



TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
May 20, 2024
Regular Town Council Meeting
Council Chambers

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Black-Burke called the meeting to order at 7:30 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) PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mayor Black-Burke led the group in prayer/reflection.

3) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Black-Burke led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4) PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS

- a) Proclamation designating May 19-25 as Public Works Week

Mayor Black-Burke read the proclamation aloud.

- b) Proclamation proclaiming May 2024 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month

Deputy Mayor Klase and Councilor Naeem read the proclamation aloud.

5) PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Susan Miller, 130 Palisado Avenue wanted to share that she was disappointed that the budget did not pass. It was very close and she knows the Town Council and the Board of Education worked very hard to make this as pain-free as possible in this challenging year. Giving where we are now, she would just implore the Council to not cut the Board of Education budget. The kids, teachers and staff have been through so much in the last several years and we need to keep holding them up. They are our future so hopefully we'll maintain services for them and the rest of the town as well.

Marayann Overbaugh, 706 Palisado Avenue, stated she has been in town for a very long time. She's watched these budgets and heard the very same arguments over and over but she feels that this budget is too high. She does like the results because she knows a lot of young and elderly people which might have effected them tremendously. Her feeling is that when you discuss this the Council should take into consideration the fact that they have to pay a lot of money for these referendums. She would suggest that whatever cuts the Council is proposing that they make sure that we don't have to go through four rounds of the referendums. She would like to know how much the referendums cost the town.

Jen Fields, 19 Parkwood Drive, stated she has been in Windsor for 28 years and raised her kids here. She is here for two reasons. One as a concerned citizen and one as a concerned parent. Neither one of her children are now in the Windsor School system but they are successful because of it. She and her husband are in mental health field and their daughters are going into the mental health field as well. The reason that is happening is not because they forced them to go that way but rather it's what they saw and what they see every day in their lives. One of the things that is essential to school systems across the country is that more and more money needs to be invested into them. School is a safety zone for our kids. Parents have to work. If they are able bodied, they are working and they are trying to make ends meet. Yes, every time you increase a budget that squeezes someone but not everybody. However, if we don't invest in our kids, our kids will be exposed to things that are not going to support their resilience and growth. What's different from our generation (for those not raised with the internet) is that we were exposed only to ourselves to maybe news media, our parents and our friends. Now there is a huge access that children are exposed to. She feels every dollar we invest in the school system is essential simply because these are the people that are going to decide whether we go into a nursing home. These are the people that will take care of us. They will be the adults making the adult decisions when we're older.

Caleb Kissoon, 23 Longview Drive, stated he is currently a 5th grade student at Clover Elementary school. On March 4th, he spoke to the Council about the importance of preventing budget cuts for the public schools. This evening, he has returned to represent his stance on the importance of avoiding budget cuts for our schools. He previously mentioned that he benefits from the Challenge program three times a week and he and his school mates have benefited from the support of his teachers, administrative staff and SEL instructor. He worries that these staffing programs might be in danger of being eliminated, depriving them of these valuable resources. If we truly believe that children are the future, then it is crucial to acknowledge that reducing staff and cutting programs will certainly have a direct impact on our present experience. He is kindly asking the Council to keep in mind the importance of investing in the future by preserving and valuing our present and providing them with the necessary resources and staff needed to foster their development.

Kathy Bousquet, 3 Winthrop Road, Director of Windsor Fife & Drum Corps stated she is here to thank the Council for allocating the ARPA funds to the Windsor Fife & Drum Corps. It is always their greatest pleasure to march in their town as well as represent Windsor in each of our performances throughout New England. Having our bus insured and back in service provides a valuable asset to our members. It allows families to send their Corps members off to a

performance and leaves them available to tend to other children or to go to work. It allows our Corps members to travel together and develop stronger friendships. It allows us to pack, manage and store our instruments, equipment and uniforms in a safe and organized manner. Since their beginning in 1985, the Windsor Fife & Drum Corps has been self-sufficient. Their main source of income comes from their contracted performances. With Covid shutting down all large gatherings, they lost a full year of income. The change in Connecticut legislation that tripled their bus insurance was just another unforeseen expense. These ARPA funds are an enormous boost for their group. She thanked the Town Council again for providing the funds. She gave a special thanks to Councilor Walker for recognizing the Windsor Fife & Drum Corps and what they offer our residents and for leading the discussion with Town Council on their behalf.

George Slate, 74 Ethan Drive, said regarding the second proclamation, recently he was made aware that it has just began or will begin soon that there will be an Asian American caucus at the State legislation. He is making his pitch for the Senior Tax relief. He did find on page 7 of the Council's deliberations minutes at the top of it was Deputy Mayor's conversation about the excess revenues. For the three items he mentioned to the Town Council in his email, you are going to have excess revenues in Fiscal Year 2024 of \$3.2 million. He asked what the Town Council will do with it. Somebody tried to pursue using some of that for the Senior Tax relief with an amount of \$305,000. That is less than 10% of the excess revenues. He is totally perplexed that for a group that is certifiably recognized as in great need that the Council has not changed that. He believes the amount should be doubled. Also at the top of page 18 of the minutes from the last meeting, the phrase was, 'As Town Councilors it is the role of government to assist wherever we can.' He thanked Councilor Walker for those words. For the Senior Tax relief he believes that is the least the Town Council can do given the impact of revaluation on the hardest hit group in this town.

Dr. Linda Alexander, 155 Fieldstone Drive, said that until we have a budget that the majority of tax payers can agree to, we still don't have a new budget. She truly appreciates the contributions of Town Manager Souza to decreasing expenditures. Unfortunately, we have yet to see a significant spirit of cooperation and understanding from our highly compensated school Superintendent and his administrators and the majority party on the Council. Revaluation of properties will hit Windsor residential taxpayers very hard and they simply cannot pay tax increases due to increased spending on top of it. The full force of the revaluation change will hit next year and continue unless there is a significant change in real estate values and that is not likely to happen any time soon. Additions to spending in the school budget are permanent and are just not affordable at this time in this town. Every year we pour money into the schools. \$80 million plus all the grants they get surely should be enough to educate the kids in this town with decreasing enrollment. She does not support taking money out of the savings fund. It's just not the solution to increased spending. It's time to decrease the demands on Windsor taxpayers.

Sarena Sky Raymond (spelled phonetically), 31 Bent Road, stated she is a graduate from Windsor High School. She feels cutting the budget for the school is not the answer. The budget from last year cut many classes that reduced creativity. She wanted to join the yearbook class but it had been turned into a club instead of a class. She wanted to ensure there would be a great yearbook for her senior graduating friends. She joined the club and it was her and one other person for the whole entire school year creating this yearbook single-handedly. It was

detrimental to the year book and her personal mental health as she had to sit there night upon night creating things that could have been a class. All these teachers are losing their jobs and their classes. The previous teacher who taught the yearbook class was teaching the class for over 10 years and now it is a club. We can have more students be involved in it and creativity is taken away from the students as no one can share their opinions. She doesn't think money should be taken from the school system because it is going to take away from students having the opportunity of being creative. Another example is a dance class that is gone and students are singlehandedly running a class as a club on their own. This should not be the case. She feels there should not be money taken away from students that need the opportunity to foster their creativity because some of these students in high school are using those skills for college and going into those fields. She feels this money should not be taken away from the students opportunities because it is pushing back on what they can achieve.

Nancy Field, 27 Pilgrim Drive, said four votes fewer than 5% of eligible voters casting ballots. It's not a mandate, yet it is a result of the referendum. Windsor is still a desirable place to live. We have good schools and services. In past times, when we have encountered referendums that have not passed, the easy way people look at it is to cut the school budget. Because to many people school cuts are invisible, every cut impacts students, their education and their opportunities. All of us are stewards of the future, and as a previous speaker said, we just need compassionate, capable students because they will be adjusting our IVs later in life. Coming back from Covid has been a challenge for students, families and schools. We need to continue our support for our schools because education cuts don't heal.

Eric Weiner, 130 Palisado Avenue, said to take a position that as a Council we know better than the school Superintendent and the staff regarding the emotional and educational well being of our children, in his mind is irresponsible and unbecoming of this Council. We have been starving our schools for years. Enrollment is constantly growing, it has not been declining. We must continue that process. As the previous speaker mentioned, a cut become cumulative and causes pain. We are already at a shoestring. We've let our buildings deteriorate. We lose staff because we are not above par. Don't do it. If there must be a cut he proposes that we look at the capital budget that has expenditures from the General Fund. He would first target pushing out road paving and sidewalk projects. Push them out a year or two. This spreads the pain across the town. It doesn't affect an individual program. It's an easy thing to do if you need to do a cut. As the previous speaker said, this vote was not a mandate. Our budget referendum process has long outlived its usefulness. He looks to the Town Council to do the right thing.

Tracey Zotter, 28 Spring Street, stated she had something prepared for the Council but they have already heard it from two students and the Windsor school system. We are at the state average for what is spent for the students. We have 21% of Windsor students that are special needs in the Windsor school system. Special needs require additional services. They require paraprofessionals, psychologist, programs, and the social/emotional learning staff. Running a school is running a business. Costs will go up yearly as utility costs rise and as services and goods rise. We can't expect to have a flat budget every year and progress our schools. There are significant links between a town's economic growth and the standing of its school systems. For us to continue to look at the Board of Education like it's an easy target, we are doing our town a disservice. A town where she grew up and learned that we are inclusive of everybody.

We are inclusive of our children with special needs, teachers that live in our town, and senior citizens to name a few. Those are the cornerstones that Windsor taught her and she is here to remind the Council that this is what students learn at the Windsor school system. We learn about community. She was disappointed that just 2,050 people showed up to vote. She doesn't think we can say an overwhelming majority either way feel yes or no but to continue to cut significant cuts from our budget for five votes seriously concerns her. A \$1.5 million cut in the budget will save the median household \$90 for the year or \$7.60 per month. You're talking 20 people's jobs and our children's education and their future.

Leonard Lockhart, 57 Columbia Road, said he is speaking as a taxpayer and not as a Board of Education member. He believes that this budget that was presented was not robust enough. He has been very vocal about that. There was no mandate at this last referendum. There shouldn't be any cuts to this budget at all. It will be sent back to the voters to decide again whether they want it or not. He agrees with the previous speaker that only 2,050 voters came out to vote. That is not good. Using the Board of Education or the district as low hanging fruit to say this is where we can cut. The town has benefited from Windsor schools being an alliance district because it has saved them from paying a lot more money in taxes and has kept their funding flat from the state, even through the pandemic when towns with the ability to pay were having a funding slash from the state. The town benefitted from that narrative. From his perspective, he knows what it is to live at the bottom with schools poorly funded, teachers not wanting to be there, teachers telling you that you aren't going to make it. He refuses to see a town where he lives and pays taxes in that he risks his life for every time he answers and alarm, that we are going to be racing to the bottom. We need to properly fund and take care of our most precious resource and that's our children. We need to make sure that we take care of every employee within the Town of Windsor. He doesn't care if they are Police officers, DPW, clerks at the town hall, district staff, etc. We should be making sure we are taking care of every employee of the Town of Windsor, both the Board of Education and town to make sure that we continue to provide the service that we are accustomed to here in the Town of Windsor. We have a great quality of life for the very low mill rate that we have. If you don't think so go to another town and see if you can get the quality of life like you're getting in Windsor with the taxes that you pay here. He's a wage earner who cheerfully pays for seniors and children and every service that we have here in the Town of Windsor as it is a collective responsibility that we take care of each other and not just ourselves. He implores the Town Council to send this budget back 'as is' and to allow the voters to have another crack at it.

Ashanti Osbourne Martin, 95 Pierce Boulevard, stated she moved to Windsor about seven years ago with her husband. They moved to Windsor and they believed it was a good town to raise a family in. She is disappointed that the budget did not pass. She asks this Council to not only think about the Windsor of today but the Windsor of tomorrow. That requires us to elevate our town and to invest in our town. Yes, that means increasing a budget. She is hopeful that as her family grows and they get at the point of having children that she is continually experiencing great services, not good services but great services. That means a constant re-evaluation of what great looks like. It also means continuing to think about the overall resident experience. This looks like investment in our education system for our future leaders. It is very disheartening to sit here and listen to the two young adults that came to this podium and shared their experience currently as students of the Windsor school system. That is very discouraging and

she is very concerned. She hopes that the Council really thinks about that current experience. She also wants the Council to look at other services that our tax dollars are supposed to provide for us, such as our community centers, parks, programming, etc. She asked the Council to consider increasing the budget. It is necessary and we cannot continue to operate on a flat budget. We need to continue to do more. She thanked the Council for their time.

Milo Peck, 23 Archer Road, said he has served on the Board of Education, Town Council and is on the Board of Assessment Appeals. He agrees with Mr. Lockhart. Our budget is not robust enough. We have to continue to increase as surrounding costs have increased. There are many people in the town that are hurting. It's unfortunate that the system of providing value and raising the tax dollars is with the most regressive tax rate possible. It's the property tax. Unfortunately, as people looked at the budget it looked like the town was just raising the property taxes to pay for the budget as opposed to determining the budget, which the Council did, irrespective of the assessed value. We need to take that step forward. As someone said, it was only about 2,000 votes with a 4 vote differential. How does the Council know that they were voting 'no' because we should have more in it? There weren't signs on the lawn. He's supporting the budget and he supported how we got there. We can't stay stagnant while costs rise. We are locked into our property values now for the next five years. We do have an unreserved unallocated fund balance to help smooth it out. Town Manager Souza has been generous in doing that and guiding the Council over the years to use this to reduce the mitigation. He would not back off. He'd keep it at 'as is'.

Sally Grey, 87 Ethan Drive, said she has a question about the tax increase that we had last year of 1.5% which was supposed to ameliorate the situation with the approaching revaluation. She doesn't see that it has been figured into things to help them with their tax situation. She wonders what happened to the 1.5% increase. Where did it go? Is it still around? Was it used for something else? As far as the turnout for the referendum, she believes one of the reasons it was so low is that people are very frustrated and they feel that when they go out to vote, it doesn't count or matter. Everyone is in favor of spending the money. They don't feel it's worth their time to go out and vote, which is very sad. As far as the budget goes, we can all appreciate a budget. We all have our expenditures that we have to make. With less money coming in and more going out, it's hard to navigate that. People are very much in a difficult position and she thinks any adjustments that can be made would be helpful for the people of the town in terms of reducing what the taxes will be.

Leslie Harrison, 41 Early Dawn Circle, said her comments are in regards of the solar farm that was recently approved by the CT Siting Council to be constructed at 445 River Street which is directly across from her house. She thanked Town Council members, Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager and the legal representation that the town engaged to try and fight the CT Siting Council in this decision. When she spoke to each of them they were all very encouraging and helpful. They encouraged her to get into this upward battle in which she has expended much of her time fighting. She has attended every meeting, has spoken and sent interrogatories and feels she has done her part to be a good citizen. While she knows we were unable to convince the CT Siting Council of the folly of placing this solar farm as close as they have to residential homes, she does want to say that she read the background information attached to the agenda and she would like to emphatically implore the Town Council to go against Town Manager Souza's recommendation to not appeal this decision. The CT Siting Council is not representative

of any citizen in this State. The members of that Council are appointed by the Governor, by the Senate Majority leader and by the House Majority leader. Those people do not represent her, they do not live here in Windsor and will not be effected by the safety concerns and most especially the sound coming from that solar farm. She will be unable to open her windows for the rest of the time that she lives in Windsor because that solar farm will produce a humming that will totally prevent her from opening her windows during the summer and enjoying the quiet solitude of her home. She respectfully asks that the Town Council please appeal this decision. There are bills that are trying to reign in the authority of this unrepresented CT Siting Council. This will not be the only place in Windsor that this will occur. She asked the Town Council to consider that.

Diane Lehan, 29 Early Dawn Circle, said the solar installation is going to have a strong effect on the quality and value of her home. Her house was just re-evaluated and it has gone up which means her taxes will go up. The installation will go in and the value of her home will drop. That has been proven in many states. The sound, take a drive over to East Windsor to hear it, that they will have sheep wandering around taking care of the vegetation and they have no plan to pick up the feces. It will dry and be forced into the soil. You got a nice windy day and her front yard is about 400 feet from the farm. She chose her home and neighborhood based on the beauty and serenity of it. She's lived there for 31 years. For the greed of one person, how many of us are going to be affected by this installation.

Divon Haughten (spelled phonetically), 31 Bent Road, said she has four children that have gone to Windsor public schools. She was very angry when they did the redistricting so she took her kids out of the Windsor public schools and sent them to magnet schools. She believes education follows the money. When Windsor started to reinvest over the decade she saw a lot of change happen in Windsor. She then placed her kids back into the Windsor school system because she saw change. Now she's seeing that there are so many cuts and changes. If you keep pulling money from the schools, you will end up like me where you are going to pull out your kids from that system to another one. Please keep making Windsor great. Yes, it will cost the citizens money and the taxes will go up, but don't take away from our children.

Aron Kiehne, 603 Brick Layer Road said just like Sky he is a senior at Windsor High School. He'd like to once again raise his voice in support of Windsor High school. Public school funding is crucial, and as the gentleman earlier said, above par spending is necessary for teacher retention. Teacher retention is key to student success. He is lucky to have avoided this himself over the past three years. He's seen hundreds of kids' school year disrupted because one or more of their teachers left half way through the school year, sometimes with literally no notice. This is just in high school. He's sure that students in the elementary schools are struggling through similar experiences. In particular, he personally benefited a lot from the Challenge program himself. When regular class wasn't challenging enough, it provided him a space and place to explore learning along like-minded students and under the supervision of excellent teachers. These are the programs under fire here and these are the ones that matter. These are the things that have set Windsor apart from other districts and he doesn't want to lose any more than we already have. He seconds what Dr. Lockhart said. This budget should not be cut any more than it already is, especially since it failed to pass by four votes. He could have single handedly gotten four people to change that vote if he had known beforehand. Go ahead and cut

a little bit and send it out again, it'll pass this time. He wanted to remind everyone that this comes back to Windsor residents directly. Who's moving into Windsor, who's buying new homes? It's families drawn by the quality of public schools and community services. It's why towns like West Hartford do so well. Without good schools, you miss out on this. If you're looking at saving yourself some money by voting no or cutting the budget, it doesn't work. Eventually down the line it will come back to you because your home value will drop by 25% and you won't be able to get a job nearby.

Jennifer Bernardino, 36 Pierce Boulevard, is here to represent for the budget in favor to cover the Windsor Public schools. She is a co-president of the JFK PTO. She has triplet boys that have attended Oliver Ellsworth and John F. Kennedy elementary school. Her kids get lots of resources from the school and she would like to keep their budget intact. Please vote for the public schools so they can have the budget that they need so they can move forward and progress.

Lucy Goins, 9 Sage Park Road, echoed what many of the others said. The public schools give so much value to our community. The budget is hard and rough decisions were made and what we got is good so keep it going. She is voicing in favor of funding the schools.

Marclion McMikle, 85 Trent Drive, said she's been a Windsor resident for 20 years. When her kids were young, they were placed in private school. In Kindergarten her daughter needed additional support. Private school could not provide that additional support she needed therefore they made the decision to bring her over to Windsor public schools. It's been an amazing experience for them. She can say without a doubt if her daughter hadn't had those services, she wouldn't be thriving today. She's a junior now and an honor roll student. The services that she received such as occupational therapist and a para when she was young has made a world of difference in her being able to thrive. She stated that the children are worth \$8 per month. That's what it comes down to. If we can't spend \$8 per month on a child, I think we have bigger issues.

Lakisha Hyatt, 104 Benjamin Court, stated she wants to lift her voice in agreement in support of the budget. She would only add as a healthcare provider and nurse we are relying on educators to really engage our children after all they've been through. She iterated once again that she wanted to voice her support of the budget. She applauded the great work of the Council and she knows they faced with (connection failed).

Lisa Cato-Scott, 9 Plum Ridge Lane, said her daughter is in a magnet school and she also needed some special services. She is still in a magnet school but the support we get from the Board of Education is second to none. She feels that we need to lift up our children as they are our future. They will need to make decisions later on in life when we are no longer able to. It is important to understand that \$8 per month is not a big deal for us to pour into our children. They are the ones that will suffer in the long run. She is in support of the budget.

Quinn Martin, 10 Sachem Hill Road, said her family moved here about four years ago. They came from private schools. They wanted to try Windsor because of the community and the love and support they found here. She has three children and two of them have ADHD. The services that they receive in Windsor are beyond belief. She did not get this support at the private schools.

\$8 per month is not a lot of money. We spend more money on coffee than that every day. She implored everyone to think about how far the \$8 month will go. This is for the benefit of not only our children but our community. Windsor has a phenomenal community. The only way to keep that is by making sure we aren't cutting our funding for the public schools.

Eric Crossett, 415 Broad Street, stated that he wanted to express some thoughts around the revaluation and that the budget as presented before is reasonable and this body knows the Board of Education took into account the impact of revaluation as they were coming up with the budget. As far as a long-term strategy of reducing services, reducing funding to the school systems would be to the detriment to the town because he believes long-term we need to shift the tax burden back onto commercial real estate rather than private property which happened with this revaluation. Our long-term strategy is we need to bring in more business into Windsor and in order to do that we need to maintain the funding, the social services and basic services such as Fire, EMS, Police so that the property values do not decrease. We maintain our property values but we need to increase the commercial value. He feels we need to do those things to draw businesses into Windsor. He is recommending that we keep the proposed budget 'as is' and bring it back up for a vote.

Beverly Moody, 39 Lamberton Road, said she is an ESL/multi-lingual teacher at Poquonock Elementary school. Her daughter just graduated from Windsor High school. At first she had her in private schools but then she put her into Windsor public schools and her daughter had a great time there. As a teacher, she can see where they can struggle if they don't get this money. We really need our budget to pass. It would be great if they can once again do a referendum and since only 5% of the town came out, she's asking that we have another vote.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked everyone that came out to speak tonight.

6) COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

Councilor Eleveld said thank you to everyone that came out to speak. This was a much more enjoyable group for a large group of people speaking than what we've seen in our past meetings. Everybody is entitled to an opinion. He understands where many of them are coming from. However, one gentleman said to cut from capital and the need to invest more money in schools. You can't do both because it is the same money. It's nice that people came out to speak and he understands where the \$8 per month is coming from but many people are looking at a \$800 - \$1,000 increase in their tax bill. The \$800 is a valid number however, it's not the whole number. He thinks that is what people should take a look at. This Saturday was the Shad Derby. The rain did not hold off until 11:00 AM and that's about when the parade started. There was a good turnout but not as good as years past. We can only hope that in the future the weather might be better.

Councilor Smith said May is College Graduation Month and he congratulated all from Windsor that are graduating from college this month. Please consider volunteering some tutor or mentoring time into our schools for those students graduating college. Thank you in advance for supporting the Windsor school system and congratulations on this important achievement in your life.

Councilor Pelkey thanked the Registrars and employees at the polls. He thanked the Town Manager and department supervisors in allowing town employees to help out with the recount because that did save dollars for our town since we didn't have to pay for extra people. He touched on the solar power plant on River Street. While we supported the legal aspects in trying to preserve our neighbors' rights and interests of the town, that ultimately we don't have any responsibility or authority over that. Please there is an election in November. Talk to your state representatives from all parties across the state. As one speaker said, these individuals on the Siting Council are decided by the Governor, Senate and House majority leaders which are people who don't live here in Windsor. So you need to talk to your representative so they can vote for what you want in the interest of your town rather than a one size fits all from the state. The Town Council does not have control over that. He thanked his fellow Councilor Gluck Hoffman in helping to run the Shad Derby for 20 plus years. He thanked the police officers in town. As they were marching the parade route, every time they went by an American flag, they all stopped and saluted. Public Works open house is this Thursday from 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM. There will be refreshments at the event. There is the Windsor House Tour sponsored by the Windsor Historical Society on June 8, from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. If you are going south on Route 159, Windsor Avenue, and you are at that light on Rood Avenue and Deerfield, the light and signal has now changed. It used to be a left on green arrow only. Now it is a yield on left. For those going northbound please be aware of this change. Tomorrow there will be a ground breaking for a new park just south of I-291 across from the Roger Wolcott School. The Governor is scheduled to appear. There are a number of things happening. We still need more fire fighters in town. If you're interested please contact the town hall, a Councilor or talk to a fire fighter.

Councilor Naeem thanked all the speakers that came out and those that joined us online today. It was great to see all the engagement. We will be addressing the budget and having some deliberations later on this evening. She thanked a few of the individuals that came out tonight to talk about the Senior tax credits. We recognize that this budget and the impact of revaluation are impacting everyone and seniors with their circumstances are getting hit on that as well. She looks forward to bringing forth, along with all her fellow Democratic council members, the increase for the Senior tax credit tonight. She knows there was another question that came up in terms of last year's tax increase. As the Town Council, they had put in a lot of one time expenditures with that increase to make sure that we are able to remove those off the books this year. The ground breaking and the Shad Derby were great. She gave a shout out to the Shad Derby queen, Serena Sky Raymond, that came to speak at tonight's meeting. Congratulations to you and your full Queen's court.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman thanked the Shad Derby queen for speaking tonight and for Caleb speaking as well. She mentioned a few of the organizations that gave toward the scholarships for the kids in town. It's doesn't only take just one, but it takes a village. Many of us here today have talked about the stewardship of our kids. We have taken it on and we want our kids to take it on as well. Community service is extremely important. She believes it is something that we as a town strive for. It's important to have that in the public schools and it's something that she would like to see more of. She just wanted to say thank you to those organizations and everyone who participated. It's been a wonderful ride and she thanked all the councilors that came out this weekend.

Councilor Armstrong said she was happy to see the audience that's here today and those online that are here to participate. She commended Councilor Gluck Hoffman on the Shad Derby and it running so smoothly, the Shad Derby queen and the event which was wonderful, the Grand Marshal and everyone that attended the Shad Derby. Be careful, be hydrated, relax when you can, exercise for your health and enjoy life. She asked that everyone look out for the bikers and walkers out there and to heed the speed limit. There is much to do in the Town of Windsor. If you're looking for something to do she's sure it can be found as we have vast opportunities for our seniors and our young people. She congratulated all the graduates. For the young people, we sometimes talk about what they don't do and not of what they do. We should appreciate that. She added that the Council does care and appreciates all their comments. We are concerned and we anticipate more participation in the audience and the calls that come into us.

Councilor Walker thanked all people that came out and made their voices heard. We also heard from the Windsor Fife & Drum Corps and he'd like to thank his fellow colleagues who worked with him to make sure that those kids got some things that they desperately needed. It is difficult for moms to run back and forth and go to different homes to attempt to pick up these kids. You've seen the Windsor Fire & Drum Corps perform not only in Windsor but in different towns and he urges anyone who wants to learn more of what they do to go to their website. We need to find things for our kids to do because there is so much out there to lead them astray. He said he's been to the neighborhood where the solar farm is proposed and has seen all the communications back and forth. There is no doubt that people who purchase a home will look to see what is in the surroundings. Unfortunately, there is what is known as a solar farm that is coming. He's not sure what the landscaping around that property will do and it's unfortunate that people bought those homes before there was a solar farm. The flip side to that is that people have property rights and they can put up anything they want to put up as long as it's within the zoning rules. The bigger issue is the push, not just in Connecticut but it's strong in CT for state government to come in and tell municipalities what they will do with their zoning rules. The push is on the take away the say of local zoning boards and to put it in the hands of the town. He feels local people know what is best and they are best able to determine what fits in their neighborhood. Talk to your state representatives so when these bills come up, they can vote to defeat it and give back to municipalities some of the rights in what they can say. There are people in town that support these solar projects. There's one on Broad Street and when it came about the residents protested it as well as the school. It's still there and it does make noise regardless of what the decibel levels are. All the councilors and Town Manager did the best they could do. Regarding the budget, he hears the figure of \$8 put out. He thinks that most residents in town wish that it cost \$8 to educate a child in Windsor. It doesn't and it's very misleading. Just about \$0.75 of every dollar that the town spends goes toward the Board of Education budget. This budget in his opinion was not really about the schools but about affordability. With many seniors in this town and a lot of those that are getting by just barely, it's about what they can afford in taxes. We need to redirect the focus to affordability. It's about what people can do to stay in their homes. Currently, you have people choosing between buying gas or food. He looks forward to the deliberations this evening.

Deputy Mayor Klase thanked everyone who came out and spoke online.

Mayor Black-Burke stated that she lifted up the students that came out to speak. She spoke of Caleb and how she's read in his class before. She congratulated the Shad Derby court. She's really proud of these young women and all they have accomplished. They are a very accomplished group. She highlighted the award winning music department from Windsor High School who had many concerts over the last few weeks. She encouraged folks to go out on May 31st to join them at the 'Hartford's got Talent' talent show. They will be a part of the line up in the talent show. It will be held at the Bushnell. The award winning Gospel choir will be performing on stage at the Bushnell. On June 8th, Art and Bloom is taking place at the Windsor Art Center. There are so many things that happen in our town each and every week. She encouraged everyone to look through the nice bulletin that is out and what is being pushed out via social media. Windsor is a great community.

7) REPORT OF APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

a) Public Building Commission

Jim Bennett, Public Building Commission, stated the following:

Oliver Ellsworth School Humidity Mitigation Design - 9574

Construction is underway. A kickoff meeting was held with contractor, engineer, and town officials to set expectations and answer questions. All HVAC equipment has been manufactured and shipped. Project is expected to be completed by the end of August 2024.

Sage Park Middle School Slab Moisture Mitigation Project – 9567

Nothing new to report with Construction anticipated over the 2025 summer break.

Sage Park Middle School Energy HVAC Efficiencies Upgrades Project Phase 2 & 3 - 9542

Auditorium unit return air ductwork is being redesigned to reduce the noise levels. Design should be completed in the next two weeks and work shall be scheduled shortly thereafter. Project is expected to be completed by the end of June 2024.

Milo Peck School HVAC Construction – 9538

Nothing new to report

Clover Street School Roof Replacement Project – 9549

Nothing new to report

LP Wilson Community Center HVAC Renovations Project - 9551

Phase - 1

Major construction is completed. Sequence of operation programming for DOAS units and controls continues to progress with project expected to be completed by the end of June 2024

Phase - 2

Contracts have been issued and a kickoff meeting is scheduled for this week. Work to begin shortly and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2024.

330 Windsor Ave. Community Center Gym HVAC Renovations - 9550

Work continues to progress. Punch list review has been performed and contractor is working on identified corrections. Project is expected to be completed by the end of July 2024

Clover Street School Restroom ADA Code Compliances Phase-1 - 9552

Construction is underway. A kickoff meeting was held with contractor, engineer, and town officials to set expectations and answer questions. HazMat testing has been completed and quotes for abatement have been received. Project is expected to be completed by the end of August 2024.

LP Wilson BOE Restroom Renovations - 9553

Nothing new to report

Sage Park Middle School Roof Design Project – 9541

Contracts have been issued and a kickoff meeting is scheduled for this week. Work to begin shortly and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2024.

Poquonock Elementary School Roof Project - 9558

Nothing new to report

JFK Elementary School HVAC System Upgrades Phase III Project - 1932

Punch list items are being addressed and project completion is expected to be completed by the end of June 2024.

Welch Park Pool House Renovations Project - 1938

Work continues to progress. All interior masonry is complete. All interior and exterior slab has been poured. Roof decking is being repaired with roofing installed thereafter. Water and Electrical supply to building will be completed this week. Project is expected to be completed by the end of May 2024.

b) Board of Assessment Appeals

Milo Peck, Chair of the Board of Assessment Appeals, gave the following report:

He thanked the Town Assessor Josh Gaston and all of his associates for all the hard work they did during this revaluation period which isn't just the meetings, but the process beforehand with Vision. They worked very hard and he thanked them very much for their diligence.

The members of the Windsor Board of Assessment Appeals met 19 times for over 75 hours during the course of the 66 days from March 2, 2024 to May 7, 2024. Mr. Peck added that the amount of appeals of 177 was the highest he's ever seen in the 17 years that he's been on the board. The last time he saw something close to that is when they had 110 appeals.

These meetings resulted in the following Assessment changes:

Category	# Appeals	\$ Assessment	\$ Change	% Change
Residential Real Estate	132	49,697,690	(1,516,890)	-3.05%
Commercial/Industrial Real Estate	27	273,857,250	(2,379,790)	-0.87%
Personal Property	2	197,095	0	0.00%
Motor Vehicle	16	314,454	(42,007)	-13.36%
Total	177	324,066,489	(3,938,687)	-1.22%

*These figures treat the 432 Condos of the Rivers Bend Complex as a single commercial appeal as opposed to 432 residential appeals.

*These figures reflect the BAA's decisions prior to any values being phase-in.

Councilor Pelkey said he had the pleasure of sitting in on a few meetings. The patience that they have to have to repeat themselves time after time along with listening to citizens complain about things they don't have control over is commendable. He's not one to give praise lightly but putting in that many hours we should quadruple their salary. For Mr. Peck and the board members he thanked them for all they did. As far as education goes, he agrees with Mr. Peck about education and would love to hear his thoughts about anything we can do. We have time to plan this so we can better educate our neighbors in the town.

Councilor Pelkey asked what the average decrease is for a residential property. He just needs a ballpark figure. Mr. Peck responded that he doesn't think that it ever went down lower than \$20,000. They had some at \$10,000 or \$5,000 as well.

Councilor Naeem said thank you to him and the board. She thinks she saw them here every time she came to town hall. Mr. Peck stated that the Assessor's office had to work extremely hard because they were constantly going back and forth to the property specifications to validate information and or look up information which took a lot of time and preparation before the meetings.

Councilor Eleveld thanked everyone on the board and the town staff. His question is on the motor vehicles. You ended up with about 13% average reduction overall. What were the reasons for the reductions? Mr. Peck responded that you'd have someone come in with a car with a

mileage of 258,000. They go by the JD Powers values. Individuals get a reduction on the mileage once it hits a certain level. 90% of the reductions deal with the mileage deduction.

Councilor Armstrong asked for an example of an appeal for personal property. Mr. Peck stated if someone has a small business in town and you have office furniture, that furniture within the business is classified as personal property and is taxable. The same thing would happen with the property that is in a hotel. You look at the bedrooms, the beds, etc. and that is all considered personal property.

Councilor Walker thanked Mr. Peck as well. He thinks some of this conversation we're having tonight might help those that didn't win an appeal or didn't get a larger decrease in their assessments understand it better. While a lot of us can afford to pay higher taxes, everybody can't. It might look good on the outside but a lot of people in this town are saying they have a budget, they're on a fixed income, and some of us have heard it. But he thinks that by Mr. Peck explaining the process it helps.

Councilor Armstrong asked how you apply for an appeal of assessment. Mr. Peck said that the form is at the Assessor's office and the person fills that out. Then it goes to the Board of Assessment Appeals for review.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked him and the Assessment team for all they do.

8) TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Souza gave the following report:

Town of Windsor Memorial Day Observances

Memorial Day observances will be held on Monday, May 27, 2024.

An observance will be held at the Elm Grove Cemetery located in Poquonock beginning at 8:00 AM followed by a ceremony at Veteran's Cemetery at 9:00 AM. Following the ceremony at Veteran's Cemetery, the Memorial Day Parade will proceed to Windsor Town Hall via Poquonock Avenue. The parade usually arrives in the center of town between 9:45 AM and 10:00 AM. The 10:00 AM ceremony at town hall will include a special flag ceremony performed by Windsor Scouts.

This year's Parade Marshal is Windsor Police Officer Joshua Amaro. Amaro is an Afghanistan Combat Veteran and currently holds the rank of Staff Sergeant with the CT Army National Guard where he serves as an instructor for newly enlisted soldiers.

Within the Windsor Police Department, he has fulfilled roles as School Resource Officer, Field Training Officer and Peer Support. He is also an Assistant Lacrosse and Field Hockey Coach at Windsor High School.

In case of rain, one single ceremony will be held at 10:00 AM in the Town Hall Council Chambers. Contact Enita Jubrey at 860-285-1835 with any other questions.

Ground Breaking Ceremony of New Park at 458 Windsor Avenue

We are ready to celebrate 'breaking ground' on the new park project in Wilson. A ground breaking ceremony will be held on May 21, 2024 at 10:30 AM at 458 Windsor Avenue for this event. The park will be a transformative project set to breathe new life into a long vacant parcel, creating a multi-dimensional space at the gateway of the Wilson neighborhood. Planned enhancements include a parking lot, trails, trees, landscaping, habitat improvement, public art, food truck parking, picnic patio, playgrounds, pavilion, amphitheater and a great lawn. This is an investment in the community's well-being, offering spaces for recreation, relaxation and cultural enrichment. All are welcome to attend!

Public Works Open House

Come celebrate National Public Works week with us on May 23, 2024 from 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM at 99 Day Hill Road and meet the amazing public works crews who take care of our community! Step into large equipment, go for a ride in a plow truck, take a tour of the facility and learn more about what goes on behind the scenes at the Public Works facility.

MDC Water Line Replacement Project - Kellogg and Lennox

Starting the week of May 13th, the MDC will be replacing water lines on Kellogg Street and Lennox Avenue. This work will also include replacing water meter pits at a number of homes and select hydrants. The MDC has notified the residents of this scheduled work. The project is expected to take three months. Our plan is to repave these roads and several others in the neighborhood during the summer or fall of 2025.

MDC Sewer Line Extension Project – Pierson Lane

The MDC plans to begin construction this summer on extending the sanitary sewer line along a portion of Pierson Lane. The existing sewer line in Pierson Lane ends just west of the Palisado Cemetery. This project will extend the sewer line west under the railroad tracks to the area in front of the Windsor Tennis and Racquet Club. Work will require alternating one way travel and at times the road way will have to be closed in the area of the railroad. Work is expected to take 12 weeks. As the schedule gets firmed up, MDC will be providing public notices through various means of the altered traffic patterns.

Siting Council Decision on River Street Solar Project

The CT Siting Council made their decision on the proposed solar project at 445 River Street approving the petition with some conditions pertaining to items the town had expressed initial concerns with.

The Siting Council approved the revised layout plan. The revised plan provides a greater set back or buffer in this area near the residential property. The set back from this property line near the condos is now over 120 feet and was previously approximately 25 feet.

The CT siting Council also approved the enhanced screening along the River Street frontage. The town had an independent sound engineer review the applicant's pre-operational sound study. Our consultant found the applicant's sound study followed acceptable standards/methodology and based on the information submitted it appears the operation of the facility's equipment will not violate State and local noise regulations. The CT Siting Council is

requiring the applicant to conduct a post-operational noise study that documents compliance with state standards and if needed mitigate the noise to adhere to the standards.

According to our outside legal counsel, the courts afford deference to the decisions made by the Siting Council, but parties are still able to appeal those decisions if the Siting Council has acted unreasonably, arbitrarily, illegally or in abuse of its discretion. The deadline to file the appeal is 45 days from the date of the filing of the Siting Council decision.

Here is a link to view the Siting Council documents, correspondence and information related to the proposed project. https://portal.ct.gov/CSC/3_Petitions/Petition-Nos-1501-1600/PE1598.

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

The Social Services Department and Senior Center have partnered with Greater Hartford Legal Aid who provides free consulting services to address the critical needs of individuals related to obtaining government benefits, housing, senior issues, employment laws, and more. The Social Services department is hosting individual appointments for residents of all ages on the first Friday of every month from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM. Walk-ins are welcome. The Senior Center appointments are reserved for residents who are 55 and up, and host appointments on the last Friday of every month. Residents may call the Windsor Senior Center to schedule a 20-minute appointment at 860-285-1992.

Volunteer Animal Feeders Needed

Northwest Park is seeking volunteer animal feeders to help feed, water and care for the heritage breed farm animals on display in the barn and pastures. Applicants must be at least 18 years old and able to work outside in all kinds of weather. The typical commitment is one scheduled evening or weekend shift (morning or evening) each week. Applications may be requested via phone (860-285-1886), email (northwestpark@townofwindsorct.com), or picked up from the park office in the Nature Center.

Red Cross Emergency Preparedness

The Red Cross will be at the Main Library to educate attendees about emergency preparedness on Wednesday, May 29, 2024 from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Learn how to prepare for natural disasters, fires, and other unexpected emergencies. Come ready with any questions you may have.

Registration required. To register, go here: <https://windsorpl.librarycalendar.com/event/red-cross-emergency-preparedness-21221> or call the Reference Desk at 860-285-1918.

Food Bank renovations and move back update

The Windsor Food Bank (temporarily located at 100 Addison Road) will close beginning Wednesday, May 29th to begin preparation to move back to the newly renovated food bank space at the L.P. Wilson Community Center. The food bank will reopen at L.P. Wilson for client distribution on Thursday, June 6th.

Food Bank clients will be notified of the schedule change. For questions, contact Windsor Social Services at 860-285-1839.

Bradley Airport

Bradley Airport is doing some work on their main runway this month. That will require a change in the flight patterns for a few weeks. There will be more traffic over the Hayden Station area than normal.

Town Manager Souza stated that the cost of having a referendum is from \$19,000-\$20,000.

Town Manger Souza said that there was a question about how the FY 24 budget to a degree helped mitigate revaluation. The FY 24 budget had \$755,000 in one time monies that were built into the budget with the expectation that those costs would not continue. In addition to that, there is \$300,000 for our housing rehabilitation program. Our desire is to keep that project funded because it's an important program. Those \$300,000 were also reduced from the town's side of the operating budget to mitigate as well. Essentially, over \$1 million was built into the FY 24 budget to try and mitigate to some degree the property revaluation impacts.

Councilor Pelkey said lots of people said they didn't know when the referendum would be and they feel they missed it because of that. He has many people proposing to maybe use the electronic billboards to put that information out ahead of time whenever we do set a vote for the next referendum. Town Manger Souza said that we can look into that. We only have one that is programmable. We share that with the Town of Bloomfield. We had received that through a shared services grant a good number of years ago. We can look at that in terms of visibility and the best place to put that.

Mayor Black-Burke asked the Town Manager to restate the cost of the referendum. Town Manager Souza said it is from \$19,000-\$20,000. That goes to pay for printing the ballots and the election workers stipends.

9) REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Town Improvements Committee – Councilor Smith – nothing to report.

Finance Committee – Councilor Naeem – nothing to report

Joint Town Council/Board of Education Committee – Deputy Mayor Klase – nothing to report.

Health and Safety Committee – Councilor Armstrong - nothing to report.

Personnel Committee – Deputy Mayor Klase said the Personnel Committee has two upcoming meetings on May 22nd and May 23rd.

10) ORDINANCES - None

11) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Update on proposed solar development at 445 River Street

Assistant Town Manager, Scott Colby, stated the Town Council authorized the Town Manager to request the CT Siting Council to hold a formal local public hearing and to also submit an application for 'party status' related to Verogy's Petition of Declaratory Ruling in December of 2023.

On May 9, 2024 the CT Siting Council approved Verogy's project with several conditions pertaining to items the town had expressed initial concerns with as outlined below.

As part of the CT Siting Council review process, three lengthy evidentiary hearings were conducted by the CT Siting Council, these were held on February 8th, March 19th, and April 9th. Evidentiary hearings included the presentation of witnesses, the numbering of all exhibits, requests for administrative notice, and the verification of all exhibits by appropriate witnesses. Witness panels were subject to cross-examination by the CT Siting Council and the parties and intervenors.

Setbacks from Property Lines

Final Decision

The CT Siting Council approved a revised layout plan (see attachment). The blue areas indicate the proposed solar panels. At the top or north of the site, the tan/brown shaded area indicates the area where the panels were originally proposed to be installed. The revised plan provides a greater set back or buffer in this area near the residential property. The set back from this property line near the condos to the northern section of the site are now roughly 123 feet compared to the developer's proposed 25 foot set back.

Vegetation/Screening

Final Decision

The CT Siting Council did not approve the berm. However, they approved the enhanced screening along the River Street frontage and the northern section of the site. Attached is a plan showing the landscape/screening along the River Street frontage and northern section of the site. The highlighted areas indicate plantings that the project developer has agreed to add to enhance the screening.

Noise

Final Decision

The CT Siting Council is requiring a post-construction operational noise study be completed that documents compliance with state standards and the identification of any noise mitigation measures that are employed to adhere to the standards.

Decommissioning

Final Decision

The Siting Council ruled that the lease is a private agreement between WSO and the property owner. At the end of the lease term, control of the solar facility site reverts back to the property owner. The CT Siting Council does not have the authority to supersede restoration provisions of the site lease or require additional site restoration conditions beyond those established by the site lease. The property owner would determine site restoration conditions at the time of Project decommissioning.

According to our outside legal counsel, the courts afford deference to the decisions made by the CT Siting Council, but parties are still able to appeal those decisions if the CT Siting Council has acted unreasonably, arbitrarily, illegally or in abuse of its discretion. The deadline to file the appeal is 45 days from the date of the filing of the CT Siting Council decision.

Mayor Black-Burke said there has been a lot of work at the State level in regards to legislation to look at the level of control a Siting Council would have. She knows that for State Representative Garibay and State Representative Jaime Foster and others this is something they are continuously working on just to look at the level of control a Siting Council does have, especially if it will impact the town.

Councilor Walker asked about the screening that the Siting Council recommended and if its vegetation an if there is a height restriction to it? How tall is this screen going to be? Assistant Town Manager Colby said they will be placing new trees and shrubs in that area at a variety of different heights. They worked with the town to ensure that they were a species of plants and trees that would grow full and lush within the next few years so that it does provide adequate screening. It should blend into the neighborhood naturally. Councilor Walker said if they get too high then there's the possibility that they will block sunlight which is what a solar farm needs. He's sure they are not going to dig into their revenues. It's unfortunate because it's a huge area, but the town did the best they could and we'll see where it goes.

Councilor Pelkey asked why is it being recommended not to appeal the decision. Assistant Town Manager Colby said with an appeal it doesn't guarantee that the town will be able to get any of the items that they are expressing concern for changed. It doesn't mean that those would occur. It would be a cost expense to go through the courts to be able to gain some traction to enhance screening or do anything else that there is a concern with but it doesn't guarantee any of those changes would be made.

Councilor Armstrong asked if the solar farm had to be removed would it be labeled as a hazardous removal and it would require an additional cost. Assistant Town Manager Colby said to his knowledge and understanding these materials are not hazardous and that the cost of the removal is on the petitioner at the end of life cycle which is expected to be 30-35 years. The petitioner would be the ones required by the Siting Council to remove those panels.

Deputy Mayor Klase said she knows that this property was eligible for a solar farm because it was zoned agricultural. Is there a zoning that exists where the town could identify the land that is more suited for solar. We do want green energy and that is one of the Council's commitments but we want to be able to say that we'd like it at a particular site like maybe the landfill where there isn't a trench. If a company is looking, we can say these are the preferred areas that will not impact neighborhoods. Town Manager Souza said that any project that is over 1 meg they can go in any zone they want to unless the CT Siting Council overrules the zoning. We do allow solar facilities currently under the zoning regulations if they are generating power for their use on site. We do have regulations that are in place for that. If it's less than a meg, they can have the opportunity to look at our zoning regulations and talk to town staff. If it goes beyond that, they just have to notify the town and go through the petition process with the state. We are extremely limited for anything over 1 meg.

Councilor Eleveld asked what is the cost of an appeal. Assistant Town Manager Colby said he does not have a cost of how much that would be to go through an appeal process.

Councilor Eleveld asked if we were to do that for this project wouldn't that put us on the slippery slope for the group that didn't want to see Dollar Tree go in and then now saying okay Windsor now you go and pay for the cost to fight Dollar Tree (used as an example only). We provided an opportunity for a hearing and we spent \$20,000 or so for that but to go to an appeal we are looking at six figures at least. Then what do we do when the next Dollar Tree pops up and the residents that live 150 feet from it could say, oh this isn't what we want and they want us to stop it when it can't be stopped? It's an issue that we need to consider in this process. He just wants to put that out there. He's not thrilled with the project and the location but unfortunately CT Siting Council has jurisdiction and we don't have much that we can say about it.

Mayor Black-Burke stated the Bill is House Bill #5507.

12) NEW BUSINESS

- a) Approve Public Relations job descriptions

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman that items 12 C and 12 D be moved ahead in the agenda before item 12 A.

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Mayor Black-Burke said that they were looking at the timing and they wanted to make sure that they had enough time for deliberation and that is why the Democratic side had put that motion forward. They thought that was something that everyone would want to do.

Councilor Eleveld suggested to Mayor Black-Burke that a Special Town Council meeting be set for budget deliberations within the next few days. He believes it can be done on Wednesday if we don't have it hybrid and we have plenty of time notice-wise to do that. Thursday is not an option as that is the Town Committee caucus meeting. He believes we are all going to want to attend for our respective reasons. Or we can just recess this meeting to another date. He's not sure if there is a notice requirement for something like that.

Councilor Eleveld said there's been no discussion on our side relative to what your side is proposing at this point so we are a little on the blind side over here.

Deputy Mayor Klase stated she totally understands that, however, it was on the agenda, we discussed it during the preparation meeting for the agenda and we didn't make up anybody's minds. People came out and spoke. We know what we stand for, we understand that. It's a deliberation session and she thinks they should be able to deliberate their thoughts publicly. She doesn't understand the movement of this as there are conflicts for some of us. We have meetings set for the rest of this week and the longer this sits, the longer it will take for the voters to get the budget and vote on it. The longer we hold people in limbo regarding their tax bill. She thinks they should continue with the agenda as published.

Councilor Eleveld said that in order to change the agenda, it requires 6 votes and he believes the vote was 5-4-0. So you'd have to continue with the agenda in the order that it was laid out prior to the motion.

MOTION RESCINDED

Deputy Mayor Klase rescinded her earlier motion.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Armstrong that the job descriptions for the positions of Senior Communications Specialist and Communications Specialist be approved as presented and the position of Senior Communications Specialist be placed in the Administrative Pay Plan in pay grade 6.

Sophia Castellanos, Human Resources Manager and Enita Jubrey, Assistant to the Town Manager and Public Relations Specialist, gave an overview of the item.

Ms. Castellanos stated the change to the title from Communications and Community Outreach Specialist to Communications Specialist is to better align the title with industry standards or practices.

Adding the Senior Communications Specialist position creates the capacity for career development within the Public Relations division. It furthers the goal of enhancing recruitment and retention in the organization by providing opportunities for professional development and growth. As employees develop more knowledge, build their skills, and become more valuable to the department and the town, this allows opportunities for career advancement.

The Senior Communications Specialist position will have some of the same job duties as the Communication Specialist position but will be responsible for strategic planning, training employees, developing methods to analyze the success of various outreach efforts, and coordinating, scheduling and assigning work. This position would also be involved in higher-level projects/assignments.

The Communications Specialist position will be more focused on planning and creating content with guidance from the Senior Communications Specialist.

Councilor Pelkey asked for the Communications Specialist, he sees that the minimum qualifications were down graded from needing a Bachelor's degree to now needing an Associate's degree. Why do we need to have a degree at all for this position? Why is that a requirement? Ms. Castellanos stated that it is really just the change of going from a Bachelor's degree to an Associate's degree. There has to be some level of understanding and that is just a basis point.

Councilor Pelkey then asked if we could substitute work experience instead of the degree. Ms. Castellanos said they could look into that. Town Manger Souza said there is language within the minimum qualifications that allows for equivalent combination of work experience. So we do have that there. Town Manager Souza added this is in the position description. The way

that you recruit nowadays you don't put out your job description. We are using other tools to demonstrate to folks that we are open to all different types of experiences.

Councilor Gluck-Hoffman thanked them for the job description. Just as Town Manager Souza said, you have to capture people and she knows that job experience is important but working with folks for many years in Public Relations, Communications, and social media, you have to have all of this in there. She thanked them again for a great job description.

Councilor Smith asked if there are any requirements to seek minority candidates in the search for this position. Ms. Castellanos explained they use the same means that is used to post all positions. We do reach out to different organizations in the community, we have a specific group of people, different emails and contacts that we do to ensure we reach all demographics within the community.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

b) Approve tax suspense list

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman, that \$305,451.30 motor vehicle, supplemental, and personal property taxes be transferred to the Suspense Tax Book from the following respective Grand List years.

OCTOBER 1, 2016 -	\$	745.28
OCTOBER 1, 2018 -	\$	198.49
OCTOBER 1, 2019 -	\$	311.80
OCTOBER 1, 2020 -	\$	<u>304,195.73</u>
	\$	305,451.30

Cathy Elliot, Tax Collector, stated in accordance with *Connecticut State Statutes* §12-165, the Suspense List must be submitted annually to the Town Council. This list consists of motor vehicle, supplemental, and personal property taxes on the 2020 Grand List that are considered not collectable. Also included is one account from the 2016 Grand List, one account from the 2018 Grand List and two accounts from the 2019 Grand List which were added on after those lists had been suspended and are still showing as active accounts.

Various methods of collection have been pursued and all vehicle registrations have been reported to the Motor Vehicle Department. Transferring these bills to the Suspense Book does not mean we cannot collect if the taxpayer appears or is found through further efforts. However, this transfer presents a more accurate picture of the town's accounts receivable at this time.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

c) Budget deliberations and adoption of revised FY 2025 budget

Councilor Naeem felt they brought forth a budget that was very strategic and in the reductions that they made to make sure they had fiscal stability in the long run. She feels they were very responsible on the use of opening cash as well. We recognize that there is a significant tax increase in town, but the significance is not because of the increase of expenditures, it is because of the impacts of revaluation. As we look to move forward, it is important to protect the financial stability of our residents. It is also very important to protect and support our town services which includes our education services. She knows that earlier tonight, Ms. Zotter shared some numbers and Councilor Walker eluded that \$8 per month is not the full cost of the Board of Education budget. She doesn't think they are here to talk about the full cost, rather we're here to talk about expenditure increases in particular because that's where there is a lot of discussion. She pointed out that beyond that \$8, if we were to bring all the expenditures down to \$0, we would be saving an average household in Windsor \$18 per month. For those \$18 per month in savings we would potentially be laying off 40-50 full-time employees between the town and the Board of Education. That is going to be a significant decrease in service levels. She feels that is not something that they can afford to do as a town. She talked about protecting the financial stability and earlier we heard from folks about the importance of making sure there is support there for our seniors. She would like to make sure that they are looking tonight at increasing the senior tax credit and doubling it as we look into the next budget that will be passed. There are other adjustments on the budget that we saw and she'd like the Town Manager to touch on that a bit.

Town Manager Souza said in preparing for the phase-in, there was a transfer to the Great Pond Improvement District which is based upon the overall taxes that are generated within that district. That transfer was not reflected downward. That was an oversight on the staff's part in preparing for the evening of the final adoption of the budget by the Council. What that does is it allows the Council to reduce the expenditure overall level by \$355,000 which is located in General Services of the budget. We apologize for that oversight. That does not impact any services. We are still meeting the obligation of our interlocal agreement with the Great Pond Improvement District. That provides some flexibility for the Town Council. If the Council were to reduce that \$355,000 in expenditures, there are a series of other motions that would need to take place relative to overall revenues, the overall expenditures and the current levy. If there were no other changes made to the budget by the Council, that \$355,000 reduction would result in a mill rate of 30.28 mills. The budget that was not passed on the 14th would have had a 30.37 mill rate associated with it.

Councilor Pelkey asked how we arrived at the \$305,000 figure for the Senior Tax Relief. Town Manager Souza said that \$305,000 is based upon the number of eligible participants per the ordinance that the Town Council has in place.

Councilor Pelkey asked how much does the \$305,000 translate to for each person? Town Manager Souza said it varies upon your income, if you meet the state program or if you are a part of the local option. He explained the different ways you can get the money and how much you would get.

Councilor Pelkey asked if we proceed with doubling this benefit would that possibly be \$800 to \$3,750? Town Manager Souza said conceptually that is correct but they'd have to work through that. He noted that several years ago when the Council made an adjustment, if it's included within the operating budget, then we'd have to come back to the Council to make an amendment to the ordinance. The Council would have to conduct a public hearing and then act on the amendment to put into effect what was in the adopted budget.

Councilor Pelkey asked if we are currently using all \$305,000? Town Manager Souza said he does not have that information will him but some years we may not reach that full amount, it depends upon those people that are re-upping and new people that have joined.

Councilor Pelkey asked if the Town Manager can give an estimated guess that we hit 98% of it versus 50%? He's trying to see what the need is. Town Manager Souza said in recent years it's probably 90%.

Councilor Armstrong asked if the mandatory recount remained the same? Town Manager Souza said it did.

Councilor Smith said we are trying to add to the Senior Tax Credit and people that are disabled. In his opinion, this is a very much needed service to give to seniors and the disabled some type of tax relief. If the numbers work out to be \$800 / \$1,300 that's where the numbers are. He feels that is totally acceptable. What would be the ramifications of having this tax abatement? Town Manager Souza said if there's a qualified individual that makes \$22,000 or less they currently are eligible under the state program \$1,250. On top of that they are able to receive local funds in the amount of \$1,875.

Town Manager Souza said in regards to Councilor Pelkey's question earlier, he would envision the \$1,875 would be doubled if we increase it.

Town Manager Souza wanted to clarify what he said earlier. He is using terminology from when the State of Connecticut gave us reimbursement for this program. The State of Connecticut still sets the income guidelines. What the dollar amounts are for the State is we used to get \$200,000 per year in reimbursement from that 'state' program. They did away with that about 5-6 years ago. What we refer to as the local match is the municipality has the ability by local option to increase the benefit to those that are eligible under the State program as well as to increase the income cap. In other words, expand the umbrella so more people can qualify.

Councilor Eleveld said the \$305,000 we are doing now is all on us at this time and the Town Manager's number for the State is irrelevant because it's all coming out of our pocket anyways. Town Manager Souza said yes, on that perspective, yes it is not irrelevant because they set the income thresholds. Councilor Eleveld said but we set the amounts that we can credit. Town Manager Souza said for the local portion of it we do.

Councilor Eleveld said if we were to double it to \$610,000 the proposal would be to either increase the income cap and/or increase the amount received at the various levels. Town Manager Souza said his recommendation would be that you don't increase the income cap

because at this point in time, that application deadline has passed but it does not mean that we cannot increase the benefit amount. Just note that the benefit amount needs to be determined prior to and giving enough time for staff to prepare the billing for this billing cycle. It's doable but it does impact the calendar for when the bills can be prepared and sent out.

Councilor Eleveld said so we'd have to run through this quickly between this meeting and the following meeting to get the ordinance approved and on the books. Would there be a possibility of looking at the Veteran's Relief program? Town Manager Souza said the Council adjusted that last year. Councilor Eleveld asked do we have any more room to increase that. Town Manager Souza said he'd have to look into that.

Councilor Pelkey asked how many people currently utilize the Veteran's Relief program. Assistant Town Manager Colby said there are 287 participants in that program.

Councilor Pelkey asked are we suggesting with the Great Pond miscalculation, does that wash out the increase. Town Manager Souza said yes.

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Smith to amend the proposed budget for General Services of \$19,642,690 by \$355,000 to \$19,287,690.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

MAIN MOTION

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to accept all other service unit budgets as adopted by the Town Council on April 24, 2024.

AMENDED MOTION

MOVED by Councilor Pelkey, seconded by Councilor Walker to amend the motion and reduce the Board of Education budget by \$1.3 million, reduce Community Services by \$108,860 and reduce Open Space by \$65,000.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman stated she cannot support moving funds from Community Services.

Mayor Black-Burke stated she cannot support reducing the budget of the Board of Education. As a mother to a student that was part of the Covid class, in the summer she will take time to use her own money to ensure that her son continues to be where he is supposed to be for his education. So reducing the Board of Education by another \$1.3 million is something she cannot do in good conscience.

Councilor Armstrong stated she does not support reducing the Board of Education, Community Services or Open space.

AMENDED MOTION

Motion Failed 3-5-1 (Mayor Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Klase, Councilors Armstrong, Naeem and Smith opposed and Councilor Gluck Hoffman abstained)

MAIN MOTION

Motion Passed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Smith to amend the total proposed General Fund expenditures for the FY 2025 budget of \$143,670,840 by \$355,000 to \$143,315,840.

Councilor Eleveld said we are going to send this back to the taxpayers with no real change. Deputy Mayor Klase said that is a pretty accurate portrayal. We took some money and added it to the Senior Relief program.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said they had discussed the creativity programs. We did not discuss certain people in certain positions with certain salaries. She does not want to delete programs.

Deputy Mayor Klase clarified that when they had their prior deliberations, the Board of Education came to us and said that if we reduce it by any other things there is going to be positions. They've looked at other scenarios from the Town Manager that showed positions at a certain point. The proposal that was made is going to require position reductions.

Mayor Black-Burke said that she thinks it's been very clear overall that on the town side as well on the Board of Education side that it would be a total of about 50 positions total for the town as well as Board of Education. Also keep in mind that the contractual obligations on both sides must be met. The cost of living will continue to go up. She just wants to make sure for everyone listening that we do have contractual obligations that is a bulk of a budget.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said she is well aware of the contractual obligations.

Councilor Eleveld said we are having the same problem that every community in the state is having. Hartford got hit with a \$44 million deficit. Multiple towns that have had revaluation and/or have had the ESSER funds disappear are all rejecting their budgets. The fact that that is happening is clear that there is a problem. It isn't our making. It's not our fault. The Federal government gave us money and presumed that we would fund it later and reality is you're asking taxpayers, on top of a revaluation year, to cover this. Next year, we have a secondary problem which many people may not realize and it could be much worse next year. He can't support this. You're giving the taxpayers back the same budget, with no changes effectively. He can't support that.

Councilor Walker said it is a fact that nothing has changed in the budget that was presented to the voters. It failed but maybe it will pass this time. We keep talking about the Board of Education. Councilor Eleveld mentioned the ESSER positions that the Superintendent knew because were temporary positions. He agreed to that. All those temporary positions have been filled. He went to one of the budget presentations at 330 Windsor Avenue. He hears people saying we will make reductions, any reductions at all 20, 40, 50. It's great to say those statements but we need to back it up with facts. How many actual positions will be eliminated, if any, if there are reductions in the budget. We're still an alliance district. Granted that we have kids that are doing very well, but are we getting the best bang for our buck. With the reduction,

not an increase in student population, it's \$5 million that the Board of Education is looking for. This is a trend every year to increase it. As Councilor Eleveld said it's not just Windsor that has to do it. He's heard people in town say to his face, 'you can't touch the Board of Education budget and we're not going to touch it.' It's fine. He's only just one vote. The citizens have said we need to do more. We can vote on it tonight, but he would definitely never vote for something like this.

Councilor Pelkey stated that it was 11:00 PM and they are at the end of their meeting.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Klase, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to extend the regular meeting to 11:30 PM.

Motion Failed 5-4-0 (Councilors Eleveld, Gluck Hoffman, Pelkey and Walker opposed)

Mayor Black-Burke said that tonight they have not concluded their business for the evening. They will look to come back to continue this business.

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Armstrong to adjourn the meeting at 11:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary