



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
Virtual Meeting
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 26, 2023
APPROVED MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor James Dobler, Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Kenneth Smith, Councilor Ojala Naeem and Councilor Len Walker

1) PUBLIC COMMENT

George Slate of 74 Ethan Drive encouraged the Council to come to their next meeting with a list of items to ensure appropriated amounts are spent and to adjust the budget so there is no tax increase this year.

Coralee Jones of 1171 Matianuck Avenue said with the increased appraisal of her home, it is expected that her taxes will go up. She encouraged the Council to vote for a zero percent increase this year.

2) FINAL DELIBERATIONS AND VOTE

Town Manager Souza noted the memorandum that was emailed out to the Council this afternoon. He apologized for the last minute budget adjustments. He stated that he was happy to answer any questions that they might have.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the budget changes were included in the draft motions and Town Manager Souza said, yes.

Councilor Eleveld asked if we could use our fund balance to accomplish a zero percent tax increase and how would it affect next year. Town Manager Souza responded that it is a policy decision the Council could consider to reduce the 1% proposed tax increase. It would be approximately \$1,060,000 that would need to be used from the fund balance to achieve no increase from one year to the next in terms of the mill rate. He said a year from now, we would have a \$1,060,000 "hole" that would need to be filled. Every time opening cash is being used, it would have to be filled the next year because we have not raised enough in our tax levy to be able to meet that. If we went at it from an expenditures perspective, then we would not have that "hole" in FY 25. By having the million dollars in capital projects or one-time expenditures in the FY 24 budget, it does not create a "hole" by using cash reserves.



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Councilor Eleveld said it is a perception issue and made a point to the public that the reality is we are probably looking at some sizeable tax increases because of the revaluation, but at the same time we will end up reducing the mill rate a sizeable amount, so the net effect of a tax increase would be somewhere in the 15% range for conversation. He clarified that every house is going to be different and we will not know what it will be until after October when the revaluation occurs. He said if we were to reduce spending by \$1M, that means that we are going to have a greater increase in spending next year and asked Town Manager Souza if that was correct. Councilor Eleveld added just holding a status quo, assuming a 5% inflation rate, we are probably looking at \$8M of additional spending for next year. Town Manager Souza said if the Council would adopt a \$140,000,000 budget, it would be in that vicinity.

Councilor Eleveld asked that if we used the fund balance, that means we will end up with roughly a \$1M “hole” next year that we would have to fill somehow. He said it may be partially offset by the fact that we have \$1M in additional capital expenditures this year. He said no matter how you cut it, he thinks that next year will be horrible for the tax payers. He said he would be inclined to use the fund balance this year to accomplish a no tax increase.

Councilor Naeem wanted to make it clear that the revaluation taxes will not be based on this year’s mill rate and that they will be based on whatever next year’s mill rate will be. She said if we do the 1% increase, it is not going to impact taxes as they are right now. She agreed that the perception of the public is that values have gone up and that is how much your taxes will go up but we need to look at what is needed to run the town and then hopefully we are able to reduce the mill rate to ease that burden in the increase of the property values. She said she doesn’t like framing it as it is an increase in taxes because our goal is not to increase the mill rate next year but it is an increase in the payment being paid because of the increase in the house values. She understood that the public gets very worried when they hear 14% tax increase and we are not looking at that from a mill rate perspective.

Mayor Trinks pulled up his house on the tax calculator for this year and the proposed 1% would be an increase of \$41.97. He said he thought it was worth it to get as much service this year as possible. He understood there would be challenges next year but the mill rate will drop. He asked everyone to remember that Zillow does not do a 70% assessment rate.

Councilor Smith said he could live with a 1% increase but he would like to see a corresponding reduction in a budget cut. He suggested that the expenses in the proposed budget be cut to 1% and he could live with the 1% increase. He wanted less money to be spent this year.

Councilor Naeem said that if we reduce the budget by 1% then we don’t need to increase the mill rate by 1%. She said the whole point of not reducing the mill rate by 1% is so that we do not have to reduce the budget by 1%.

Councilor Smith said cutting expenses doesn’t help. Councilor Naeem responded that by cutting expenses then the mill rate comes down.



Councilor Smith said that he would be more in favor of cutting expenses to get to the zero.

Mayor Trinks said he would entertain a motion and open it up for discussion whenever they get to a place in the budget where they would like to propose cuts.

EXPENDITURES

Board of Education

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Bress, seconded by Councilor Black-Burke to accept the proposed budget for the Board of Education of \$80,184,020.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Town Support for Education

MOVED by Councilor Black-Burke, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to accept the proposed budget for the Town Support for Education in the amount of \$5,561,380.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Safety Services

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Walker to accept the proposed budget for Safety Services of \$13,437,180.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Recreation & Leisure Services

MOVED by Councilor Dobler, seconded by Councilor Eleveld to accept the proposed budget for Recreation & Leisure Services of \$2,434,500.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Human Services

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bress to accept the proposed budget for Human Services of \$556,100.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Health Services

MOVED by Councilor Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Black-Burke to accept the proposed budget for Health Services of \$646,360.

Motion Passed 9-0-0



Library Services

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Dobler to accept the proposed budget for Library Services of \$1,918,210.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Development Services

MOVED by Councilor Smith, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bress to amend the proposed budget for Development Services of \$1,595,680 to \$1,617,230.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Community Development

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Bress, seconded by Councilor Naeem to amend the proposed budget for Community Development of \$535,550 to \$490,900.

Councilor Eleveld asked for confirmation that part of this adjustment is for the veterans' benefit that the Council has discussed in the past. Town Manager Souza said, yes, it is a combined motion to reduce \$44,000 from this budget section, which relates to \$21,500 due to the increase that was made previously in Development Services and then \$23,100 is to offset the forgone revenues due to the Council's desire to decrease veterans tax.

Councilor Eleveld asked if Council will be voting on the veterans' issues next month. Town Manager Souza said Council will be incorporating a motion later this evening which will be incorporated into this budget and then formally the ordinance would be considered in May.

Councilor Eleveld thanked Town Manager Souza.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Public Works & Engineering

MOVED by Councilor Black-Burke, seconded by Councilor Eleveld to accept the proposed budget for Public Works and Engineering of \$7,457,440.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Information Services

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Walker to accept the proposed budget for Information Services of \$710,400.

Motion Passed 9-0-0



Administrative Services

MOVED by Councilor Dobler, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for Administrative Services of \$2,899,760.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

General Government

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bress to accept the proposed budget for General Government of \$1,258,630.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

General Services

MOVED by Councilor Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for General Services of \$20,033,640.

Councilor Eleveld then proposed the following motion:

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Smith to amend this line by \$1,060,000 for a total budget of \$18,973,640.

Councilor Eleveld explained that this would be a reduction predominantly on the capital expenditures section of this budget, which is within the general services budget and would result in a zero percent tax increase for tax payers of Windsor. He said they would be able to fund those additional expenditures on a “pay as you go” basis, for one-time capital expenditures over the next year.

Motion Failed 4-5-0 (Mayor Trinks, Deputy Mayor Bress, Councilors Dobler, Naeem and Black-Burke opposed)

Mayor Trinks then repeated the original motion:

MOVED by Councilor Hoffman, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for General Services of \$20,033,640.

Motion Passed 5-3-1 (Councilors Smith, Eleveld and Walker opposed and Councilor Gluck Hoffman abstained)

Expenditure Totals

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Dobler to amend the total proposed General Fund expenditures for the FY 2024 budget of \$139,228,850 to \$139,205,750 on the previously approved motions.

Motion Passed 9-0-0



REVENUES

MOVED by Councilor Smith, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bress to amend the proposed budget for Revenues of \$139,228,850 to \$139,205,750 by decreasing the Current Levy by \$23,100 to balance the revenues with expenditures.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

TAX COLLECTION RATE

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Bress, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the FY 2024 proposed tax collection rate of 99.00%.

Councilor Eleveld asked if 99% is correct and if a separate motion was needed for motor vehicles. Town Manager Souza said the collection rate for vehicles is built into the 99%.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

SENIOR TAX RELIEF

MOVED by Councilor Black-Burke, seconded by Councilor Walker to accept the amount proposed for FY 24 senior tax relief of \$305,000.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

VETERANS TAX RELIEF

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Eleveld to accept the amount proposed for Veterans Tax Relief of \$23,100.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Landfill Enterprise Fund

MOVED by Councilor Dobler, seconded by Councilor Naeem to accept the proposed budget for the Landfill Enterprise Fund of \$2,161,860.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Resident Transfer Station Enterprise Fund

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Councilor Dobler to accept the proposed budget for the Resident Transfer Station Enterprise Fund of \$376,070.

Motion Passed 9-0-0



Caring Connection Adult Day Care Enterprise Fund

MOVED by Councilor Hoffman seconded by Councilor Black-Burke to accept the proposed budget for the Caring Connection Adult Day Care Enterprise Fund of \$471,460.

Motion Passed 8-1-0 (Councilor Smith opposed)

Windsor Child Development Enterprise Fund

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Hoffman to accept the proposed budget for the Windsor Child Development Enterprise Fund of \$1,508,340.

Motion Passed 8-1-0 (Councilor Smith opposed)

OTHER FINAL MOTIONS

Price Guide

MOVED by Councilor Smith, seconded by Deputy Mayor Bress to accept the Price Guide as proposed located in appendix G from the proposed budget document.

Councilor Eleveld spoke to Town Manager Souza and asked if there had been an increase in prices to reflect inflation. Town Manager Souza said there had been some increases but nothing across the board. He said due to inflation some recreation fees, as well as permit fees at the transfer station and pay as you go fees are increasing. He said building permit fees would also be increased, which hadn't been increased in about 15 years.

Councilor Eleveld asked if there are any other increases. Town Manager Souza said the Child Day Care Program and the Caring Connection also had adjustments.

Councilor Eleveld asked what areas have not been increased. Town Manager Souza said Recreation did not increase all of their fees and a number of fees are set by State Statute and Council does not have the ability to change those.

Council Walker asked if there was such a thing as a blanket permit where people stay within one particular price and they continue to build out and the town doesn't collect anything. Town Manager Souza said there is not per se. He said we do have a blanket permit but it does not work as Councilor Walker described it and he gave an example.

Councilor Walker said he has heard the blanket permit term used around town and he wanted to ensure that the town isn't losing revenue. Town Manager Souza said the permit is based on the value of the work and we check that value at the end of larger projects. He said for a single-family permit for a home, they can get one permit for all the work and do not have to come back to get individual permits for electrical and plumbing, so that could be also be referred to as a blanket permit for that type of project. If they were to come in a year later to do electrical work, then they would need to submit an electrical permit application.



Motion Passed 9-0-0

3) SET DATE FOR ANNUAL VOTE ON BUDGET REFERENDUM

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Bress, seconded by Councilor Black-Burke that the annual vote on the budget be held on Tuesday, May 9, 2023, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. at all 7 polling places.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Mayor Trinks thanked Town Manager Souza for the work he put into preparing the budget and asked him to send thanks to staff and let them know how much Council appreciates their work.

Town Manager Souza thanked the Finance Team led by Jim Bourke, Finance Director, Tristen Dodd, Budget Analyst and Accountant and Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director.

4) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Naeem and seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Marcavitch
Recording Secretary