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TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
FY 2019-2020 BUDGET WORKSHOP
Town Council Chambers
April 8, 2019
RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Special Town Council Meeting on Monday, April 8, 2019 was called to order at 6:02 P.M. There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were: Chairman Vincent Cervoni (left at 7:05 P.M.), Craig Fishbein, Thomas Laffin, John LeTourneau, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Gina Morgenstein (arrived at 7:21 P.M.) and Jason Zandri. Christopher K. Shortell and Vincent F. Testa were absent. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr., and Comptroller James Bowes were also present at the meeting.

1. Moment of Silence
2. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call
3. **PUBLIC HEARING:**

Mayor Dickinson opens with the following statement:

The backdrop is the grand list. He indicated an increase of 1.19% which at the current mill rate raised revenue by 1,400,000. The general government request for 2019-2020 totals over 7.3 million dollars. He feels there is a gap there that the public cannot afford. The Governor's current budget proposal has a revenue loss to the town of \$900,000. A recent bond sale created a decrease in our bond rating, and the sewer usage rates will be going up for businesses and residential homes.

The Mayor has concerns that the utilities have either stayed stagnant or declined in the last few years but now will increase. He indicated a .55 mill increase is in this year's budget to sustain our service and he hopes to all work together.

Chairman Cervoni reviewed how the evening will proceed.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

*In Attendance: Dr. Salvatore Menzo, Superintendent, Board of Education
Roxane McKay, Chair, Board of Education
Dominic Barone, Business Manager*

Bob Gross, Long Hill Road, commented that the size of administration seems to be growing.

Dr. Menzo stated it seems to be growing in curriculum and we need it. He went on to state we have subsidized funding with grants.

Mr. Gross commented that with the enrollment going down, the cost of running two high schools must be high.

Dr. Menzo indicated they are getting ready to do a town-wide survey including the two middle schools.

Tammy Raccio, 120 Chimney Hill Road, spoke on the bill that is in Hartford that states every student must have a seat on the bus even though many kids will never be on the bus.

Dr. Menzo stated it would help for the town to save money if we could get that money back.

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, indicated demographics are stagnant and student population has declined by 13% and asked how we reduce costs.

Dr. Menzo explained what gets glossed over is our community is much more diverse in that special needs is much higher, 43 languages are now spoken in Wallingford and there is a large transient population in which some children who have special needs do not spend the whole school year with us.

Mr. Ciardullo stated we cannot sustain an increase every year in the Board of Education budget.

Dr. Menzo said they started at over a 3% increase and whittled it down so we are able to try and get it down.

Mr. Comerford, Broad View Drive, questioned if there is a generator in school buildings in case of an emergency. Dr. Menzo answered no.

Mr. Comerford then asked if the school applied for a grant and Mrs. McKay replied that the town applied for the grant.

Dr. Menzo stated that is beyond maintenance and it is not in our budget. He went on to state the buildings are used for emergency shelter not through the Board of Education.

EDC

*In Attendance: Joseph Mirra, Chair EDC
Mark Gingras, Commissioner EDC*

Jared Liu, 59 Curtis Avenue, asked what percentage is the full-time member. Mr. Mirra answered 30 hours. Mr. Liu then inquired about the billboards.

PARKS & RECREATION

*In Attendance: John Gawlak, Director, Parks & Recreation
Michelle Bjorkman, Superintendent of Recreation*

Brad Sammis, South Whittlesey Avenue, wants to know if there has ever been a cost analysis done on the community pool, extending the timeframe. Mr. Gawlak stated they are looking constantly at that stuff and Mrs. Bjorkman stated they are always looking at extending the timeframe.

Mr. Sammis inquired about the fitness part of the park.

Mr. Gawlak explained how they have been looking at other pool/park facilities so we were trying to make it more attractive.

Mr. Ciardullo feels the Parks & Recreation Department does a good job. He is a big supporter of the community pool. He commented that we went from a pool to a huge park facility and our demographics are shrinking, not growing.

CAP & NON RECURRING

Mr. Ciardullo remarked that his understanding of this line item was year by year items would be funded but what we do here is put a couple of million dollars of non-recurring expenditures and put it in a recurring budget and asked why. He then asked why we are not bonding these items.

Mr. Bowes stated to Mr. Ciardullo that he is mis-categorizing this category and that it is for infrastructure, sidewalks, street, etc.

Mr. Gross agrees with Mr. Ciardullo.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Comerford inquired about budget line #57665, Center Street Cemetery, and asked what that was for. Mr. Bowes responded he was not sure and will call Mr. Comerford tomorrow.

CENTER STREET CEMETERY

*In Attendance: Bob Gross, President, Center Street Cemetery
Bob Beaumont, Vice President, Center Street Cemetery*

Mr. Comerford asked about repairs on the cemetery building. Mayor Dickinson stated the building is leased.

Mr. Comerford stated that Henry McCully is satisfied with the building and there is evidence from these photos that there are dents in the siding.

Mr. Comerford inquired about the budget of the cemetery and indicated that there is no detail. He stated it is the same amount of money each year and the town (Mayor's office) has said they are not interested in the detail.

Mr. Gross stated we are projected to run a deficit this year.

Mr. Comerford asked if there was any fundraising last year. Mr. Beaumont responded less than \$1,400 and he thinks it was in donations. Mr. Comerford remarked that they should do some fundraising.

Mr. Gross stated that their budget is not a public document.

FIRE

*In Attendance: Richard Heidgerd, Fire Chief
Joseph Czentnar, Deputy Fire Chief
Stephen Alsup, Deputy Fire Chief*

Gene LeTourneau, Durham Road, questioned the shortfall of the overtime item and not running the Rescue 3 truck.

Chief Heidgerd indicated most years they do transfers but last year and this year they did not have enough money and cut back on training.

Mr. Gene LeTourneau remarked that the Public Works and Police operate on normal budgets and overtime and asked why the Fire Department is getting cut.

Mr. Gene LeTourneau then stated the rescue truck is very important and explained as a retired firefighter, it should be fully funded. He then stated the town has grown to expect a certain amount of services. He remarked that the Fire Chief now is in a car and gets to the scene faster. He feels we need to maintain our staffing numbers and we need 12 to maintain the truck and four more so we have 16 so we are always using four for overtime.

Larry Morgenstein, South Main Street, asked what happened with Rescue 3 and noted the police have a formula for staffing. Mr. Morgenstein then asked if there is a plan.

Chief Heidgerd stated we have a standard, we also have a volunteer community. There are three formulas and timely response is very important. He indicated they staff heavier during the day.

Mr. Morgenstein asked are you down staff? Chief Heidgerd stated we have authorized 63 positions and there are two openings presently. We are running one 16 person shift and three 15 person shifts right now.

PENSION FUNDS

In Attendance: James Bowes, Comptroller

Mr. Gross asked if we have an idea of what we are paying. Mr. Bowes replied .30 to .40 basis points.

Mr. Gene LeTourneau asked how much is in the pension fund and Mr. Bowes replied 200 million dollars.

Mr. Ciardullo inquired about the 2018 pension from the audit and asked who calculates it. Mr. Bowes said the actuary calculates it and we have been reducing our expected rate of return.

Mr. Ciardullo inquired about service cost. Mr. Bowes explained it is what has accumulated as service for the year.

Mr. Ciardullo remarked that the fund itself had a gangbuster past two years but we are still falling behind. He feels we are not contributing enough.

GOV TV

In Attendance: Scott Hanley, Manager

Mr. Gross noted in the budget you are getting new cameras and asked are you going to live-stream. Mr. Hanley responded there is no immediate plan to livestream.

Mr. Gross then asked could this building be wifi'd. Mr. Hanley stated he is not sure where that sits right now and noted the Council was going to address that with the Mayor.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

In Attendance: James Bowes, Comptroller

Mr. Liu inquired about Ashlar Village. He asked if they were to pay property taxes what approximately would it be. Mr. Bowes stated that he will wing it and replied approximately 600,000 to 700,000.

Mr. Liu asked how much it costs the town to collect taxes. Mr. Bowes broke it down stating \$800,000 in payroll, 30% in benefits and 240,000 in insurance so over a million dollars.

Mr. Gross mentioned the state has talked about looking at tax exempt properties and asked has the town looked at it.

Mayor Dickinson stated "You know the answer". It was a settlement of litigation. They felt they did not have to pay taxes.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN
MADE BY: LAFFIN
SECONDED BY: LETOURNEAU
MOTION: PASSED**

The Council adjourned the meeting at 8:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

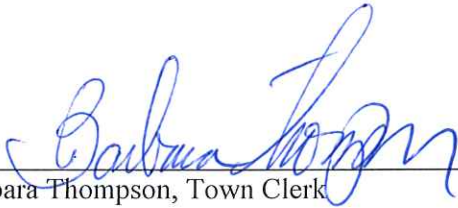
Lisa Moss
Council Staff
Meeting digitally recorded



Vincent Cervoni, Chairman

23 APR 2019

Date



Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk

4-24-19

Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-11-19
AT 9:30 AND RECEIVED BY
Barbara Thompson TOWN CLERK