



**TOWN COUNCIL
VIRTUAL MEETING
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 27, 2020
APPROVED MINUTES**

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Joe McAuliffe, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor James Govoni, Councilor Donald Jepsen, and Councilor Kenneth Wilkos

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

John Dunn, 15 Strawberry Hill spoke about the current year having a tax rate increase of 1.88%. With the state bond commission's release of \$390,000 this year, this year's tax increase would be about 2.3% under the Town Manager's current budget proposal. Mr. Dunn said that the Board of Education's proposed budget was created before the pandemic began. Now Connecticut is in a horrible health employment financial position for the foreseeable future. There will be Windsor residents who cannot pay their property tax bill at the present rate level, much less adding "only several hundred dollars more for this year" so that town services can be maintained as is without cuts. The number of people unemployed is still increasing. People cannot buy food for their families and the town still wants to present all services--both educational and town provided--to continue as if "the world of Windsor" is not effected by the reality of the current real world. Mr. Dunn is therefore asking that the Board of Education and current town departments hold their line on spending to, at the most, last year's level for this year. Mr. Dunn thanked everyone.

Coralee Jones, 1171 Matianuck Avenue, spoke about how the town has already decided if there will be an in-person vote on the budget. Ms. Jones said that this decision is premature and she believes things could change a lot after May 20. Ms. Jones added that there is no reason why the referendum can't be delayed. People can easily stand apart to vote and wear a mask. If the town chooses to deprive citizens of their right to vote on the budget, this would be the second time in a couple of years that it's happened. Ms. Jones stated that if we don't vote, the town should not increase expenditures from the current budget. Think about what you just voted on. You agreed to deter tax payments for those who have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID19 virus. If this Council increases the budget, what are you doing if after the deferment, you are asking these same people to now pay more? That really isn't helping people and it sure doesn't make any sense. You're giving them something in their right hand and taking it away in their left hand. So please reconsider this budget proposal. You should keep it flat. Ms. Jones thanked the Council.

John Cassarino, 48 Arrowbrook Road, spoke about not believing in the Town Council's philosophy. If this was an ideal world, maybe, but this is not an ideal world. He cannot justify how the Council can sit there and not come up with better ways to project increased revenues without increasing property taxes. Mr. Cassarino said that if you looked at the proposed budget,



you will see that you have the revenues. He cannot justify how the Council cannot automate, consolidate or eliminate waste. He cannot justify why the Council cannot change fees for the services of licenses, permits, etc. Mr. Cassarino said he has made recommendations in the past, but the Council is not putting on their listening ears. Mr. Cassarino asked if the Council actually looked at the revenues by type data. Mr. Cassarino said that he cannot justify how the Council can support the Board of Education (BOE) for any enhancements, when they have enough money in their budget to fund part of the town's for the entire year. The BOE should have a ton of money to give back to the town since they are very top heavy with salaries that must be adjusted. Mr. Cassarino said that he cannot justify the town needing an administrative assistant and a town manager assistant. Mr. Cassarino said that putting a band aid on an issue is not the solution and giving bonuses to those on the leadership team at the end of the year does not help the Council raising taxes. Mr. Cassarino asked Mayor Trinks if he understood this. Mr. Cassarino stated that there is the wrong skill set to do this work and you need a business person. Mr. Cassarino stated that in the past thirty years, his property taxes have gone up over 300%. Property values have not gone up that fast. In conclusion, God bless those tax payers who work every day and pay their taxes on time because some tax payers don't pay their taxes, so the honest tax payer has to cover for them. Mr. Cassarino said to stop wasting his money. Increased taxes decrease job creation and this is a fact. Mr. Cassarino thanked the Council.

3) DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The overall FY 20 expenditures are expected to come in under budget by \$570 primarily due to savings in Services. The overall FY 21 budget reflects an increase of \$57,760 or 4.3% as compared to the FY 20 budget primarily due to Personal Services.

Councilor Rampulla Bress wanted the listeners to be aware and to congratulate Economic Development services for receiving an accreditation from the Connecticut Economic Development Association as exemplifying best practices and land use of economic development. Councilor Rampulla Bress stated that only 24 Connecticut towns were so recognized.

4) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The overall FY 20 expenditures are expected to come in flat to budget. The FY 21 overall budget reflects an increase of \$35,050 or 10.6% and the General Fund portion has a slight decrease of \$820 or .08%. Personal Services and Loans are the main drivers for the non-General Fund increase.

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the position in the Community Development office that was approved last year. Councilor Black-Burke asked if it was for a grant writer or something else. Mr. Burke stated that the Community Development Specialist was filled back in September. Councilor Black-Burke asked if that is the proposed 1 FTE for the FY20-FY21 budget. Mr. Burke



stated that yes it was. Councilor Black-Burke asked if the Community Development Specialist is pursuing grant opportunities just related to the town or also for the school district. Mr. Burke stated that this is strictly for the town. Councilor Black-Burke stated that maybe for next year's budget, we could get this position to pursue for the school district also. Councilor Black-Burke noted that a lot of the grants for the school district may also be a benefit for the town.

Councilor Jepsen asked about the amount we are loaning out and how we are doing this year. Mr. Burke stated that the first part of the year we trained staff and brought them up to speed on the program requirements. Mr. Burke said that in the beginning of January we picked up on loans. Mr. Burke noted that at this point the town has five loans which are active. There are a number of referrals from the Health Department on septic systems. Mr. Burke indicated that people of low or moderate income cannot afford the septic systems and that they are addressing a few of those loans. Mr. Burke stated that the number of loans may decline since the systems cost more. Councilor Jepsen stated that the total amount of increased funding is very impressive and if there was a way to get more, we would welcome it. Town Manager Souza stated that those are competitive grants that we apply for every other year.

5) ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The FY 20 overall budget is expected to come in under budget by \$21,010 or 0.8%. This is primarily due to Personal Services in the Property Valuation and Finance departments due to new hires are lower salaries. The FY 20 General Fund budget is expected to come in under budget for these same reasons. The overall FY 21 budget is expected to increase \$111,140 or 4.4% and is primarily due to Personal Services in the General Fund and Services in the Special Revenue fund for an anticipated tax sale. The FY 21 General Fund budget reflects an increase of \$76,990 or 3.2% for Personal Services.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe asked how the town's technology department is handling work at home during this time. Mr. Angelillo stated that the town has had a remote access infrastructure for several years. Mr. Angelillo said that the town has had remote desktops internally for several years, but the cost went way above traditional desktops. Mr. Angelillo noted that the town stored those terminals and that is what the town used for employees that are working remotely. Licensing needed to be increased for our security to accommodate those users. Mr. Angelillo stated that traditionally there is an average of fifty hours of remote access a week which is primarily during the evenings and weekends and last week there was 1,500 hours of remote access. Mr. Angelillo stated that things have been progressing well and the other area of change is with all the Zoom meetings. Deputy Mayor McAuliffe thanked Mr. Angelillo for all the information and said that the Zoom meetings have been going very well.

Councilor Rampulla Bress asked about the 2021 goals where they are implementing employee self-service where employees can access payroll and health benefits online from the Town's Human Resource Department. Councilor Rampulla Bress said that this is a wonderful goal for



2021 and asked when this would be implemented. Town Manager Souza stated that it should be hopefully developed towards the first quarter of the new fiscal year. Councilor Rampulla Bress stated that would be beneficial to the employees and thanked Town Manager Souza.

6) GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The FY 20 General Fund expenditures are expected to come in on budget. Savings are seen in the Town Manager's Office for a partial year vacancy, but these savings are offset with increased Counsel and Legal Advice expenditures for workers compensation litigation. The FY 21 General Fund budget reflects an increase of \$35,960 or 3.5% as compared to the FY 20 budget due to Personal Services in the Town Manager's Office and a presidential election budgeted for FY 21 in Elections.

Councilor Jepsen asked about legal reviewing the budget because of worker's compensation. Councilor Jepsen asked if this was an isolated case or more than one. Town Manager Souza stated that in the last two years, there has been an effort put forward to settle some of our longer term worker's compensation cases which requires more effort from outside attorneys. Town Manager Souza noted that in FY20 there is a projected overage in the area of worker's compensation. Town Manager Souza said that he is hopeful that as we move through FY21, that work load will decrease as there will be close outs of a number of significant cases. Councilor Jepsen asked if it's really the complexity driving us or have we actually not gone to court with anyone. Town Manager Souza stated that these cases went in front of worker's compensation and have not been adjudicated outside the worker's compensation process.

Councilor Jepsen said that if we don't have a primary, we could save on elections, but we cannot tell at this point.

Councilor Jepsen asked about community services. There are events that may not happen. Does that mean we still write a check for them? Town Manager Souza stated that if the event does not occur, then we would not write the check. Town Manager Souza noted that we are in discussions now regarding the monies that go for the holiday observances. Town Manager Souza stated that there have been adjustments to the Memorial Day event already and there is some savings because of it. Town Manager Souza stated that the town does purchase material early for these events which have been canceled but it is expected they will not expend the full amount of money. Town Manager Souza noted that the town is determining if the volunteer brunch in June will still happen and some expenditures will be lessened as we will not have the full brunch.

7) PRICE GUIDE

Councilor Jepsen stated that he found the price guide changes to not be that much this year and the rest of the changes are not out of line in any way.



8) TOWN SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

The FY 20 expenditures are expected to come in under budget by \$92,060 or 1.7% which is mostly due to the state's decision not to require municipalities to contribute to the State Teacher's Retirement Plan as originally proposed by the Governor. The FY 21 budget reflects a decrease of \$171,290 or 3.1% less than the FY 20 budget and is mostly due to a decrease in debt service payments related to school debt and the elimination of the State Teacher's Retirement contribution.

9) PRELIMINARY DELIBERATIONS

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe stated that judging from the public comments tonight, it might be a good opportunity for the Town Manager to mention the Governor's Executive Order to suspend voting referendums at this time. Town Manager Souza stated that the Governor has signed an Executive Order that does not allow for in-person voting either through a town meeting or referendum related to not only the annual budget, but also a variety of other items. Town Manager Souza noted that at some point, there will be some form of phased modification to the Governor's stay at home order. Town Manager Souza added that the Governor did postpone the Presidential election to the early part of August. It is unlikely that the Governor was going to lift his order for in-person elections soon, which would stay in place as we move toward May 20. Deputy Mayor McAuliffe said that it's not the decision of the Town Council to vote or not vote, but it's the Governor's call. Town Manager Souza stated that when the Council decides to adopt the budget, the Council can then postpone the action on the budget. As it stands now, the Town Council cannot schedule a referendum at any time.

Councilor Dobler agreed with Deputy Mayor McAuliffe that we don't want to do something and think we did the wrong thing. Councilor Dobler said that he did not know how we would handle the 2.53% increase. Councilor Dobler stated that the Board of Education increase is contractual and there is not much to work with there. Councilor Dobler noted that if the town budget could be moved to the 2.2% or 2.3% area, it would help out the town as a whole. Councilor Dobler said that he is comfortable with the 2.53%, but if it could be lower, that would be great.

Mayor Trinks stated that he would like to see the Town Manager craft a budget scenario reflecting any changes that can get the overall number down to a 2.25% increase.

Councilor Rampulla Bress agreed with Mayor Trinks. Councilor Rampulla Bress said that it's very important to her to know what exactly would be lost. Councilor Rampulla Bress noted that she feels the budget is a responsible budget.

Councilor Govoni stated that he would support the budget. He said that we have to honor the contractual agreements in the budget. He asked if we should take that out of the General Fund



budget now and then see what happens next year or take it out then. Councilor Govoni stated that it's responsible that we cover just the basic costs and get that lower number. Councilor Black-Burke agreed with the Council and supports it. She noted that she feels this budget is a responsible budget. She looks forward to seeing that scenario.

Councilor Jepsen stated that we have been doing this for a while. This is unique since there is a lot we do not know at this time. Councilor Jepsen said that he doesn't want to cut anyone's job nor does he want to dip into the General Fund.

Councilor Jepsen noted that 2.5%, 2.3% or 2.2% are all in the same ball park and not going to effect the overall tax bill people will pay. Councilor Jepsen said that he's worried about next year. He believes the state is going to be out of money. Councilor Jepsen stated that he predicts we are going to be in a world of hurt next year. Councilor Jepsen said that he would interested in seeing what the Town Manager can come up with.

Mayor Trinks agreed with Councilor Jepsen. Mayor Trinks noted that everyone's voices and opinions have been heard and taken into consideration. Mayor Trinks thanked Town Manager Souza and his staff for all the work that they have put into this budget. Mayor Trinks added that the Council seeking a reduction to the budget is not a disapproval of this budget.

10) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Rampulla Bress and seconded by Councilor Black-Burke to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

Motion passed 8-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Ozaki
Recording Secretary