



TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
April 8, 2024
Special Town Council Meeting
Council Chambers

APPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Black-Burke called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Nuchette Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Darleen Klase, Councilor Mary Armstrong, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor William Pelkey, and Councilor Walker

Absent: Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Leroy Smith

2) LIBRARY SERVICES

Gaye Rizzo, Director of Library Services, stated the FY 24 General Fund budget is expected to come in under budget by \$20,510 or 1.1% primarily due to salary savings from two partial year vacancies. The FY 25 General Fund budget reflects an increase of \$72,990 or 3.8% due to Personnel, Energy and Utility Costs.

The FY25 Library Services budget is one that will allow us to attract and retain talented staff and manage utility expenses so that we can continue to offer outstanding programs and services to everyone in our growing Windsor population.

Mayor Black-Burke asked under funding services where it says grants Fiscal Year 24, it shows about \$4,200 and for the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 there is a significant increase in the proposed amount of \$21,200. With that sizable of an increase will there be a shift in programming and if you can tell us what type of programs those might be. Also, where are the grants coming from? Ms. Rizzo stated that this year they paid for the full-time children's librarian out of American Rescue funding. We'd like to include her in our regular budget. We will be taking grant funds and using \$20,000 of that funding for supplies of our Adult and Teen department, which will be for books.

Councilor Gluck-Hoffman had the same question as Mayor Black-Burke and is still confused by the answer. She sees \$21,200 in the grant number and she sees supplies. She is trying to figure it out. She asked how we went from \$4,200 to \$21,200. Ms. Rizzo responded that we took Connecticut grant money and we will be using \$20,000 of that grant towards books, which we would have been paying out of the General Fund and

instead we'll be paying the librarian's full salary out of the General Fund and not using American Rescue funds.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked where we get the grants from. Ms. Rizzo replied it is from different sources but primarily from the State Library. The Connecticard fund comes to us each year based on the number of people that use our library. They give us a grant for that because we participate in a regional collaborative. During COVID, one year we received \$17,000 for that grant.

Councilor Naeem stated that the Library is expected to get \$16,000 more in grant funding this year in comparison to last year. Correct? Ms. Rizzo said not yet. We aren't quite certain. Town Manager Souza interjected and said we have money that has accumulated through the Connecticard fund so we are using that money that has accumulated through the last few years towards the materials and supplies so that we can continue to fund the full-time position the Town Council authorized a year ago using partial American Rescue fund dollars. This is a part of succession planning within the department. We have a younger librarian and we're trying to keep that person with us. We do receive the Connecticard grant on a regular basis so we feel that we will be able to make that transition without creating a hole for FY 26.

Councilor Naeem said the Connecticard money that we receive gets put aside in a separate fund and it is used for Library services correct. Town Manager Souza said that money has to be used for library purposes. Councilor Naeem asked if we know the dollar amount in that fund? Ms. Rizzo said it is \$44,810.

Councilor Pelkey asked if the library is expecting to keep the same hours for next year as what they currently are. Ms. Rizzo said they are not planning any changes in hours.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about the Connecticard program. Ms. Rizzo stated that this program allows you to use your library card at any library in Connecticut.

Mayor Black-Burke asked for this program is it something that we bill and then receive funds for? Ms. Rizzo said no it's based on the usage of the library.

Councilor Pelkey asked if there is an expiration date on the use of the funds. Ms. Rizzo replied that you need to use the funds within 5 years' time.

Councilor Naeem asked about the goal of furniture and equipment replacement. She knows it's a big goal the Library has but she hasn't seen too much of costs going up in the budget as it relates to maintenance and repair and supplies. It seems pretty flat in comparison to other years. Do you foresee, in order to meet that goal, you will need more than what you traditionally spend from a maintenance repair perspective? Ms. Rizzo stated she does not foresee an increase from this budget. Once they've finally done everything with the furniture they will then have a better idea as to what they might need. Every five years they like to take a good hard look at the furniture and equipment. Some of the

equipment such as a computer can be paid from the copy revenues line. We also have another line item in the budget for equipment replacement and repair so that can be used as well. Councilor Naeem said this year the expectation is that there won't be any major replacements happening and it's really taking stock of what might be needed. Ms. Rizzo said that was correct.

Councilor Armstrong said she was looking at the goals for 2025 and you are talking about two members for full-time staff. Will that incur any other expenses or are these employees we already have? Ms. Rizzo said they are all employees we presently have that may be retiring in which case chances are we probably wouldn't have a budgetary impact. Town Manager Souza added that the market place does have an upwards pressure in terms of salaries. As some of our longer term employees leave, the market place value of their positions may be at or above where they were for a salary. That's the only qualifier he'd like to put onto that.

Councilor Pelkey asked moving forward what is the plan for fees. Ms. Rizzo stated that Windsor collects fines for overdue materials at \$.20 per day. The maximum they charge on any item is \$10. Those that are late get an email or text from the library stating their item is going to be due. You get three weeks if you check it out and if no one else wants to check it out you get an additional three weeks, you get an automatic renewal. Last year they collected \$11,000 total for overdue materials.

Councilor Armstrong was wondering 'total circulation of items' is that what you are talking about? Ms. Rizzo said yes that is the total amount of items we check out each year.

Mayor Black-Burke asked in regards to the State Library grant, it looks like there are no projected expenditures for FY 24 but there is a projection for FY 25. Does that tie back to prior conversation regarding Connecticard? Ms. Rizzo said yes and that they are projecting they will get an additional \$4,000 in FY 25 and we'll spend that \$24,000 because that will include the purchase of the books that we spoke of earlier. Mayor Black-Burke asked so that is the same as the State Library grant? Ms. Rizzo said that they have not been receiving the State Library grant which is separate from Connecticard, but they will be giving us \$1,200 this year and we will be spending that.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about all the other programs done through the Library. Are they done through the General Fund? Ms. Rizzo said that staff does a lot of it on their own. Also, they get a grant from the Library Association. They do fundraisers throughout the community to collect funds and each year they give them a budget. We submit the budget and it always gets approved. Many of the performers they hire are paid through them. The \$22,000 in the budget is just an estimate of what we've been getting from them. We submit the bills to them and they pay them.

Mayor Black-Burke inquired about the tutoring program in Wilson. That program will be staying and there are no changes in hours correct? Ms. Rizzo said yes.

3) HEALTH SERVICES

Dr. Michael Pepe, Director of Health Services and Jennifer Waldo, Public Health Nurse gave the following overview of the budget:

Town Manager Souza said he'd like to acknowledge the effort of Mike and his team in pursuing a variety of grant opportunities over the past 18-24 months.

Dr. Pepe stated there are four divisions of the Health Department which include:

- Inspections and Regulation
- Disease Prevention and Control
- Clinic Services
- Emergency Management

FY 24

- FY 24, overall expenditures are expected to come in over budget by \$103,460 due to an increase in available grant funding.
- FY 24 General Fund expenditures are expected to be under budget by \$ 29,040 due to increased grant funding.

FY 25

- The proposed FY 25 budget reflects an increase of \$136,990 and is due to an increase in grant funding.
- The proposed FY 25 General Fund portion of the budget shows a decrease of \$1,360 which is due to grant funding.

Some Highlights for the department this year are:

- Windsor Health Department was awarded a 5 year Preventive Health Strategies at Work in CT grant through the CT Department of Health. The grant will be focused on Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention. The grant award is \$56,250 each year for 5 years totaling \$281,250.
- Collaborated with Greater Hartford Area Health Departments to create a process to screen Class B TB Entrants that enter Windsor and the surrounding towns due to the increased number of immigrants, refugees and newcomers in Connecticut

Councilor Pelkey asked about the expenditures and how the department shares regional costs and funding? If a group gets an amount of money how do we get our portion of it? Dr. Pepe said the primary group that we partner with is South Windsor. One way they partner through them is through the public health emergency preparedness coordination. We are all a part of Region 5 (Hartford County) and Windsor is the lead for Windsor/South Windsor. Therefore South Windsor is providing us their half of the money and then we have a staff member that assumes those duties for both towns, which is programs for public health awareness, updating our flu plans, etc. That is the primary way we work

together. We update South Windsor's plans as well. We also go to meetings on their behalf. Ms. Waldo added that they've also partnered with them on the immunization clinics (flu vaccine) and we've done a flu clinic with them this past year with their staff. We bill for all those vaccines.

Deputy Mayor Klase said thank you for the presentation. She asked if they could talk about the mosquito control program. Dr. Pepe stated the mosquito control program is a very proactive program. It has several different components and facets. We have a private company that we contract with. What they do is they help to maintain the mosquito populations on town-owned properties. There are roughly 13-14 properties that have a large amount of standing water throughout the town. They apply a larvicide which does not impact the wildlife and it stops the mosquito from growing from a larve stage to an adult stage. They go through the town depending on the weather and conditions on average 7-8 times per year if not more. Another mosquito control component is the Health Department has an active program where we go out and larvicide all the town's catch basins twice per year. We drop a larvicide in the catch basins that are effective for 30-45 days. Another component is we provide the residents larvicide protects that they can put on their property for any standing water free of charge. It's one per customer and you get a packet of six that will last you throughout the year.

Councilor Naeem asked about food service inspections. What would be some of the reasons why we wouldn't have 100% of required services inspected? Dr. Pepe said you can think of COVID where it's 'all hands on deck' where we have to have all staff handle traditional clinics, getting the word out, answering questions and also the prohibitions that are associated with where the State of CT didn't want our inspectors going into establishments. That's one example of COVID. Another way could be an absence of one of the sanitarians that conducts the inspection. Those are just a few examples.

Councilor Naeem asked if he had a sense as to where they might be right now. Dr. Pepe said we are at 100%.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the suicide rate that has gone up in Windsor and that the Health Department will be making an assessment of that. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Ms. Waldo asked if she is asking about the community health needs assessment (CHNA)? Councilor Armstrong said the Comprehensive community health needs assessment. Ms. Waldo said based on the grant award, we are required to do a CHNA and we'll be doing that the first year of the Suicide Prevention Mental Health promotion grant. It will be a comprehensive assessment and we'll be working with another company to help pull that information together and survey the Windsor residents. This will lean towards mental health and suicide questions but we want it to be broader than that to help identify things we do well and perhaps some gaps and how do we fill those gaps with the kind of programming we would like to do and share that information with other departments in the town.

Councilor Armstrong said the assessment will be done with departments and not individuals. Is that right? Ms. Waldo said it will be done with individuals throughout Windsor. Dr. Pepe added that it will be done in Windsor in a variety of ways. There will be the ability to answer questions online, in person, and the ability to have a community forum. Those are some of the ways it will be done with the residents. After all the information is accumulated and tabulated, there will be a report issued. One of our goals with the assessment is to ensure there is also information that is not just totally germane to the Health Department but it can be used by the Library or Recreation. That way the entire town has the benefit. Town Manager Souza added as part of the overall grant we are receiving there will be a community panel put together with a variety of providers from the community. The information that we gather from the survey, will be shared with these other community partners. Some of these may be regional providers as well.

Councilor Armstrong said they talked about emergency management and emergency plans for the town. What are the current emergency plans for the town? Dr. Pepe answered we have a variety of emergency plans such as an all hazards planning which would be due to weather conditions, we have a public health emergency response plan which is Health Department related, we have continuity operation plans so we can figure out what needs to be done when there's a continuity issue when someone's not available and who is responsible after that point. There is media communications as well. Town Manager Souza added that the primary plan is the Emergency Operations Plan or the all hazards planning that Dr. Pepe referred to. That is the basis of which we work off of and then there is the specific plans. There is a regional plan the Police Department uses and the Fire Department has plans that are specific to significant fire incidents that need assistance from outside agencies, but our main plan we will be updating is our Emergency Operations Plan which will be done largely with internal staff.

Councilor Naeem said on the expenditure side of these grants funds that are coming in are they resulting in the creation of or hiring of additional permanent full-time people and if so, are these multi-year grants? How does it all fit in? Dr. Pepe replied it is somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle as many of these grants have different durations. Portions of the grants do cover personnel costs, mainly salaries. Some of those funds are used to help cover the personnel costs of a full-time individual. Other components of the grants cover temporary part-time individuals that come in to do specific functions of that grant that might last 3 months, 6 months or a year. When we have this many grants, to try to do it so that individuals that we hire on a temporary basis can go from one grant to another grant so we can get some kind of continuity as they are familiar with the operations and our town and we found it easier to carry out the mission of the grants if we do that.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the Special Revenue Funds. The Bike and Ski safety equipment grant. Do we have inventory on a shelf somewhere for these items? Are we going to be spending that down or how does that work? Ms. Waldo replied the Health Department has about 30-40 helmets in their department. As we use those, we repurchase more with the funds generated by the sale of the helmets.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the Emergency Management Performance grant. It looks like we are continually starting with a negative amount. Why is that? Dr. Pepe stated unfortunately this grant is a victim to the State of Connecticut's ability to process our financial submission to them as to what is expended. It was 18-20 months behind. The negative you are seeing is from a while ago and it has been compounding itself to a degree. Councilor Pelkey said it's not really a negative per se, it's that we're carrying this amount from years past. Dr. Pepe said that is correct.

Councilor Walker asked about the line item 'housing units relocated under the relocation act.' The numbers in 2022 were 10 and then it dropped in 2024 to 5 and we are now projecting 6. Is that all from our housing in town and who pays the cost of that? Dr. Pepe said we do relocations whenever the town causes a dwelling to be condemned or deemed unsafe. It could be a fire or code enforcement issues such as no heat. Those are the traditional ones. What happens is that per the relocation act, we are required to put the individuals within the property into short-term housing. From there, depending on how long they will be out of their dwelling, we see if it's possible to have them go into a permanent new place. When it comes to recouping the costs, the town puts liens on the property that go to the land owner. The homeowner is required in the end to pay the town back for putting those individuals up. Sometimes the liens aren't paid back until the house is sold, other times we've had landlords come in after the fact a month or two later to pay off those liens. The town is fronting the money and then in the back end we do get it when the house is transferred or sold.

Mayor Black-Burke stated she is looking forward to the community health needs assessment and she feels this will inform a lot of individuals in our town. She thanked them for their presentation.

4) FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Steve Bianchi, Interim Fire Chief, Fire & Rescue Services, Daniel Savelli, Assistant Fire Chief and Paul Goldberg, Fire Administrator gave an overview of the budget.

This year's budget is projected to have saving of \$38,000 or 2.8% due to energy and utility savings, with next year's budget increasing by 0.7% or \$9,000 due to increased personnel costs and building maintenance costs. Also in this past year we have received \$21,000 for reimbursement from the State of CT for emergency responses to the limited access highways in town. These funds are placed in an equipment fund that will be used to future purchases in rescue equipment.

The number one concern of the WVFD and all volunteers services is manpower and retention of volunteers. Through the last several years the Town Council has supported the fire department through funding of a LOSAP or pension program, property tax reductions of up to \$2,000, purchase of 7 new vehicles, building a new firehouse at 340 Bloomfield Avenue and dedicated funding for recruitment and retention. As we sit here today we have "sufficient" manpower to handle most situations in town and have the ability

to call for assistance from adjoining towns via mutual aid. But be aware these abilities may come into question in the next couple of years. Here are a few of dynamics that could create the need for changes;

- Our number of active members (attending 10% of calls) is 59 and we have an average age of 46
- The number of “day crew” members who are available on a regular basis during normal working hours is presently 24 with an average age of 57 years
- 10 members resigned this past year
- 12 applications for membership were received 4 members completing the probationary period.

The Town Manager is proposing a third party review of the fire department which would provide the Town Council a road map to ensure the proper fire protection for the town and the costs associated with this protection. The fire department supports this effort of creating a long range plan for both the protection of our citizens and the membership of the department.

Town Manager Souza added that Mr. Bianchi had noted the review of the department’s long range plan. There are no dollars in the operating budget of FY 24. We will be issuing our request for proposals for that. The plan is to come back to the Town Council and request use of year end money or the Reserve fund balance for that third party study.

Councilor Naeem said it sounds like we have an aging and recruitment challenge going on. Could you elaborate a little bit on what you are doing right now on a recruitment perspective and what you think some of those hurdles are in getting more folks involved at a younger age? Interim Fire Chief Bianchi stated they recently started a fire program at Windsor High School. They’ve managed to get three young individuals to join. They are constantly working through advertisements and always thinking of new ways of projecting different incentives. We have two gentleman that just went to a class on recruitment and retention and that is going to start with a whole new eyesight on how to get people to come. It was a vigorous class that they attended.

Councilor Naeem asked if there is more that the town can be doing to support them. She knows that Councilor Pelkey reminds everyone at every meeting about becoming involved in the Volunteer Fire Department. Are there things we could be doing to get that word out? Assistant Fire Chief Savelli said that one of the things that can be done is the department needs to do a better job in letting individuals know that they are a volunteer fire department. Signs have been placed everywhere in town. They try to find good communication avenues to do that. Working with the people that took the recruitment and retention class and working with the Town Manager we’re going to try and find ways to get the biggest bang for our buck. There have been several times that he’s gone to calls at 2:00 AM and people ask him ‘what do you mean you were in bed two minutes ago? I don’t pay for you to be in bed two minutes ago.’ He has to then explain to that individual they are a volunteer fire department. The best recruitment is word of mouth whether it’s a family member, friend

or neighbor. Next year's programming we are going to try and look at getting that word out either through communications or at events at the fire stations.

Councilor Pelkey asked if there is anything in terms of needed funding, broader support, etc. that we can supply you. Whatever cost we spend will pale in comparison if we had to professionalize. We are all worried about what the budget implications are going to be this year. If we professionalize that is going to go even higher. He said just looking at the budget line it is \$150,000. Is that a little bit of a wait and see to see for that potential review and see how that new training is or is there something that you feel you wanted to include but were trying to have an ear out for what was out in the public about taxes this year? Is there something you've said it would be nice to have, but we can't have. What can we do? Interim Fire Chief Bianchi said the high school program was a semester. He's been pushing to make it a second semester which would be a Fire II/Fire I. That hopefully will incorporate some more interest from the high school. The other part is going out and looking into the buildings we have in town and see if we could get support from some of the companies in town in letting their people go. They are called industrious members. We have a few from other towns that actually volunteer because they work in town. The best way is word of mouth. Town Manager Souza stated the budget you have before you, which is similar to the FY 24 budget, has \$40,000 in it that is specifically broken out for recruitment and retention efforts. He doesn't believe from a recruitment and retention perspective there's really anything there. It's with making those connections with individuals. If your question is relative to if there are any additional resources needed, he doesn't believe there is at this time.

Councilor Pelkey said you've recruited and paid for the training for these individuals and they are now fire fighters. How do we stop them from going on to becoming professional fire fighters elsewhere? Is there anything more that we can do to try and retain those individuals? Interim Fire Chief Bianchi said we are doing everything right. We are retaining who we have from the training aspect through the tax incentive. There is a slight stipend these individuals get. It's basically that you got to want to be there. With the guys they've picked up they've had great success with. We just need to pick up a few more. Assistant Fire Chief Savelli added that there are fire fighters that received their training and are professional fire fighters elsewhere but are still volunteer fire fighters for Windsor.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked if there is a projected time line from the release of the RFP to the actual completion of the assessment. Town Manager Souza said most likely by the time we get a contractor on board, hopefully the first portion of this summer, it's probably 120 days or thereabouts.

Mayor Black-Burke said as we are looking at the RFP do we have any data right now that speaks to the why people are not staying. Is it a family situation, stepping away from volunteer or relocation? Town Manager Souza said there is attrition from an age perspective, relocation out of the area, and more transitions in regards to work and a significant change in their professional life that does not allow them to be a volunteer any longer, along with time commitments as their family life changes. It's a whole host of things.

Acting Interim Chief Bianchi said in his own life, when he had smaller children, he couldn't commit as much time as he can now in volunteering.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the fire hydrants. They are in the Capital Improvements Plan. Is there any sort of amount we should incorporate into the budget? Just trying to make sure that you have what you need to do your job. Interim Fire Chief Bianchi stated that if he doesn't have to lay 1,500 feet of five inch hose down and instead only 500 feet, it would be more efficient. As a rule, we have a pretty good fire system in town.

Councilor Walker said for several terms on the Town Council they have been acknowledging that the Town of Windsor is fortunate to have a volunteer fire department. The Town Manager may remember that several years ago we did start looking at just guessing what the cost would be for professional fire fighters for Windsor and we don't even want to go there. The longer we can get volunteers, the better it will be for the town. He thanked the volunteer fire fighters for all they do.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said she knows a few full-time fire fighters that live in town and do volunteer. Have we thought about doing some recruitment with those folks, some that don't even realize about the volunteer fire department? She thinks many people do not know that Windsor is a volunteer fire department. What's a good way to capture those full-time fire fighters to maybe volunteer for us? Assistant Fire Chief Savelli said he doesn't think there is a singular answer to that question. Any fire fighter in the state of Connecticut knows who is protecting the place that they are living in. It was frowned upon to become a volunteer fire fighter if you were a full-time one years ago, but that is no longer the case. Even career fire departments are suffering recruitment wise.

Councilor Armstrong said she's looking at grants and contributions and she does not see any. Is there a reason for that? Town Manager Souza said on occasion we have received money in memory of someone or if someone chooses to make a donation. The individual fire companies do a whole host of fundraising activities and with those dollars some fire departments use them for their social activities. That's why historically you haven't seen a lot of donations toward that line item.

Councilor Walker asked if the fire fighters get a tax break. Assistant Fire Chief Savelli said yes.

Mayor Black-Burke stated she believes a pancake breakfast is coming up. Interim Fire Chief Bianchi stated yes it's on April 20th at the Hayden Fire Station.

Councilor Armstrong said she did attend the awards ceremony and it was well received. She appreciates their services.

5) AMBULANCE SERVICES

Dan Moylan, Chief of Windsor EMS, gave the following overview of the budget.

For FY 24, we are expecting a positive year-end balance due to salary savings, along with savings in areas such as medical supplies, communications and utilities. Throughout FY 24, due to the continued support of the Town, Windsor EMS has been able to:

- Increase wages to become competitive with other companies in the region
- Start of a successful recruitment campaign, resulting in:
 - 52 applications and 38 interviews
 - Hiring of 1 full-time EMT, 2 full-time paramedics, 6 part-time EMTs, 3 part-time paramedics, 2 full-time paramedic supervisors
 - 4 part-time EMTs starting in April
 - Several more still in the application process
- Purchase of new patient care equipment, such as stretchers and cardiac monitors to replace equipment at or past manufacturer's expected useful life
- Order placed for new ambulance to replace aging fleet, expected delivery of 2-3 years

A few other notable mentions from FY 24 are:

- Started working in collaboration with Bloomfield Volunteer Ambulance to help train new EMTs
- 2 managers that returned to school in early 2023, have become paramedics, allowing for additional resources
- Working to implement revised scheduling, with the use of intercept paramedics, in an effort to be more efficient, reduce provider fatigue, recruit/retain staff, and meet the increasing call volumes of the town and region.
- Still facing many of the same state and national challenges relating to decreasing number of EMS services, services areas being taken over by healthcare systems, low insurance reimbursement rates, increasing costs and manufacturing times for equipment and supplies, and increasing hospital overcrowding causing longer out of service times.

Looking forward to FY 25, our budget remains level with that of FY 24 at \$595,000, which will allow for:

- Continued increase in recruitment and retention of staff
- Staffing of a third ambulance during peak hours
- Additional Paramedic level supervisors/intercept paramedics
- Increasing maintenance on the aging fleet of ambulances
- Continues replacement of aging patient care equipment
- Additions of new equipment/training to remain current with State and Federal requirements

As we move into FY25, we look forward to the continued support in making Windsor EMS a premier EMS agency in the state and increasing the delivery of care we are able to provide to the residents and visitors to the Town of Windsor.

Councilor Naeem asked about the ambulance board. Can you give us an update on have there been any changes in bringing in new members, level of engagement, and by-law review. Mr. Moylan stated they are expecting the board to have a revised set of by-laws by the beginning of June for an implementation that we are expecting for July. In the by-laws it does include a restructuring of the board, the number of positions that are currently on it with an increase of 2-3 members and recruitment efforts from the Board itself.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked about the invoicing of patients and collection of payments and what have we done to make that situation better. Mr. Moylan stated that is still an issue on not just the lower reimbursement rates in general but from all the different providers. One of the hurdles they do have is people being able to pay their bills or not able to cover deductibles. If they do not hear back from individual in arrears by nine months, the bill then goes into a collection agency or small claims court to recoup expenses.

Councilor Pelkey said the annual contribution has stayed flat as opposed to a decrease or increase. Why? Mr. Moylan answered they are anticipating on bringing on additional staff which in turn would increase the revenue allowing the town contribution that will be required to sustain the ambulance service to be the same as it has been.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the ambulances and who would get them? Town Manager Souza stated the ambulances are going to be purchased for Windsor EMS or Windsor Volunteer ambulance (WVA). The WVA has ordered those and the plan, based upon the multi-year study, was that the town would provide, through its annual contribution when those vehicles get delivered, their annual contribution which would potentially increase and cover those lease payments assuming that the WVA's revenues from insurance reimbursement does not increase enough to cover that. You'll see in FY 26 that \$595,000 number increase (assuming we will get a delivery in FY 25 or FY 26). We'd be able to see an increase in the town's contributions for those capital leases.

Councilor Armstrong asked if with the purchases of the new ambulances would that require personnel? Mr. Moylan said no as they will be replacing our current fleet of ambulances that we have. The average age of our ambulances that we presently have are about 9-13 years old with a life expectancy of 7-8 years.

Councilor Naeem stated in the audited financials she saw that the WVA has two leases. Are those existing leases or are they the ones that are coming down the road? Mr. Moylan stated they are for the existing ambulances that are 8-10 years old. Councilor Naeem asked about the lease length. Mr. Moylan responded that one was a 10 year lease and one was a five year lease. Councilor Naeem asked the ones that we are looking at are brand new and five year leases. Is that correct? Town Manager Souza said he believes it is what they placed in the proforma that Mr. Holdsworth had completed. It was five years.

Councilor Pelkey asked how many ambulances do we have. Mr. Moylan said we presently have five ambulance vehicles (transport units) along with three paramedic intercept vehicles.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman thanked the WVA staff and said they do an amazing job.

Councilor Walker said we know that currently in greater Hartford, recruiting individuals to work for the ambulance companies is not easy because major hospitals have bought up a lot of ambulances and they have benefits that are attractive. CT DPH had instructions on the state legislature to look at what we can do to changing some of the rules. For example, an emergency room physician who is very capable to handle all types of trauma treatment is unable to work as a volunteer on an ambulance if he/she lives in Windsor or any other town in Connecticut. Do you know what the status is at the state level and if they will ever allow nurses to work on ambulance off hours? Mr. Moylan said he does not know the status. He's never heard in his 20 years on the job that would be brought up to legislation. Town Manager Souza added that at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) that question has been raised relative to potentially investigating those regulation changes and how to go about that. He's not sure how far those conversations have gone with the DPH council but he knows at that level there had to be some conversation with CCM to try and advocate for those changes. In the past six months, they have been focused on the reimbursement rate. Perhaps those regulation changes have taken second place to those conversations of pushing to change the reimbursement rates and having the state put monies into the budget to continue reimbursement rates for this current year and into 2025. That's where most of the effort has been put in this current legislation.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the ambulance service. What is the response time? Mr. Moylan said a lights and siren ambulance is 7 minutes and 40 seconds and one without the lights and siren is 8 minutes and 37 seconds. For any of the out of town units, it's been a 10 minute 40 second response time.

Mayor Black-Burke said in regards to the schedule and covering peak times, can we cover the calls coming in. Is that also a part of the configuration? There will be two full-timers and three part-timers coming on. Is that what we need to balance the scale for scheduling? Mr. Moylan responded they are getting there. We aren't 100% there yet but there are four new part-timers starting this week and then there are 6-7 individuals in the process of being interviewed. From there is the hope that we can get started with the onboarding process in the next month or so. That should bring us up to minimum staffing. Mr. Moylan talked about the intercept paramedic and explained the concept to the councilors.

Councilor Armstrong asked what the age requirements are. Mr. Moylan said in the State of Connecticut you can become a paramedic at the age of 16. Normally, the age is 18 and older that we will bring individuals on as volunteers or paid staff.

6) RECREATION & LEISURE SERVICES

Paul Norris, Director of Recreation & Leisure Services, George Headley, Transportation Coordinator; Rich Henderson, Assistant Director; and Kursten Coleman, Youth Services Bureau Coordinator, gave the following overview of the budget for Recreation & Leisure Services.

The overall FY 24 Recreation & Leisure Services expenditures will be higher than originally budgeted by approximately \$44,650 or 1.3%. This is due to increased programs and service offerings associated with unexpected grants for the senior center, transportation, and the Youth Services Bureau. The FY24 General Fund expenditures are expected to be under budget by \$13,910 or 0.6%

FY 24 was the year of improvements and engagement. The early part of the fiscal year began with the reopening of Goslee Pool and the new pickleball courts at the LP Wilson Community Center. Youth Services and its 30 summer teen employment interns added a new element to their community engagement by completing beautification projects for some of our elderly residents. The recreation division added weekend swim lessons during the summer to make scheduling easier for working families, added summer game nights on the green, expanded evening adult sports, and added a 3-on-3 basketball tournament for young adults at 330 Windsor Avenue Community Center.

The senior center and transportation staff continue to provide programs and services, especially in health and socialization, to meet the demands of the 55+ community.

Northwest Park staff continues to enhance its environmental education curriculum to meet modern standards and provide the best possible experience for students and families.

The overall FY 25 budget reflects an increase of approximately \$149,000 or 4.2%. The General Fund budget is expected to increase by \$75,470 or 3.1%. This reflects an increase in Personnel, Services, and Energy and Utilities.

Councilor Naeem asked about the money that came in last year to help cover pool passes. Will that be happening again this year? Mr. Norris replied that we received \$14,000 at the beginning of the current fiscal year. What we've done with that is there used to be a charge for teens to use the teen center at 331 Windsor Avenue. We have eliminated that charge this fiscal year. They have seen an increase in individuals using the community center, in particular the older teen age (19-22 years old) group. We are looking to implement for this summer free pool passes for youth. Anyone that would like to get a youth swim pass for this coming season, they can contact the Recreation office for that and that pass will be free for them.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked about the pickle ball courts. Were they used last year? Mr. Norris said yes, they were used frequently. He explained they take down the nets from the courts when it's off season as it helps with the longevity of the nets. They put those nets up in March this year as the weather was so nice. They have been used and there are quite a few people using the courts. They still wanted to make sure we had a tennis facility and he saw a few people playing today.

Councilor Pelkey asked if we are changing any of the hours for any of the facilities. Mr. Norris said no they are not changing hours.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the facilities and management piece of the budget. Is there no personnel needed for that? Mr. Norris responded that is correct. In our Recreation facilities budget for the most part that is strictly buildings or pool operation.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about the partnership with Windsor Locks and Suffield. Is that all in kind? Are they providing money? Ms. Coleman responded it is mainly them both leaning on each other. In example, if Windsor Locks/Suffield has a program in their town that we do not, we will send kids out there and they will be transported with Youth Services Bureau vans to be able to attend those events.

Mayor Black-Burke said last year there was an increase in summer interns. Was that enough or are we going to increase that number this year? Ms. Coleman said that they are looking at 15-30 individuals. It depends as we just implemented a program that is going to open up. Staffing can be an issue with running summer programs. So, that program is still up in the air. Town Manager Souza added the goal is to do as close to 30 as we can using American Rescue dollars again for that extra bump from 15 up to 30.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked about the FY 25 goal regarding researching the feasibility of increasing summer recreation programs for the youth with disabilities. Can you talk a little about what that plan is? Mr. Norris stated inclusion is everything we do in our Recreation program but we don't have a specialized camp for persons with special needs and neither do we have the expertise. Part of the discussion we will enter into with the Board of Education is do we want to consider doing a joint program where we can have a program specifically for kids with special needs. The model they would be using is the Town of Glastonbury has one of the best summer camp programs for kids with special needs along with the Town of Groton. We would be trying to use their model as much as possible. The goal here is not to do it alone but to collaborate with the Board of Education.

Councilor Armstrong asked what the Red Ribbon week activities are. Ms. Coleman said Red Ribbon week is their drug prevention week where they promote being drug free. They will hand out pamphlets and paraphernalia. They also do red tulip kits. This is where individuals sign up online and they are able to get a tulip kit which is a planter, tulip bulb and other items. They are also given signs to place in their front yards stating they are drug free. There is always a wait list for this program. Mr. Norris added that program is in collaboration with the Recreation Department's 1,001 pumpkins so we have a large drawing of about 600 people. It's also an opportunity for us to increase awareness on opioids and prevention.

Councilor Armstrong asked how many programs/activities they have related to mental health issues. Ms. Coleman stated one recent activity they had is offering the mental health first aid certification for those 18 and over to come in. It's a bundled course. They are able to see how to talk to someone and recognize those mental health issues. There is always a wait list for this program as well. We promote mental health with our youth as well.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked how you get on the list for those programs. Ms. Coleman said mental health first aid you can sign up through the Recreation's online portal. Once an individual is signed up, we contract out to CHR. We pass along the information and they reach out to the families. For the youth, it's whoever signs up for the after-school programs.

Councilor Naeem said she found the Recreation Department's statistics very impressive. She's looking forward to seeing more. Town Manager Souza stated use of the American Rescue monies really kept us to before COVID levels. We received approximately \$95,000 towards that. It kept us in the forefront of getting folks outside from the position of isolation and out into the community.

Mayor Black-Burke said in regards to senior services, the transportation is so needed. Councilor Pelkey has been asking about shifting hours and days. She feels there is a great need in the Windsor community for seniors to have access to that type of transportation. Are there any proposed changes to days and times to transportation services? Mr. Headley replied currently we are operating Monday-Sunday. Saturday and Sunday are evening and weekend trips which is funded through a grant from the NCAAA. Right now, we do a lot but we are restricted because of the size of the bus. It only holds 12 people. Shifting services or time, he's not sure he sees where they can do anything like that because they are already doing it.

Councilor Pelkey asked what the utilization rate is for the bus. Mr. Headley said you'll never have a full bus unless it's on a designated trip. Because we have six buses and sometimes all six of them are in operations. They are all going different places and they try to utilize the bus the best way they can because they do time specific transportation. Councilor Pelkey said so we don't have three buses just sitting there idle all the time. They are being used correct. Mr. Headley said yes. Mr. Norris added that Mr. Headley has done a great job in enhancing the services for transportation. For example, he shortened the reservation time so folks that had to call seven days before the appointment can now do it in four days before the appointment. We also bought a smaller van where we can increase ability to get down narrow streets and narrow driveways where we can transport people more efficiently with gas, we do more rides to our out of town medical transportation. Mr. Headley continues to bring good ideas to the table. Town Manager Souza added that one of the challenges and constraints with senior transportation is the availability of part-time drivers and the pay rate. Where before we'd get a fair number of semi-retired folks at \$14-\$15 hours, that is becoming more of an issue and that is some of the constraints Mr. Headley is dealing with.

Councilor Pelkey asked what are the requirements to drive a bus. Mr. Headley said you have to have a public service license or a CDL. You have to have a physical as well showing you are physically fit.

Councilor Armstrong asked if these vehicles are for disability and wheelchair accessible correct? Mr. Headley said all the vehicles are disability and wheelchair accessible.

Councilor Walker said the Recreation team is doing a good job.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if the Red Sox programs etc. are still going on in the near future. Mr. Henderson stated that last year they ran a very successful bus trip to the Hartford Yard Goats game. There were 100 people on the trip. They could drive themselves or we provided transportation. That was a part of the American Rescue funds at a reduced rate for Windsor residents. We are actually looking to do two games this year, one in July and one in August.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked everyone for what they are doing for the town.

7) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Armstrong, seconded by Councilor Pelkey to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Motion Passed 7-0-0 (Councilors Eleveld and Smith absent)

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary