

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY  
APRIL 27, 2023  
6:30 P.M.

AMENDED RECORD OF VOTES AND MINUTES  
FY 2023-2024 BUDGET

The Special Town Council Budget Workshop on Wednesday, April 27, 2023, 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: Autumn Allinson, Samuel Carmody, Thomas Laffin, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Christina Tatta, Vincent F. Testa, and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Mayor William W Dickinson, Jr., and Controller Timothy Sena were also present.

- 1. Moment of Silence
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call
- 3. FY2023-2024 BUDGET

ANIMAL CONTROL

*In attendance was Mitch Gibbs, Animal Control Officer*

Chairman Cervoni asked about the state of the building, as there were some violations a year or so ago. Mr. Gibbs replied that they had an inspection back in December and passed. All the issues were fixed, air conditioning was installed and the heating system has been upgraded. Chairman Cervoni thanked him for his work.

FIRE

*In attendance was Joe Czentnar, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief Sam Wilson, and Deputy Fire Chief Mike Shaw.*

Chief Czentnar gave an overview of the budget and operations for the past year. The department has continued to experience an unprecedented increase in emergency call volume for the second year in a row. It's a 25% increase from 2020. Early indications this year are that the trend is going to continue. They are managing simultaneous overlapping emergency calls. This results in fatigue and injuries. Last year they implemented Rapid Sequence Intubation. They are one of only a handful of agencies statewide that can perform this procedure in the field. These people have been courageously on the front lines of the pandemic, which will have a long-term effect on our members. EMS providers in the state have been experiencing EMS and ambulance staffing shortages at an unprecedented level. This started before COVID. It is difficult to recruit qualified employees. This translates into longer wait times and decreasing likelihood of receiving advanced life support intervention. The Fire Department is the provider of ambulance transport services in our community and we have been able to continue to provide excellent service, but it is becoming more common to need to rely on mutual aid ambulances during times of high call volume. In this budget, they are requesting four more firefighter positions to increase operational flexibility, reduce injuries and stabilize the overtime budget. Recruiting has been a challenge due to a shortage of individuals that want to enter the field. He reported that they continue to support the volunteer

divisions with training and personal protective equipment. As a result of a recent contract agreement with the Union, the budget includes some wage increases and salary adjustments.

Councilor Laffin thanked Chief Czentnar for the summary. He asked if the Fire Marshal position is still unfilled. Chief Czentnar replied that the job description needs to be ironed out first, but he has a request in to fill it.

Councilor Marrone verified that he has two full-time ambulances. Chief Czentnar confirmed and added that they do envision adding a third. They are trying to get up to the full staffing that they are authorized for. He stated that they have several qualified candidates that should be going through testing in May. When he is up to full staffing, he will look into it. Councilor Marrone asked how long it will take to fill the open positions. Chief Czentnar replied four plus the positions in the budget. It could take the balance of the remainder of the year to fill the positions. Councilor Marrone asked about the volunteer tax abatement and verified that it is paid once a year. Chief Czentnar confirmed. He explained that there was a statute last year allowing the town to increase the maximum abatement from \$1500 to \$2,000 per year and that is reflected in the budget.

Councilor Testa stated concern is that the department is staffed to the level you need to be to provide the level of service we've come to expect. Does this budget provide you with sufficient funding to get to the staffing level you need? Chief Czentnar replied yes, it is what he asked for. Chief Czentnar confirmed that it will be about 8 open positions as he is adding four. Councilor Testa noted that Wallingford is blessed with combined services that work well together.

#### CAP & NON RECURRING

*In attendance were Rob Baltramaitis, Public Works Director, and Alison Kapushinski, Town Engineer*

Councilor Tatta asked about the \$1 million that was transferred to Community Pool Capital Projects Fund and what happens to it at the end of the year. Where will it show? She stated that she wants to be sure that it doesn't get lost in the shuffle. Mr. Baltramaitis promised to get that information to Mr. Sena tomorrow.

Councilor Testa asked if there is an idea of what it would take to repair all the sidewalks where there are obnoxious asphalt repairs and bumps. Ms. Kapushinski replied that they haven't done an analysis. She says it's easier and more thorough to take it in the zone-by-zone approach. This way we get to do a full inspection of the street where trips are reported. Councilor Testa asked if there is a log or problem areas. Ms. Kapushinski replied yes, in the engineering office. Mayor Dickinson added that by state law, once we notice a defect in a road or sidewalk, we have a duty to respond within a reasonable time. When a report of a trip is received, someone from engineering goes out and determines if this is a tripping hazard. If it is, it's scheduled for emergency repair, which is done by a contractor. He stated that the Town is spending \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year putting in new sidewalks and for temporary repairs. Trying to do all the sidewalks at one time would be a logistical nightmare and would cost multiple millions of dollars. Ms. Kapushinski explained the temporary repairs. She stated that infrequently the whole sidewalk is replaced if it is the best solution. She added that she will verify that the Fox Run example she gave was paid out of the annual replacement budget or something different. Councilor Testa verified that if a hazard is reported, it is a temporary patch solution until that zone is done. He agreed that this is a prudent use of Capital Funds because it is planned. He noted that we are falling short because of all the patches that aren't in the current zone drag on until we get to them. We need to find a way to more quickly affect those repairs. He believes there are opportunities to secure federal or state infrastructure grants to repair more sidewalks. He would like to see a more proactive approach. He commended both for the work they do in their departments.

Councilor Carmody stated that he hears nothing but great praise for the work you do. He thanked them for being responsive and helpful when he had questions. He asked how many zones are done a year and how long it takes to get through each zone. Ms. Kapushinski replied that there are 13 zones and it depends on how big the zone is and how many repairs are needed. She added that they are completing their second year in Zone 12 this year. Councilor Carmody stated that we should make an exception for the center of Town, the downtown area as there is a tremendous amount of foot traffic. We want it to be an attractive place for people to walk. He added that it is something this Council should look at. He noted that this was not necessarily a budget item.

Councilor Marrone asked how long it takes to get through all 13 zones. Mr. Balamaitis replied that he was in Engineering for 20 years before he moved to Public Works about four years ago. When he started in Engineering they were in Zone 6. As Ms. Kapushinski explained, they are finishing up Zone 12 and will be moving on to Zone 13. The good news is that Zone 13 has very few sidewalks and they are newer. The philosophy was that once you go through all 13 zones you can go back through faster because you will be dealing with fewer problems in each. The life of concrete is about 50 years under perfect conditions. Councilor Marrone suggested looking at the zone program because a 30-year maintenance program may not be optimal.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cervoni called for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 7:10 PM**

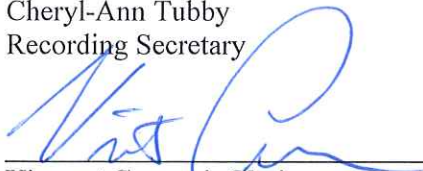
**MADE BY: LAFFIN**

**SECONDED BY: ALLINSON**

**VOTE: ALL AYE**

**MOTION PASSES**

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl-Ann Tubby  
Recording Secretary

  
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Vincent Cervoni, Chair

23 May 2023  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joan M. Stave, Acting Town Clerk

6/1/23  
Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-30-23  
AT 1:00 p.m. AND RECEIVED BY  
Deborah Makurana TOWN CLERK  
Joan M. Stave, Acting TOWN Clerk