

Present: Marshall, Cordeiro, Parella, Barboza, & Herreshoff

Also Present: Diane C. Mederos, Town Administrator
John M. Day, Town Treasurer

The Council met in workshop session for the purposes of the 2009-2010 Town budget deliberations in the Town Hall, Council Chambers on Tuesday evening, March 17, 2009 beginning at 7:10 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Marshall presiding:

Documents Received:

None

Town Solicitor - 404 - Michael A. Ursillo, Esq.

Councilman Herreshoff thanked Town Solicitor Ursillo for submitting a zero-increase budget.

Town Administrator Mederos congratulated Councilman Herreshoff for establishing regular office hours for the Town Solicitor. Town Administrator Mederos explained that Town Solicitor Ursillo or one of his associates has office hours every Tuesday afternoon in the Town Hall and that this arrangement has many advantages.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if Town Solicitor Ursillo knew any further details regarding the Federal stimulus program with Town Solicitor Ursillo responding that there appears to be a good deal of confusion regarding this matter. He did note, however, that each of the various communities should "be getting something" from the stimulus legislation.

Town Solicitor Ursillo also credited the Town for it's "good job in avoiding trouble" and that the Town should be able to "weather the storm for a year or two."

Public Works - 603 - Fred Serbst, Director

Public Works Director Serbst reported that he worked closely with Town Administrator Mederos regarding the development of this budget proposal and that those line items presented in bold-face type "ran in the red" last year.

Public Works Director Serbst attributed some of the deficits to the particularly onerous increase in gasoline prices and the implementation of a uniform program within his department.

Public Works Director Serbst speculated that both of these issues have been resolved.

A discussion ensued regarding the Snow and Ice account; this running at 400% of budget with Public Works Director Serbst explaining that the winter was extraordinary and also the Morton Salt Company unexpectedly raised prices. Public Works Director Serbst also informed the Council that Morton appears to have a "monopoly" on the road salt product and that other products carry a premium price beyond that which is charged by Morton.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if Public Works Director Serbst will have a deficit overall due to the extraordinary expenses with Public Works Director Serbst responding that he expects that the budget will balance due to some offsetting surplus accounts. Public Works Director Serbst did note, however, that additional winter storms may prevent the balanced budget.

Public Works Director Serbst further explained that this year has brought about nineteen (19) "events" these being eighteen (18) snow storms and one (1) ice storm; most of these coming on weekends and holidays thus requiring the department to pay double-time rates for workers' overtime.

Council Chairman Marshall asked if these storms impacted the department's supplemental wages account with Public Works Director Serbst responding affirmatively. Public Works Director Serbst also explained that his supplemental wages account is approximately 101% expended and that the costs of the early 4th of July events - some requiring overtime - will take place prior to the conclusion of the fiscal year.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was pleased to see a comparably low budget for the department but asked Public Works Director Serbst if the budget was practical. Public Works Director Serbst responded that this year's winter was unusual and that he did not predict an equally difficult winter for the upcoming fiscal year.

A discussion ensued regarding the costs related to rubbish removal with Public Works Director Serbst explaining that the Town contracts for hauling service, this contractor bringing the refuse to the Central Landfill in Johnston.

Public Works Director Serbst explained that it does not appear practical for the Town to consider hauling its own trash and that he is satisfied with the work done by the contractor.

Councilman Barboza asked to know what happened to the line item for "Christmas Lights" this being set to zero with Town Administrator Mederos explaining that this line item was transferred to the Municipal Observances (806) since it made sense for this line to be linked to the Christmas Festival Committee.

Council Chairman Marshall asked Public Works Director Serbst if he might be able to have less in the Road Materials line with Public Works Director Serbst responding that the amount provided was used to repair damaged berms and to patch roads. He also explained that this amount is minimal. Public Works Director Serbst also explained that there are no major road repair contracts anticipated for this year.

Public Works Director Serbst noted that many of the berm repairs are completed in an effort to control water versus simply placing a curb for aesthetic reasons on a given street.

Council Chairman Marshall asked if the Tire account might be reduced with Public Works Director Serbst explaining that the Town already purchases a certain amount of retreaded tires to save funds and that the difference in price for a rear tire for a rubbish packer is \$215 for retread versus \$450 for a new tire.

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know the status of the labor union contract with Public Works Director Serbst explaining that the contract was in the third year of a three year contract.

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know if plans were in place to have a new building at the transfer station to house cardboard with Public Works Director Serbst replying that he had not yet done this but agreed to investigate same since the selling price for cardboard may increase in the near future.

Public Works Director Serbst also reported the continued pilferage of the deposit-return beverage bottles from recycling containers at curbside.

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know what the drainage account would buy with Public Works Director Serbst responding that this account provides minimal support to the drainage

program only allowing for the purchase of replacement manhole covers, etc.

A discussion ensued regarding the Public Works' recycling of the doors from the Hydraulion Fire station; these being replaced as part of the fire headquarters project. Public Works Director Serbst speculated that this recycling effort will result in a saving of approximately \$22,000 to the Town.

Town Administrator Mederos commented that Public Works Director Serbst is excellent in the field of salvaging.

A discussion ensued regarding the plowing of sidewalks with Councilman Cordeiro expressing concern that some of the downtown merchants do not remove their sidewalk paraphernalia in order to allow for sidewalk plowing. It was suggested that this matter might be brought to the attention of the Code Compliance Coordinator.

Water Pollution Control - Composting - Enterprise Fund - 604, 606, 607 - Matthew Calderiso, Superintendent

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know if any of Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso's accounts were running in the red with Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso responding that the energy lines were of concern. Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso also informed the Council that he is looking into the possibility of obtaining assistance from the Narragansett Bay Commission so as to fund a study on energy efficiency. This study is being conducted through the University of Rhode Island.

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso also reported that he is investigating some solar/wind energy smaller projects for his facilities including some small wind turbines and solar roof shingles. He explained that low-interest SRF funding may pay for these.

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso stated that these projects might not provide sufficient energy to operate the plants but will rather offset the cost of heat, lighting, etc.

Councilwoman Parella commented that the Compost facility property may be a good place to locate a wind turbine since it might not be visible to the surrounding area.

Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso explained that his utilities are already 83% expended and his departments have yet to experience the "wet" season.

Council Chairman Marshall suggested that the Town might meet with National Grid so as to receive fewer electric bills through consolidation. Town Administrator Mederos and Town Treasurer Day agreed to look into this matter.

A discussion ensued regarding the removal of sludge by Kelly Space with Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso reminding the Council that the sludge material is used to make compost of the yard waste.

A discussion ensued regarding the repair of the composting building with Council Chairman Marshall suggesting that new siding consisting of cement versus wood would lessen maintenance costs.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to receive an explanation of the "seasonal reduction" plans with Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso and Town Administrator Mederos responding that some of the composting workers may be laid-off during the winter months. Town Treasurer Day explained that a large component of the savings will come from workers' compensation insurance premiums since the rate for laborers is \$25 per \$100 of payroll.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso could identify any further budget cuts with Water Pollution Control Superintendent Calderiso responding that the budget was tight. Town Administrator Mederos reported that the budget, as presented, represents no increase in the Sewer Use Fee.

Municipal Observances - 806

4th of July Celebration - David Burns, Chairman; Judith Squires, Vice-chairman

Council Chairman Marshall asked Mr. Burns if his committee would be able to "live" with the budgeted amount as proposed by Town Administrator Mederos with Mr. Burns responding affirmatively.

Councilman Barboza suggested that the committee might be able to "tighten-up" the parade since last year's parade ran longer than usual; incurring additional police patrol costs.

Ms. Squires noted that the Committee is considering relocating the television cameras so as to lessen parade gaps.

Councilman Barboza stated that he would appreciate if the Committee would work to resolve this issue.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was pleased that the concert program will be returning to Colt Memorial School with Ms. Squires stating that some of the Hope Street merchants complain that the concerts are detrimental to their business.

Councilman Herreshoff asked if the fireworks display will be held on July 3 with Mr. Burns responding affirmatively. Councilman Herreshoff explained that he was generally opposed to having 4th of July fireworks on July 3 but agreed not to make issue of the matter since it represents a cost-saving.

Mr. Burns invited the Council to attend the Chief Marshal announcement planned for April 1, 2009 in the Burnside Building.

Veterans Holidays - Jack Sylvester, Bristol Veterans Council

Mr. Sylvester informed the Council that the proposed cut to the budget for Veterans Holiday would seriously impact the Council's ability to operate the Memorial Day exercises and parade. Mr. Sylvester also informed the Council that the cost of flower wreaths increased dramatically in recent years this allowing for a large portion of the Memorial Day budget.

Mr. Sylvester also informed the Council that the Veterans Council pays for the collation from its own donations.

Parella/Barboza - Voted unanimously to restore the budget for Memorial Day to \$3500.

Patriotism - Denise Asciola, Assistant to Town Administrator Mederos

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that some slightly tattered flags may be repaired by removing a small portion of the frayed edge. Councilman Herreshoff noted that this practice was considered acceptable.

Ms. Asciola agreed to provide one of the Town's slightly damaged flags to Councilman Herreshoff so that he may attempt to have it repaired.

Christmas Festival - Rick Baccus, Co-Chairman

Mr. Baccus stated that he was of the opinion that the Committee could operate the festival with the allotment as recommended by Town Administrator Mederos with the proviso that Roger Williams University provides their typical support of \$2500.

Town Administrator Mederos noted that Recreation Director Burke and Town Treasurer Day have the applications for the Roger Williams University public service grants.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know what the Committee's largest expenditures were with Mr. Baccus responding that the morning program costs approximately \$4000 and the evening program costs approximately \$3000. Mr. Baccus also observed that the morning program (Breakfast with Santa) appears to be gaining in popularity.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if the Committee was planning fireworks as part of the Grand Illumination with Mr. Baccus responding that the Committee was not planning fireworks. Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was pleased to learn this since he was of the opinion that fireworks were inappropriate for this event.

Councilman Barboza suggested that the Committee might continue the practice begun this past year where the audience is invited to join-in singing after the holiday tree is lit. It was suggested that the St. Michael's Carillon might also be played at this time with Councilman Barboza noting for the record that he believed that the late Earl Rounds, who played the Carillon for many years, made tapes that might be installed into the console to play holiday carols.

Councilwoman Parella suggested that the local area merchants might be encouraged to open their shops during the Grand Illumination activities and perhaps offer special prices or sale coupons in order to increase local shopping.

Last Night Activities - Denise Asciola

Ms. Asciola agreed to contact the office of the John Hazen White foundation to determine if this group will continue its sponsorship of Last Night.

Town Administrator Mederos noted that due to budget constraints it did not appear that fireworks would be possible. Ms. Asciola noted that last year's program ran a deficit of approximately \$18,000.

Several suggestions to increase revenues to support this activity were discussed including the sale of tickets. Councilman Barboza suggested that the various participants might "brainstorm" possibilities.

Rogers Free Library - 802 - Joan Prescott, Director

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the Library might consider Sunday hours and close on Monday.

Ms. Prescott stated that she was pleased with the new Library and that the building was "drop-dead beautiful." Ms. Prescott also reported that there are many activities planned for the Herreshoff Meeting Room at the Library and that the Library is collaborating with the Bristol Art Museum and Good Neighbors Soup Kitchen.

Councilman Herreshoff asked about the book budget as proposed with Ms. Prescott informing the Council that the Library plans to build its collection over the next twenty (20) years and that the shelves will be filled over time. Councilman Herreshoff stated that he might have books to donate to the Library with Ms. Prescott responding that the Library does accept book donations for its collection provided that these are appropriate.

Ms. Prescott stated that the only portion of the budget of concern was the utility account since there is no "track record" for energy use as yet. Ms. Prescott also stated that the Lutron lighting system was yet to be programmed by Stephen Cornwall and that she was of the opinion that there was no need to have excessive lighting on the third level of the building when the Library was closed; this likely leading to higher than necessary energy bills.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the toilets in the building use "gray water" with Council Chairman Marshall noting that this was not part of the plan for this building.

Ms. Prescott noted that the architect provided a list of "green" building features and she agreed to provide a copy of same for the Council's information at a later date.

Town Administrator - 402 - Diane C. Mederos, Town Administrator

The Council noted the increase in the Town Administrator's salary with Councilman Barboza explaining that this amount was applied to the salary based upon the action taken several years ago by Council Ordinance.

The Clerk reminded the Council that it may adjust neither the Administrator's salary nor the Council's salary during the current term but must rather do so prior to the election for the ensuing term.

School Budget

Councilman Barboza, in his capacity of Chairman of the Bristol Warren Regional Joint Finance Committee informed the Council that the Bristol school population increased by .8% resulting in an overall increase in funds expected from the Town of Bristol. Councilman Barboza noted that this change will require the Town to provide an additional \$241,598 in order to "level fund" the schools.

Councilman Barboza recounted a conversation with Supt. Mara and Director of Finance Correia who indicate that the overall school appropriation cannot be less than the previous year and that this amount is represented by the combined contributions of both Bristol and Warren and not the amounts derived from the individual towns.

There being no further business upon a motion by Councilman Barboza seconded by Councilwoman Parella and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this workshop to be adjourned at 9:25 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk