



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
(Virtual Meeting)
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 21, 2021
APPROVED MINUTES**

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:30 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, Councilor Lenworth Walker and Councilor Kenneth Wilkos

2) GENERAL SERVICES/CAPITAL SPENDING

Jim Bourke, Finance Director, gave an overview of General Services/Capital Spending as follows:

For debt service, we are proposing a 3% general fund increase over the FY 21 budgeted amount. This is consistent with the Town Council's policy target and long-term strategy over the past several years of a 3% increase and use of reserve funds as needed to pay debt service.

The general fund allocation for capital projects is proposed to increase by \$110,000, and will fund pavement management projects, sidewalk repairs, fleet replacement, as well as technology upgrades and facility improvements for the Board of Education.

The MDC payment for sewer services will decrease approximately \$256,000 for FY 22, and is based on the MDC's calendar year 2021 budget. This decrease is mainly due to MDC's increased use of reserve funds in their operating budget, which subsequently reduces the amount the member towns are required to contribute.

The FY 22 budget for Great Pond is increasing \$144,000 for a total of \$402,000. This amount represents 50% of the taxes that will be collected from the parcels located at Great Pond. The increase for FY 22 is due to increased assessed value that resulted from the completion of the first phase of construction at Great Pond.

The worker's compensation and liability Insurance budget is expected to increase by \$155,000 as compared to the FY 21 budget. This is due to the insurance industry increasing premiums in the public sector by as much as 30%, given the events of the past 12 months and the effect that the pandemic has had on the insurance marketplace.

The FY 21 funding for costs associated with the next revaluation is proposed at \$10,000. The next revaluation will be for grand list year 10/1/2023 and will be applicable to the FY 25 budget.



The FY 21 budget for the town's contribution to long-term retiree health costs reflects an increase of \$25,000 (\$25K in general services—Town Support for Education is not changing). FY 22 will be the eighth year the town has contributed towards funding the town's long-term other post-employment obligations. The balance in the OPEB trust fund is projected to be approximately \$5 million on June 30, 2021. This amount consists of the town contributions and accumulated investment earnings.

And lastly, a transfer of \$140,000 is proposed for FY 22 from the operating budget to the Caring Connection to provide a balanced budget for that program.

3) INSURANCE INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

Amelia Bliss, Human Relations Director, and Marty Maynard, Risk Manager, gave an overview of the Insurance Internal Service fund as follows:

Health Insurance Fund

The FY 21 employee and retiree general fund costs, after employee and retiree copays and Enterprise Fund contributions are deducted, are expected to be \$216,920 or 6.8% under budget. This is due to lower than expected health, prescription drug and dental claims costs.

The total FY 22 employee and retiree benefits budget is increasing \$163,000 or 3.8%. The increase is due to medical trend and inflation and an increase in the stop loss insurance premium. The increase is mitigated slightly by a decrease in expected dental claims costs. The total FY 22 general fund contribution is increasing \$57,010 or 1.8% over the FY 21 budget after deducting employee and retiree copays, use of insurance fund balance and enterprise fund contributions.

Liability Insurance/Worker's Compensation

Nationally, carriers are expecting much higher premium increases for this coming year due to COVID losses, natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, wildfires and snow/ice storms, civil unrest property and liability losses of this past summer, cyber-attacks world wide and stricter underwriting. We have had three very good past years for experience which should assist our broker in limiting increases to less than 15%, while many cities and towns without a good record will be seeing 20-25% increases in many of the auto, liability and property policies. We are also looking at other options of either raising our deductibles or self-funding a portion of certain policies while keeping the same limits for all of our insurance policies.

The Worker Compensation Fund is forecasted to be flat in FY 22 with the FY 21 fund showing an increase in the excess worker compensation policy. We are going out to find an excess carrier for our worker compensation program. The incumbent carrier is looking to raise premiums approximately 60% for market correction and because of the presumption of COVID claims in many states. We continue to be conservative with the possibility of a couple of our newer claims having larger reserves as time goes by.



Councilor Wilkos asked if increasing the deductibles is an option in order to bring down the premium cost. Mr. Maynard said he is exploring options.

Councilor Jepsen asked if more could be self-insured. Mr. Maynard said currently we self-fund for Workers Compensation and we are exploring self-insured options for other areas.

Councilor Bress asked if the deductibles are comparable to other town's rates. Mr. Maynard said he looks at it from our perspective, not other towns. He went on to explain what the different deductibles actually are for each plan.

Councilor Jepsen asked how the experience is for the fire insurance that was purchased several years ago. Mr. Maynard explained how the program works as well as the reimbursements that the town gets from the fire districts and mentioned its working well and savings has been gained.

4) DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Eric Barz, Town Planner; Bob Bolasevich, Fire Marshal; Jim Burke, Economic Development Director; and Bob Ruzzo, Building Official answered the following questions raised by the Town Council:

Councilor Bress asked if the 50% for percentage of multi-unit dwellings being compliant is normal. Town Manager Souza stated that this area is the most challenging—mostly the 2-4 unit buildings. The town works to make sure we are on schedule for inspections and the town has contracted these services out and we are in line with other towns.

Councilor Jepsen asked if the streamline approach to bring in new businesses is still in place. Town Manager Souza said that it's even become more efficient from an internal and external process, including collaborating with other local towns to keep businesses in surrounding towns, if not Windsor.

Councilor Bress asked about the survey that Economic Development did and how small businesses in the community will be helped in the future. Mr. Burke said there was a survey done previously and one done recently. The idea of the survey was to get a snapshot of where the businesses are today and have they taken advantage of programs that were available. It also includes what kinds of issues they have now that are challenging them from taking advantage of current programs.

5) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Jim Burke, Director of Economic & Development Services and Flavia Rey De Castro, Community Development Specialist, answered the following questions raised by the Town Council:



Councilor Black Burke asked if there are other competitive grants available other than those shown on page L-4. Mr. Burke said that his office continually looks for and applies for grants. He went on to talk about examples of grants that are currently being pursued.

6) ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Finance Department

Jim Bourke, Finance Director, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

No questions were raised.

Human Resources

Human Resources Director, Amelia Bliss, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

No questions were asked by the Town Council.

Information Technology

Information Technology Director, Frank Angelillo, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

There were no questions from the Town Council.

Risk Management

Risk Manager, Marty Maynard, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

No questions were raised.

Assessor's office

Town Assessor, Larry Labarbera, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

Councilor Jepsen asked what types of shifts between commercial and residential are coming in the next revaluation for the FY 24 budget. Mr. Labarbera said residential has gone up approximately 15-20%, and there hasn't been any commercial sales to determine what is happening there.

Tax Collector

Tax Collector, Cathy Elliot, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.



There were no questions from the Town Council.

7) GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Town Manager Peter Souza and Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director, answered the following questions raised by the Town Council:

Councilor Walker asked where the wages are seen on the financial statements submitted by the two organizations (First Town Downtown and the Chamber of Commerce). Town Manager Souza said he will ask those organizations to provide additional financial information.

Councilor Walker asked what happens to the funding for events that haven't happened. Ms. Collins said the funds aren't distributed to organizations that don't hold the event the funding is intended for, and therefore, it goes back into the General Fund's Fund Balance.

Town Manager Souza said there are dollars reflected in this section of the budget for anti-littering campaigns, for support for the clean energy task force initiatives, and for continued work with the Human Relations commission for their equity, diversity and inclusion programs.

There was continued discussion about the Community Contributions and Grant Funding Policy and what financial information needed to be submitted by organizations requesting over \$15,000.

8) TOWN SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director, was available to answer questions raised by the Town Council.

Councilor Jepsen wanted to clarify that the funds in this budget are all General Fund monies and appear in no other department's budget. Town Manager Souza said that is correct and Town Support for Education funding is used in the formula for state education reimbursements (ECS).

9) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Bress and seconded by Councilor Black Burke to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Collins
Recording Secretary