

**TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

THURSDAY

MAY 6, 2021

6:30 P.M.

RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Special Town Council Meeting on Thursday, May 6, 2021 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, Gina Morgenstein, Joseph A. Marrone, III, 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.

1. Moment of Silence
2. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call
3. Discussion and possible action on amendments to the Town of Wallingford Budget for FY 2021-2022.

MOTION WAS MADE TO ADD \$60,000 TO THE PARK & RECREATION BUDGET TAKING THE FUNDS FROM THE \$1.8 MILLION ROLLOVER SURPLUS IN THE CAP AND NON AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO ALLOW FOR THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE TO BUILD A DEDICATED PICKLEBALL COURT AT HARRISON PARK.

MADE BY: ZANDRI

SECONDED BY: MORGESTEIN

Chairman Cervoni wanted to confirm we cannot access that \$1.8 million but if we are going to access some PILOT electric division money we would take it from the contribution that's being made by the Electric Division during this Budget. Mr. Bowes stated that's correct.

MOTION WAS MADE TO SHORT THE ELCTRIC DIVISION PILOT CONTRIBUTION BY \$60,000 TO ADD TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BUDGET TO BUILD A DEDICATED PICKLEBALL COURT COMPLEX AT HARRISON PARK.

Councilor Zandri accepts this as a friendly amendment.

Councilor Morgenstein seconds the amendment.

Councilor Shortell supports the motion. He wants the public to know this came from Mr. Michaels and stated that's a number from Kenny.

Chairman Cervoni wants to state for the record that several members of the public did reach out to him seeking support for pickleball courts.

The Mayor indicated there would have to be considerable administrative review of this before he can promise that it would happen right at the Harrison tennis courts.

Councilor Zandri said we are responsible for making sure the funds are there and he hopes they have the support.

Councilor Tatta would like to know where the \$60,000 came from. Chairman Cervoni stated it came from the Director of Parks and Recreation.

Councilor Shortell explained it came in an email from Kenny Michaels on April 15th. He indicated this is to do repairs to the courts, not putting in new courts.

Councilor Marrone agrees with Councilor Zandri that if we don't put this in the budget this will never happen. He stated he supports this.

Councilor Laffin feels these are exactly the type of funds to use for it and he trusts that Administration with the Park and Recreation Department will figure out the best way to implement that.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	SHORTELL: YES
FISHBEIN: YES	TATTA: YES
LAFFIN: YES	TESTA: YES
MARRONE: YES	ZANDRI: YES
MORGANSTEIN: YES	CERVONI: YES
9 – AYE	
MOTION: PASSED	

MOTION WAS MADE TO APPROPRIATE AN ADDITIONAL \$1.5 MILLION FROM THE RESERVES/AUDITED FUND BALANCE FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT ON BUDGET LINE 49010 OF \$7.9 MILLION.

MADE BY: TATTA
SECONDED BY: ZANDRI

Chairman Cervoni asked if he is correct that some of that increase in the fund balance has been allocated by the Council already.

Councilor Zandri said we had discussions about this in prior years and designated never means spent. He feels this is another opportunity to designate more funds and take that pressure off the taxpayers. He would like to see some support on this.

Councilor Laffin indicated what they did last year was different they took from Cap and Non. He asked how that would affect credit ratings. Mr. Bowes said ratings are affected by many factors.

The Mayor stated in his experience credit rating agencies are not a one year thing. He feels it's not a good trend to use more and more money from reserves in order to handle operational costs because it exposes you to losses.

Councilor Shortell asked if the 10-15 percent unassigned is of the overall budget or the general budget. Mr. Bowes said the entire general fund which includes schools.

Councilor asked if the credit rating went down in 2019. Mr. Bowes answered yes. Councilor Shortell then asked if we have bonded since then. Mr. Bowes said no but we are putting together a bond sale now.

There was discussion between Mr. Bowes and Councilor Shortell.

The Mayor stated another factor is reassurance to the public that we are doing a good job managing their assets.

There was discussion between the Mayor and Councilor Shortell.

Councilor Shortell stated he's not sure how he feels about this motion. He agrees with the Mayor and he appreciates Councilor Tatta's perspective.

Councilor Zandri feels the concern is allocating an additional \$1.5 million. He spoke of previous years where we designated money and nothing happened. He then asked Mr. Bowes why we reissued these bonds. Mr. Bowes said we haven't done it yet we are analyzing it with our consultants.

There was discussion between Councilor Zandri, Mr. Bowes and the Mayor.

Councilor Marrone is not sure he is comfortable with this motion. He asked what the strategy is toward taxation. The Mayor said to be able to maintain at least a 10 percent reserves.

Councilor Marrone applauded the Mayor on making the decision to not fill Scott Hanley's position.

Councilor Marrone asked the Mayor about the Administrative philosophy as to the extra in the taxes every year. The Mayor said the extra is not necessarily built in the tax rate. He explained revenues come in that are not expected. It's a constant balancing and a matter of us looking to provide what the community needs and not looking to overtax.

There was further discussion with the Mayor.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	SHORTELL: YES
FISHBEIN: ABSENT	TATTA: YES
LAFFIN: ABSENT	TESTA: YES
MARRONE: YES	ZANDRI: YES
MORGENSTEIN: YES	CERVONI: NO
6 – AYE	
1-NAY	
2-ABSENT	
MOTION: PASSED	

Mr. Bowes explained if we are going to use \$1.5 million in our fund balance to offset that we don't need \$1.5 million in current property taxes so we can reduce that line item (41006) by the same \$1.5 million which in essence translates to a lower mill rate.

Councilor Testa inquired how the bond ordinance for \$2,107,062 relates to this budget. Mr. Bowes indicated that's the amount of the authorization action by the Town Council for next year's portion of the six year capital plan. Mr. Bowes stated the Charter has provisions with regard to the Cap and Non Recurring and it refers to items that would be on there and also it gives the public a chance to opine this.

Councilor Testa said he would like to see that money as a promised payment to the community pool project which he acknowledges requires Administration approval. He suggested we take the money from the Electric Division pilot and transfer it over to a general fund account instead of putting that money into the Cap & Non Recurring fund. He stated this commits us to doing the community pool.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO CREATE A FUND ACCOUNT FOR
RENOVATION OF COMMUNITY POOL & TRANSFER THE MONEY IN
LINE ITEM 41190 PILOT ELECTRIC DIVISION INTO THAT FUND FOR
THAT PURPOSE.**

**MADE BY: TESTA
SECONDED: MORGENSTEIN**

Mr. Bowes referred to pages 83 and 84 Cap and Non Recurring fund. There was discussion between Mr. Bowes and Councilor Testa.

Councilor Shortell stated he is a big supporter of the pool and does not want to vote against this. He loves the concept but is worried about the dollar amount.

The Mayor said in looking at the ordinance it appears in order for money to go into Cap and Non it does require Administrative recommendation and if it becomes part of the capital project it should become part of the budget.

Mr. Bowes referred to Page 23 Expenditure Reports and had further discussion.

Councilor Testa stated he appreciates Councilor Shortell's comment and caution is well advised. He is okay with lowering his request.

**MOTION WAS MADE TO AMEND THE PREVIOUS MOTION THAT
\$1 MILLION OF THE ELECTRIC DIVISION PILOT IN LINE ITEM 59232
BE TRANSFERRED TO THE COMMUNITY POOL PROJECT ACCOUNT.**

**MADE BY: TESTA
SECONDED BY: MORGENSTEIN**

Councilor Tatta believes the intent is to push the pool along to make sure it happens and she's not sure this does that. She said she understands the rationale but doesn't believe it will achieve the outcome. She stated she's undecided.

Chairman Cervoni stated the motion is a political statement by the Council to earmark the money for the pool and he doesn't know if that's the best way to get the pool built.

Councilor Testa feels the Council's job is to do their best to decide what they think is in the best interest of the community.

Councilor Marrone agrees with the spirit of this motion and he supports the motion. He stated his concern is money gets set aside and never gets used for the pool.

The Mayor stated it would be good to have a new pool but he is troubled by health concerns and the economy as far as taking on that expense immediately. He feels timing is important and there is too much uncertainty right now to take on a project like that.

Councilor Marrone asked the Mayor if there is an economic indicator for him to move on with the project. The Mayor spoke of a report he looked at regarding indisposable income and noted that Connecticut was at a .6% increase. He stated Connecticut is about the lowest in the country and he feels this is very troubling.

Councilor Marrone stated the pool is a public service we provide. He is in support of this motion and appreciates the Mayor's perspective.

Councilor Morgenstein commends the people who are in support of this. She feels the mentioning of the 6 to 3 majority in favor of the pool is the reason to put this forward at this time.

ROLL CALL VOTE:	SHORTELL: YES
FISHBEIN: ABSENT	TATTA: NO
LAFFIN: ABSENT	TESTA: YES
MARRONE: YES	ZANDRI: YES
MORGENSTEIN: YES	CERVONI: NO
5 – AYE	
2-NAY	
2-ABSENT	
MOTION: PASSED	

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Moss
Council Staff
Meeting digitally recorded



Vincent Cervoni, Chairman

15 June 2021

Date



Deborah McKiernan, Town Clerk

6.14.2021

Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 5-12-21
AT 3:30 AND RECEIVED BY
Deborah McKiernan TOWN CLERK