



**TOWN COUNCIL**  
**HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON**  
**June 3, 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 (via Zoom and then in person – entered meeting late), Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor William Pelkey, Councilor Leroy Smith, and Councilor Walker

**2) COMPLETE ACTIONS RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET**

Town Manager Souza stated the Council had talked about the potential reduction for General Services last time with the \$355,000. Where the Town Council left off was the motion for Total General Fund revenue expenditures.

Total General Fund Expenditures

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

AMENDMENT TO MOTION

MOVED by Councilor Pelkey, seconded by Councilor Eleveld to amend the main motion so instead of a reduction of \$355,000 it would be a reduction of \$1,655,000 down to \$142,015,840.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked if Councilor Pelkey can describe where that money would come from. Councilor Pelkey responded he doesn't think we should be spending that much money. Deputy Mayor Klase said to Councilor Pelkey that he doesn't have it earmarked for anything. Councilor Pelkey said he did but it is not part of this motion.

AMENDED MOTION VOTE

Motion Failed 4-4-0 (Mayor Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Klase, Councilors Naeem and Smith opposed and Councilor Armstrong absent for vote)

Councilor Naeem clarified for the public that the Town Council discussed during their last meeting that \$355,000 be cut from General Services which is reflective of an error that was caught due to phase-in for the Great Pond Improvement District. They did vote to

adopt all of the other services' budgets as they were proposed and we are now on our General Fund Expenditures.

Councilor Eleveld said just for the record the \$355,000 reduction is not a reduction in spending, it's just an acknowledgement of an accounting error.

Councilor Naeem stated that Councilor Armstrong cannot get into the meeting via zoom.

Mayor Black-Burke asked if there is a telephone number that she can call into the meeting with? Assistant Town Manager Colby stated there is a number on the agenda as well as within her email.

Mayor Black-Burke called a five minute recess at 6:39 p.m. due to technical difficulties of getting Councilor Armstrong onto the zoom call.

Councilor Armstrong regained her connection via phone at 6:46 p.m. and the Special Town Council meeting began again.

Deputy Mayor Black-Burke added that per the Rules of Order, you must be on camera for an Executive Session and cannot be calling in. For any other vote you do not need to be on camera.

#### MAIN MOTION VOTE

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

#### General Fund Revenues

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to amend the proposed budget for Revenues of \$143,670,840 by \$355,000 to \$143,315,840 to reflect expenditure adjustments.

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

#### Current Levy

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Smith to amend the Current Levy by \$355,000 from \$117,521,400 to \$117,166,400.

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

#### Revaluation

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Deputy Mayor Klase to implement the October 2023 revaluation with a two-year phase-in starting in FY 2025 with an estimated net taxable grand list for FY 2025 of \$3,928,000,000.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

### Senior Tax Relief

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Pelkey to amend the amount proposed for the Senior Tax Relief by \$129,475 from \$305,000 to \$434,475.

Councilor Naeem stated that they had some discussion on this at the last Town Council meeting recognizing some of the challenges that some of our senior residents may be facing. This dollar amount is reflective of what we think covers the needs of our town.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

### Veterans' Tax Relief

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Pelkey to amend the amount proposed for Veterans' Tax Relief by \$15,170, from \$23,100 to \$38,270.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

## **3) SET DATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET REFERENDUM**

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman that the annual vote on the budget be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2024 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. at all 7 polling places.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Councilor Eleveld stated he would like to have the Town Council consider adding non-binding advisory votes to the referendum. He thinks it could be done because nothing has been printed. This is a similar approach as used by the Town of East Granby.

Councilor Eleveld added that he will be forming his motion as what will be read on the ballot for the voters. The two questions would be: Question #1: "In your opinion is the General Government budget, non-Board of Education, in the amount of \$59,002,500 a decrease of .0003% or \$19,230 the right amount too low or too high? Question #2: In your opinion is the Board of Education budget in the amount of \$84,313,340 an increase of 5.15% or \$4,129,320 the right amount, too low or too high?"

Councilor Eleveld thought this is something we should consider doing and that would allow the voters to accept or reject the budget and to able to provide us guidance on it.

### NEW MOTION

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld, seconded by Councilor Pelkey that two advisory non-binding questions be added to the ballot. The questions are as follows: Question #1: "In your opinion is the General Government budget, non-Board of Education in the amount of \$59,002,500 a decrease of .0003% or \$19,230 the right amount, too low or too high? Question #2: In your opinion is the Board of Education budget in the amount of \$84,313,340 an increase of 5.15% or \$4,129,320 the right amount, too low or too high?"

Councilor Naeem stated she appreciates the idea of adding questions to the ballot. Her concern is questions have implications in terms to how they are worded and phrased. She would like to have more time to think about this versus reacting to it in the moment. She will not be supporting this today, but she would like that they have a potential conversation on about how we can bring these questions or any other questions to the ballot in the future during the Finance Committee meetings.

Councilor Pelkey stated he likes this idea as it provides information. This is an exact verbiage from East Granby minus the numbers. It has been used and meets legal criteria. This gives folks a way of giving their input. This would give not only the Council but he folks in town an idea of where their neighbors stand. It's not perfect. But if you look back at the results from East Granby you can get a sense of how each side voted on the questions. It's just a data point and it's open to interpretation. He thinks it gives us an idea whether the vote was yes or no did we get it about right. Putting this in would give us a direction regardless of a yes vote winning or a no vote winning. He feels it's worth having the information as a community.

Deputy Mayor Klase stated she would like to see this question studied further. She doesn't disagree that it would be something to look at. Her concern is that we had over an hour of public comment clearly stating to the Council that the Board of Education budget should not be reduced. It should be evaluated. She doesn't think the questions aren't good, but we should be evaluating them. She will be voting no on this item.

Councilor Smith believes that this might have a potential of creating the Board of Education versus the town. It might have that indirect situation going on. He feels that it should be evaluated some more. He would hate to see a situation where it's the town versus the Board of Education.

Councilor Armstrong felt there should be more discussion on these items brought up tonight. She would be voting no at this time.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said when the folks came out to speak about the Board of Education, they did speak for an hour to keep the budget without the cuts. That was just one room full of people and does not constitute the full community. She believes the questions are good and we need some informational pieces. We should discuss it further but she thinks it would be a positive for all of us here as opposed to a negative going forward.

Councilor Walker said the questions as they are worded have no negative connotation whatsoever. He feels the questions make the voter look closer within to see what exactly they are voting on. He gave an example using the Board of Education. He doesn't feel there is a negative to it and the other piece of it is most of us walk around this town we hear from our neighbors and constituents. The views are spread all over. There are some people in town that are of the opinion that some of the councilors do not do enough for the Board of Education. He feels they are not aware of the amount of money that needs to go

to the school system. When people understand that better, the opinions change. He feels there's no negative nor can it hurt to place the questions on the ballot.

Mayor Black-Burke stated she also is of the same opinion as Councilor Gluck Hoffman regarding the room full of people that were here at the last Town Council meeting asking that the Board of Education budget not be cut. There are more than just a handful of people in the community with opinions and we hear them every day. The Board of Education budget is a portion of the budget – it's a service to the town. She thinks this is something the Finance Committee can look at further. Can the question be crafted a bit differently in the future? Do we take it up as one block of a question? She is not prepared to have that discussion here tonight. For her, she will be saying no to the motion, but perhaps knowing that they may come back to this at a later time. She thanked Councilor Eleveld for bringing it up. It is food for thought.

Motion Failed 4-5-0 (Mayor Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Klase, Councilors Armstrong, Naeem, and Smith opposed)

Mayor Black-Burke referred the item regarding the two advisory non-binding questions being added to the ballot to the Finance Committee for review.

Mayor Black-Burke stated that she'd like to spread the word about the next budget referendum and asked that the councilors help with that along with town staff. The referendum is set for June 18<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM at all seven polling places.

#### **4) ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councilor Naeem seconded by Councilor Pelkey to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Motion Passed 9-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert  
Recording Secretary