



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
Virtual Meeting
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 26, 2021
APPROVED MINUTES**

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

1) PUBLIC COMMENT

Donna Grossman, 781 Kennedy Road, said that the Board of Education's (BOE) distant learning was well done. She went on to talk about Windsor's Senior Center services and the programs offered and how the town also provides funding for the Caring Connection and transportation for seniors. Ms. Grossman added that these valued services are a benefit to the town since a good percentage of Windsor's population is older.

Susan Miller, 130 Palisado Avenue, said that the funding for education and the teachers budget is where it should be. She went on to add that it's been a hard year and something extra should be done for them. She also supports the Library Services and commended them for what they've done over the last year during the pandemic.

Becky Jacobsen, 50 Lighthouse Hill Road, said she supports the budget and that the BOE is only increasing it by 2.5% and it is a large part of the budget. She added that there is nothing frivolous in the budget and that she is willing to have her taxes increased to get the kids back to school. She also mentioned that Dr. Hill has gained savings by the measures he has taken.

Sally Grossman, 106 Niles Road, wanted to let everyone know that the Windsor Housing Authority meeting will be in the Ludlow Room in town hall. This meeting will be to hear from the residents. She also stated that she is disappointed that more funds are not allocated to children and the schools and that she would like to have seen no reduction in the BOE's budget.

Christina Crosset, 415 Broad Street, asked that the FY 22 budget be adopted by the council. She also said that the Recreation Department has a lot of great programs and the pools are enjoyable. She went on to talk about the classes and programs that she has participated in and how the parks in town, including Northwest Park, are a great value to the town and residents.

Lakisha Hyatt, 104 Benjamin Court, said she supports the Health Services budget overall and she supports the increased FTE. She talked about the Health Department's commitment to the vaccine program and contact tracing. She also highlighted the value in the educational budget and supports it and the town's recreational program.



2) PRICE GUIDE

Town Manager Souza said that the price guide questions were answered during the department presentations. Council had no further questions.

3) PRELIMINARY DELIBERATIONS

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe said it's been a tough year and everyone has been affected by the Windsor COVID deaths. He added that the unemployment rate in town is 8% and that residents are hurting financially and emotionally. He said that the Finance Committee met in March and talked about coming up with a 0% tax increase. He also wanted to recognize the Town Manager, town staff and the prior council for ensuring the positive financial position that the town is in. The goal is to get to zero with no negative impact to services. He would like to look at revenues, opening cash, and expenses. The council will work together to do what's best for the Town of Windsor.

Councilor Bress said that the budget is exemplary and well thought out. She wants the public to know that there were discussions during the Finance Committee meeting about scenarios to reduce the budget to a .77% tax increase. She said the goal is to try to reduce the budget based on citizens having a rough year. She mentioned that surrounding communities are facing many of our same challenges and they are coming in with no or low tax increases. She said Windsor is a place where dreams can come true, but those dreams were damaged this past year. The Finance Committee tweaked numbers to come down, and would like to look at reductions that are inanimate. She supports all of the town services and educational system. She would like to see a 0% tax increase.

Councilor Jepsen said at the Finance Committee he agreed to increase the opening cash for this year, but not for future years. He said because of Amazon coming on line in FY 23, he agrees with increasing opening cash for FY 22, but with the caveat that it's not to be used in the future. He also said that there should be an expenditure cut for the BOE and the town. Federal recovery funding that is coming to the town can help offset budget increases. He added that once an inanimate item is cut from the budget, it's hard to get it back into the budget. He likes to look forward to future years and to him, right now, FY 25 looks scary.

Councilor Dobler said the last year has been the most challenging year ever in a lot of people's lives. People have had to dip into their savings to survive. He said the town can figure out a way to do the same for one year and that he is in favor of seeing what needs to be done to come as close to a 0% tax increase for the sake of the residents.

Councilor Black Burke said that we need to get to a 0% tax increase and wanted to remind everyone that the federal recovery funding coming in is earmarked for specific purposes and how they are used is coming from guidance that is out of their control. She would also like to see cuts without touching people and instead going for animated items.



Councilor Jepsen appreciates the thought of going to a 0% tax increase, but using gimmicks will create a hole for next year. He suggested that a 0% tax increase doesn't have to necessarily be attained prior to bringing the budget to the voters. He went on to explain that they don't have to cut anything and that a 0% tax increase is good optics, but it doesn't have to be 0%.

Councilor Bress understands the .77% tax increase, but surrounding towns have .5% and 0%. Looking at the long view, we will be in fantastic shape regardless of a 0% tax increase. She added that citizens may wonder why we can't come in at zero if other towns can. A 0% tax increase sends a message and it will help the residents. She said Windsor is not in bad shape due to the fact that it's been very well financially managed.

Councilor Jepsen said there is going to be a significant budget decrease needed to get to zero percent tax increase.

Councilor Walker said it would be difficult to explain to the voters about not getting to a 0% tax increase. He added that it wouldn't be fair to the town to reduce the town side, but not the BOE. He feels the pain needs to be spread equally and that it can be done without cutting services.

Councilor Govoni said that the hardships for the citizens haven't bottomed out yet. He said the federal rescue funding that is coming in can be used in areas to help mitigate cuts and that he's been around long enough to remember the \$4 million budget cut from citizens and the services that had to be cut as a result.

Councilor Wilkos said everyone has ideas where to get money from such as opening cash, but it effects capacity for future years. He said they have to look at the BOE since this is a unique year and since the BOE is such a big part of the budget. He also talked about the potential BOE uses of the federal recovery funding coming to them. He went on to add concerns he has about the BOE's bussing contract.

Councilor Bress wanted clarification that the federal rescue funding coming in can't be used to supplant the expenses in the budget, but the guidance is not concrete yet and may not be concrete for some time. She wanted to know if the budget needs to be decided on now and is there a way to find out concrete information before deliberations? Councilor Jepsen said that federal guidance will be out on May 10th and that the town referendum can be postponed until that guidance is out.

Councilor Bress doesn't want to make a decision on what might or might not happen, but if the federal funding can be used for certain things, then the council needs to know what it is for sure before making a decision.

Councilor Govoni said we have a good working relationship with the BOE and everything is high quality. The BOE will be spending the federal recovery funding coming in certain areas and will not have to spend those monies in their budget. He said the federal recovery funding will give the town a little bit of leeway.



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Councilor Jepsen said ordinances have been passed for HVAC for the BOE that they can use the federal recovery funding on which will mitigate the funds needed by the town.

Mayor Trinks asked if the BOE is getting their federal guidance on May 10th as well. Town Manager Souza said he believes they will.

Deputy Mayor McAuliffe asked if it's for sure that the town will get guidance on May 10th. Town Manager said that's his understanding.

Councilor Black Burke asked if the town had to apply for the federal recovery funding that would include telling the federal government what they were going to use the funding for. Town Manager Souza said the general government does not need to outline what the funds will be used for. Once the state receives the funds, within 30 days, they need to distribute them to the towns. He added that they will need to be spent by the end of 2024 and will come in increments, one in June of this year and then one in about another year.

Councilor Bress asked if the federal recovery funding would work the same way as when the BOE returns unspent funds to the council. Is that going to be possible with the federal funds and would the BOE return unused federal funding to the council? Town Manager Souza said that dollars not spent by the BOE gets returned to the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance, but some years, it's minimal and last year was unusually more based on the pandemic and had fewer expenses. He went on to explain that the federal funds would not come back to the town, only if the federal funds take the place of the BOE operating expenses.

Councilor Bress pointed out that some of the BOE capital projects were grant funded, so does any of this have a timing impact on the decision at hand. Town Manager Souza said that this construction season would be impacted.

Councilor Dobler said he is taking a view from 30,000 feet above and it looks like everyone wants an increase of somewhere in between 0% to .77%. He went on to add that there are means to get a zero percent increase with the federal recovery funds coming, but we don't know how they can be used, so waiting for a budget referendum makes sense.

Town Manager Souza asked if staff should come back with a couple of scenarios of use of increased opening cash and/or expenditure reductions equating form a 0% to .77% tax increase. Mayor Trinks said that would be good, but narrative needs to be added.

Councilor Black Burke asked what are the scenarios that he plans to come back with. Town Manager Souza said there would be increments of percent and dollar changes with a variety of possibilities and looking out for 2 years.

Councilor Bress asked if they are going to include scenarios already discussed, or other scenarios including the federal recovery funding that will be coming. Town Manager Souza said they are going to reflect cuts in expenditures.



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Deputy Mayor McAuliffe asked that scenarios look at revenue assumptions as well.

Councilor Bress thinks it's a good idea to explore and see the information that can be provided.

Councilor Jepsen said looking at revenue assumptions is a slippery slope. He asked that the superintendent of schools be involved with the conversation.

Councilor Jepsen wondered if final deliberations are going to be made Wednesday.

4) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Bress and seconded by Deputy Mayor McAuliffe to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Collins
Recording Secretary