

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

PRESENT: Marshall, Barboza, Teixeira, Herreshoff, and Parella

ALSO PRESENT: Diane C. Mederos, Town Administrator
Julie Goucher, Town Treasurer

The Council met in workshop session for the purpose to consider the 2011-2012 Town Budget on Thursday evening, March 24, 2011 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers beginning at 7:09 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Marshall presiding:

406 BOARD OF CANVASSERS

Frances C. O'Donnell, Chairman

Ms. O'Donnell reported that there are no elections anticipated in this year's budget request. She explained that any special elections will require a special appropriation.

The Council made no changes to this line item.

807 BENJAMIN CHURCH SENIOR CENTER

Maria Ursini, Director

Ms. Ursini informed the Council that she is attempting to change the "face" of the "yellow house" to that of the "senior center."

She also informed the Council that the Center's activities include its nutrition program and that fifty (50) individuals participate faithfully every week. She also observed that the Center is a place where seniors may spend time and that this is particularly important to those who have no families. She informed the Council that she is "off to a good start" and plans to remain "busy and focused." She added that she is planning weekend activities for some of the Center's 1100 members.

Ms. Ursini informed the Council that the Center does not charge a membership fee.

She also informed the Council that she partners with the Parks and Recreation Department on a bowling program, which she is "shopping around" to find economical bus transportation for field trips to Wright's Farm and Trinity Rep.

Ms. Ursini informed the Council that the Benjamin Church "trust" pays toward the maintenance of the building but that funds were limited and that she needed additional funds to pay for elevator maintenance.

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

The Council agreed to consider this appropriation at a later date.

Councilman Teixeira asked to know if the Bristol Housing Authority maintenance workers were Town employees with Town Administrator Mederos responding that those persons are employed by the Housing Authority.

Ms. Ursini suggested that her assistant might be allowed an increase in her work week of 2.5 hours.

Ms. Ursini also informed the Council that she was "taken aback" by her own salary since it was the lowest amount that she has been paid in twenty (20) years. She added that she made \$20 per hour as the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force Coordinator.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if Ms. Ursini received benefits in her new position with Ms. Ursini responding that she did receive benefits and did not receive same when she worked as Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force Coordinator.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the value of the benefits may be as much as \$20,000 per year.

Ms. Ursini informed the Council that she would like to have more funds available for the Senior Center "program" with Councilman Herreshoff suggesting that Recreation Director Burke might be able to obtain grants for the Senior Center.

405 BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Historic District Commission

Oryann Lima, Vice Chairman

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Historic District Commission is requesting additional hours for Susan Church, Staff Assistant; an increase of four (4) hours per week.

Councilwoman Parella also stated that the Council may wish to support improvements to the website, etc., to make the Historic District Commission more "user-friendly."

Ms. Lima agreed that more hours for Ms. Church were necessary and suggested that her hours should be increased to thirty (30) hours per week.

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

Councilwoman Parella speculated that the new "staff review" of certain Historic District applicant work projects will require more staff time.

Councilman Barboza asked to know if more funds are needed for the Commission solicitor with Ms. Lima reporting that there appears to be a need for additional solicitor time.

Councilman Barboza suggested that Historic District Commission programs might be funded at the amount of \$3650 with Councilwoman Parella suggesting that \$4000 might be more appropriate for programs. She added that the Historic District Commission has requested additional program funding for some time.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he did not believe that the Historic District Commission Advisory Committee's recommendations should cost money.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the additional program fund request is for education and training.

Ms. Lima reminded the Council that the Historic District Commission's fee income projection is approximately \$5000.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was grateful for the fees collected.

Councilman Barboza asked to know if the Council agreed to the \$4000 with Councilman Herreshoff asking for what the \$4000 would pay.

Ms. Lima reported that the Commission would use the \$4000 for technical experts to provide instruction and training. She added that funds are needed to update the website and also for a "more sophisticated brochure."

Councilman Herreshoff noted that Ms. Church provides clear information and that he does not see the need for more sophisticated literature.

Ms. Lima informed the Council that it would be in the Historic District Commission's best interest to have an improved "program."

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

Council Chairman Marshall expressed concern that the legal fees were actually averaging approximately \$4000; much lower than what is proposed (\$8500).

A discussion ensued regarding legal fees with Ms. Church noting that the Town Council asked the Solicitor to attend all meetings and also that the Solicitor did not previously attend unless there was a specific reason for attendance.

Council Chairman Marshall suggested that the department budget might be annotated with an asterisk (*) so that the Council may revisit the budget prior to the conclusion of its workshops.

Ms. Lima agreed that the legal budget may be trimmed if warranted.

Timothy Pray, a member of the Historic District Advisory Committee indicated his support for Ms. Lima's request for more public education and outreach. He added that the Advisory Committee also supports more assistance for applicants.

Gary Watros, also a member of the Historic District Advisory Committee, explained that the Committee is looking at the "whole picture" and that the Committee will be recommending changes to the operation of the Historic District Commission. He added that much of the change will include a "shift" from Commission meeting approval to staff review and approval.

Mr. Watros added that the website is confusing and in need of improvement. He also explained that the proposed changes will need some one-time legal assistance and that the increase in legal costs should not repeat in subsequent years.

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the Council may wish to provide for one-time charges in the Council Contingency Account since otherwise the funds may repeat annually in departmental budgets.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the need for educational funds will not cease. She also observed that any ordinance changes will not need legal support outside of the Solicitor's normal salary arrangement which includes ordinance support.

The Council, by consensus, placed an asterisk (*) on this budget line so as to consider it later in the budget process.

NORTH AND EAST BURIAL GROUND COMMISSION

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

Enzly Ramsay, Superintendent

Mr. Ramsay informed the Council that he will "make due" with the funds as recommended by the Town Administrator.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

PERSONNEL BOARD

There were no representatives present.

Denise Asciola, Administrative Assistant to Town Administrator Mederos informed the Council that the budget line covers the required Personnel Association memberships.

704 FIRE DEPARTMENT

Robert J. Martin, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Martin informed the Council that he believes that the Town Administrator's budget recommendation is fair.

A discussion ensued regarding fire protection operations with Fire Chief Martin notifying the Council that he is working on a plan to address Poppasquash Road water issues.

The Council made no changes to this budget.

CDBG APPLICATION REVIEW

Geraldine Turbeville, Program Manager

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know if the Benjamin Church Senior Center might qualify as part of the CDBG application with Program Manager Turbeville responding that a senior center component would probably not score well.

Council Chairman Marshall asked to know if the application includes fuel assistance with Program Manager Turbeville responding that the fuel assistance component was a "one time deal" for last year.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know how persons qualify for the home repair component with Program Manager Turbeville responding that the applicants must have a low-moderate income level and that the CDBG funds code violation mitigation.

She added that the served clients are mostly senior citizens.

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP - THURSDAY EVENING - MARCH 24, 2011

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the Cornerstone Adult Services would be an acceptable fit for the application with Program Manager Turbeville responding that the service would not likely be a "strong" applicant.

The Council suggested no changes to the proposed application at this time.

There being no further business upon a motion by Councilman Teixeira, seconded by Councilman Barboza and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this workshop to be adjourned at 9:30 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk