

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2001

7:00 P.M.

A special meeting of the Wallingford Town Council was held on Wednesday, April 11, 2001 in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 7:05 P.M. Answering present to the Roll called by Town Clerk Rosemary A. Rascati were Councilors Brodinsky, Farrell, Knight, Papale, Parisi, Rys, and Zappala. Councilor Centner was unable to attend due to a previous commitment and Councilor Vumbaco arrived at 7:10 P.M. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Town Attorney Janis M. Small and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were not required to attend the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

ITEM #2 Executive Session Pursuant to Section 1-200(6)(A) Pertaining to the Appointment, Employment, Performance, Evaluation, Health or Dismissal of a Public Officer of Employee

The purpose of the meeting is to interview candidates for the position of Deputy Fire Marshal.

Chapter X, Public Safety, Section 4. Fire Marshal, Powers and Duties, of the Charter of the Town of Wallingford assigns the duty of appointing the Town's Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshal to the Town Council.

Motion was made by Mr. Rys to Enter Into Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Knight.

VOTE: Centner and Vumbaco were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

Mr. Vumbaco entered the executive session at 7:10 P.M.

Present in executive session were all Councilors, with the exception of Mr. Centner; Personnel Director Terrence Sullivan; Fire Marshal Joseph P. Micalizzi and Fire Inspector Rich Forman.

Mr. Zappala left the meeting at 8:00 P.M. due to a previous commitment that could not be re-scheduled.

Fire Marshal Micalizzi and Inspector Forman left the meeting at approximately 8:10 P.M.

Personnel Director Terrence Sullivan left the meeting at approximately 8:13 P.M.

Motion was made by Mr. Rys to Exit the Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Farrell.

VOTE: Centner and Zappala were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

The council exited executive session at 8:14 P.M.

Motion was made by Mr. Rys to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Farrell.

VOTE: Centner and Zappala were absent; all others, aye; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:14 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:

Kathryn F. Zandri
Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved by:

Robert F. Parisi (by ex)
Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

4-24-01
Date

Rosemary A. Rascati
Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

4-24-01
Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-12-01
11:00 AM AND RECEIVED BY
Rosemary A. Rascati TOWN CLERK

2001 – 2002 ANNUAL BUDGET

PUBLIC HEARING

APRIL 17, 2001

6:30 P.M.

A Public Hearing on the 2001-2002 Annual Budget of the Town of Wallingford was held by the Town Council in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:35 P.M. Councilors Brodinsky, Centner, Farrell, Knight, Papale, Parisi, Rys, Vumbaco and Zappala answered present to the Roll called by Town Clerk Rosemary A. Rascati. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were also present.

Mr. Parisi asked that everyone present observe a personal moment of silence in lieu of a blessing.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Mr. Parisi stated, we will start out with the Board of Education; we will then go to the Utility Budgets; Public Utilities Commission; General Government departments; Capital, Non-Recurring; Revenues and Special Funds. That will be the order and it will be based on questions.

Mayor Dickinson: In the beginning of the budget book you will find a letter that highlights the most important points about the budget. I will briefly speak about the budget and the way it was constructed. The budget describes our ability to provide services for the next fiscal year but also, as important as describing what can be spent and what can be provided in the next fiscal year, is developed around the need to maintain the fiscal health of the community for a longer term. The budget is constructed around the maintenance of \$3.6 million held in reserves to offset revaluation and it preserves \$4.9 million in reserve which is the Aa credit rating reserve. The budget, as proposed, increases spending by 5.8%. Certainly, I take that with due caution; we all know that inflation, the cost of living is somewhere around 3%. The budget spending increases by 5.8%. It adds an additional \$5.6 million in expenditures. The education portion of the budget increase 6.5%; an additional \$3.8 million. General Government increases 4.1% in spending; an additional \$1.6 million. If adopted as proposed, it would result in a .06 of a mil increase which is a 2.3% increase in spending; or I should say spending by each of the taxpayers and that comes down to \$65 dollars and approximately \$.10 on the average assessment. That is an average assessment based upon the 1991 revaluation of approximately \$108,500 real estate and two motor vehicles. The message also, in this budget, includes enterprise funds which are utilities, no rate increase is forecasted for the Electric Division.

Capital projects for the coming year include overhead work and the office renovation which will move the Electric Division offices from this building to the John Street location. No rate increase is forecasted for Water or Sewer (Divisions). Major capital projects in Water include Prince Street, South Whittlesey and Ridgeland projects of improvement. We recommend the budget for adoption and welcome questions and comments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Board of Education, P. 65

Frank Wasilewski, 57 North Orchard Street referred to funds received from the State of CT. to the Town which are labeled, "State Grant School Aid" in the amount of \$18 million and asked how the funds get to the Board of Education?

Joseph J. Cirsuolo, Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools, explained how the funds are deposited into the Town's general fund and, in turn, the Board's budget is appropriated from said fund.

It is Mr. Wasilewski's opinion that the \$18 million should be the basis for the Board of Education's budget and should come out of the grand total revenue which would lower the grand total from \$103 million to \$84 million, resulting in an immediate tax cut. The taxpayers would then be taxes on \$84 million versus \$103 million. If the Board has a budget of \$62 million and is reduced by the \$18 million, the Board's budget is being cut down to \$40+ million right off the bat which also reduces the tax burden to the taxpayers. The Board will still receive the same amount of monies needed for their budget. The funds are received from the State in the form of a grant to the schools. The \$18 million should not go into the general fund.

Dr. Cirsuolo explained that the law states the funds must be deposited into the community's general fund. Even if the funds went directly to the Board of Ed, it is suspected that the Board would then ask for what it needs, minus \$18 million. The Town's contribution is the same, whether the money goes directly to the Board of Ed or to the general fund.

Mr. Wasilewski stated that it is his hope that the \$18 million does go into the Board of Ed's budget.

Mayor Dickinson was not sure he understood Mr. Wasilewski's thought process but offered the following information; if education were an enterprise fund, there may be some validity to your argument that \$18 million, if it were placed in the Enterprise Fund for education, and education had its own education tax, that would lower the amount that would be raised in the education tax. But there isn't an education tax. It is a total governmental tax which means that every dollar we receive in revenue other than taxes is a reduction in the amount that we bill for taxes. It is all one pot of money. I don't know that we can do what you are saying unless we separated out education as a separate fund and had a separate education tax. Then I can understand how you would reduce it. The way it is, under the law, one appropriation from government, in order

to fund education and all the other services, I don't think it really matters what label you put on it, it is just money that doesn't get raised from a local taxpayer, that is a local tax. The local taxpayer is also paying state taxes so, in part, it is also funded from the state level as well.

Mr. Wasilewski felt that his suggestion would result in a 0% tax increase to the Town.

Geno Zandri, 37 Hallmark Drive confirmed with Dr. Cirusuolo and Linda Winters, Business Manager of the Board of Education that the Board's request totaled \$63,531,088 and the Mayor decreased that amount by approximately \$1,500,000. He asked if Dr. Cirusuolo and Ms. Winters had any idea as to what the amount of surplus would be from last year's budget to offset the cut?

Dr. Cirusuolo answered, at this point we are projecting a \$550,000 surplus.

Mr. Zandri pointed out that the Board's budget remains \$1 million less than requested and asked for an explanation on what programs or services may be cut as a result of the \$1 million shortfall?

Dr. Cirusuolo stated that the surplus figure would first have to be updated; they always project a very conservative surplus figure. At the Council's budget workshop next week an updated figure will be released. He anticipated the figure would be higher which will be used to pre-purchase items for next year to offset the reduction. Areas in the budget will then be reviewed where estimates are high; there is one particular area we know carries a high estimate; we are not sure of just how high it is. We budgeted \$1.50/gallon for heating oil because we were actually paying that at one point this year. That was the maximum allowable under the arrangement for this year. These figures were compiled during November/December of last year. The bids are due in next week...we will be shocked if the cost comes in at \$1.50/gallon. We anticipate a savings there. We will look at other areas of the budget where we can do the same thing. Where there is a range of estimates that we plug into the budget; we use the high range so that we don't find ourselves surprised. If we need to go further than that, then we will look for things that have the least amount of impact on students. Generally, we will be looking for items that will be additions to the program for next year. There are very few of those in the budget and some of them, we will be very reluctant to touch. We are expanding our early intervention reading program; it has been very successful. I will be very reluctant to recommend that program for reduction. We have, in the budget, an expansion of the alternative program at the high school; we have an additional Physical Education teacher at each of our middle schools; we will look at that as a potential reduction because they are new items. We will take a look at some of the technology expansion we are planning for next year and perhaps trim that down a little bit. Those are the areas we would be looking at. If we have to go further than that...the effect would be quite drastic. Athletic programs, music programs, certain aspects of them would have to be looked at. I don't think we will have to go down to that level in terms of accommodating this recommendation by the Mayor, if enacted by the Council. I

don't think we are facing a catastrophe here, in general. I can't guarantee we will meet the entire \$1.5 million but I am a lot more comfortable having to make recommendation in that area than I would for \$2 million or \$2.5 million.

Mr. Zandri asked, has the replacement of carpeting over the next 1-2 years been factored into this proposed budget?

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, not completely. We have put approximately \$247,000 in next year's budget for carpet removal. Our plan, if we are to accomplish it, and remove all of the carpet we want to remove from the present to next June, will cost us approximately \$597,000. We have been able to identify an additional \$150,000 out of this year's budget in the maintenance area that we can use. That leaves us short about \$190,000. In addition to finding money to accommodate the \$1.5 million reduction, we have to find another \$190,000. which, in my perspective, is a very high priority item. We will do that before we do some other things. Whenever you adjust the budget, you look for areas where you underestimated or you had some surprise and that is an area where we were underestimated by about \$190,000.

Mr. Zandri urged the Council to give due consideration to the special circumstances that have recently developed regarding the carpeting. He hoped that programs would not be lost because of the issue. He felt it should be handled separately.

Jack Agosta, 505 Church Street, Yalesville asked Dr. Cirsuolo if specific comments attributed to him in the newspaper were accurate?

Dr. Cirsuolo responded, no.

Mr. Agosta asked if the Mayor sat and met with him before cutting the Board's budget?

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, yes. The Mayor meets with the Comptroller, Board of Ed members, Dr. Cirsuolo, Central Office staff to review the budget in great detail.

Mr. Agosta asked about the decrease in funding to purchase textbooks.

Dr. Cirsuolo stated, most of the books were purchased this year out of last year's budget.

With regards to repairs and maintenance, Mr. Agosta asked if labor was included in the figures?

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, no labor or salaries are included in the figures. Those figures would be found in the non-certified salary account. The repairs and maintenance account represents money spent for materials and supplies; contracting for services that we cannot handle with our own crew such as plumbers, electricians, heating and ventilation, etc.

Mr. Agosta asked if there were any plans to hire new teachers?

Ms. Winters answered, there are 6.5 additional teaching positions. In addition there are four paraprofessionals for the early reading success plan.

Dr. Cirusuolo explained, we have three teachers for the early reading success program and two paraprofessionals; one information technology teacher; two middle physical ed teachers; alternative high school half-time teacher. Those are the new positions.

Mr. Agosta stated, the state aid grant has to go into the general fund, in his opinion, because then if the Town were to have a school tax the senior population would not want to pay it.

MaryEllen _____, 150 William Road, member of PTAC of Lyman Hall High School read a letter she wrote to the Mayor asking him to support the full budget, into the record. She asked, someday is there going to be or is there a goal in the long term plan of our education to increase our budget a certain amount on an annual basis?

Dr. Cirusuolo answered, no, there is no plan tied to a specific number. The Board has an updated five year plan and that really is the driving force behind the budget. The Board looks at that plan and funds as much of that as they can by asking for those funds. The Town decides how much money will be spent and adjusts the budget accordingly. With the exception of last year when the Board could not do everything that it had planned to do, the amount of money appropriated was not enough to do that. But every other year, and this is my eleventh, that I have been here, the Mayor and Council have appropriated sufficient funds for the Board to do everything it set out to do in putting its budget together. You will find very few schools systems in this country who can say that. The financial support on the part of the Town for the school system has been very good. The relationship between the two have been very positive. I am hopeful that the amount of money that is being recommended by the Mayor, that we will be able to say in June, once again, that the Board could do everything it wanted to do.

Pasquale Melillo, 15 Haller Place, Yalesville stated that he is a strong supporter of education. He asked for an explanation of the account titled, "Other Expenses" with a requested amount of \$94,000+.

Ms. Winters explained, those expenses include membership dues in professional organizations. The Board of Ed also provides some funding for graduation and for student activities.

Mr. Melillo next asked for an explanation of the "Non-Instructional Equipment" account.

Ms. Winters replied, it would be equipment for plants and maintenance.

Mr. Melillo asked, isn't that the same as "Non-Instructional Supplies"?

Ms. Winters answered, yes. Those are consumable supplies that are purchased primarily for offices, administration, etc.

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, basically paper supplies, etc. It could also include vacuum cleaners, lawn equipment; equipment used to maintain fields, etc.

Mr. Melillo felt that there was too much repetition in the accounts. On a separate note, he felt that as much funding as possible should be allocated for mentally-handicapped children. He asked if there were sufficient funds in the budget to cover all state and federal mandates.

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, yes there is sufficient funds to meet all mandates.

Questions were asked of the Pupil Transportation, Communications and Differential accounts.

Dr. Cirsuolo explained, we transport approximately 4,000 per day and we have the largest transportation system in the community. That is the cost of the contract we have with Double A Transportation; a contract that was arrived at through the bidding process.

Ms. Winters stated, communications includes postage for all of the mailings system-wide. It also included our telephone expenses and expenses for the internet. The Differential account is what is paid to guidance counselors, psychologists and information technology teachers when they work additional weeks in the summer. That is a contractual issue.

Mr. Melillo asked, what safeguards have been taken to assure the student's safety?

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, in schools where we cannot see the entrance from the office very well, we have greeters meeting people as they come in. We have more than one at the high schools because we have more than one entrance open all day. Any entrances that cannot be observed from the office or at which there is not a greeter, is locked, once the children are in the school.

Mr. Melillo raised a question about the ventilation systems in the schools.

Dr. Cirsuolo answered, there is nothing in the budget for revising them, just to maintain them. Included in the school renovation project is an examination of the ventilation system at all of the schools and needed revisions. That will be taken care of by the renovation project.

Wes Lube, 15 Montowese Trail stated 77% of the budget is salaries. The basic increases approximate 7% of the Board's 8.7% increase. The Town is going to stop growing and, so far, a lot of the educational system growth has benefited from increases in our grand list over and above inflation and over and above reassessment. Somewhere you are going to have to get tougher in negotiating salaries because we cannot continue that 7%. To only have a 1.7%

increase in the quality of education system is a very minimum achievement and we should be striving, although we can't, as long as that basic, fundamental 7% hurdle is there every year.

Dr. Cirasuolo stated, state law sets deadlines forcing parties into mediation and, in some cases, arbitration which is binding. That creates a whole different atmosphere in terms of negotiations. Both sides in the process have to look at what the pattern is in terms of the arbitration awards that are coming down. The increases that are built into this budget and the budget for many years are ones that would have been, whether they were settled or arbitrated or mediated, were increases that if they were pushed to binding arbitration would have been there anyhow. It is not just a matter of getting tough. Change in state law must occur which will either remove parts of the process or changes the criteria that the arbitrators have to employ. It is not a free market negotiating process at all. It is highly regulated, leaving very little margin on either side for either getting tough.

Lynn Landry, 5 Trailside Drive, representative of the Yalesville PTAC stated that she represents a group that have titled themselves, "No Child Should be Left Behind". She read excerpts from a statement asking for Council and Mayoral support of the budget. The Town now spends \$104 per student, per year for supplies. That includes workbooks and materials. That is the lowest amount allocated, per student, in our Connecticut economic reference group. This amounts break down to barely \$.50 per child, per day in this town. Don't you believe our children need deserve to have the resources and programs to grow ahead? We believe they do and we thank you for your concern.

Christine Bee, 8 Saddlebrook Drive also spoke in support of the Board's budget and also read a prepared statement into the record. She trusted that the community's representation will make the right critical decisions.

Barbara Zielinski, 7 Sunset Drive stated that, in her opinion, the Town is just maintaining status quo, not improving education. She was concerned for the children. Status quo does not afford the children the opportunity to go above and beyond what they have now.

Tony DeBaise, 278 N. Main Street appreciated the previous speaker's concern with remaining status quo and another speaker's comments with regards to the seniors concerns with attempting to keep the budget as status quo. Most seniors have very little income other than social security which poses a major problem for those who don't have decent housing of their own. Most of the seniors have family and grandchildren who are attending schools, whether in this town or another. The Superintendent stated that he and his fellow superintendents are limited in their number and scope, to be able to converse with our representatives about doing something about this, what I consider as evil, binding arbitration. I disagree with the superintendent when he says he only has 160+ people in his field to try and affect a change. I believe there are hundreds and hundreds of people who could help you out in this matter, and so does each one of your other co-horts in the same capacity, in that you have students that I am sure you could get to

write letters to our representatives. I have mentioned this many times over the years to people in public office and the response is always the same; they feel they have no power over the binding arbitration. Perhaps you should start a campaign with your fellow superintendents to address this issue.

Dr. Cirsuolo replied, I didn't mean to give the impression that we were absolutely without any influence at all. I, personally, have been the president of the State Association of Superintendents, before that I headed up their legislative efforts; in my present position I am in regular communication with those people who represent Wallingford in the legislature. You are talking about a situation where, those who are in favor of binding arbitration are organized, and there are those who represent teachers, are very powerful. If you were to speak to any representatives, you would find that approximately 75% would tell you that there is no way that they would ever consider changing or removing binding arbitration altogether. There may be some revisions they may want to look at, and we have been successful in persuading the legislation three years ago to change some of the criteria that are used by the arbitrators. The state is going to have to face, I think, what it faced in the middle of the 1980s; a major infusion of funding into teacher salary accounts in each school district or else we are simply not going to have enough teachers. That is just a market situation as inevitable as compound interest; that is going to happen. I don't think we should be looking at ways to limit the increases in teacher's salaries, I think we should be looking at ways to get the state and federal government to shoulder a greater share of the burden. The effort to fund a greater share has been started again and there are some bills being considered by the legislature, before the appropriations committee right now... which will increase the level of state funding and make the whole enterprise less reliant on the local property tax which is probably as aggressive a tax as you are going to find. I could never justify to myself trying to get students in the school system to support a political position that the Superintendent's Association would take. I think that would be highly unethical for me to do, from my own perspective.

Diane Citerella, 11 Fairlawn Drive asked, is there a way to adjust the dollar amount that is allocated to the Board of Ed's budget after the Board has their workshops to determine if their surplus will not cover that \$1million+ amount, so if they don't come up with enough that then will effect programs and services that we currently have? Is there a way to re-negotiate so that nothing currently gets affected with children's services and programs? Dr. Cirsuolo said that next week the Board of Ed was going to have workshops to see if the surplus in the heating oil account, etc., will amount to enough so that nothing will get affected?

Dr. Cirsuolo explained, the workshop is a Town Council workshop at which we will be presenting an updated estimate of the surplus to the Town Council, to the Community, to the Mayor, at that point. We will not be making final decisions on the budget, the Board won't be making that until June. At that point, is when we really can project, with some degree of certainty what the surplus will be. We will also be able to identify, with a sufficient degree of certainty, where, in next year's budget, what we have over-estimated some items so we know

we can reduce those accounts without effecting anything. We are about 1-2 months away from those actual decisions being made. I cannot guarantee that programs and services we currently have won't be cut.

Ms. Citerella stated, I have to agree with some of the people who spoke; there are a lot of people out there; I organized a petition, 200 people signed it saying please...a copy was supposed to have been forwarded to Chairman Parisi. I have a copy of it here. Two hundred people signed it just saying, please, please support the Board of Ed's budget to maintain current programs and services. I am told by your (Mayor's) office today that over approximately 150 people wrote letters; I don't know how many calls you got. You may not see people's faces but there are people out there who do want to preserve the quality of education for our children. We don't want our children shortchanged and, hopefully, you got our petition, I left it with...

Mayor Dickinson answered, yes.

Mr. Parisi stated, I didn't get it; I don't think I got it.

Ms. Citerella stated, the woman in your (directing her comment to Mayor) office, I came to deliver it and they said you don't really have an office here.

Mr. Parisi stated, I just wanted to make it clear...

Ms. Citerella stated, I wanted the Council to be aware, 200 is not a lot, but it was in a short period of time and it does represent people who do care. Is 150 a good estimate of the letters that you received saying....

Mayor Dickinson replied, I think it was 117 letters; phone calls and 221 signatures, right. The budget is always a difficult process but if you look back to 1995, 1996, on the average the requested increase was 8% on the Board of Education budget. If you compound that and add that up over a period of time, literally, in this community, you could not afford what the taxes would be. Wallingford's per capita income is below the state average or has been, and I don't think it changes with the new census. That has to be factored into it. If we are not a well-to-do community, we fall somewhere below the state average which includes extremes, it is a factor that has to be kept in mind. The budget is truly just an estimate; an estimate of what the costs will be in the upcoming year. Some of those costs may be higher, some may be lower, but it is only an estimate. As a general rule, the Town has not financed education budget at the level requested but it has been adequate to maintain and improve services. For example, since 1996/97, we have an additional 60 administrative and certified staff employed by the Board of Education. In the non-certified area, I think it is somewhere, almost 100, that would include aids and paraprofessionals. In that time period, right now, we will have a school enrollment slightly less than the 1996/97 enrollment, if I am looking at the pages correctly. Significant money is being spent in education and they are impacted by many mandates at the state level

and there are a lot of factors involved. As a general rule, everyone has benefited, most importantly, the students. There is no magic to the issue of where the dollars come from and there has to be a balance of what we are able to do. At this point I do believe we have a balance that has been in the interest of the students, as well as the population at large. Those are some of the factors that have to be waived. I would just remind you again, that the budget proposals are always estimates. That is general government, education, state budget, federal budget, it's estimates. Somewhere in that estimate will be the reality. The track record has been a fairly positive one and I would not expect that there would be a major problem this year. So far we have provided an education that I think everyone can be proud of. Does it have all the bells and whistles? No. I think, given the level of wealth in the community, it would be very difficult to justify to the entire community if we had every bell and whistle because there are people who cannot afford the taxes we have now and we are asking them to pay more. Just as there are people who could pay much more in the way of taxes but we can't pick and choose, it becomes a general assignment that everyone has to shoulder. That is why we have to keep it somewhere within the cost of living and this tax increase is certainly within that. There is no magic.

Susan Smith, 17 Normal Avenue supported the budget request in its entirety. She did not want to see any dollars cut from the request. She thanked everyone for giving her children a good education. She asked the Town to continue doing the work that it is doing.

Annie McDonald, 175 North Branford Road, stated that what the Mayor has suggested is fair. We will see our kids continue to have a good education, which is what we see now. The budget is fair for everyone. Please support it.

Mr. Agosta asked for further explanation on the Mayor's communications with Dr. Cirsuolo regarding the Board's budget cut. He asked if the Council was made aware of the Mayor's cut prior to the printing of the budget book?

Dr. Cirsuolo could not answer that question.

Mayor Dickinson reviewed the budget process for Mr. Agosta. His office becomes involved in the process with the departments beginning in February. The proposed budget before you is submitted to the Council and is available for public comment. The Council then takes up the budget subsequent to the public hearing to determine what action they will take on the budget. There is no meeting with the Council on the proposed budget until this hearing.

Mr. Agosta was of the opinion that once the budget is in print, it is not changed.

Mr. Parisi disputed Mr. Agosta's opinion stating, this Council does have the authority to change the budget if it chooses to. If it doesn't choose to, it can accept it as it is presented; that is our system and it has worked very well for us.

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street asked Dr. Cirusuolo, how many new programs have been instituted since he has taken the position of Superintendent; how many programs have been cut?

Dr. Cirusuolo was not sure how many, he hadn't counted; quite a few. He has cut less than five programs, if his memory was correct.

Mr. Wasilewski pointed out that every year that Dr. Cirusuolo has been employed in his current position, the Board of Ed budget has had a surplus.

Pasquale Melillo, 15 Haller Place, Yalesville stated that everyone has to pitch in and contact their local and state representatives to ask for as much state funding as possible.

Christine Bee, Saddlebrook Drive reiterated that, although many parents may not be seen at these meetings, they are out there, as opposed to the members of the public who are seen at the meetings. She stated, we do want the budget supported. We are not looking for bells and whistles. If it can be improved, great.

This concluded review of the Board of Education's budget.

Electric Division – P. 67

Geno Zandri, 37 Hallmark Drive stated, with regards to the Division's revenues, in looking at the budget it appears as though one-third of the division's revenues are generated by residential customers, is that correct?

Raymond Smith, Director of Public Utilities answered, yes.

Mr. Zandri asked, and approximately two-thirds is commercial and industrial?

Dave Gessert, Public Utilities Commission member answered, correct.

Mr. Zandri asked, in this year's budget you are projecting \$3, 196,000 deficit?

Mr. Smith asked, for the planned budget? Yes.

Mr. Zandri stated, in looking at Working Capital, you show the \$3 million loss; you have \$2.7 million for depreciation expense, and your inputting \$4,230,000 from Retained Earnings to balance the budget, correct?

Mr. Smith answered, I believe the Mayor approved a figure of \$4,210,000.

Mr. Zandri asked, in essence, to balance the budget, we are subsidizing it with retained earnings?

Mr. Smith answered, we are taking money from prior earnings, yes.

Mr. Zandri stated, I wanted to point out how the earnings of the division that I have always said, in my opinion, belong to the residents of Wallingford, is subsidizing the electric rates. I just wanted to make that point.

Jack Agosta, 505 Church Street, Yalesville asked, how much is in the division's cash reserves presently?

Mr. Smith answered, approximately \$19-20 million.

Mr. Agosta asked, what are your future plans for the money?

Mr. Smith answered, when we developed our current rate schedule, we showed that we would be drawing down those monies, as Mr. Zandri pointed out, to supplement the needs of the operations over the next few years in order to keep the rates stable. There is \$4.21 in next year's budget to cover the operations and capital needs of the division.

Mr. Agosta stated, you had \$18.4 million and now you are up to \$20 million. The figure is not coming down.

Mr. Smith stated, in our wholesale power contract we have scheduled increases. The monies shown in Acct. 555 will rise in future years, even without a rate increase in the retail, we are going to need monies to offset those extra power cost increases that are already in our contract. We will be drawing down more in the future years.

Mr. Agosta shared Mr. Zandri's feelings; the money belongs to the residents of Wallingford, and not to the industries.

At this time Mr. Parisi announced that one of the other speakers made the statement that they were told there is no Council Office. That is not true. The Town Council Office is located on this floor, the second floor, and the door is directly behind Council chambers. I say that for the enlightenment of anyone and everyone either listening or sitting here.

Pasquale Melillo, 15 Haller Place, Yalesville questioned the Operating Revenues account. He asked what the designation, Public Authority, meant.

Mr. Gessert explained that it is all the electricity sold to the Town for use in public buildings such as schools, town offices, streetlights, etc.

Mr. Melillo asked for an explanation of the Late Payments account.

Tom Sullivan, Electric Division Office Manager explained, there is a 5% penalty called for by the rates adopted by the PUC, which is levied against the current monthly bill or the remaining unpaid portion after fifteen days.

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street asked, how much did the Electric Division contribute to the general fund of Wallingford?

Mr. Smith answered, \$1.8 million, approximately.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, how much is the Town billed for electricity used town-wide?

Mr. Gessert answered, Mr. Melillo came up with a figure of \$1.1 million.

Mr. Wasilewski replied, I came up with \$1.4 million, excluding the Board of Ed.

Mr. Smith answered, there is \$300,000 for Street Lighting and \$1.1 million for all the other entities.

Mr. Wasilewski stated, if we are paying approximately \$1.4 million, we are actually gaining about \$400,000 from the Electric Division. We are one of the big users.

Mr. Gessert answered, the Town is a big user but they also have the best rates in town.

Mr. Wasilewski answered, so does everyone else. We own the plant; that is what you have to remember; we own the plant and we still have to pay for our electricity. Somewhere along the line we should do away with what you give to the general fund and don't pay for the electricity. By law, you have to charge. State Statue 7-222 requires that the Town be charged for electricity, at cost. Something should be done so that the Town benefits more than it does.

Mr. Smith felt that the Town does benefit. If it were charged CL&P or United Illuminating rates, it would be a 20-30% higher. The Town is not incurring that differential.

Mr. Wasilewski repeated his statement that the Town should get more than \$400,000 out of the Electric Division.

Pasquale Melillo, 15 Haller Place, Yalesville asked if the new generating plant will impact the operating budget of the division?

Mr. Gessert answered, they will become a customer of the Water & Sewer Division; will pay a lease payment of approximately \$500,000 per year to the Electric Division and will, in turn, become a very large taxpayer to the Town. The revenue stream is three-fold.

Mr. Wasilewski asked if the generating plant is currently paying lease fees?

Mr. Smith answered, yes, monthly.

Mr. Wasilewski asked what is being done with that money?

Mr. Sullivan explained that it is deposited into the line item #418. It is invested with the rest of our funds.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, is it invested in stocks or what?

Mr. Gessert stated, the Comptroller places the funds for us.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, do you suggest to the Comptroller where the funds should be invested?

Mr. Sullivan replied, we inform him of maturity dates we must meet to pay outstanding obligations. He makes the decision as to where the funds are invested.

Mr. Wasilewski was mystified how the division could have so much money in reserves yet report a deficit budget.

Mr. Smith answered, that is how we can do it. If we didn't have that money in reserves, we would have to raise the rates.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, how do you make up the deficit budget, from sales?

Mr. Smith answered, we are appropriating \$4.2 million from Retained Earnings.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, was that for the reduction we got in electric rates? Is that one of the reasons why we are having this deduction?

Mr. Smith answered, it is one of the reasons that we try to establish level rates for the next three years. We knew that we would make money early on in the rate structure to use that money to put in reserves and then draw it down to stabilize the rates for the future.

Jim Krupp, 2 Jonathan Road, asked, if you are operating at a negative net income now, how many years in the future are you planning to continue operating in a negative income? What happens when you run out of Retained Earnings?

Mr. Smith answered, somewhere down the road we will have to raise rates.

Mr. Krupp asked, so we are dealing with a temporary fix?

Mr. Smith answered, it is a temporary arrangement. We could have left the rates higher but we chose to reduce them last year and not build up additional funds.

Mr. Gessert added, we knew when we signed a long term contract a number of years ago, that what the sliding scale was going to be on the rates. If we had cut the rates way down at the beginning of that contract... which we could have, you would have been seeing rate increases now. Rather than cut way down and then keep gradually keep going up over ten years, we elected to try and levelize it as much as possible.

Mr. Krupp pointed out that the Division cannot continue to run a negative net income forever. We will be facing electric rate increases in the future.

Mr. Gessert answered, yes, and our contract runs several more years and then we will be negotiating a new, long term power supply contracts and our rates will be based on what those contracts come in on.

Mr. Wasilewski asked Mr. Smith if all of the customers and Town government should start conserving on electricity to cut its large electric bill?

Mr. Smith replied, we encourage conservation and there are certain customers that have taken significant steps, yes. We have the lighting assistance program; people purchase several thousand volts, conservation...

Mr. Wasilewski asked if the Town bill is going up or down?

Mr. Smith answered, it has been stable over the last few years. The Water & Sewer Divisions have been very active in controlling their cost. They have established operating arrangements with the Electric Division so they would not pump during peak periods.

Mr. Wasilewski hopes the Town practices conservation with electricity and water.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Social Services Contribution – Committee on Aging

Jack Agosta asked why the Senior Center's budget has increased by only \$10,000 with a new Senior Center being constructed?

Virginia Phillips, Executive Director of the Senior Center explained, when the approval was given for the construction of the center, one of the agreements reached was that we wouldn't substantially increase staff. We would try to maintain staff at approximately the same level and expand programs.

Mr. Agosta was of the opinion that a lot of money is being spent to build a new center and it doesn't seem as though there will be any increase in the programs offered.

Ms. Phillips directed Mr. Agosta's attention to the large increase in the Transportation program because of a series of events that have occurred in the recent couple of years. We felt that we are living up to our commitment to the Council that we wouldn't increase the amount of salaried employees to staff the center. We needed the money for transportation more than we needed it for staffing the new building.

The various shopping locations to which the senior bus travels was discussed at this time.

Wes Lube, 15 Montowese Trail asked why the Committee on Aging is only requesting \$325,000 for the new fiscal year when the current rate of expenditures during the first seven months of the present fiscal year, if it were to continue along the same pace, would total \$405,000 for the current fiscal year.

Ms. Phillips explained that the Committee on Aging's expenses are not averaged or steady every month. Each month is different. The only item that remains steady from month to month are salaries. The COA is billed twice a year for postage and gasoline accounts. Very often these lump sums come out of the account, all at once. They are not paid on a monthly basis. Ms. Phillips feels that the COA will come in under budget.

Mr. Lube spoke to the Mini-bus appropriation. At the present rate of expenditures in the current fiscal year, Mr. Lube felt the account would be over-expended by \$10,000.

Ms. Phillips reminded everyone that last month the COA approached the Town Council and asked for a \$6,000 appropriation to cover extra-ordinary expenses for maintenance of the vehicles. The total is not reflected, perhaps, in the figures Mr. Lube is viewing. With the \$6,000 appropriation, the COA will come in under budget. Three vehicles have recently undergone extensive major repairs.

Mr. Lube pointed out that there was a 75% increase in the Mini-bus appropriation, what was that attributed to?

Ms. Phillips replied, a new lease arrangement for two brand new vehicles that will be arriving in the midst of the next fiscal year.

Mr. Lubee asked, what portion of this \$108,000 is your deposit on the lease?

Ms. Phillips answered, it is a matching payment. The Town of Wallingford is the official lessee of the vehicles. They are asked to provide a 20% and the Greater New Haven Transit District provides the other 80%. The Town's contribution will be \$21,000.

Mr. Lubee pointed out that the \$108,000 requested is an over-estimate.

Mayor Dickinson explained, \$25,000 of the increase from \$61,000 to \$108,000 was just for vehicles. The remainder is for increased wages and benefits on the drivers.

Mr. Lubee asked why there is a 50% cut to the Elderly Meals program?

Ms. Phillips answered, that is a request of the Program Planner's Office, not the COA. It does not cover all of the home delivered meals in Wallingford. This is a special program that subsidizes people who cannot afford home delivered meals. The COA does not administer that line item.

Don Roe, Program Planner explained, his projection for next year was that \$3,000 from the general fund would be sufficient to continue the program as has been practiced for the past decade. If you were to go back ten years you would see that, one year, we actually budgeted close to \$20,000 when the program operators were making claims around "fair share". There had been different issues in how that program plays out. There is a variation and each year we estimate what that variation is going to be. We have decreased that request to the Town, pretty faithfully, over the past few years. I don't anticipate it going any lower than that.

Mayor Dickinson explained that the program is not totally funded by the Town. IT is funded through state and federal funds via an agency in New Haven. All of the communities that participate are supposed to deal with fair share allocation at the point there is not sufficient funds from other sources to cover the meals. It is not always the case that those monies be used. There is variation year to year. When it is clear that there is potential for the money not being spent, reductions occur in what is budgeted. That could change depending on usage and what money is available from state and government.

Mr. Lubee stated that he wanted to be assured that if the funds budgeted in this account for the year were expended, in total, prior to the end of the budget year that there would not be a problem if a transfer of funds were requested into the account.

Mr. Roe assured Mr. Lubeck that there would be no problem with transferring money should it be needed, however, he doubted seriously that it would.

Tony DeBaise asked if the new Senior Center will be turned over to the Committee on Aging?

Ms. Phillips replied that the building is rented from the Town.

Mr. DeBaise asked what the annual bonding costs are to the Town on the new center?

Thomas Myers, Comptroller answered, approximately \$275,000 per year.

Mr. DeBaise pointed out that it will cost approximately \$700,000 per year for the Senior Center when you add in the bonding costs (\$275,000), to the operational expenses (\$325,000) and transportation lines (\$108,138). Is it true that the Town has no firm authority over the Committee on Aging?

Mayor Dickinson explained, there is a partnership arrangement between Town officials and the operation of the Senior Center. The operation of the center is performed pursuant to lease by the COA. The COA is a separate corporate entity, similar to the Board of Manager at the Library and S.C.O.W. (Spanish Community of Wallingford), and the (Wlfd.) Day Care Center. The day to day decision making has been delegated to the COA. If there is extreme dissatisfaction, ultimately, the operation of the center could be taken over by some other entity at the direction of Wallingford officials. He believes the COA to be very responsible and desirous of providing services in an atmosphere and at a facility that is a benefit to the seniors and the community at large.

Mr. DeBaise asked, what operations is the Town in control of?

Mayor Dickinson answered, budgeting. Without the budgeting of funds, the center could not operate.

Mr. DeBaise wondered if the citizens of the town realized that the taxpayers are paying close to \$60,000 per month to support the senior center, yet, the Town's elected representatives claim they have no direct control over the center.

Mr. Parisi pointed out that the Town does not have any control over the Library, or Housing Authority, either. Control is a partnership and our part of the agreement is financial; theirs is administrative. If people were being treated unfairly or if funds were being mismanaged, obviously, the administration cooperatively, Council and Mayor, would step in; it would not be allowed to continue. The Council does not have any authority over the operation of the center.

Mr. Lube explained how the Senior Center was set up. When Randolph Erskine (Atty.) drafted the original by-laws and the Mayor, along with Mildred (Mrs. Erskine) proposed them. Mrs. Erskine was then the current president of the COA. The Council, Atty. Erskine and the Mayor was concerned that an ongoing relationship be maintained in this partnership. That relationship has been somewhat destroyed except for the Town's funding. The original by-laws called for a maximum of two three year terms, per member; that has now been changed to three year terms per member; the meetings were to be open to the public; they are now closed to the public; the meetings used to have minutes; they no longer have minutes. The partnership has been destroyed by the COA. The Council had reserved the right to appoint two people per year to six seats of revolving three year terms. For the last three years the Council has appointed no one to the COA. The Council's clout is what the Mayor pointed out, your funding, and that is the strongest muscle anyone can ever have.

Pasquale Melillo, 15 Haller Place, Yalesville wanted to know if the Town of Wallingford had the final legal authority over the senior center.

Mayor Dickinson answered, the Town owns the senior center.

Law Department, P. 20

Mr. Melillo asked for a report out on the number of outstanding court cases that could potentially affect the budget.

Atty. Small answered, most of our cases involve insurance coverage, therefore the risk is covered through that. Tax Appeals, the Finance Department has some kind of reserve, they keep track of all our pending cases. We updated them whenever cases conclude; whenever we have new cases, and he takes care of that in terms of reserves. I know of no serious exposure relating to pending litigation on the part of the town.

Social Services – Center Street Cemetery

Jack Agosta, 505 Church Street, Yalesville asked what the budgeted funds are spent on?

Gerald, Farrell, Jr., President of the Center Street Cemetery Association explained that it has been a consistent budget between this year and last. Last year's budget exhibited an increase from the previous year's budget due to a tree program the association established. The cemetery has two main problems relating to liability. There are thousands of stones that are hundreds of years old. Many of them are in danger of toppling over. We have some that are 15-20' high in the air and if they topple over, they could literally kill someone. Each year we spend over \$30,000 on doing stone restoration. The second thing we implemented last year was

a tree program. We hire an arborist to cut trees back for us to avoid dropping limbs. The association has a sexton to perform some services for the association. He is paid a minimal salary.

Police Services, P. 32

Mr. Agosta had some questions regarding the level of staffing for police officers.

Chief Dortenzio stated that the labor market is tight; he would take all the officers he could get. The budget reflects an increase of one officer position. The \$50,000 increase in the budget does not represent the new position but an overall wage increase for just under 100 employees. It is based on contractual obligations that will come due July 1st.

Animal Control Officer, P. 34

Mr. Agosta pointed out that the ACO had been before the Council at its last meeting seeking funds for architectural services to enlarge the animal shelter. Why isn't there any funds in the proposed budget to do the work?

Mayor Dickinson answered, no bid figures were available. We hope to fund the project but without knowing what the total is, he could not commit beyond the overall plan to see improvements made.

Mr. Melillo asked Kathryn Lindemann, ACO, if she had enough money to properly care for the animals?

Ms. Lindemann did not feel funding was inadequate.

Mayor Dickinson pointed out that the State visits and inspects the shelter on a regular basis and always gives a passing grade to the facility. We are meeting the standards the state has.

Engineering, P. 49

Mr. Lube asked why there is a 28% increase in the salary account?

John Thompson, Town Engineer explained that a portion of it is due to contractual obligations and a portion is a result of the hiring of an Assistant Town Engineer.

He inquired about the Mansion Road/South Turnpike Road safety improvements budgeted for last year in the amount of \$30,000. What is the status of the project?

Mr. Thompson explained, last year \$30,000 was requested for engineering services to study and design the improvements at the intersection of Mansion and S. Turnpike roads. The design is under way and we have requested funding in the six year capital and non-recurring budget for the construction work for the safety improvements.

Mr. Lube asked, why the Mayor cut the \$40,000 request to fund the Town-wide Regulatory Signing Program?

Mr. Thompson explained, we were looking at hiring an outside consultant service to undertake a town-wide program, looking at all the regulatory and warning signs as part of the statewide safety improvement product. It was agreed that we had a significant number of projects currently under way and it would be best to defer this for at least a year.

Mr. Agosta pointed out that the \$150,000 in the six year capital budget for the Town-wide Regulatory Signing Program is paid for entirely by the state.

Mr. Thompson stated, it was probably an oversight and should have been removed from the budget.

Mr. Melillo asked if the Engineering Department's budget had enough funds in it to all for the inspection of every bridge in town?

Mr. Thompson answered, yes. All the bridges have been inspected on a regular basis by the state and none have been determined to be structurally deficient or presenting any safety hazards to the public. Any time we find something that needs repair we address it immediately. If there is a need for additional appropriations to take care of the repairs, there is a mechanism that we follow to get those monies.

Public Works Dept., P. 51

With regards to the North Farms Road, Rte. 68 to Town Line item under the six year capital and non-recurring, \$750,000 was budgeted for the project in the F.Y. 99-00 budget and an additional \$500,000 in the F.Y. 01-02 proposed budget. Mr. Agosta asked, why the project had not yet started?

Henry McCully, Director of Public Works explained, the \$750,000 was a high projection. The figure was lowered and the job was postponed for one year.

Quinnipiac Linear Trail

Mr. Agosta stated that the project was supposed to be 100% funded by the State of CT. outside of design. Now we see that the cost to the Town is going to be \$700,000.

Mayor Dickinson stated, the Town is funding approximately \$700,000 or a little more. There are several different grants involved. Out of \$1,450,000 for Phase II, \$750,000 is a grant. Phase I, at least \$700,000, I believe. There should never have been an impression that there was not a financial commitment by the Town.

Public Works Dept. (Re-visited)

With regards to the Gas & Oil account, it reflects a reduction. Is this a guessing game again?, Mr. Lube asked.

Mr. McCully replied that he had transferred into the account and that amount is an amended amount. We are back to last year's number on that because the increase in the diesel; we experienced a 90% increase in diesel plus the heavy winter. He has already transferred into the account this year. We work through the Purchasing Department and have a meeting on Friday to discuss natural gas. It is a town-wide bid and purchase.

With regards to Purchased Professional Services, Custodial, there was a 28% increase in the amount requested. Mr. Lube asked for an explanation.

Mr. McCully answered it is the result of a contractual increase in a multi-year contract. The new Senior Center is impacting the budget. The new building is much larger than the existing one.

Mr. Lube noted an increase in the Professional Services, Recycling account.

Mr. McCully explained, we will eventually take over the landfill and once we take it over, the resident drop-off permit will not longer be valid and we will have to move into a transfer station. It is another permit. The senior drop-off service will continue and it will be a much better area for them; totally designed and user friendly.

Mr. Lube asked why two picnic tables were cut from the budget?

Mr. McCully answered, the items are going out to bid.

Mr. Lube asked about the need to budget for fencing for Hope Hill Road.

Mr. McCully explained how the fencing will replace existing fencing that is in need of replacement on the side of Suburban Market.

Mr. Agosta stated that the \$57,000 salary that was cut from the budget should have been used for other expenditures. This is one of the few budgets lower than last year.

Mr. Melillo asked if there is a systematic program of cleaning storm drains?

Mr. McCully stated, Line #9024, Purchased Professional Services, is budgeted for our five year contract we have entered into for the cleaning of catch basins. The contractor cleans approximately 2,000 basins when he comes in, which is usually late spring. That supplements the Town's own catch basin cleaning program. Every three years the cycle is completed for cleaning the 6,000 basins in town.

Pension Fund

Mr. Agosta asked, how many people working for the Town of Wallingford do not have Medicare when they retire?

Terence Sullivan, Personnel Director replied, there are 131 employees who have not paid into Medicare. We are trying to determine what their status would be at age 65 to see if they are eligible.

Mr. Agosta thought that employees who did not contribute to social security had the option of contributing to Medicare, is that true?

Mr. Sullivan was not sure. The Town is trying to get an answer from Medicare and Social Security directly. We have a team of consultants and lawyers looking at it.

Mr. Agosta was concerned about those employees working for the Town who will find that they are not eligible for Medicare when they retire because they did not contribute to social security. Why can't the Town allow the employees to vote on whether or not they would like to join it?

Kathryn Zandri, 37 Hallmark Drive asked, are any employees being laid off in the budget?

Terrence Sullivan answered, there is one employee whose job is not included in the general fund budget. That is in the Public Works budget. The department head determined that he didn't have enough work to do; there is a re-assignment of duties; the man is under-employed. The left over duties would be handled by current staff.

Ms. Zandri asked, how long did that employee work for the Town?

Mr. Sullivan answered, around 15-17 years.

Ms. Zandri asked, has he been under-employed for 17 years?

Mr. Sullivan answered, the department head determined that there was not enough work to keep this man gainfully occupied and to justify it.

Ms. Zandri asked, are we adding any positions in this budget?

Mayor Dickinson answered, there is a clerk in the Recreation Department and there is a Property Appraiser in the Finance Department.

Ms. Zandri asked, do we have any other vacancies in the Public Works Department? Positions that we are not funding because they are vacant at the moment?

Mr. Sullivan answered, not to my knowledge.

Ms. Zandri asked, there is no other position we could have found for this gentleman to place him in?

Mr. Sullivan answered, the employee has been advised to bid on any job that is open as they come up. I have indicated that we would try and work with him where he has the qualifications. It is a decision that the Town doesn't take lightly. We offer assistance to laid off employees, career counseling services; resume building; interview skills; training; etc. If it comes to that, those services will be made available. He is encouraged to apply for the jobs as they are posted.

Ms. Zandri asked, what is the average percentage of increase is in contract negotiated wages?

Mr. Sullivan answered, for the next year coming up, where we have contracts, the average is 2.9% or 3%; that ball park. We have three contracts in arbitration and we have three contracts coming up for negotiation between August and September.

Ms. Zandri directed the question to the Council, Mayor and Personnel Director, would you think that a 7.5% increase in wages is excessive?

No response was forthcoming.

Mr. Parisi answered, it depends on what the starting wage is. If you make \$5,000 a year and get a \$2,000 raise, that is approximately 50%.

Ms. Zandri stated, we haven't had a 7.5% increase in many, many years. Does the Council have a ceiling or limit at which they feel is to be the amount of increase that they...

Mr. Parisi answered, the Council requested 3% a couple of years ago.

Ms. Zandri asked, how are part-time wage increases calculated, is there a formula used?

Mr. Sullivan answered, by January 1st of each year I make a recommendation to the Mayor about the adjustments for part-timers. Generally, you have a sense of what is out there in the community. I do speak with human relations people in the private sector, my peers in other municipalities and we try to gauge what a fair rate would be. It is not tied to union contracts but it is helpful to give a cost of living adjustment so that they can also pay their bills each year. It ranges from 2 ½ to 2 ¾% in this budget.

We have a part time position on the first page of the Personnel Detail and Salaries Page which reflects a 7.5% wage increase for a part time secretary who works 25 hours in the Town Hall; from \$17.09/hr. to \$18.35. I didn't see that size increase in anyone else's pay and I was curious as to why?

Mr. Sullivan answered, to answer your first question, there is a 3% adjustment for part-timers effective July 1st.

Ms. Zandri asked, that is what you recommend to each department head but departments can ask for more or can be given less?

Mr. Sullivan answered, I recommend to the Mayor and then, in his message to the departments for the budget preparation, he gives direction on what he wants to see for part-time raises.

Ms. Zandri asked, do you mind if I ask that department why they increased the position 7.5%? Is anyone opposed to that?

Don Roe, Program Planner explained, I believe the two people in my office have been on a previous schedule and that has been the continuation of that, rather than the elimination of that. If you were to look at other part time employees who have come to work after them, the guidelines of the 2.9% or whatever the percentage was, was applied. For these two people they are prior to that.

Mr. Sullivan stated, prior to July 1, 1997 we did have some part-time employees who were on a step plan. They were to wait two years to move up the schedule. Hires after 1997 don't get the step plan, their wages are not tied to the union contract. The two employees hired in Mr. Roe's office are on the step plan and are either still progressing on that or they have a schedule that applies to them.

Ms. Zandri stated, there are a lot of part-time employees who work throughout the various departments in the Town Hall, some of them I know, some of them I don't. I believe they are all dedicated, hard workers, and I think a formula for increases should be fairly applied, or a rate of increase, for all of them. There doesn't seem to be a uniform formula that is followed, for instance, there are two part time employees who have been hired within a year of each other but are not receiving the same increases. I would hate to see us lose some good, part-time employees because of wage issues.

Mr. Lube asked, there was no contribution on the part of the Town to the pension fund again, this year?

Mr. Sullivan answered, that is correct.

Mr. Lube asked, when was this decision made to reflect the current market?

Mr. Sullivan stated, there have been downturns in the market but we are over-funded and the actuary has recommended that we not contribute again.

Mr. Lube asked, despite the decline, we are still over-funded?

Mr. Sullivan answered, yes.

Fire Department

Mr. Lube asked for an explanation on the goals the department should be setting personnel-wise.

Chief Peter Struble stated, standards are set by OSHA for respiratory protection; a certain number of people have to be on standby outside of a building or hazardous area if we are going to send them in. There are National Consensus Standards which are not mandated by law but are benchmarks we try to work toward because they are industry standards. There is an insurance standard called ISO that the town is rated on and we are currently rated a 3 out of 10 with 1 being the highest rating. There are only three 1 ratings in the State of CT. We continually monitor that to ensure we are in compliance.

Mr. Lube asked, how many people are we supposed to have on a truck?

Mr. Struble answered, we have several staffing requirements. Our ambulance is required by State Health Department to be staffed with a paramedic and EMT; 2. A pumper or engine is required to have a minimum staff of 3; an officer, driver and fire fighter. Our aerial truck is also staffed with 3, same as the pumper. Volunteer houses staff their engines with the same standards; 3. They can staff with 2 on a rescue truck. Last year we added a rescue unit; 2 persons in the budget, and put a rescue in service. Our high call volume is Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The engines, which at one time had extra capacity to be able to handle the medical calls during the day, were no longer having that extra capacity because of the number of medical calls. We put a dedicated unit, much smaller, and one of our capital requests this year is to replace that unit with a small unit which will specifically run medical emergencies with the ambulance. It reduces the number of times a pumper has to run.

Mr. Lube asked if any extra positions were requested due to the staffing requirements just mentioned?

Chief Struble did not request an increase in staffing in the proposed budget. The department is in the process of doing a strategic plan that it hopes to have ready for the fall and one of the things being looked at are the various benchmarks. This will help to illustrate for people that may not understand the Fire Department, we want to make it simple enough so that we can explain it to everyone as to what level of service that we are able to deliver and how we are meeting the benchmarks. He was not prepared this year to ask for any additional staffing because he did not believe he could effectively justify getting it through the budget. As a Fire Chief, he would love to have more staffing in the trucks. The staffing requested will meet the current benchmarks.

Mr. Melillo asked if the department had a sufficient supply of infra-red equipment?

Chief Struble stated, the department currently has two cameras, both were donations; one from the Rotary Club and one was a fundraiser conducted by the North Farms Volunteer Fire Department. There is current legislation in the state whereby the state will be providing each community with a camera. That looks like it is going to be approved and we should be receiving a third (camera).

John Marriott, Grieb Road stated that he was concerned about simulation activity relative to toxic disbursements. As principal of Moran Middle School, he has experienced the one and only town-wide activity that was conducted. Since that experience there hasn't been another. With a major railroad and highways running through the community, it is something that should be done periodically. It does not have to be on a grand scale...there was a state-wide program put into effect and there has to be a plan in each school on how to handle toxic disbursements. This is something that needs to be re-activated from time to time.

Chief Struble explained, there is currently an active local emergency planning committee that meets on a regular basis. While we haven't done one to the extent that was done at Moran, where the population of the school was moved, we do more practical frequency exercises with local industry, especially Cytec. It gives our personnel an opportunity to deal with the most likely scenarios they we are going to run into. Some of those include the movement of clouds or plumes that they need to start predicting. We are doing at least four level three hazardous materials exercises a year right now with local industry. We haven't done anything at that level since then. We have a Hazardous Material Response Plan that is updated annually.

Town Council

Mr. Lube asked why the salary line item in the Council's budget was increased 15%?

Mayor Dickinson answered, it reflects a \$1000 raise per Councilor. The budget reflects a \$500 increase because it is budgeted for half of a year. It should be going from \$4,500 to \$5,500.

Mr. Lube pointed out that the requested amount in the Office Supplies line item is \$5,100 and, to date, only \$700 has been spent. Why are we requesting so much more than has been spent to date?

Town Council Secretary Kathryn Zandri explained, what you do not see hitting the expenditure to date figure is the budget legal notice that was printed in the newspaper which will run us approximately \$1,300. Also, there are a few more purchases of copy cartridges and toners for the office copier that usually hits the account before the end of the year. I do plan on purchasing a few more before the end of the year because I will need them. They are quite expensive. The copy cartridges are, I believe, almost \$500 for two and that does not include the cost of the toner. It will run close. It may not be quite \$5,000 but there is some leeway in there.

Mr. Lube asked for an explanation of the Council Expenses line item, #6010.

Mr. Parisi explained that it is an expense account for the Councilors, they each receive \$125 every three months; four checks per year. The Chairman receives an additional stipend of \$150 or so per year.

There were no remaining questions of the proposed budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Farrell to Adjourn the Meeting, seconded by Mr. Centner.


VOTE: Zappala was absent; all ayes; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:02 P.M.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:


Kathryn F. Zandri
Town Council Secretary

Approved by:


Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

5-8-01
Date

Rosemary A. Rascati
Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

5-8-01
Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD Apr. 26, 2001
AT 1:05 P.M. AND RECORDED BY
Rosemary A. Rascati TOWN CLERK