

**TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING - THURSDAY EVENING - APRIL 26, 2012**

PRESENT: Marshall, Barboza, Teixeira, Herreshoff and Parella

ALSO PRESENT: Julie Goucher, Town Treasurer

ABSENT: Diane C. Mederos, Town Administrator

The Council met in special session on Thursday evening, April 26, 2012 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 7:15 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Marshall presiding:

*It is hereby noted for the record that this meeting was originally scheduled for April 25, 2012 and was continued to this date due to posting requirements.*

1. **Public Hearing** on Provisional Budget 2012-2013

Barboza/Parella - Voted  
unanimously to close the public hearing and to continue all matters to the special meeting scheduled for Monday, May 7, 2012.

Prior to the vote taken, Council members noted the absence of an audience with the exception of two reporters.

Council Chairman Marshall noted that the Council "pawed over" the budget for two weeks.

Councilman Herreshoff asked for a clarification of the proposed salary increases with Town Treasurer Goucher reporting that several persons were recommended for a merit increase of 5% and the Council trimmed this to 3.5% and also the remainder of the non-union personnel were recommended to receive 3% increases and the Council trimmed these back to 2.5%.

Council Chairman Marshall noted that the department heads have provided good stewardship and that the Town is on firm fiscal ground due to the efforts of these individuals.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know the estimated tax rate with Town Treasurer Goucher reporting that the estimate remains as earlier discussed with the tax rate remaining the same as last year. Town Treasurer Goucher added that

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Tax Assessor Spagnolo was "spot-on" last year and hopes that she will be equally accurate this year.

Councilman Barboza stated that the budget is a fair one and that it provides maintenance of services with no tax increase.

Councilman Herreshoff agreed that the budget was a responsible one.

Councilman Teixeira stated that employees of the Maher Center salaries were reduced by 5% and lost three employees.

A discussion ensued regarding revenues and use of fund balance with Councilman Barboza stating that the reserves belong to the taxpayers and that the Council returns these. He added that the amount utilized does not negatively impact the Town.

Council Chairman Marshall agreed that the fund balance is the result of a conservative collection rate.

Councilman Teixeira expressed concern that the Town used fund balance to offset the tax rate.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the Council should be careful to "compare apples to apples" since it typically applies some of the Town's fund balance every year. She added that this practice is not detrimental to the Town's financial picture.

Councilman Herreshoff noted that the State's financial woes may impact Bristol since the Town might be "punished for doing a good job."

Councilwoman Parella agreed that the Town's good financial situation may cause State officials to divert aid, etc., to the communities with doubtful financial situations.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that it was a "terrible principle" to punish success with Council Chairman Marshall adding that those who are unsuccessful seem to get more financial aid.

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2. Discussion re Future Capital Borrowing,  
**continued from April 19, 2012**

Town Treasurer Goucher provided documents pertaining to the previously approved bond issue (Council resolution, etc.).

Council Chairman Marshall confirmed that the Town may borrow, absent a bond issue, \$6.5 million based upon the operating budget. He added that some of this amount would be applied to the Town's borrowing from the SRF.

Town Treasurer Goucher added that the Town may borrow for open space acquisition as part of the remaining capital borrowing (after considering SRF).

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was of the opinion that the Town's capital borrowing authority was adequate and that a bond issue was unnecessary.

Councilwoman Parella disagreed, stating that the Council has heard pleas for waterfront improvements from the EDC and Merchants Association including what might be an expensive renovation to the Church Street Armory. She also expressed concern that only \$380,000 remains in the Town's open space borrowing authorization and that some significant waterfront parcels are rumored to be soon placed on the market.

Councilwoman Parella added that she was of the opinion that it was more acceptable to ask the voters for capital borrowing authorization rather than the Council "throwing it down the throat of the Town."

Councilwoman Parella also added that she sees a continuing need for the Town to address drainage issues since these seem to occur frequently and that the Town has been successful addressing some of these with previously approved capital bond funds.

Councilwoman Parella recalled that of the previously approved \$15 million bond in 2006, \$3 million was allocated for drainage. She also recalled that the estimate for pending drainage projects in 2006 was \$15 million alone.

Town Treasurer Goucher explained that the department managers had a discussion regarding future capital

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borrowing and that the scope and timing of specific projects remains unknown at this time.

Councilwoman Parella questioned the capital plan for wastewater improvements in consideration of the age of the treatment plant and pump stations. She asked to know if the capital borrowing through the SRF for piecemeal improvements was sufficient or would the Town be better served through a larger project.

Lastly, Councilwoman Parella noted continuing complaints regarding the condition of Roosevelt Drive and other Town streets and suggested that a bond for street improvements may be popular with the voters.

Town Treasurer Goucher stated that the Town is attempting to "think outside of the box" by creating a more comprehensive street improvement methodology. She did agree, however, that there did not appear to be harm in asking the voters for an appropriation. She cautioned the Council that although its honorable body has been judicious in its spending of the bonded capital, a subsequent Council may not be as careful.

Councilwoman Parella agreed that the funds do not have to be borrowed but also expressed concern that should large tracts be developed the result could be a large increase in the school budget; particularly if a new school is needed.

Town Treasurer Goucher stated that a bond issue to support Phase II of the Tanyard Brook project would be a good idea if the project could be more clearly defined.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the Town's general ability to borrow capital funds is "good in a pinch" but that she feels strongly that it is better to ask the voters for this authority.

Councilman Herreshoff expressed concern that a bond issue would raise taxes and also that the timing of this is ill-advised since the nation is in a recession. He added that the Town's citizens wish to have all of their expected services without a tax increase.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the funding authorized by a bond issue may not be utilized for years. She provided an example that the funds authorized for the animal shelter

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years ago are just now being borrowed and that the Town may hold-off on its capital borrowing in order to stabilize the tax rate.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he believes the voters will not support spending and will vote against a bond issue.

Council Chairman Marshall asked Town Treasurer Goucher to investigate the payback on a wind turbine.

Councilwoman Parella again noted the request for improved facilities for boaters and asked to know how the Town expects to provide this (through a bond project or a DPW project). She expressed concern that absent a bond it may be several years before the Council may consider making these improvements.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that the Council recently finished the library and fire department headquarters projects and that he did not believe a boating facility to be a high priority.

Council Chairman Marshall suggested that Council members should "ponder" the questions posed since there would still be time to consider a bond issue. He noted the potential projects to reflect upon as follows:

- Tanyard Brook
- Harbor "center"
- Open space and recreation
- Road improvements
- Alternative energy

Councilman Barboza stated that he was unsure as to the need for a bond issue since the Town may borrow \$3 million per year without one.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the Town's authority to borrow absent a bond may not be sufficiently "transparent" and that she believes a direct authorization from the voters is far more "transparent."

Councilman Teixeira asked to know the status of the plan for a Tanyard Brook Phase II project with Council Chairman Marshall responding that he is hopeful that the State will

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participate in this project since much of the water originates on Metacom Avenue running toward the State Street Reservoir.

Councilman Teixeira stated that he does not believe that work in the vicinity of the State Street Reservoir will mitigate problems with flooding on Charles Street.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he believes that the Town needs a plan for the project prior to authorizing a bond referendum.

Councilman Teixeira asked to know if there is a plan on record with Councilman Herreshoff stating that he believes that BETA has looked into this issue and that it may be something that the State will consider.

Council Chairman Marshall stated that the plan includes a retention pond for severe storm events which will allow water to proceed downstream more slowly.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he would not wish to sponsor a bond referendum that will likely fail.

Council Chairman Marshall stated that the voters appear to have confidence in the Council since the Council is a "good steward" of the Town's finances.

3. Adjournment

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Barboza, seconded by Councilman Herreshoff and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:21 o'clock PM.

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Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk