

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

**HELD REMOTELY
at GoToMeeting.com**

**THURSDAY
April 30, 2020
6:30 P.M.**

**PUBLIC HEARING
FY 2020-2021 BUDGET**

RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Special Town Council Meeting on Thursday, April 30, 2020 was called to order at 6:30 p.m. There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Craig C. Fishbein, Thomas Laffin, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Gina Morgenstein, Christopher K. Shortell, Christina Tatta, Vincent F. Testa, Jason Zandri and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr, and Comptroller James Bowes were also present (BY TELECONFERENCE).

- 1. Moment of Silence
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

POLICE

*In Attendance: Chief William Wright
Deputy Chief John Ventura*

Chief Wright mentioned that in the past two budgets he asked for additional staffing but not this year. He stated they have looked to cut operating and maintenance. He went on to say they still have this year's cruiser money and the Mayor is allowing them to carry over that money (\$141,000).

Councilor Morgenstein is looking to have a flat tax increase this year and said to Chief Wright you look like you already aren't asking for anything. She then asked Chief Wright why he hasn't ordered new cruisers. Chief Wright stated GM has shut down production and we are waiting and hoping our current vehicles will withstand the wear and tear. Councilor Morgenstein then asked how many cruisers will we get for \$140,000 and Chief responded we hope for three.

Councilor Fishbein asked how COVID has affected the Police Department's budget. Chief Wright said their partners in Fire and Public Health have been in the lead but we took drastic action early on to keep our force healthy and have had one officer test positive. He went on to say as of the budget, all of our programs have gone by the way side. We are concentrating on dealing with the public over the phone, we are sitting on overtime money and wages are good. He asked Councilor Fishbein if that answers his question. Councilor Fishbein said yes.

Councilor Tatta asked Chief Wright if he could find 1% to take from his budget and said she was thinking the body cameras. Chief stated we may have a surplus on June 30th but he doesn't have 1% which is roughly \$100,000 to cut.

Councilor Shortell asked what the \$155,000 appropriations in force for cruisers is. Chief said he is only aware of \$140,000 not the other number. He indicated Mr. Bowes might better understand.

Mr. Bowes clarified appropriation in force is the money for the cruisers.

Councilor Shortell asked Chief if the \$140,000 is all inclusive or if he will need the other \$15,000. Chief responded we will need the other \$15,000 to load up the gear. Councilor Shortell then asked if we hired the four new officers. Chief answered yes and stated the last new officer starts in June. Councilor Shortell asked do you have what you need and Chief said we are going to be fine.

Councilor Shortell then inquired about upgrades of security in town buildings. Chief stated they installed an emergency intercom system and a new phone system at the town hall and the next step is to lock doors directly from desks and alarm them, which will go straight to police headquarters.

Chairman Cervoni said to Chief you keep mentioning GM when mentioning cruisers and asked are we going away from Ford. Chief answered yes.

Councilor Testa asked how much money is needed to cover the parade. Chief answered \$30,000.

Councilor Testa stated to Chief on your general page you requested \$200,000 and nothing was approved and the \$140,000 is being carried forward. He then asked is that correct. Chief answered yes.

Councilor Zandri asked what is line 51900 other pay? Chief explained if they don't use their sick time in the calendar year, they receive a stipend and dispatchers get a meal stipend and a few other payouts.

Councilor Tata asked why such an increase in maintenance of equipment? Chief stated the increase is from the brand new town wide radio system, it covers police, fire and the school system.

Councilor Fishbein stated he is in favor of body cameras.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, commented that Simpson Court Parking lot has always been talked about being redone. He asked if we know how much money in tickets have been given out at Simpson Court.

Chairman Cervoni thanked Chief Wright for everything.

FIRE

In Attendance: Chief Richard Heidgerd

This budget reflects the data of the new EMT's being hired. We have assistance for a grant in for the breathing PACS in this budget.

Councilor Tatta stated on the SCBA it looks like it appears on three line items. Chief Heidgerd said they continually buy air packs or maintain them it's ongoing. He went on to say we have 76 on hand and we are looking to purchase 50 new ones.

Councilor Tatta asked Chief if we are saving anything due to COVID. Chief indicated they are shifting money around to keep going in this crisis to receive PPE and other uses.

Councilor Tatta asked Chief if it would be a hardship to cut 1% of his budget. She then asked do you need the SUV. Chief stated that vehicle was cut by the Mayor and said we do not have 1% to cut without affecting services. He feels we will have more hardship in the fall than now.

Chairman Cervoni thanked Chief Heidgerd for all he and his department do.

CIVIL PREPAREDNESS

There were no questions.

PUBLIC WORKS

*In Attendance: Robert Baltramaitis, Director, Public Works
Stephen Palermo, Foreman, Public Works
Cathy Johns, Executive Secretary, Public Works*

Mr. Baltramaitis said we oversee 16 parks, the community pool and town buildings. He went on to say we are building a new field at Pragemann Park, we are cutting trees and we did a lot of work at town hall for COVID and the safety of town employees.

Mr. Baltramaitis stated that under this year's budget we have a large increase on the telephone line. He indicated that Public Works will pay all telephone usage of the town except utilities and that's a large savings for the town. He stated our budget is lean and mean and in line of previous years budgets.

Councilor Shortell thanked Mr. Baltramaitis for what he did so quickly at Town Hall and said that was really important.

Mr. Baltramaitis spoke about the line item for PC's, appropriations in force, and noted it is to replace the internet computer to get emails.

Councilor Zandri asked if the same amount of trash is being dumped around town.

Mr. Baltramaitis said the new trash cans we have put out are working better and recently street side dumping has picked up.

Councilor Zandri asked Mr. Baltramaitis if he knew what type of cost that is to the town, especially the large items dumped. Mr. Baltramaitis said not really but he could give a summary of that.

Councilor Zandri asked with the lack of true snow storms did you save money. Mr. Baltramaitis replied we had three storms that lasted three days long but we will start next year with a surplus of salt. He stated they are 65% into their overtime which isn't too bad but noted they use overtime for more than snow.

Councilor Morgenstein asked Mr. Baltramaitis if the construction at community pool impacted his work. She then asked why other departments have the phone on their budget lines. Mr. Bowes explained some departments utilize mobile phones, etc. and Public Works is paying for town halls phones.

Councilor Morgenstein inquired about the recycling contract and the duties listed in the department. Mr. Baltramaitis stated Susan Schot in Program planning helps with that but it shows up in our line items.

Councilor Tatta referred to Capital Items and asked Mr. Baltramaitis if he could find 1% to take out of his budget. She asked if he could do without the \$60,000 crew cab truck. Mr. Baltramaitis explained they use this every day and the truck is 18 years old and it needs to be replaced. He stated he looked up and down his budget and his answer is no. He went on to say the Mayor already cut \$20,000 out of Maintenance & Grounds and remarked we are paper thin.

Councilor Fishbein asked Mr. Baltramaitis if he has been involved with the pool project. Mr. Baltramaitis said he helped draft the RFP, the plans and the land use plan. Councilor Fishbein then asked if Public Works could do any part of that project to save money. Mr. Baltramaitis said he doesn't know how they could blend in with the contractor. He stated it's good to have one general contractor, less finger pointing in the end. Councilor Fishbein asked if the sand volleyball court could be done for less than \$80,000. Mr. Baltramaitis stated he was shocked to see these prices but everyone came in at that price and he wonders why.

Mr. Comerford asked if Public Works maintains the gates of the cemetery wall. Mr. Baltramaitis stated he believes they are the Town of Wallingford's. Mr. Comerford then stated Public Works is responsible for tree work and road maintenance. Mr. Baltramaitis indicated they are dirt roads and said we do not have a specific line item for the cemetery. Mr. Comerford then inquired about the state of the building.

Chairman Cervoni asked Mr. Baltramaitis if this is in his budget. Mr. Baltramaitis answered no.

ENGINEERING

In Attendance: Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer

Ms. Kapushinski stated she started in late December and has not added additional staff and no capital this year. Her total budget is 3-31/2 percent less than last year's budget.

Councilor Tatta asked Ms. Kapushinski if she has saved anything due to COVID and if she could cut 1% of her budget. Ms. Kapushinski asked if we could do without the highway guardrail reimbursement that we did an increase for. Mr. Bowes stated it's a revenue offset. It's technically a wash so there is no revenue.

Councilor Zandri asked if the Amazon permitting has come to a stop with the Johns Street Bridge. Ms. Kapushinski said she did take note and the permitting is still open. She will follow up with Planning and Zoning.

Councilor Zandri questioned the traffic signal budget line and remarked you doubled it. Mrs. Kapushinski stated it's the energy consumption cost to power the lights and change out lamps when needed.

CAP & NON RECURRING / SIX YEAR CAPITAL

*In Attendance: James Bowes, Comptroller
Rob Baltramaitis, Director, Public Works*

Councilor Shortell asked if \$1.9 million is left over from pervious projects and Mr. Bowes stated that is correct.

Councilor Shortell asked if he could make a Motion to move that money into the pool project. Mr. Bowes replied I think you could. Councilor Shortell then asked Chairman Cervoni if he thinks we can do this without the approval of the Mayor. Chairman Cervoni said he thinks so.

Councilor Shortell inquired about Wallace Avenue Construction and the \$40,275 that is left. Mr. Bowes stated the he and Mr. Baltramaitis meet at least twice a year to go through these items. Mr. Baltramaitis indicated that Wallace Avenue was going to receive a chip seal and it didn't happen but he's trying to pave it and that's why that line item is open.

Councilor Testa inquired about the \$1.2 million in paving. Mr. Bowes explained its money freed up in the past years put towards projects.

Councilor Testa asked who can reissue the allocation of anything and then asked if the Council can create a line item during the budget process. Mayor Dickinson stated yes the Council can create a line item at budget time and then it requires administrative action after the fact.

Councilor Testa stated he would be very resistant to redirect any money set for paving because we are so far behind.

Councilor Tatta stated one of these sources can be up to two mills and asked how much is coming from that. Mr. Bowes stated revenue stream is the electric pilot.

Councilor Fishbein asked if we have any designated scenic roads. Mr. Baltramaitis said a portion of East Main Street is considered folklore.

Councilor Fishbein asked if we have a list of roads that are going to be paved. Mr. Baltramaitis answered yes and stated it's not a secret we also file it with Planning & Zoning.

Mayor Dickinson explained the problem with listing the roads is it can change due to conditions and indicated we need flexibility.

Chairman Cervoni adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Lisa Moss
Council Staff
Meeting digitally recorded

Vincent Cervoni /BT 5/12/2020
Vincent Cervoni, Chairman Date

Barbara Thompson 5/13/2020
Barbara Thompson, Town Clerk Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 5-4-2020
AT 4:00 AND RECEIVED BY
Barbara Thompson TOWN CLERK