



Town of East Greenwich Town Council Minutes April 30, 2012

Location and Time: Swift Community Center 121 Peirce Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818, 7:00pm

Council Members: Michael B. Isaacs, President
Henry V. Boezi, Vice President (absent)
Jeffrey B. Cianciolo, Councilor
Mark Watkins Gee, Councilor
Michael S. Kiernan, Councilor

Staff Members: William Sequino, Jr., Town Manager
Leigh A. Botello, Town Clerk
Col. Thomas Coyle, Chief of Police
Joseph Duarte, Public Works Director
Wendy Schmidle, IT Director
Kathy Raposa, Finance Director
Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director
Catherine Bradley, Parks and Recreation Director
Erin McAndrew, Human and Senior Services Director
Peter Clarkin, Town Solicitor (absent)

Others: School Committee Members: Winters, Gifford, Green, Sommer, Durant,
Dr. Victor Mercurio, Superintendent
Maryanne Crawford, Director of Administration

7:00pm CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

President Isaacs calls the meeting to order and leads the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Dr. Gifford calls the School Committee to order.

1) BUDGET WORK SESSION

a. Discussion of School Department Budget

Dr. Mercurio begins by summarizing the changes for the FY2013 proposed budget. Some major contributing factors are Retirements – increasing from 3 to seven with \$35K savings, State Aid – projected to increase by \$10K and Health Care – confirmed at 2% or \$78K. Proposed budget increases total \$1,194,977. The fund balance from FY2011, as explained at the Public Hearing, has a total surplus of \$861,417. They have identified additional expenditure reductions since the first presentation of the budget to the Town Manager in the amount of \$247,082. Other reductions are disclosed ranging from early retirement incentives to supplies and various equipment lines which



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total \$47K. All further reductions affect the classroom. Major capital improvement projects are High School emergency generator replacement at \$70,000, replace the gym floor at Hanaford at \$50,000, repaving the bus drive at Eldredge at \$29,000 and refinish the bathroom floors at Frenchtown at \$20,000.

President Isaacs confirms that the scheduled capital improvement projects are currently in the operating budget but are one-time expenses that have the potential to be funded out of the surplus. Dr. Gifford replies that they are non-recurring expenses but could be considered recurring as a category such as building maintenance. The generator could be pulled out as not a recurring expense. Discussion follows on details presented on the handout.

Councilor Cianciolo asks about increases in energy costs at Cole. Dr. Mercurio replies the increases are for heating, electricity and staff to cover the square footage. Councilor Cianciolo would like to see a breakdown of energy for the district. The increase in Transportation is discussed and Dr. Gifford adds that the district is responsible for busing students to a private schools within the region such as Bishop Hendricken. They are still looking for savings with state wide consortium for transportation with RIDE.

Councilor Kiernan confirms that the teacher's union will be working off of last year's contract.

President Isaacs continues by addressing their fund balance and looking for ways to make more reductions. There is \$1.2 million in the unreserved fund balance. The health care surplus is restricted contractually. Ms. Crawford explains the history of this account.

Dr. Gifford adds that the intent of the surplus is to develop a fund balance for ongoing yet expected expenditures such as computer hardware. They are hesitant to use the funds now for one time expenditures as previously discussed. There is no allocation for fund balance as a line item in the operating school budget. Mr. Sequino notes their fund balance has increased significantly over the last few years. Dr. Gifford denies any systematic over-budgeting practices. Their fund balance goal is to have 1.5% - 2.5% and anything over is for technology and capital improvements. President Isaacs agrees with the intent of the fund but due to the current budget situation, utilizing some surplus means less tax money to be collected. Further discussion follows on the audit numbers for the municipal surplus.

President Isaacs suggests that Mr. Duarte and Mr. Wilmarth meet to discuss potential ways to save money with cooperative efforts in maintenance. Specifics are yet to be identified. IT Directors from both Town and School are looking at ways to cooperate.

Dr. Gifford states there is a \$400K difference between the school's request and the Town Manager's proposal. The savings in retirements of \$35K and an increase in State Aid of \$10K are real numbers. The generator for \$70K can come out of fund balance, reducing the difference to \$285K. She speaks about the history of the capital improvements fund.



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Ms. Raposa and Ms. Crawford discuss teacher retirements and out of district tuitions.

The final budget needs to be adopted by May 15th. The current budget presented by the Town Manager would result in a 2.8% tax increase in today's tax dollars but also includes an increase in the School Department's budget.

The School Committee has been picking away at their budget for four months. Dr. Gifford does not see much more to cut that won't impact the educational programs. They have already said no to support an Arabic teacher, gifted program at elementary level and grade consolidation but they have funded half of the SRO. The Committee does not feel there is any more to cut.

Catherine Williams, Meadowbrook parent, wants 3rd graders moved to Hanaford from Meadowbrook before construction begins.

Mr. Durant moves to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Green. The committee votes 4-0 and the motion carries.

Council takes a brief recess.

b. Discussion of Town Budget

Chief Coyle presents his budget beginning with some highlights and statistics. As of May 2011, there were 20,101 calls for service. This year, calls total 24,723 for an increase of 4,622. Calls vary but there were 680 accidents, 400 arrests and over 50 DWI's. This year, he had 4 officers out with one being deployed over- seas and covered by an over-time slot. The others were on medical leave. Last year, he saved \$150K by hiring pre-trained officers. To date, sick time is down and there have been no grievances in two years since he has been Chief. Revenues are explained including increases in moving violations of \$10,000, detail cruiser fees of \$10,000 and service charges for details of \$15K. Expenditures are explained including longevity which is decreased due to retirements, staff pay is increased due to step increases, prorated raises and a new recruit and vacation buyback has a small increase due to more activity. \$25K was added to Staff Pay for some of the cost of the SRO services but the cost is more like \$76K. Clothing maintenance allowance is increasing due to a new recruit and 4 officers coming off probation. The radio antenna is located on the Town House and the fee is for maintenance and upkeep. Councilor Gee asks about the tactical response costs. This covers ammunition and annual training. There are 9 members on the team and all but 3 are FBI certified in several areas. He asks what would happen if this training ceased. Chief Coyle replies that the response time in the event of a serious event is critical. Training time is posted as regular time with comp time, no overtime. Chief Coyle reminds Council of a very serious domestic shooting situation that occurred before he became Chief. He was the commander of SWAT at that time and the unit had a crucial role in defusing the situation. One item is included in the Capital Improvements Program which is \$16K for a wall-



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mounted dehumidifier unit for the basement. The Chief has recommended that 5 police vehicles are replaced and has requested \$144K from the Vehicle Replacement Fund. President Isaacs adds that as of April 2012, that fund has \$1,247,000.

Ms. Bourbonnais presents her budget stating that 90% of the budget is salaries. There is an increase due to a step increase and longevity. Budget items are predictable and level funded. The Planning Department staff support and serve on several Town boards and are responsible for maintaining the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Hazard Mitigation Plan and Capital Improvement Plan to name a few. She gives an update on the comprehensive community plan. Professional services cover stenographic services at all public hearings and transcripts as needed. The Planning Department does collect revenue which will now show as Platting and Subdivisions and Zoning Board Fees. These fees were previously collected by the Town Clerk's office.

Ms. McAndrew presents her budget and states it is level funded with a decrease in Newsletter for postage. She has been distributing the newsletters via email as much as possible. Approximately 200-300 newsletters are mailed out annually and there are 150 on the email list. President Isaacs suggests distributing newsletters to the seniors who regularly have lunch at the center. Ms. Andrews replies that each member pays a \$5.00 membership fee which includes having the letters mailed to your home and the ability to pre-register for events before non-members. Erin is also the Chair of the West Bay Community Action program. She collects approximately \$10K in revenue which is under Miscellaneous Income for class fees. The expense of \$16K for Senior Programs covers paying the instructors, kitchen supplies and entertainment for special functions. In FY 2011, Public Assistance helped 48 low income families and 78 people. They follow Federal Government Poverty Guidelines for the application process.

Council will meet again tomorrow to review the effect on the budget and the tax rate with health insurance cost, 40% versus 35% on reimbursement from RIDE and also a \$400K reduction in School as adopted or in \$100K increments.

Councilor Cianciolo comments on the vehicle replacement fund. He is concerned with the lack of flexibility in spending. Roads are a big issue for his constituents and he would vote against any new bonds for the Town as presented in the Budget Message. He would like to see an expansion on the use of this fund to include any capital type expenditures and change the mechanism for using the funds. President Isaacs replies that an amended resolution would have to be presented at the Financial Town Meeting.

Gene Dumas, 50 Montrose Street, asks what was approved for resurfacing on the hill and if National Grid's gas line project will impact the Town's effort to resurface the roads. Mr. Duarte replies no.



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2) **AN ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT OF THE TAXATION ORDINANCE FOR SENIOR AND VETERAN EXEMPTIONS** – FIRST READING AND INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this amendment is to set fixed dollar amounts for age based, veteran status and disability status exemptions rather than to change the rates every year. It is suggested that the word 'elderly' be changed to 'senior'.

Councilor Gee moves to adopt on First Reading and set the Public Hearing for May 7th, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Councilor votes all in favor and the motion carries 4-0.

2) **EXECUTIVE SESSION** per RIGL §42-46-5 (a) (2) to discuss collective bargaining and litigation.

Councilor Gee moves to go into Executive Session per RIGL per RIGL §42-46-5 (a) (2) to discuss collective bargaining and litigation, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Council takes a roll call vote and the motion carries 4-0.

Following the Executive Session, Councilor Gee moves to return to Open Session, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Council votes all in favor and the motion carries 4-0.

Councilor Gee moves to return to seal the Executive Session minutes, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Council votes all in favor and the motion carries 4-0.

Councilor Gee moves to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Cianciolo. Council votes all in favor and the motion carries 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh

Leigh A. Botello
Town Clerk

APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL MAY 29, 2012