

**TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers**

**Monday, April 10, 2023**

**6:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**FY 2023 – 2024 BUDGET**

**MINUTES**

The Special Town council Meeting on Monday, April 10, 2023 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, Autumn Allinson, Sam Carmody, Craig Fishbein, Joseph Marrone, Christina Tatta, and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and Comptroller, Timothy Sena were also present.

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

**3. PUBLIC HEARING**

Chairman Cervoni reviewed the process for the Public Hearing. He then went through the list of departments alphabetically, looking for raised hands of any representatives from the public that have questions for those specific departments. He stated that he will stop when there is approximately 30-40 minutes left and notify the audience of a final call to make sure that there are no late arrivals with questions. If there are no questions for specific departments, those department heads will be able to leave at that time. Chairman Cervoni asked that the public please be considerate of the time they take when asking questions.

Chairman Cervoni stated that Board of Education is not in attendance to answer the public questions, but they will watch the recording and be available to give answers to those questions on their scheduled Budget Workshop on Wednesday, April 19, 2023. Board of Education was going to be pushed to the end of the department list, but seeing that there were only 2 attendees from the public with questions, BOE would be first.

Chairman Cervoni asked for questions and received none for the following Departments:

**Animal Control**  
**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
**Board of Ethics**  
**Building Department**  
**Cafeteria**  
**Capital Appropriations Reserve (In Force)**  
**Capital & Non-Recurring**  
**Capital & Non-Recurring Fund**  
**Conservation Commission**  
**Debt Service**  
**Economic Development Commission**  
**Emergency Mgmt./Civil Preparedness**  
**Employee Insurance & Other Benefits**  
**Fire Department, including EMS**  
**Government Access TV**  
**Health**  
**Human Resources & Risk Management**  
**Inland/Wetlands**  
**Insurance-Property & Casualty**  
**Law Department**  
**Library**  
**Pension Contributions**  
**Planning & Zoning**  
**Probate Court**  
**Program Planning**  
**Public Utilities Commission**  
**Registrar of Voters**  
**Sewer Division**  
**Six Year Capital**  
**Town Council**  
**Town Clerk**  
**Utilities – Electric, Water, Sewer**  
**Veterans Center**  
**Water Division**  
**Youth & Social Services Bureau**  
**Zoning Board of Appeals**

## **Board of Education**

*Not in attendance due to schools being in April break.*

Melanie Rossacci, 9 Platt Drive, questioned the ESSER Cares Funds and the Coronavirus Relief Funds that were received. What was the money used for through June 30, 2022? What monies have been allocated, spent, and unspent? What are the unspent funds going to be used for? Are any of these funds being used towards learning loss, chronic absenteeism, and mental health support? She does not see anything in the budget for Mental Health Supports. These funds are to be spent by December 2024. There are 5 areas that the funds can be used for. From her calculations there is approximately \$2MM+ left to be spent. How is this being spent? Why are the Site (710) and Building (720) Improvement columns on page 65 blank? Where do these items fall into the budget? Why was there a \$3.6MM budget cut for services related to students and families that includes Youth & Social Services, Parks & Recreation, and BOE? Why are we making cuts to departments that support our children and families the most?

Randy Jasmine Carlone, 20 Buttonwood Circle, stated there is a position cut for Special Education. What data did they use to arrive at this decision? Do they have the number of students with IEP's, 504's, and the level of support each of those student's needs? She has asked the Board of Ed for this information with no response. This is not only a numbers game it is also about the quality of the services.

Cervoni stated that these questions will be addressed at the April 19<sup>th</sup> Budget Workshop.

## **Contingency Account**

*In attendance was Comptroller, Tim Sena*

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, asked why the account is \$400K greater than last year. Tim Sena responded that there are two (2) accounts in Contingency. Current Year General Purposes has an increase and the Incurred Expenses comes from Human Resources. Contracts are currently in negotiations.

## **Electric Division**

*In attendance was Rick Hendershot, Director, PUC*

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, referred to Item 596/Street Lights and Signals on page 68. Last year was \$500, this year is \$24,805 is this increase based on the need for repair and replacement of the existing ones. Mr. Hendershot stated that they are compiling an inventory of the lights and signals that need repair, and will begin to work on the signals and lights that are in the most need. This has not yet gone out to bid, but is what they've budgeted for.

Mr. Hendershot informed the Council that Tony Buccheri was not in attendance, since he is no longer working for the Town of Wallingford Electric Division.

## **Employee Insurance Benefits**

*In attendance was James Hutt, Director, Human Resources*

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, referred to Page 28, line 55, item 955 – Health Insurance; why

is there an increase of \$2.7MM? Is it the same plan or has the town shopped around? Hutt stated that they went out to bid a couple of years ago, there were no bids received. The increase is due to the Individual Stop Loss Premium. Mr. Gross asked if the town has looked into the state's insurance plan. Mr. Hutt replied "no". Mayor Dickinson stated that they have not been advised by the consultant to move to the state plan. Our current plan is appropriate with the insurance trend of 8-9%. Mr. Gross stated the town may save 2-3% if they look into the state plan.

## **Engineering**

*In attendance was Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer*

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, referred to Page 49 – Staffing; any plan to hire Sidewalk Inspector? Ms. Kapushinski stated that there is no increase to staffing on this budget. Mr. Comerford then referred to Page 50 – Sidewalk Repair – Police \$15K what is that? Ms. Kapushinski replied that is to fix the sidewalk in front of the Police Station on North Main Street. She was approached with this project this year.

## **Finance**

*In attendance was Tim Sena, Comptroller*

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, referred to Page 1/Summary forecasts – why don't we put actual numbers for previous years? Mr. Sena replied that the budget format follows what the Charter requires. Mr. Ciardullo stated that every year the town underspends by millions when comparing the budget vs. actual spent. Why is money going into the General Fund? Mr. Sena stated that the budget has to be balanced. Mr. Ciardullo asked if the town really plans to spend the money or just continue to inflate the budget and that Town council continues to approve an inflated budget, hopefully this will change with the next administration, as a friend of his (Riley) says it should.

Chairman Cervoni hearing no questions for Planning & Zoning, excused Kevin Pagini from the meeting.

## **Finance (continued)**

*In attendance was Tim Sena, Comptroller*

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, referred to Page 10 – Use of Money or Property/Interest on Investments item 44010 is \$1M, what is that? Mr. Sena stated that is income that is invested into a Money Market Account. Mr. Gross asked approximately how much is in the money market account. Mr. Sena stated that it fluctuates, there are accounts with multiple banks, each one over \$250K. Mr. Gross asked if the town uses the US Treasury, they pay better. Mr. Sena stated the town does not.

Mr. Gross referred to Page 8 – CRRRA Distributed Funds/Revenue was that the end of the CRRRA money? Mr. Sena stated that there was less than \$100K left, and there were not any projects that were less than \$100K. Revenue line for Covanta is zero. Is there a reason we do not receive money from them? This item is not there anymore and it is not in the budget. Mayor Dickinson stated that the contract came to an end. It is now owned by Country Disposal. Covanta has no ongoing contract with the Town of Wallingford. Page 1 – Use of Money or

Property Revenue \$1.052M, what was that money used for? Mr. Sena stated that \$1M is use of money we've already discussed and the other is property income. Page 1 is just a summary.

Chairman Cervoni went through the list of departments again for late arrivals. Hearing no additional questions of these departments, Chairman Cervoni stated these departments are dismissed.

### **Mayor's Office**

*In attendance was Mayor Dickinson*

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive asked what the Mayor's salary is. Mayor stated it is approximately \$96K.

Mr. Comerford asked about the EDC purchase of the cement blocks for outdoor dining, and then public works placed and housed the blocks. According to the Charter departments are supposed to invoice each other for their services. Is this type of transaction approved by the Mayor's Office? Mayor stated this was a group effort and that our departments work together on projects. Monies do not go through the Mayor's office, and there was no reimbursement necessary.

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, asked if the grant writer is in the Mayor's Department. Mayor stated that grants are prepared in the Program Planning office and is supervised by the Mayor's Office. Do we have a full time Grant Writer? The town has a Grant Technician. A full time Grant Writer would be beneficial for the town and maybe next administration will hire one.

### **Parks & Recreation**

*In attendance was Kenny Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation, Michelle Bjorkman, Superintendent of Recreation and John Sullivan, Chairman, Parks and Recreation Commission.*

Kenny Michaels introduced the new Chairman of Parks & Recreation Commission John Sullivan.

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, asked who pays for the lights at the town parks; turning the lights on and off. Mr. Michaels stated that he believes it is with the Public Works Department. Mr. Comerford asked if maintenance of the fields is under Public Works. Mr. Michaels appreciates his questions, but has nothing to do with his Budget.

### **Police Department**

*In attendance was Chief John Ventura and Deputy Chief Anthony DeMaio and staff.*

Mr. Comerford... Sidewalk replacement that was discussed with Engineering Department, when did that start? Chief Ventura stated more than a year ago, that's why it is in this budget. Mr. Comerford asked if Atlas One is anywhere on the budget. Chief Ventura stated he has a meeting for information on applying for Federal Grants that would allow the town to have Atlas One free for one year. Cost is \$25K per year. Mr. Comerford, is Atlas One in the budget for ARPA funds? Chief Ventura has not requested ARPA funds for Atlas One. Mr. Comerford asked if a drone purchase is in the budget. Chief Ventura stated they have money in current fiscal year and are looking to train another officer in drone usage. Mr. Comerford, stated anything we can do to help our officers is great, increasing their budget to have the ability to improve their efforts is a benefit and ARPA funds could be used for the Police Department.

Chief Ventura noted to the Town Council that the 4 ASO's for the Board of Education is in the Police Department budget.

## **Public Works**

*In attendance was Robert Baltramaitis, Director, Public Works and Stephen Palermo, Superintendent, Public Works.*

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive...Just for clarity, under the summary functions lists maintaining sidewalks, is that Public Works or Engineering. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that in his 25 years of working for the town, it has always been an engineering function. Mayor stated that there is an overlap in these two departments if repairs need to be made. Mr. Comerford asked if the number of employees is accurate at 41. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that they have budgeted for 41 employees including mechanics, not all positions are full right now. Mr. Comerford was urging efficiency within the department, including trash pick-up at the parks and town facilities. Can we go out to bid and save money on this type of work? Can this be looked into? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that it is a rotating staff due to contract obligations. Mr. Comerford asked about the Utilities line item on Page 52, why such a large decrease? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that this number is based on a 5 year average. Mr. Comerford asked about the lights at the parks. Mr. Baltramaitis is going to work with Parks & Recreation to make sure lights are being turned on and off by league users and that timers are working properly. Mr. Comerford, maintenance of buildings and grounds increase? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that Town Council has created a Building Maintenance Subcommittee that is suggesting improvements to town buildings and grounds that will be included in this line item. Increase in staff will also help get the work performed more efficiently. Purchasing Services – Engineer Consultant? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that \$13.5K that was added during this fiscal year was to get the services of a design firm to assist with plans to replace the Library HVAC system. \$25K amount is for design services for HVAC improvements to the Town Hall. Mr. Comerford -- tree contracts \$45-70K? Mr. Baltramaitis stated Historically \$70-90K was cut in half last year due to the need. This is also need based figure, if monies are low in funds and we have emergency situations they will go to Town Council for additional funds. Mr. Comerford thinks the town should retain the services of a contractor with an arborist on staff that would take some of the pressure off of his staff. Mr. Baltramaitis stated that they do use a contractor for projects that has an arborist on staff and would like to continue to use their services in the downtown area.

## **Six Year Capital**

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive...What is Luffberry Park improvements? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that he works with Parks & Recreation and Engineering to look at what improvements need to be done. New pavillion, decorative wooden rail, parking area reconstruction, etc...Mr. Comerford, Marcus Cooke as well? Mr. Baltramaitis stated yes, one park per year. SCOW Masonry Repair? Mr. Baltramaitis stated yes this is on the budget. As maintenance needs come up we will address those issues using capital funds and apply for grants when possible. Mr. Comerford, Athletic Turf Maintenance? Mr. Baltramaitis stated Public Works and Parks & Recreation work on this together. Mr. Comerford stated that outsourcing these types of projects/needs would alleviate some of the work for the Public Works and Parks & Recreation departments.

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road...\$7.1M requested but received \$6.7M is this enough? Understaffed already, how will you accomplish all of this? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that the Mayor is suggesting to use ARPA funds for projects that are not in the General Fund budget. Mr. Gross stated that the ARPA funds should be used not only for capital projects, but also to make the town shine.

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive...60 Prince Street property, is Public Works in charge of this property? Mr. Baltramaitis stated that the town owns the property but the maintenance is not under the town. Mr. Comerford stated that someone might want to check the siding on the building.

**Center Street Cemetery**

*In attendance was Bob Beaumont and Bob Gross*

Mr. Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive...Did you supply the Town Council with the documents requested with your budget? Mr. Gross answered, most of it. 990 was given. Mr. Comerford stated that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year they have not given the proper documentation. Mr. Comerford and Mr. Gross went back and forth about the Cemetery services, revenue, headstone repairs, a jeep, tools and equipment, etc...Mr. Comerford asked if there is an inventory list. Mr. Gross stated their inventory is on their 990. Chairman Cervoni asked if the Cemetery is buying or selling any tools this year. Mr. Gross replied, no. Mr. Comerford asked about member fees, what is the criteria to be a member? Mr. Gross stated it is a private organization and the board can choose who they accept as a member. Any rejected applicants get their money back.

Chairman Cervoni stated that was the last of the questions and closed the Public Hearing.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

Stacey Hoppes

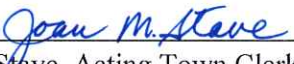
Program Planning Secretary



Vincent Cervoni, Chairman

27 APRIL 2023

Date



Joan M. Stave, Acting Town Clerk

4/28/23

Date

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Deborah McKernan TOWN CLERK