

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

HELD REMOTELY
at GoToMeeting.com

THURSDAY
APRIL 29, 2021
6:30 P.M.
FY 2021-2022 BUDGET

RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Special Town Council Meeting on Thursday, April 29, 2021 was called to order at 6:34 p.m. There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance was said. Councilors in attendance were Thomas Laffin, Gina Morgenstein, Joseph A. Marrone, III, Christopher K. Shortell, Christina Tatta, Vincent F. Testa, Jason Zandri and Chairman Vincent Cervoni. Councilor Fishbein was absent. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and Comptroller James Bowes were also present (**BY TELECONFERENCE**).

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. FY 2021-2022 BUDGET:

POLICE/ANIMAL CONTROL

*In Attendance: William Wright, Police Chief
John Ventura, Deputy Chief
Beth Dighello, Assistant*

Chief Wright reviewed the budget proposal for fiscal year 2021-2022 which he indicated represents approximately a 2.1% increase over the current year's appropriations.

Chairman Cervoni asked how much of your budget increase is related to the police accountability legislation. Chief Wright stated nearing \$100,000. Chairman Cervoni asked if he sees more to come in the future. Chief answered yes.

Councilor Shortell congratulated Chief on his final budget hearing. He wanted to confirm flat wages are due to negotiation and asked will that change once the contracts are negotiated. Chief said he can't say for sure but generally we might be able to get a 1 to 1½ percent increase.

Councilor Shortell asked if the police accountability bill will make it better. Chief answered generally, yes. Councilor Shortell thanked him and wished him the best.

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Councilor Testa wished Chief the best. He asked if overall he feels that the requirements put in place are a good thing. Chief answered yes.

Councilor Testa asked if there are any monies or recruitment efforts being made by the agency to recruit to try to create a more diverse force. Chief answered yes but noted there is no new money in the budget for that effort. He stated the agency services unit attends a number of job fairs in New Haven and Hartford and they continue to have good conversations with high school students. He feels we have done very well with their lateral transfer process. He mentioned they are always looking to further diversify the workforce. Chief stated the biggest challenge is a fewer number of candidates wishing to do this job.

Councilor Testa remarked to Chief that his department has always represented itself so well.

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, asked the total cost of the storage building. Chief replied roughly \$185,000 and mentioned they received a lot of assistance from Public Works. Mr. Comerford then asked how much it cost for the new antenna for the radio system. Chief replied \$40-\$65,000 for the tower itself. Mr. Comerford asked the cost of the tower with all the gear on it. Chief replied \$175-180,000.00. Mr. Comerford feels we could have saved money by not having to move the tower.

Chief explained the priority was that they needed to assure the community from a public safety point of view that they are capable of providing a high level of service that the community could advance from.

There was further discussion between Mr. Comerford and Chief Wright.

ANIMAL CONTROL

There were no questions.

FIRE

*In Attendance: Joseph Czentnar, Deputy Fire Chief, Administrations & Operations
Samuel Wilson, Deputy Fire Chief, EMS & Training*

Chief Czentnar provided an overview of the fiscal year 2021-2022 budget of the department of fire and emergency services. He then reviewed the changes made in the last fiscal year and mentioned it's one of the biggest operational changes the fire department has made in 40 years.

Councilor Laffin stated there was a significant increase in the pay lines and replacement pay. He asked Chief Czentnar to address those lines more specifically. Chief Czentnar indicated it's primarily in the replacement pay account which is their biggest account. He explained in the past they were not planning on a lot of people being out on injury. He stated they reduced services which impacted the town but they were able to save money.

Councilor Laffin asked how many ambulances are running at a given time. Chief Czentnar answered two ambulances full time 24/7. Councilor Laffin asked if that's the goal and if they will add additional ambulances. Chief replied they are continuing evaluating.

Councilor Laffin asked if the training includes the volunteers. Chief Czentnar stated we work with volunteer leadership and volunteer drill training. He went on to state they requested \$64,500 extra in that account to create a cost center for volunteers for training for a total of \$68,500 requested in this budget. He feels this is a great idea and it earmarks money for recruitment and retention.

Chief Wilson stated there was no real funding area and they have created this cost center to go forward and front the money. He mentioned there is a capital item that earmarks \$30,000 for volunteer PPE.

Councilor Laffin asked Chief Czentnar if he feels this is the right model for Wallingford. Chief answered yes and stated it's working as intended. Chief stated we continue to monitor and do quality control.

Chief Czentnar indicated EMT's are doing great work and they have ironed out the overtime line.

Councilor Laffin wanted to confirm this model was not to suppose to save the town money, it's just more fitting. Chief Czentnar confirmed that is correct.

CIVIL PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Comerford asked as far as generators go how we are prepared for a catastrophe. Chief Czentnar stated 143 Hope Hill Road former Station 5 is designated as a small shelter that can house up to 30 to 40 occupants and noted Sheehan High School is a larger scale shelter. He went on to say there is a generator at the Sewer Division which is being donated to the BOE.

There was discussion between Mr. Comerford and Chief Czentnar

HUMAN RESOURCES

*In Attendance: James Hutt, Director, Human Resources
Kurt Treiber, Risk Manager*

The Mayor stated in the Human Resources Budget, line 52962 should be \$4,000 not \$7,500.

Mr. Hutt reviewed the budget proposal for fiscal year 2021-2022. He indicated the budget figures represent projected costs of services to residents as well as town employees.

Councilor Shortell asked if we will be in compliance with the ordinance this year. Mr. Bowes answered yes.

Councilor Shortell asked if there is a way he could see the balance of the health fund. Mr. Bowes stated the self-insurance health fund is a separate fund where we pay claims from. He indicated he could run something that shows the expenditure summary through that period of time.

Councilor Shortell asked if the last time we put the stop loss out to bid we got a lot of decline in quotes. Mr. Hutt answered yes.

Councilor Shortell inquired when we got Segal as our insurance consultant. Mr. Hutt replied this is our second year. He went on to state we had a three year bid with a two year extension and we're coming up on July 1 for a one year extension. Councilor Shortell thanked Mr. Hutt for everything he does.

Bob Gross, Long Hill Road, asked how much money is in reserves for health insurance. Mr. Bowes stated that is hard to project and indicated the last audited balance there was almost \$5.6 million as of June 30, 2020. Mr. Gross asked what amount is needed in there. Mr. Bowes stated \$5 million.

Mr. Gross asked if we went out to bid for the TPA already. Mr. Hutt said we go out to bid once every five years and we just did this past fall. He noted it's good for three years. Mr. Gross asked who the lowest bidder was in dollars. Mr. Hutt said he believes Anthem.

Mr. Gross asked do you go out to bid for property casualty. Mr. Hutt answered yes. Mr. Gross asked do you ask multiple agents to bid on that. Mr. Treiber said they put it out for multiple agents and indicated it's a four year bid.

Mr. Gross asked if the town does any diversity training. Mr. Hutt stated they have done it in the past and if time permits and they have the resources to do it but it's been difficult during the pandemic. Mr. Hutt said it's something we are always willing to provide.

Mr. Comerford inquired about retention bonuses. He asked if we are stilling paying those based upon our contracts. Mr. Hutt said we have the Professional services insurance consultant line item for \$60,000 and that's all we pay.

The Mayor stated the town is not self-insured on property casualty insurance we are self-insured on health insurance.

Mr. Comerford asked how much we saved collectively because we are self-insured. The Mayor stated insurance costs go up every year there is no way to see if there is a savings and it depends on how many claims there are in a given year.

Councilor Shortell stated the Mayor covered it. Self-insurance you pay as you go. He said we absolutely saved money being self-insured and we are in good shape with health insurance.

The Mayor stated on behalf of the Administration we are aware of the concerns raised by Mr. Comerford to the extent of this budget and will address those concerns that will be a matter of conduct in the coming year.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In Attendance: Kurt Treiber, Risk Manager

Mr. Comerford asked if the town insures the abandoned building at Center Street Cemetery. Mr. Treiber stated the town pays the premium.

Adelheid Koepfer asked if unspent funds can be spent on other projects.

PENSION

*In Attendance: James Hutt, Director, Human Resources
James Bowes, Comptroller*

Councilor Testa indicated in the last two years contribution by the town has gone up about 10% a year and what is the reason for that. Mr. Hutt explained when we submit our budget we anticipate a salary increase and build our estimate for pension contributions by the town for the next fiscal year as well as information we get from BOE in terms of what their total pension payroll will be for the upcoming year.

Councilor Testa indicated he is questioning the \$800,000 increase from last year to this year. Mr. Bowes stated it's a combination of factors determined by the actuary firm that creates the plan. It's the liability versus the market value of the assets. He mentioned on the earnings side we are doing well on the cost side folks are working longer and there is an older workforce.

The Mayor stated since he has been Mayor we have made contribution at the minimum of what the actuary has dictated.

INSURANCE PROPERTY/CASUALTY

There were no questions.

PUBLIC WORKS

In Attendance: Mr. Baltramaitis, Director, Public Works

Mr. Baltramaitis reviewed the proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021. He mentioned for this year there is less than a 1% increase than previous years.

Mr. Comerford asked Mr. Baltramaitis if Public Works has donated any money into repairs for the building at Center Street Cemetery and if not is it in the budget this year. Mr. Baltramaitis answered no and stated it is not in the budget this year.

Mr. Comerford asked why Public Works is paying for BOE's fuel. Mr. Baltramaitis indicated we pay for utilities at the railroad station. Mayor Dickinson stated the railroad station is a town owned building being used by BOE and we have responsibilities for that building.

Mr. Comerford asked if the Gazebo at Fishbein Park will be replaced. Mr. Baltramaitis stated we are proposing \$120,000 for improvement projects and that includes replacement of the Gazebo along with other improvement along the park.

Mr. Comerford asked if it is in the budget to fix the bus stop. Mr. Baltramaitis said no, but that's a small project and Public Works can repair it and it will come out of a general fund.

Ed Bradley, 2 Hampton Trail, questioned if this year's budget includes road repairs along Hampton Trail. Mr. Baltramaitis answered no there is not a direct budget set for that but that would be a small project and something we would do in-house. He said if work is required we will absolutely do it.

Adelheid Koepfer inquired about utilities PPW Line item 53010 and asked if this is the total for light, heating, cooling and water for all town building excluding school buildings. Mr. Baltramaitis answered yes and indicated it includes all those buildings but that line item also includes a lot more than just building utilities.

Ms. Koepfer inquired about materials and supplies and asked what other materials and supplies are contained in that. Mr. Baltramaitis said it's everything else we buy and one the biggest items that comes out of that line item is road salt.

Ms. Koepfer asked if it's fair to say we spend over \$1 million annually on utilities for town buildings. Mr. Baltramaitis stated out of the \$840,000 a large portion of that is spent on other things so he doesn't know if it's fair to say we spend over \$1 million dollars annually.

Ms. Koepfer asked if the last energy audit of town buildings was done in 2012. Mr. Baltramaitis said he believes that is correct.

Ed Bradley, stated it's been 18 years since the Mayor and Mr. McCully said Hampton Trail was going to be done. Mr. Baltramaitis said it's not in this year's budget and if the current Town Engineer determines that mitigation work is required he will do it. Mr. Bradley asked if it will be in next year's budget. Chairman Cervoni stated next year's budget hasn't been determined.

ENGINEERING

In Attendance: Alison Kapushinski

Ms. Kapushinski gave an overview of proposed budget.

There were no questions.

CAP & NON RECURRING/SIX YEAR CAPITAL

Councilor Testa asked if Administration has a plan for the \$1.8 million left over funds. The Mayor stated with regard to the money in capital funding we are always reluctant to use that money for anything other than capital projects. He went on to state there is never an end to capital projects. It gives us a chance to plan for the unknown. Councilor Testa asked where that

money is and Mr. Bowes stated it's in the audit. Councilor Testa then asked if that amount is on some kind of balance. Mr. Bowes answered yes on the balance sheet.

Councilor Zandri stated if we earmark money that is part of the amount of money that is with the entire budget for the year and that's what causes taxes to go up. Mr. Bowes explained the impact on mill rates for the Cap and Non fund is basically a wash. He went on to say it's basically an expenditure in the general fund.

Councilor Zandri and Mr. Bowes discuss appropriate use of general fund.

Councilor Zandri asked if there is another mechanism we could use in short order instead of money that is left out on the table. Mr. Bowes stated it depends on the type of expenditure. Mr. Bowes went on to say can we do it, yes but should we do it, no.

There was further discussion between Councilor Zandri and Mr. Bowes.

Councilor Shortell wanted to follow-up on some projects that were in the monthly report and cap and non report. He wants to understand the \$1.8 million. He inquired about town wide paving – \$500,000 from fiscal year 2014-2015 and wants to know if that will go to unassigned. Mr. Bowes answered yes.

Councilor Shortell asked if the \$800,000 that you couldn't transfer is that reflected in this report. Mr. Bowes said that is already reflected.

Councilor Shortell asked if Hall Avenue streetscape is encumbered or still open. Mr. Baltramaitis stated while the improvements are complete we are still closing out the project so he can't say the project is one hundred percent complete.

Councilor Shortell asked if the project from fiscal year 2011-2012 South Turnpike Road culvert for almost \$79,000 is still ongoing. Ms. Kapushinski stated we are going out to construction for this culvert next fiscal year.

Councilor Testa wants to know on page 83 how we split that money in the current years budget.

There was discussion between Councilor Testa and Mr. Bowes

The Mayor explained money is taken before it enters in the Cap and Non.

There was further discussion between Councilor Testa and Mr. Bowes.

Mr. Bowes explained the general fund balance is separate from other fund balances.

Councilor Testa wanted to clarify it's a separate balance of extra funds on top of the rainy day funds. Mr. Bowes answered yes.

Councilor Shortell asked if the Council had not done what it did last year with the interception of

funds would the cap and non actually be \$2.6 million unassigned and not \$1.8 unassigned. Mr. Bowes stated not until all of those projects are completed and their final cost determined. He said theoretically if everything came through the way it was budgeted that would be correct.

Councilor Shortell stated it looks like there is \$605,000 that's going to be unassigned and once we close out the fiscal year we will be at about \$2.4 million.

Mr. Bradley asked the total deferred amount in cap and non. Mr. Bowes replied \$2.4 million.

Mr. Bradley asked how much is in unused money in other capital accounts. Mr. Bowes said he does not have those numbers in front of him.

Mr. Bradley asked what we have coming in new capital grants. Mr. Bowes stated \$538,000 for town and road and \$287,000 for local capital improvement, roughly \$800,000.

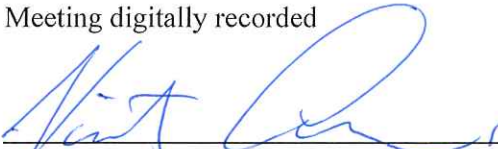
Mr. Bradley asked how much is budgeted in the coming year from a capital standpoint for town roads. Mr. Bowes replied \$913,000.

Mr. Bradley stated open space has always been a big issue for him. He asked the Mayor if he would be receptive to purchasing open space that sits behind the hill over by Interstate 91 Route 68 and Williams Road. The Mayor stated we're always open to assessing any piece of property And noted it's reviewed by the Conservation Commission. Mr. Bradley asked if we could be more aggressive in our approach. The Mayor said to send him information and he will look at it.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Moss
Council Staff
Meeting digitally recorded


Vincent Cervoni, Chairman

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AT _____ AND RECEIVED BY
Deborah McKiernan TOWN CLERK

26 MAY 2021
Date


Deborah McKiernan, Town Clerk

5.26.2021
Date