



TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
April 15, 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 Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor William Pelkey, Councilor Leroy Smith, and Councilor Walker

2) POLICE SERVICES

Don Melanson, Police Chief stated the Police Department's FY 24 Expenditures are expected to be under budget by \$517,480, or 4.1%. This is primarily due to savings in Personnel costs from partial year vacancies, workers compensation and disability leave, and savings related to the state Municipal Retirement Fund. This is offset in part by the use of other funds mostly for the purchase of a new crime scene van that was recently approved by this Council. The FY 24 General Fund Budget is expected to come in \$650,280, or 5.5%, due to the same personnel cost savings.

For the 2025 Fiscal year, the Police Department's General Fund Budget, including town support for education, is increasing \$167,110, or 1.4%. This increase is mostly due to the same personnel costs, as well as increased costs for Maintenance and repair services. Increases to the FY 25 General Fund have been mitigated in part by the increased use of Other Funds such as Police Private Duty to fund a patrol vehicle and a part time administrative assistant.

Councilor Naeem asked about vacancies and if they had staff leaving or if they were not able to fill the position. Police Chief Melanson said that in Support Services, they were not able to fill the vacant position over the past year and they are looking to fill that position. He said a lot of that was officer positions and they had to move Officers from Support Services to Patrol to make sure the Patrol Division was covered for that.

Councilor Naeem asked on the support side, if they still need the full-time employee role with how the fiscal year has gone. Police Chief Melanson said yes, we do.

Deputy Mayor Klase thanked them for their investment in training and community efforts.

Councilor Armstrong thanked them for their service and thought what they were doing was great for the community. She said looking at page F-4, the Vehicle Maintenance budget line went up from \$5,000 to \$15,000 and asked if there was a reason for that. Police Chief Melanson said the cost is for replacement vehicles and he explained how they auction off old vehicles and use that money to help pay for new ones.

Councilor Armstrong said looking at page F-5, under Maintenance and Repair, there was nothing in FY 24 and now it has gone up to \$110,000. Police Chief Melanson said that those funds are for radio costs. He said it is for the public radio system that is town-wide and it is due for a major upgrade, so there is a substantial increase for a one-time cost.

Town Manager Souza added that they are using non-general fund dollars and it will increase for FY 25 and then will go back down for FY 26. He said there are dollars in the Capital Outlay account which paid for the original purchase and implementation of the radio system and they are using approximately \$90,000 from that account to address this “peak” in costs for FY 25, so they do not have to add that to the general fund budget.

Councilor Armstrong said that she remembered there was mention of a webpage going up or technology and information and asked how that has progressed. Police Chief Melanson said they published live about a week and a half ago with their interactive webpage where you can go in and look at their calls for service and pull up specific types of data. He believed there was five years’ worth of data on there to see where the trends are.

Councilor Armstrong asked where they could find the information. Police Chief said that it is on the town’s page (www.townofwindsorct.com), under the Police Department’s page and click on the “calls for service data” and it will bring you to an interactive dashboard.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked them for the presentation. She saw that one of the goals for FY 25 is advanced training and asked if it would be further training on the areas listed on page F-9 or if there would be additional training opportunities coming to the police force. Police Chief Melanson said it will be a mix and that it often depends on what trainings are available and trying to coordinate that with their officers and their availability. He said most trainings are from 3-5 days and some are two-weeks long, so it all depends. He said that they do speak with each of their officers many times a year to identify what type of trainings they are looking forward to and to identify areas where they may be lacking.

Councilor Pelkey said looking at page F-15 he sees that there is \$90,000 for the dog pound and dog placement and asked for a better understanding of the breakdown of the expenditures. Police Chief Melanson said it is not only for the maintenance and care of the facility but also utilities, food for animals, vet bills and equipment for the shelter.

Councilor Pelkey asked if they were looking to change anything in terms of the number of zones that we have. He thought that we have five currently. Police Chief Melanson said that they have five areas or districts that their officers patrol and they look at calls for service and how those calls are broken down in the different zones and they will deploy

their officers as needed. He said as they graduate more officers from the academy and they enter the field, they'll be able to take those officers and do more proactive law enforcement and re-staff the traffic unit, which serves the whole town. He said he thought the district plan they have right now works very well and a lot of it is structured because of the highway to provide for best response times.

Councilor Naeem asked about the Community Resource Officer position and if that was an area that they would be looking to expand. Police Chief Melanson said that right now they are able to staff a second Community Relations Officer and they are very busy doing not only community engagement but also working with businesses and working with our community events. He said he thought two is the proper number for that right now and said that they only have one Youth Engagement Officer currently and their goal is to fill that second spot in May.

Councilor Naeem asked if he would be able to share how frequently throughout the year a Community Resource Officer is requested. Police Chief Melanson said the Department itself runs five or six formal events and they try to schedule a "Coffee With a Cop" at least once a week. He said they also get a dozen or so requests from businesses to do crime prevention and active shooter training as well. He said they do get called out quite often.

Town Manager Souza added that this department has also worked with our Social Services Department regarding homelessness or those in transition and that has been a more recent role that they have taken on.

Deputy Mayor Klase believed there was a new rule about elder abuse and neglect training for police departments and asked about their plan for rolling out that training for officers. Police Chief Melanson said the training is part of their recertification and their office is tracking that as they move forward.

Councilor Pelkey asked how is the Department doing in terms of mental health for officers and asked if they needed more support or if he felt good about where they are. Police Chief Melanson said he thought they were doing well but that more could always be done. He said he felt mental health and mental wellness is always very important along with physical health and wellness and that sometimes they go hand in hand. He said they have a great new fitness facility that many of the officers use and they also have a couple of programs along with the town's EAP (employee assistance program) program. He said they also have a peer program, where officers get mental health training and can identify someone who needs help or can be someone for the officers to talk to. He added that any time there is a major incident, they do a debriefing and have an opportunity to talk to their mental health clinician, which many officers utilize. He also mentioned comfort dogs, which many departments are moving towards around the country and they are looking at to see if it would be a good fit. Overall, he thought the Department is on the right track and that they are doing a lot for their officers.

Councilor Smith asked about the service areas and if they include the highways that pass through Windsor. Police Chief Melanson said that they are not the primary patrol service for the highway that is the Connecticut State Police. However because it is in Windsor, they do have jurisdiction to enforce laws on the highway. He said they do respond if the State Police asks for assistance.

Councilor Smith said he knew of a program that would check in on people's parents and wondered if that is something that could be brought to Windsor. Police Chief Melanson said that they actually do that quite frequently and that it is called a check welfare call. He said there is also another program that is being pushed out by the State called "Bring Me Back Home" where if an autistic child or an elderly parent leaves home, they are able to pull their data and get them home.

Town Manager Souza added that our Social Services Department also has an at-risk notification for folks who are homebound or disabled, so if there is any emergency, like a long-term power outage, our staff will call them and check in on them. He said there is more information on the town's website under the Social Services Department.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about the customer satisfaction survey and was trying to determine if the quality assurance program was more about the end user or if it was quality assurance for process, procedures and protocols being used within the Department. Police Chief Melanson said that it was more for processes within the Department and that they can use their survey tool to enhance that as well.

Mayor Black-Burke said she read that they are looking to develop the quality assurance program and she asked if there was another program that they are currently looking at or a tool that others are using. Police Chief Melanson said they have tried it out a little bit in a pilot method at the command staff level where they randomly select cases from the previous two weeks and command staff reads it to see if the report was properly written and identifies if proper investigation tools were used. He said it is like a checklist to determine if the best practices are being met.

Councilor Walker said that when people look to move to Windsor, especially young families, they look to our crime statistics and to our schools. He said they do a tremendous job and that he really appreciated it. He asked if calls for vicious animals have gone up or decreased. Police Chief Melanson replied that he would not say that they have gone up or decreased. He said those types of incidents where a dog attacks another dog out of the blue, do not happen often. He said they are not seeing a spike in that and he thought we have very responsible pet owners in town. He said there will always be someone who does not want to follow the rules. He said the issue that Councilor Walker was talking about had been resolved.

Councilor Eleveld asked when they are shifting people into patrol, are those typically uniformed officers or where do they come from in the budget. Police Chief Melanson said they are uniformed officers but they are assigned to Support Services. He said there are

five officers (SRO (1), community relations officers (2) and youth engagement (2) officers) assigned to support services. He said they are at the same rank as a Patrol Officer, so they will assign them back to patrol when staffing is needed.

Councilor Eleveld asked if that cost then shifts to uniform patrol versus support services. Police Chief Melanson said it does and it all depends if it is going to be a long-term or short-term assignment. He said on a day-to-day basis, they will not reassign those funds.

Councilor Eleveld remembered that about four years ago there were some dead spots on the radio and asked if that was still an issue. Police Chief Melanson said that is no longer an issue with the new radio system.

Councilor Eleveld asked how many canines are in the Department. Police Chief Melanson said they currently have one canine and now that staffing is back up, they are putting out for a second officer to be trained, so that can be back up to two canines.

Councilor Eleveld asked if he anticipated being fully staffed this year. Police Chief Melanson said yes, but being fully staffed does not necessarily mean officers on the road. He said it takes almost a year once they hire someone to get them ready. He said they have one officer starting next Monday and an officer starting in July and then they will be fully staffed.

Councilor Eleveld asked what is the cost to get an officer ready to be on patrol. Police Chief Melanson said it was somewhere between \$108,000 to \$115,000, plus about \$10,000 to \$15,000 on top of that for equipment and uniforms.

Town Manager Souza added that the numbers included salary, benefits and pension/retirement.

Police Chief Melanson said that it was the full cost and not just salary.

Councilor Armstrong commended the Animal Control Officer and asked about a note on page F-15 to continue status as a no kill shelter. What does that mean? Police Chief Melanson replied that it means when it comes to pets that are adoptable, they will hold on to them and work with agencies that are proactive in putting pets up for adoption. He said it is their goal not to euthanize pets that are adoptable.

Councilor Armstrong read on page F-9 that they provide security and protection for students and staff for the high school and asked how that rolls over to the other schools. Police Chief Melanson said at the high school they have the SRO and at the other schools patrol officers will come in and walk through the school, as well as their youth engagement officers work with the middle and elementary schools. He said they will stop in, do trainings and are very familiar with the schools. He said their focus is being a mentor and helping with any issues that they may have.

Councilor Armstrong asked what their response time was for situations at school. Police Chief Melanson said that it would be very fast at the high school because they have a SRO right at the school. If there were an emergency at the other schools, their response time would be somewhere between two and four minutes.

Mayor Black-Burke said that if anyone had any additional questions to email Town Manager Souza and thanked the Police Department for their presentation.

3) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Flavia Rey de Castro, Community Development Specialist, and Patrick McMahon, Economic Development Director, gave an overview of the budget.

The primary goal of Community Development is neighborhood preservation. This is normally done through the housing rehabilitation program, which is funded primarily with state grants and program income (or repayment of loans). During FY24 and for part of FY25, the office is also achieving this goal through the Multifamily Rehabilitation Grant Program.

For the current fiscal year, the overall expenditures are estimated to come over budget by approximately \$140,000 or 17% with a decrease of \$540 to the General Fund portion. The non-General Fund budget increase is associated with expenses related to the Multifamily Rehabilitation Program, Housing Rehabilitation, and Senior and Workforce Housing Planning initiative.

For FY 25, the proposed budget shows an overall expenditure decrease of around \$430,000 or 50.7%. The General Fund portion is expected to decrease by close to \$380,000 or 77% mainly due to one-time transfers of approximately \$305,000 and \$75,000 that took place in FY 24. These transfers were for the Housing Rehabilitation program and for the creation of a Senior & Workforce Housing Planning Initiative. The non-General Fund budget decrease is associated with a one-time allocation of American Rescue Funds (ARF) in FY 24 for the Multifamily Rehabilitation Grant Program.

Councilor Naeem asked if they could share updates on what has come out of the senior and workforce housing development and asked what future opportunities could look like based on the work that has already been done. Mr. McMahon said the Council allocated \$75,000 to analyze opportunities for seniors and workforce housing. He said they have been looking at properties across town that they think could be a possible locations. They have been reaching out to affordable housing developers and have brought them on property tours throughout the community. He said the properties that they are identifying, they are looking to utilize the funding for pre-development activities, which would be a fit test – how many units could be built on the site and how do we make it happen through federal, state, local or private funding. He said one of their challenges is finding a developer who is willing to sell those units to those on a fixed income.

Councilor Naeem asked if we had spent the \$75,000 that was allocated. Mr. McMahon replied that they anticipate spending \$25,000 in this fiscal year and \$50,000 in the next fiscal year.

Town Manager Souza added that we applied for a state grant called the Community Investment Fund and we were planning on using \$50,000 of the FY 25 dollars as a local match. He said we were not awarded funds through that competitive grant and it has delayed plans. He said Mr. McMahon will be putting his efforts mainly in several properties in the Wilson neighborhood.

Councilor Smith asked if there were any plans to focus on public services and facilities. Mr. McMahon said those are eligible services through the CDBG program through housing and urban development at the Federal level. However at the state level, they have determined that they want to focus on state supported housing portfolio, so they do not anticipate being able to secure any funding through CDBG for those purposes. He said when it comes to community facilities, they are looking at other grant possibilities and public services they are working with the Wilson Deerfield Advisory Committee on beautification efforts and those types of things.

Councilor Naeem asked about the multi-family rehabilitation program and if they had a sense of what additional demand could look like for that program. Mr. McMahon said despite not advertising, they continue to get inquiries from multi-family owners who would have interest if there was another allocation. He said at least a handful have approached them.

Councilor Armstrong asked them to explain the loan repayment fund. Ms. Rey de Castro said CDBG money was used through the housing rehabilitation program and that was set up to give low interest loans. She said the money that gets paid back from those loans allows them to give additional loans. Mr. McMahon added that it is a revolving loan program.

Councilor Armstrong asked who are the loans given to. Ms. Flavia Rey de Castro said that they comply with the CDBG eligibility requirements. Town Manager Souza added that there were nine projects done in FY 24 and all have averaged a loan of \$30,000. He said most of them are deferred loans, so once they get paid, sold or transferred then the loan would go into the revolving loan fund and draw down from the fund to pay for operational/administrative costs or to do additional projects in years to come. He said it is hard to estimate how much money will come in on an annual basis as the loans are deferred.

Councilor Armstrong said these are loans given to qualified residents and asked if that was it. Mr. McMahon said that was correct.

Councilor Armstrong asked by what means would they apply. Ms. Rey de Castro said there is a waiting list and as they reach the top of the list, then they ask for more

documentation to ensure that they qualify. Mr. McMahon added that they do a lot of roofs, replacement of furnaces, electrical upgrades and often code related updates.

Councilor Eleveld thought there was a program tied in with Windsor Federal and asked if that was the revolving loan program. Town Manager Souza replied that was the multi-family project that was funded with American Rescue Funds.

Councilor Eleveld asked if Windsor Federal did the administering. Mr. McMahon said that their department administers the program but what Windsor Federal will do is if the owner does not have funds to match the grant, then they can approach Windsor Federal and seek a loan to be the match for the grant. He said a few property owners have taken advantage of Windsor Federal's financing but most have used their own assets to match.

Councilor Eleveld asked if disposition of a property would fall under the sale and/or the refinancing if there is an existing mortgage. Mr. McMahon said they will subordinate if it is refinanced.

Councilor Eleveld clarified that as long as it stays within the loan value to debt ratio, correct? Mr. McMahon said that is correct.

The Council thanked them for their presentation.

4) INFORMATION SERVICES

Enita Jubrey, Assistant to the Town Manager, stated for the current fiscal year, our General Fund budget is projected to come in over budget by approximately \$3,000 mostly due to an increase in contractual services in Public Relations.

The proposed FY 25 General Fund budget for Information Services reflects a 4.3% increase primarily due to personnel costs offset in part by increased use of special revenue funds and a decrease in the Services line.

Town Clerk's office

Anna Posniak, Town Clerk stated the Town Clerk's overall FY 24 budget is expected to be over budget by \$25,000 due to the use of Special Revenue Funds to offset the costs related to renovation of Town Clerk's office. Thanks to Council's support of the project in October, we are pleased to report the intended goals of increased functionality and enhanced security during non-business hours were achieved.

For FY 25 the General Fund budget will increase by 2.4% (\$9,130) due to increased Personnel costs. The overall budget will increase by \$18,900 (4.4%) due in part to Personnel costs and the use of an absentee ballot grant to mitigate the impact of absentee ballot costs on the General Fund. Furthermore, in an effort to lessen General Fund increases, special revenue funds are being used to fund a portion of the Maintenance and Repair costs.

Public Relations

Enita Jubrey, Assistant to the Town Manager, said this division is proposing a \$15,000 increase in our FY 25 General Fund budget. This increase is primarily driven by Personnel costs and increases in contractual services, offset by a reduction in services.

Last year, our FY 24 request included the addition of a new full-time staff member. This position was crucial for addressing succession planning in the department and expanding our capacity to create diverse and enhanced content.

Since then, we've had a remarkable year. Our new Communications Specialist, Andrew, has seamlessly integrated into the team, offering a fresh and unique perspective on our work while allowing us the capability to increase collaboration efforts with every department over the last year, helping us keep the community informed, educated and engaged.

Achieving our FY 24 goals, this position has helped us increase our digital reach and engagement, while also creating new storytelling opportunities. These include a variety of feature stories in the "There's a lot to do in Windsor" publication, diving deep into the impacts that American Rescue Funds are having on our community, and highlighting some of our essential services through our new Windsor at Work video series.

Gaining more than 800 new fans and followers this year, we've posted over 1,600 times across social media platforms, generating over 6,200 clicks to our website.

Councilor Eleveld commented that the Town Clerk's Office looked very nice and asked if they would be using user fees in order to offset some of their costs. Ms. Posniak said yes, for the maintenance and repair line, they will be using \$5,000 of the Special Revenue Funds.

Councilor Eleveld asked if those are generally the cost of making copies. Ms. Posniak said any time someone makes a copy of a land record, it is \$1 and in addition when a land document is recorded it costs \$1 and those funds go to that line item.

Councilor Eleveld asked if people can go online and get copies of our land records. Ms. Posniak said our residents, attorneys or title searchers can assess our land records online going back to 1640 and all 6,000 maps that are recorded in their office, as well.

Councilor Naeem asked if they could explain the uptick on vital records issued as she assumed it was mainly death certificates and wondered if more deaths were happening or if they were catching up on records. Ms. Posniak responded that last fiscal year the State of Connecticut implemented the State electronic death registry system, which now allows them access to deaths throughout the whole entire state and previous to that they only had access to deaths that occurred in Windsor or for a resident of Windsor who may have passed away in another town. She said Carmen Funeral Homes has a large presence in the greater Hartford area and their Windsor office is their administrative office, so they

bring all of their requests for certified copies from their various funeral homes and burial permits and such to their office. She said that is the main reason for the uptick in revenue that they see.

Councilor Naeem commended the Public Relations Office for their social media presence and all the ways they are engaging with the community.

The Council thanked them for their presentation.

5) HUMAN SERVICES

Jasmine Hall, Social Services Coordinator, stated the FY 24 General Fund expenditures, are expected to be under budget by about \$8,500 or 1.5%. This is a result of receiving and using grant funds and donations, which allowed us to mitigate expenses that impact the General Fund.

The Social Services' FY 25 proposed General Fund budget reflects an increase of \$15,000 or 2.8% as compared to the FY24 budget, primarily due to personnel costs. For this coming year, we plan to use special revenue funds to partially offset costs that would have otherwise increased our general fund budget.

Councilor Eleveld said looking at some of the key statistics, participants and support groups had a relatively large increase of about a factor of four. He asked if they could explain the increase and if some people were attending multiple groups. Ms. Hall said the biggest increase came from the Longest Table event and said there are no duplicates in the numbers this year, as some of the groups stopped during Covid but they plan to restart them.

Councilor Eleveld said that they would expect that next year the numbers would decline from 220 down to 75. Ms. Hall said yes, and that 75 represents the numbers outside of the participants at the Longest Table. Ms. Jubrey said that the 220 number is inflated because of the large event they had.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the decline in walk-in case management was due to coming off of Covid. Ms. Hall said yes.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the big drop in volunteer hours. Ms. Hall said for FY 25 they are projecting to go back to all the programming they had before Covid, which would require more volunteers.

Councilor Armstrong thanked them for their services and asked what avenues they have used to provide community outreach. Ms. Hall said that they participate in a lot of the block parties and any events the Board of Education invites them to and their back to school block party. She said that they are showing a big presence this year with the Windsor Housing Authority to share resources. She said they also work closely with the Board of

Education providing newsletters and different promotions to get their name out there. She said they also have their information in all the public libraries.

Councilor Armstrong asked if they have their own means of getting information out there. Ms. Hall said that they promote their materials on their social media pages, she has facilitated and promoted their services to the Windsor Hunger Action Team and during a CT Food Share event she was on a panel about creating a welcoming environment for our food programs and offered resources in the Windsor community.

Mayor Black-Burke said to clarify Councilor Armstrong was trying to determine what are the specific avenues from the Human Services Office to the community. Ms. Armstrong said correct.

Town Manager Souza said that the actions that Ms. Hall outlined that those folks have multiplier effects and using those avenues that are already in place help to build new partnerships and are helping to get that word out. He said there is also close coordination with our Senior Services Department, so other staff members in town may run across a household or individual that has needs and can link them to our human services. He said this department is mainly an informational and referral department. He said it is a small staff with only two case managers and a lot of it is getting people connected to needed services.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked how donations come to them and if they were primarily monetary. Ms. Hall said that they apply every year for two NCAAA grants for Groceries To Go and the Grandparents & Kinship program and they also have their human services assistance fund and community partnership fund, which are from Operation Fuel that provide reimbursement for some of the applications they do. They also apply for as many grants as they can locate in the community.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if there was a platform for people to donate money. Ms. Hall said yes and that they promote the Windsor Food and Fuel Bank and that they can give money, donate food or host a food drive. She said that information is all on the Windsor Food and Fuel Bank website. Town Manager Souza added that the majority of the donations are through the Food and Fuel Bank, which is a separate non-profit that we direct people to give to.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked them for their work and commented on how wonderful the Longest Table event was.

6) CHILD DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISE FUND

Laura Casey the Director of the Montessori School and Discovery Center, gave the following overview of the budget.

This year we took a risk by adding a fourth Primary 3-5 year old classroom. We averaged 11-13 students, falling short of full capacity of 16. Hiring qualified staff, especially part-time staff, continues to be a challenge and is the main reason we were unable to fill this class to capacity in accordance with our mandated ratio. At the end of the third quarter, we were able to hire an afternoon staff member, which enabled us to turn to the waiting list for this classroom, where we picked up one additional student. Understandably, other waiting list families were reluctant to make a change to their child's program mid-year. In the coming year, we have projected this classroom to be fully enrolled with 16 students.

We began enrolling for the 2024-2025 academic year and have 34 students on the 3 to 5-year-old waiting list. To date, we have placed 11 students for the 2024-2025 school year. The under-three-year-old programs are also full for the next school year as they were this year. We have placed 10 of 83 children into the under-three program for the 2024-2025 year and are optimistic we will be fully enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year.

For the first time in her tenure, the summer programs were filled by March of 2024.

September 2024 is the deadline to fully expend the Office of Early Childhood's "Ready, Set, Rebuild" grant. We received a total of \$484,975.00 over 4 installments that were efficiently distributed to child care centers across the state beginning at the early onset of the COVID pandemic.

Finally, we are implementing a slight tuition increase for fiscal year 2025 (3%) for all Montessori Programs. The tuition increase and budgeting for additional full-time spaces based on this year's enrollment will provide us the revenue to meet market demands on salaries, and increasing cost of services, utilities and repairs.

Councilor Naeem asked about the tuition increase and why they chose not to increase it more to get to a more break even number. Ms. Casey said that she likes to stay marketable and make sure that their costs are in the middle of the market, so parents can afford to come to them.

Councilor Eleveld asked with a 3% increase where does that put them in the competition with private firms. Ms. Casey said with private, profit centers their tuition is slightly lower and that they are competitive with non-profits.

Mayor Black-Burke asked if all of the FTEs have to be Montessori certified or has that requirement been relaxed. Ms. Casey said no, it has not been relaxed. She said that all of her lead staff are Montessori certified. She added that she waits until people have been in a role for at least a year before pursuing the training because it is a costly training and is quite an investment.

Councilor Pelkey asked what is holding them back from being able to clear the waiting list. Ms. Casey said space and staffing is what holds them back. She said staffing is a big challenge right now as there are less qualified applicants out there, it is not a lucrative business, and there are fewer colleges offering early childhood education right now.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the elementary programs are a competitor to the Tree House programs the Board of Education runs. Ms. Casey said that their elementary program is typically the children that started with them as infants. She said they have very few that come from the Windsor Public Schools, although their students often start as an infant and then can use their bus to come back and forth once they start elementary school.

Councilor Eleveld said he saw two employees listed under facilities and management and asked if those were Discovery Center employees and town employees. Ms. Casey said that those two people are herself and her assistant.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked Ms. Casey for the presentation.

7) ADULT DAY CARE ENTERPRISE FUND

Cheryl Rosenbaum, Caring Connection Manager, stated the FY 25 budget I am presenting this evening was created based on trends that we've seen pretty consistently at the Caring Connection since the start of FY24 -- one of steady growth to census and increased interest in our program.

The factors I attribute to this recent census growth are a combination of:

- families feeling more comfortable post pandemic,
- outreach efforts at in-person events for professionals,
- the expected closure of another day center in the general area,
- increases to our outreach efforts on google,
- and our art therapy program.

Weekly at the Caring Connection we have a successful and popular art therapy program. Research shows that participants thrive during these types of special activity therapies that increase cognitive and physical function, feelings of self-worth and socialization. We have experienced this, with higher daily attendance, on the day this program is offered.

To capitalize on that trend, we plan on using the ARPA funds we received from the Connecticut Department of Social Services in November to offer more of these kinds of specialty therapeutic activity offerings. The time is NOW for us to move forward with a plan I believe will increase attendance and grow the Caring Connection program. The plan is to leverage some of these funds to bolster our enrichment offerings, with professionally lead activities such as music and drama therapy, to continue the upward trend of our admissions.

The grant funds will also be used to provide competitive wages to retain and recruit qualified staff, and offset costs to replacing furnishings and minor facility improvements to our over 20 year old space.

We are proposing an update to our price guide in this year's budget that proposes a range of fees versus a single rate. In the past couple years, increases to the state reimbursement

rate for Medicaid clients has occurred within the fiscal year, after the budget has been approved. A “range of fees” will give us the flexibility to adjust our rates in real time as the state adjusts their rate, and does not mean we will be charging the rate at the top of the range.

The Caring Connection is not just a place for frail seniors to engage, enjoy and exercise. It is also truly a lifeline for care-givers. We often receive heartwarming sentiments from families expressing what it has meant to them to have their loved one at the Center.

For over thirty six years countless seniors from Windsor and the immediate surrounding area have been able to stay in their homes and our community, aging in place and out of long term care facilities, because of the dedication and talent of current and past employees of the Caring Connection who were and are passionate and dedicated to our motto, “We change how our clients live, not where they live.”

Councilor Eleveld asked if he was correct that they are looking at a transfer in of \$100,000. Ms. Rosenbaum said yes. Councilor Eleveld said he understood that they are looking to receive funds from state Covid relief funds.

Councilor Eleveld asked if he was correct in understanding that they provide support to this entity because providing them the funds to use the building was not dis-similar to us having to pay for operating on the entire building. Town Manager Souza said correct.

Councilor Eleveld said that they are anticipating this coming year a grant for \$100,000 and asked if that was going to be an ongoing issue or are we getting close to a period where we are getting self-sufficient. Town Manager Souza said that they are certainly on the right track as Ms. Rosenbaum had outlined. He said we are optimistic that they can meet the budget for FY 25 with a qualifier that all it takes is for a few of Ms. Rosenbaum’s clients to get sick and lose their attendance where they are only coming 2 days a week instead of five days. He said that is a huge challenge Ms. Rosenbaum faces with the fluctuation of the census given the nature of the clients that they are serving.

Councilor Eleveld asked if they were still having a similar number of non-residents utilizing our facility, as we are one of the few in the area. Ms. Rosenbaum said that there are a few in the area and asked him to repeat his question.

Councilor Eleveld asked if we charge the same amount to non-residents. Ms. Rosenbaum said that is correct.

Councilor Eleveld asked if she anticipated that number to be constant next year. Ms. Rosenbaum said yes and that she hoped to continue to attract more Windsor residents as well.

Deputy Mayor Klase commended the program and asked how many people they serve. Ms. Rosenbaum said currently there are 38 people but that they do not come every day.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked about their hours of operation. Ms. Rosenbaum said they are open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked for help understanding the Medicaid reimbursement. Ms. Rosenbaum said that Medicaid determines the rate and that is what they pay them. She said in order to receive the highest Medicaid rate available, they need to keep their private pay rate and they keep it just a little bit above that.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked if the nursing services were included in the Medicaid rate or are they Medicaid eligible separately. Ms. Rosenbaum said they are not eligible separately.

Councilor Pelkey asked what percent are non-residents that seek their services. Ms. Rosenbaum said 40% are Windsor residents and 60% are not, at this time.

Councilor Pelkey asked if their piano had been tuned yet. Ms. Rosenbaum said no.

Councilor Armstrong said that she saw their re-accreditation year was 2023 and asked how often they go through that process. Ms. Rosenbaum said every three years because they had a survey without any findings and received the highest accommodations, so it is every three years.

Councilor Armstrong said that she was to be commended for that and thanked her.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked Ms. Rosenbaum for her work and was thankful that we are able to bring in others from surrounding towns. She reminded the Council that if they have additional questions to contact Town Manager Souza.

Councilor Eleveld asked Mayor Black-Burke if he was able to ask Town Manager Souza few questions relative to communications from the public. Mayor Black-Burke said yes.

Councilor Eleveld said they had received a communication from members of Windsor Votes and North Central League of Women Voters and which asked why can't some residents, if they want to, break up their property tax bill into two payments. In his estimation, Windsor could lose about \$1.5M, which equates to an almost 1.25% tax increase. He asked if there was a mechanism that the State offers to allow residents to pay twice, if they so choose, plus some amount for the loss of revenue because it is not fair to all taxpayers to carry that burden. Town Manager Souza said that they could look into it but nothing to his knowledge allows it to be done on an individualized basis.

Councilor Eleveld calculated that we earn almost \$115 million that we earn interest on for the month of July.

Deputy Mayor Klase said the loss Councilor Eleveld is talking about is if everyone chose to make two payments a year. She said if you are carrying a mortgage, it is not likely that you will make that request. Councilor Eleveld said correct.

Deputy Mayor Klase said we should be cautious in assuming those kind of numbers and said she understood the financial impact he was talking about.

Councilor Naeem said that there have been a lot of questions from the public as they go through the budget and she said that they are working on it and information is coming.

Mayor Black-Burke said she had spoken to Town Manager Souza about compiling questions into themes and said that it would be helpful to have a place to post answers to questions that come up a lot.

8) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by, Councilor Pelkey seconded by Councilor Naeem to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Marcavitch
Recording Secretary