised by its legal counsel that if there is any discussions about changing the contract, it would, in effect, be opening up the entire contract.

Mr. Slocum said that the Council and BOE people did enter the conversation hoping that there would be a shared sacrifice. There was a genuine feeling that there should be. He also stated that the attitude of the union leadership this year is better than last year.

Dr. Florio will continue to have conversations with the union leadership. He does want to make this work without impacting programs with this budget. The BOE has not decided how the first $1 million will be reduced, but there will be program
and staff reductions. A change to the contract which would be financially beneficial would mitigate these impacts. According to Mr. Schrumm the local union is under pressure from the State union not to give in anywhere because if it one town gives in it spreads to other towns. In his 15 years of working on Cheshire budgets, Mr. Schrumm said this is the first time he is worried about the financial future of the Town. He does not see the economy bouncing back. This year there was a $260,000 increase in the grand list which is very small. There is concern about going backwards. There is the State aid reduction of about $450,000, and everything else is out of the pockets of local taxpayers. He cannot see telling people in the next 5 to 10 years that their local taxes will increase 5% to 10%. The question is what will happen next year when the stimulus money runs out.

Mr. Schrumm stated that the Council has started discussion on many things to be wrestled with, such as the medical benefits trust fund, VEBA, BOE retirees, heart and hypertension, pension fund and many other issues.

It was stated by Mr. Falvey that with the number forwarded to the Town Council by the BOE, some reductions will be people. He asked if the BOE and Dr. Florio had any idea of the range of the number of people that might be involved, a break out between certified and non-certified staff and program changes.

Dr. Florio said his speculation is that it would probably be between 10 and 15 teachers, trimming in the areas of technology, reduction of classroom teachers on all levels, changes in extra curricular activities (music, athletics, clubs and activities) at both the middle and high schools.

Dr. Florio cannot recommend to the BOE a budget that would impact instruction or special education, and not impact extra curricular activities. There would be some reduction in support staff. Last year 17 teaching positions were cut; 12 to 15 support staff were terminated (IA’s, secretaries, custodians and the like). There would probably be reductions in supplies, text materials, equipment, technology and trimming things back to what the district could live with. If there is a cutback in investing in technology, the district will pay for it down the road and it will be more costly. Many of these areas have been cut back to bare bones and there is not much money left to be cut. Dr. Florio said that all grade levels would be impacted.

Regarding the retirees, Mr. Falvey asked if Dr. Florio had an idea of the number of retirees for this year.

At this time, Dr. Florio has two letters of intention to retire, one is in the guidance department. If a position is eliminated for someone who is retiring the savings is about $85,000. Elimination of a position of a classroom teacher it is about $40,000 and payment of unemployment is involved. Last year there was a retirement incentive with 12 retirees, and the highest number in the district has
been 17 or 18 people. It was noted by Dr. Florio that the number of potential retirees is shrinking every year. Right now 50% of staff is at the top step compared to 73% a few years ago. Cheshire has a younger and less experienced staff now, and there are fewer people in the window of retirement age.

Mr. Slocum asked about the $2 million hole for next year with $1 million coming out of stimulus and $1 million salary increase, and this is talking about possibly 30 positions.

The State’s aid to municipalities is federal stimulus money, and Dr. Florio said about $1.5 million of the ECS funding on the revenue side is stimulus money which goes away in 2011. The federal government sent to the state in the Individuals with Disabilities Act $1 million, with $500,000 to be used every year for two years. In the grant budget, which is not part of the operating budget, this money will be gone at the end of next year. In terms of revenue there is $1.5 million at risk; with grants there is $500,000 at risk; and there are the contractual costs as well.

Regarding the guidance counselors, Mr. White asked what percentage of time they spend on class scheduling.

It was explained by Dr. Florio that guidance counselors meet with individual students. The actual development of the schedule is not a guidance department function, and is done automatically. This year students selected their courses through the automated system, Power School, which is a very interactive resource for teachers, students and parents.

Going out the next two years, Mr. Schrumm asked about any long term things being looked at by the Superintendent.

In response, BOE member Dixon stated that the BOE has not gotten to that level of detail, and is waiting to hear back from the Council in order to know the magnitude of what it is dealing with.

Stating he was troubled by that, Mr. Schrumm said the trend lines on what is going on with state and town finances have been there for all to see for a few years. He encouraged the BOE to think about this.

BOE member Perugini asked if the Council is looking for the worst case scenario other than what would be put forward by the BOE. The Board has had long discussions on the numbers submitted knowing there was an impact on programs. The BOE will have to go back and look at the next 2 to 3 years.

There are three revenue sources which the BOE must keep in mind, and Mr. Schrumm said they are growth in the grand list and he does not see this
increasing. The state aid well has run dry, and the last is the local property tax
payers.
BOE member Massey stated he has been through many BOE budgets for the
last 5 or 6 years, and the Board has requested a meeting between its Finance
Committee and the Council Budget Committee to find out where we are going,
collectively. The BOE and Council need to work together so people have a view
of where the school district will be in 3 to 10 years into the future. The two
groups may not agree philosophically on many things, but must understand
where we are going financially. The BOE needs guidance and raw numbers to
make ideas and thoughts and know the worst case projections to make it easier
for the Board. Mr. Massey said the bigger picture is how this town looks at
education 3 to 10 years out, and he is not sure there is an answer at this point.

Mr. Slocum stated that Cheshire will have to “right size” its education community
for the future. This may mean redistricting, losing one elementary school, putting
kindergarten, first and second grades together. The BOE must figure this out
and the public must be prepared for it. Next year the BOE may have to decide
which school to close.

Gerry Brittingham, BOE Chairman, informed the Council he has had discussions
with Supt. Florio on this year’s budget and next year’s budget. Mr. Brittingham
will ask Dr. Florio to prepare a budget based on the following – elimination of all
department head positions at the high school; elimination of all hallway monitors
as the contract allows for duty periods; a minimum 25% reduction in stipend
positions across the board; 25% reduction in all extra curricular activities across
the board; closing Chapman School. According to Mr. Brittingham, redistricting
will not save any position. To make the money work a school must be closed.
Positions to be eliminated would include administrative, teachers, instructional
assistants, maintenance…all across the board. He has also discussed with Dr.
Florio the combination of other things. Since the town owns the school buildings,
he questions why we are running two maintenance staffs, two payroll
departments, and who handles things better. The school buildings are town
buildings and Mr. Brittingham said the last thing the BOE and Dr. Florio should
be concerned with are heating systems, boilers, maintenance, etc. It was stated
by Mr. Brittingham that he and Dr. Florio disagree on a number of the things
being cited.

Mr. Brittingham asked the Council if it is giving the BOE a zero budget increase.
Council Chairman Slocum stated “no”, it is not being thought of that way.

Ms. Giddings noted that the Town and BOE already collaborate in the area of
technology. What is being talked about is an extension of this type of
collaboration.
Dr. Florio stated that it has always been said that if the Town side and BOE each have two people doing a job, you put them together, and you still need four people. It does not make it any more efficient. The collaboration of efforts has been looked at many, many times.

BOE Chairman Brittingham stated that the BOE is looking at everything.

Mr. White said his top concern is the long term liabilities such as OPEB, sewer plant upgrade, etc. When it comes to things like deferring costs in the union contract or artificial turf at the high school, there are long term liabilities involved. He is not comfortable going down the path of bringing on long term liabilities until there is a clear understanding of the funding.

Stating he understands the BOE is painting a bleak picture, Dr. Florio said for the last 19 years we do the budget process every year. The town has managed to keep its eye on the future, and is in a better financial position relative to other municipalities. He would not want to do anything that would be taking a long view and have the short term issues dictate that an issue did not have to take place.

Dr. Florio hopes that with a better economy, better teachers’ contract, etc. things will change. He understands we must have an eye to the future, and said that Cheshire has done a good job of making sure that future issues are taken care of and addressing immediate needs in the annual budget process. We cannot be short sighted either and cut too much because we are afraid of where we will be 3 or 4 years from now.

It was stated by Dr. Florio that education is an investment and expectation in the Cheshire community. He believes we have an obligation to the students and families to provide the best services possible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
Jim Bernain said he is shocked that the BOE would make a $1 million cut without outlining exactly what the $1 million cut will have on the Superintendent’s budget. People make phone calls to Councilors because they do not understand what the impact of the cut will be. Before going to public hearing on the budget, the BOE should outline exactly what the $1 million cut will be on Dr. Florio’s budget. In this way people in town will understand the impact on the number of teachers, class sizes, band, athletics, etc. Then, the Council should be told what the impact would be if they cut more money from the BOE budget. This will enable people to make a logical decision to support the Council’s efforts to cut more, or come forward and say there should be no cuts and the BOE budget should be left as is. Mr. Bernain moved to Cheshire because of its great schools even though he has no children in the system. He supports the school system because it supports the property values. To think about a reduction in the grand list or schools closing down affects property values. He asked the BOE to give a
clear definition of the cuts to be made, additional cuts, so people can make an informed and logical decision. If $400,000 is cut, the impact must be defined and people should be informed so that they do not make guesses.

Ray Squier stated that we are talking about a $1 million cut, and with this budget we are still spending $1 million a week on education in this $60 million budget. People should realize this and there should be some balance.

Mr. Slocum asked about last year’s budget cut which resulted in retirements.

Dr. Florio explained that positions were eliminated, but there were no layoffs due to the retirements, leaves of absence of resignations.

Last year’s cuts were dispersed throughout the school system and Mr. Slocum said they were not necessarily noticed on a grand scale, although there was an impact. This year we have a high level of staffing positions and they will be impacted. The BOE and Town Council know this, and next year there will be more extreme cuts. It will be challenging unless there is a higher tax levy.

Mr. Ecke asked Dr. Florio about this year’s lower spending increase from prior years, and the BOE cut $1 million from his budget. He asked for the effect in the classroom if 20 teachers are gone, how it affects students, test scores, etc.

In response, Dr. Florio said that to speculate across grade levels is difficult. He cited an example of a teacher with 20 students, with one hour for writing, part of the hour requires that teacher conference with individual students on their writing. With 25 students, fewer minutes would be allowed for individual conferencing. This is one of the impacts. There are mandates to include all students in the classroom setting. Classrooms with more students has behavioral issues which are magnified and more support or attention is needed, either from an administrator or special education staff. There would be fewer elective courses at the high school; more students in all classes at the high school; and Dr. Florio could not speculate on the results of test scores.

With the zero percent increase budget a few years ago, Mr. Ecke stated that freshman sports were eliminated, and this will be on the table again.

Dr. Florio could not state specifically what activities would be affected. The fee for extra curricular activities has been imposed again this year.

Mr. Dixon commented on the course requirements for high school graduation, and all these students cannot just go to a study hall.

With the reauthorization of ESCA and the State increasing the number of credits required for graduation, Cheshire is in a good position. There may be some impact on the high school in this regard.
With regards to the BOE being more specific, Mr. Brittingham said that with the budget, the date for teachers submission of retirement letters is August, up to the day before school starts. All the funding numbers are not received until part way through the budget year. With regard to talks with the teachers’ union, they brought up the HSA and deferred days. Dr. Florio proposed one year’s wage increase spread out over two years. This was the concession proposal to the union. This got to the point of trying to figure out an equitable way to make this work. The union leadership brought up the HSA and deferred days. Opening up the contract was never the intent of the Board and was never brought up by any Board member or the Superintendent. Each meeting started within one minute or two with the union stating they would not open up the contract.

Mr. Schrumm stated that whatever is going to happen in the school system over the next 12 months will not be based on the Town Council and Board of Education, but on the union leadership who insisted on the 4.4% contract increases over three years in an economy that is not producing this wealth. He said everyone knew that this three year contract was not sustainable by all parties, and he will not tax the citizens of Cheshire to pay for this contract.

Dr. Florio stated that the teachers’ union cannot fix the entire problem. He said there are other costs and other issues driving this budget, and from the start he said this required sacrifices from all parties.

Mr. Brittingham noted that this has been said at all the meetings with the union leadership…shared sacrifices.

Mr. Ecke commented that with David Schrumm versus the union, the children lose.

Mr. Falvey said that with the union against everyone else in town, the children lose.

If one party to the situation is holding up the BOE and Council from making the best decision possible, Dr. Florio said the children are penalized.

**PUBLIC**

Sue Zentak asked about the turf field and if the Town is going ahead with a final vote to put the shovel in the ground.

Mr. Schrumm said the Council has not even touched on this issue.

Ms. Zentak said that if the Council and BOE come together to find $500,000, this could be redirected and save 10 teachers.

This is an allocated grant with the State donating $500,000.
Mr. Schrumm explained that the State borrowed the $500,000 for this turf grant.

Ms. Giddings commented on this grant being very specific and it must be spent to put artificial turf at the high school field.

**TOWN COUNCIL, pages 78 and 1, 2, 3. Arnett Talbot.**
Ms. Talbot reported that this budget increases by $595, or 1.4%. There is an increase in contractual services for the CH 14 producer and videographer and money for U-Verse. The department is trying to introduce small but stated savings in accounts such as advertising and training, taking advantage of efficiencies in equipment with new copiers and evaluation of how things are done. The costs for public hearings has been reduced to 1 1/3 pages with savings of up to $1,000. There is expanded use of the web site which has helped provide information to the public.

In the 5409 account there is a balance of $9,000.

Survey Monkey is a citizen feedback survey posted on the web site at a cost of $300 a year and it provides specific feedback on everything and anything. More and more people are using the web site. The Survey Monkey gets a few responses each week. The Town is working on an upgrade to the web site.

U-Verse $1,000 fee will be the cost to the Town with AT&T paying for the equipment. AT&T will reimburse the Town and schools up to $15,000 each. There must be an agreement with AT&T which the Town Attorney will review. Once the agreement is approved the Town can solicit proposals from private vendors. The agreement will be submitted to AT&T for a recommendation, and the Town makes the purchase, bills AT&T for the portion they will cover. AT&T will pay for the T-1 lines service fee, and Cheshire has most of the wiring in place already with installation of the new phone lines.

Ms. Talbot said we may have to look at a bid waiver if the costs exceed $12,000. If the work can be done sooner than later, the money will be found and the project moved forward. She expects the project to be completed by the end of the summer. There is no ongoing monthly fee to AT&T by the Town. The only additional cost to the Town will be for staff to broadcast on U-Verse. The Town will have to get permits on some of the music and there are issues to be worked out with Cox.

All equipment for CH 14 is under the 5603 line item.

With regard to the producer/videographer, Mr. White suggested that this person become a Town employee rather than a consultant.
Mr. Milone stated he did not want to go this route. The Town is working with the BOE on technology upgrades, using the high school students and studio for Town interviews and features on CH 14.

PUBLIC
Gary Darter stated that the Council should lead, and he commented on the budget line item of $1900 for refreshments for meetings. He believes this should be removed from the budget.

Ray Squier commented on the fact that the Councilors arrive at Town Hall between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. without having dinner, and he supports this expense.

Mr. Milone advised that this line item was reduced by $1,300 with meetings starting at 6:30 p.m. but it could be reduced further.

TOWN MANAGER, pages 5-9 and 74-75, Arnett Talbot
Ms. Talbot reported that this budget increases by $,1692 or 0.45%, and this budget is lower than the FY 2008-09 budget.

The Town Manager’s office works diligently to expand technology and communication efforts and the web site is being used more and more. Video streaming has also been introduced. Posting of agendas and minutes takes a lot of time for Ms. Talbot. There is ongoing improvement of the quality of material being sent out from the office. The budget books are an example of this effort, and continue to receive awards from GFOA. With the new Munis software system there is a reduction in the amount of time spent to produce documents. With e-copy software there is integration of Excel, Word, Munis, PDS, and Document.

Mr. Milone commended Ms. Talbot on her work to understand and integrate all the technology and software. Comparing this year’s budget books to last year’s there is a noticeable change in the quality of everything, along with the ability to integrate the accounting software.

Ms. Giddings brought up the concerns about overtime which she said is having a significant increase, and cited numbers for overtime costs. She has a bias when she sees a large amount of overtime and believes this is due to lack of planning, noting that sometimes things take longer to be done.

Regarding the numbers cited by Ms. Giddings, the actual numbers were cited by Mr. Milone. 2002 – $16,000; 2006 - $26,000. He noted there is always ample opportunity to economize and reduce costs, and overtime has been reduced by $12,000 in about 5 years. The $26,000 in 2006 was earned at 2006 dollars which is about 15% lower than today’s wage scale. There are four people in the department. Much of the overtime is due to the success of Ms. Talbot being
efficient. Each day the Town Manager’s office plans the day and in 15 minutes the plan is interrupted because this office is the focal point for the public and everyone who works for the Town. At least one department needs help each day from the Town Manager’s staff. The best work is done after 4 p.m. and Mr. Milone said he needs someone there to work with him and get out the door what must be done. Ms. Talbot now uses flex time, coming in later in the morning and stays until at least 6 p.m.

The web site is a nightmare and Ms. Talbot is the main stay of the web site for every department. Much of her day is spent updating the web site.

Ms. Talbot informed the Council that 3 people can publish, and posting on the web site is considerable and there are statutory requirements for the web site which must be carefully monitored.

The State continues to mandate towns, and the new requirement is for all agenda and meeting minutes to be on the web site. Ms. Talbot must do this work to meet these statutory requirements. Without meeting these requirements, people call to complain and there could be an FOI complaint filed along with lawsuits. The Council is now receiving most of its documents via e-mail which saves time and money.

Mr. Schrumm noted that overtime in 2006 was $26,000, and for FY 2010-11 it is down to $12,000.

Mr. Slocum commented on the fact that if the Council decided not to pay overtime of $12,000, and give the Town Manager’s office another person, this would cost much more.

In an effort to show where taxpayers receive benefits, Mr. White said that $50,000 is one more teacher in the classroom; overtime in the Police Department is $25,000. He recommended elimination of the position of Personnel Manager/Assistant Town Manager.

Mr. Milone explained to the Council that his predecessor hired a law firm to negotiate labor contracts at a cost of $50,000, and now the Personnel Director does this work.

Mr. Milone informed the Council he would not be taking a salary increase this year, and has reduced the conference line item to $1,700. He will not be attending the ICMA conference next year.

It was stated by Mr. Schrumm that the Town Manager’s budget is less than it was two years ago, and the department is doing more with services to the Council and the public. He also said that much of what is done in Town goes through the Town Manager’s office and he suggested spreading this knowledge around.
Ms. Giddings asked whether there is a built-in minimal salary increase for non-union staff.

This has been built-in, and Mr. Milone said it is the same as for union employees.

**TOWN ATTORNEY, page 81 and pages 11-12**

Ms. Talbot submitted a spread sheet to the Councilors on the legal fees.

Ms. Talbot advised that this budget has a zero increase. Most of the increases in FY 08-09 were the result of lawsuits (ASADI, Connecticut Combustion, Barite Mines, CRRA and other lawsuits at various steps) being defended by legal counsel. Connecticut Combustion fees, year to date, FY 09-10 the legal fees are already at $28,087. For some of the cases the defense may be from the insurance company, but in some of the cases they will be defended by Murtha, Cullina.

On the WPCA line, Mr. Slocum commented on the high number, stating that the December number could be a two month billing cycle.

For the WPCA meetings, Mr. Schrumm said that the Chairman looks at the agenda and determines whether or not someone from the Town Attorney’s office should be in attendance. He suggested that this be further scrutinized.

Mr. Milone has discussed this with the Chairman, and it is more of a comfort situation with him.

With regard to meeting with the Town Attorney, Mr. Milone said he does not meet with him unless there is a critical matter, and he comes to Town Hall less frequently, about once every three months. Department heads will not call the Town Attorney without approval from the Town Manager. The Town Attorney is very sensitive to the costs of legal fees for the town, and will not waste the Town’s money or time.

Mr. White said the Town Manager looks to the Town Council for guidance and the Council makes a judgment call. He asked what the retainer is for the Town Attorney.

Ms. Talbot stated the retainer is $17,850 monthly. Sometimes things are covered under the retainer and they could be specific to a department. General items deal with the Town Manager’s office or when Councilors contact the Town Attorney directly.

Mr. Milone reported that the BOE is pleased with Attorney Dugas and the Town Attorney’s law firm, Murtha, Cullina.
In FY 2008-09 the actual appropriation for the Town Attorney was $367,584, and in FY 2010-11, the appropriation is $301,000.

Mr. Milone stated that Attorney Johnson has taken on some specialties which the Town would have to contract out, such as the barite mine lawsuit.

Ms. Talbot informed the Council that Murtha, Cullina is extremely helpful and knowledgeable.

In an emergency situation, a department head can call the Town Attorney, but Mr. Milone said that usually they go through him before making the call.

**PUBLIC**

Mike O’Donnell asked about the legal fees associated with the Strathmore Dam issue, and if the Town is reimbursed for them.

The Town paid for these fees, and Mr. Milone said it will not be reimbursed.

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT,** pages 62 and 73

This is a status quo budget and Mr. Milone advised that the clerk/typist hours were cut back from 30 to 25 per week, and the Zoning Enforcement Officer’s hours will be cut back to 10 hours a week. The department is trying to reduce overtime costs. The ZEO plays an important role in the department, and goes out and reviews and makes inspections when zoning issues are reported.

The revision of the Plan of Conservation and Development will be done in-house. Much time and effort must be devoted to updating this Plan. Staff works with the Planning and Zoning Commission on the Plan update. The department will be hiring a new Assistant Town Planner who will work with PZC on the Plan.

Mr. Slocum expressed concern about the Plan being the sole issue for hiring an Assistant Town Planner.

It was stated by Mr. Schrumm when the Assistant Town Planner position was added there was more development going on in Town and the office was very busy. Regarding the ZEO duties he asked why the Environmental Planner could not do this work, or the Assistant Town Planner. He said the last Plan of Conservation and Development was done in segments and took a few years. He does not see this revision taking that long.

Similar to the Personnel Director’s position, Mr. White suggested deferring the hiring of the Assistant Town Planner for 6 months to January 2011.

Mr. Milone said he understand she variation of options, and will pursue what can be done to save money, but he does not want to paralyze the Planning Department.
Ms. Giddings commented on the overtime cost at $8,000.

The Council was informed by Mr. Milone that the Planning Department is staff to many boards and commissions which meet at night. Some boards have reduced the number of meetings. There are also wetlands visits on weekends which require staff attendance and this is an overtime cost.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, pages 44 and 83**
Mr. Milone reported that this is a status quo budget. Mr. Sitko has requested reinstatement of “Business Appreciation Day” at a cost of $750. This event is held at Elim Park and is a nice recognition of the business community.

**BUILDING INSPECTION, pages 42 and 139.**
This budget has a 3% increase in the salary line item. Inspectors are out every day for rehabs, additions, pools, etc. catching up on test work, and people doing work with a permit.

Mr. Schrumm asked about consolidation of operations in this department with any other Town department.

In response, Mr. Milone said this is a unique department with unique responsibilities.

Mr. Schrumm asked that the inspectors be reminded to check for sump pumps when inspecting a house.

In that regard, Mr. Milone said the inspectors have been very conscious about this issue, but he will remind them again.

**BUILDING DEPARTMENT, pages 42 and 139**
The budget increases by just over 3%, which is exclusively in salaries.

This department is self sustaining and Mr. Milone said the revenue was $307,000. There are ancillary services which are not shown in the budget book. They work with the Fire Marshal, Traffic Division, Town Engineer’s office and Planning and Zoning Department.

With regard to building fees, Mr. Milone would like to review all the fees, when they were last increased and what they are now.

Natural Gas Issue – Mr. Milone explained that he has learned of new blended rates for FY 11-12 and 12-13, and the Council must re-approve the rates to the upper limit. There will be a resolution at the March 16th meeting.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**
MOTION by Mr. Schrumm; seconded by Ms. Giddings.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk