

**BUDGET AND FINANCE  
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2010**

A special meeting of Budget and Finance Committee and Wethersfield Town Council was held on Thursday, May 6, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room, Community Center, 30 Greenfield Street, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri and Chairperson Hemmann.

Absent: Councilor Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk

The special budget meeting of the Budget and Finance Committee was called to order by Chairperson Manousos.

Councilor Manousos said Town Manager Bridges provided a handout of the power point presentation of "Budget Information - Changes to be discussed and voted upon". These were proposed for the 2010-2011 Budget.

Council Chairperson Hemmann read the additions for discussion. The first one was the \$10,000 put on the list for the study of a Regional Dispatch Operation. This has been discussed for quite a while at the State level. She said that five towns are looking into having a study for regional dispatch; Cromwell, Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield. Other towns may want to join. The towns' radio systems operate on different frequencies. Future funding from the State may be going towards 911 dispatch centers.

Councilor Hurley asked if all of the Towns were putting in \$10,000.

Chairperson Hemmann stated they have been meeting and discussing this for about 6 months. This \$10,000 is for a feasibility study done by a retiree from the State with expertise in this venue. They want to see if they will get savings by pooling their resources. The police chiefs are concerned about five towns and half the people working it may leave some dark stations. The towns want to get a handle on all of it before they are tagged onto Hartford.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> item was complaint tracking software at a cost of \$15,000. Currently someone has to file a complaint during office hours. The person answering the telephone would then have to transfer the call to the appropriate department or departments. Then it has to be tracked by hand. This software tracks issues through a period of time and/or projects. It allows a person to file a complaint from home, distributes it to multiple departments as needed and tracks the actions taken as well as the outcome. The Town would subscribe to it and not own it.

Councilor McAlister asked if it would be like a master program with categories similar to what is in the CAD system in the Police Department.

There is a recommendation for a Community engagement of \$6,000.

Councilor Manousos wanted to know if it were necessary.

Manager Bridges stated that they wanted to engage citizens to solve neighborhood problems, similar to what they did in Old Wethersfield. Alta Lash would again be the coordinator.

There was also a recommendation to purchase 20 more sets of Bunker Gear for the volunteer firefighters. The equipment standards have changed. There needs to be a matching grant for the gear and the amount suggested is \$25,000.

The Redevelopment Committee is asking for \$10,000. There is going to be a special meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. with the Town Council and the Redevelopment Committee. They are working on a program which includes property owner participation. They have previously had trouble getting buyers and sellers together. This is a way to be sure the owner is onboard to really want to sell the property.

Manager Bridges next discussed the Fire Marshal and the requirement of over time to be offered. The State Fire Marshal's Office said the office does not have a non-exempt OT category to allow for the Fire Marshal to use comp time. It must be over time, so \$2,000 was added to the budget. Also, there is a fringe benefit associated with the OT in the amount of \$250.

There were also additions from the previous budget meetings: \$2,000 to Senior Advisory Committee; \$3,000 to Compensated Absences Reserve Fund; Central Services for fire Department wireless of \$3,000 and \$3,750 for the Agent of Record Fee Additions—Health Insurance. This is on the Town-side; the Board of Education is a higher cost of \$11,250 for the agent [not yet appointed].

The Budget also has expenditure reductions. It was found that some categories could be cut back. As actual figures came in, some of the funds were no longer necessary. The following categories and amounts were deducted from the proposed budget. These included: various Debt Service Accounts for Bond Refunding savings of \$3,000; various Wage Accounts for Part time salary increase reduction to 2.5%, for \$1,554 in various departments; various Fringe Benefit reductions due to PT salary reductions of \$93; Various Health Insurance Accounts being reduced from 8.4% to 6.1% for \$37,480; retiree health insurance coverage reduction to 6.1% or \$7,000; Town Property & Casualty Insurance, \$24,424; Board of Education Property & Casualty Insurance, \$7,139 and due to a Recalculation of Unemployment, \$4000, from Building Inspection. There was no change to the Workers Compensation, \$30,625 for the Town-side even though renewal was different because of the potential workers compensation audit costs.

Councilor McAlister was okay with all of it. Councilor Manousos questioned the need for the Community Engagement person.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the co-pay for Morrison Avenue.

Town Manager Bridges said the Town side money was in the Capital Improvement Projects budget. Residents would be required to put money into the project as well.

Councilor Montinieri also mentioned that he would like to see more money go to Façade Improvement program of the Economic Development and Improvement Committee, if there is any monies at the end of the budget process. It is an area which leverages the seed money against what the property owner puts in a project and results are larger.

Councilor Kotkin, while fine with the list, thought that incumbent agent for Health Insurance did a good job and also was the low bidder; he hoped they did not end up with another higher cost insurer for Health Insurance since there was a recommendation of additional monies for the retiree reserve account. Councilor Kotkin also would like to see more money in roads, perhaps an additional \$200,000. He also was fairly certain that the Tax Collector's rate of collection on property is a little more conservative than it needs to be.

Town Manager Bridges also stated the advised reductions from the Board of Education and the Original Town Proposed Budget will change the mill rate to 30.66 from 30.68 of 2009-2010, a reduction of .02.

Councilor Manousos wanted to do something different this year to break the idea of "spend it or lose it" mentality for the Board of Education budget. His suggestion was to remove some money from their budget and keep it on the Town side for use by the Board of Education. This would insure that an appropriation could be made during the year, up to \$199,999 if required.

Councilor McAlister suggested keeping the mill rate the same and saving even more money.

Councilor Manousos and Councilor Hurley were against the idea and they were against assigning it to a specific purpose at this time.

Councilor Hurley thought they could use some of the money for other school improvements as a show of good faith if it was not required for other Board of Education expenses.

Councilor Drake thought they could keep it as next year's budget is predicted to be worse than the one they just completed.

Councilor Hurley also mentioned Chief Cetran and his comments on the change in laws for identifying juvenile offenders.

Councilor Manousos wanted to know about other Town side programs.

Councilor Kotkin wanted to know how much below budget the Town side is currently. He thinks it will under spend again this year and tax collection is still at a better rate.

Councilor Hurley and Councilor Manousos do not think 98.5 is excessively conservative, they would still have more in the rainy day fund.

Councilor Montinieri suggested they could add back \$176,000 and the money from the Board of Education to reduce the tax rate more and put money into roads as it is basic service.

Councilor Drake said they have to keep the roads up. There is an excess every year as a buffer, he doesn't want it to go away.

Town Manager Bridges answered the question Councilor Manousos had, on a chart showing 2008-2009 budget and with the grand list increase, was due to a revaluation. He reiterated that tonight they would only be having a discussion on additions and subtractions to the budget. They still have to hear from a few more Town departments.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:15 p.m., Councilor Hurley moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Manousos. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk  
*Approve by vote of Council*  
*June 7, 2010*