

ADJOURNED BUDGET MEETING MAY 4, 2004

An Adjourned Meeting of the Town Council (adjourned from Thursday, April 29, 2004) was held on Tuesday, May 4, 2004 at 5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Town Hall with Chairperson Russell A. Morin presiding.

Present: Councilors Adil, Cascio, Czernicki, Forrest, Fortunato (5:50 p.m.), Hemmann, Montinieri, Deputy Mayor Karangekis, and Chairperson Morin.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien Town Manager, Dolores Sassano Town Clerk, and Lisa Hancock, Finance Director.

FIRE - 431 (C-70)

Fire Marshall Gary Santoro explained that the Materials & Supplies account includes the materials to run the office and fire prevention flyers, books, etc.

Chairperson Morin asked in what capacity Jeff Morrissette serves. Mr. Santoro said that Mr. Morrissette is the Deputy Fire Marshall and serves voluntarily in the Fire Marshall's absence.

Councilor Czernicki asked why there is such a significant decrease in the Contractual amount. Mr. Santoro said that this number is given to him by the Finance Department. The Town Manager said that the fees for copying and vehicle services have been removed from this line item.

Councilor Cascio asked Mr. Santoro if he would be monitoring the blasting at Nott Street. Mr. Santoro said that he will be involved in the blasting process.

Councilor Hemmann asked if there is a charge for calls due to fire alarms. Mr. Santoro said that he determines if it is chargeable or not. He said that the majority of fire alarm calls in Wethersfield are chargeable and the funds collected go into the General Fund.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien introduced Wethersfield's Emergency Management Coordinator. She said that Wethersfield is behind with regard to emergency management and that Homeland Security funds will be used toward bringing the Town up to date with an Emergency Operations Center as she is not budgeting any funds for this.

Richard Fippinger, Wethersfield Emergency Operations Coordinator, said that Wethersfield has always made public safety a top priority. Mr. Fippinger said that he represents a new management process that recognizes that Police, Emergency Management Services, Fire, Public Health, and Executives need to function together at a higher level to combat terrorist, bio-hazardous, or natural disasters. He said that the main mission is to insure the safety of the residents of Wethersfield and to orchestrate the response of the other services. Mr. Fippinger requested a minimal budget amount of \$10,000 which was cut to \$0. He said that Homeland Security funds are available through CRCOG. Wethersfield's portion of the funds will come from a region-wide \$112,000 which can either come directly to Wethersfield or remain in the CRCOG "pot" for regional use. Mr. Fippinger urged the Town Manager to sign a memo of understanding with CRCOG. He said that leaving the \$112,000 with CRCOG entitles Wethersfield, along with other regional communities, to a larger combined amount of the total \$5.5 million. Mr. Fippinger reviewed the items he suggests that the Town budget for under Emergency Management. He said that the Town should budget at least \$5,000 for these items.

Councilor Czernicki asked if the Homeland Security funds are determined per capita. Mr. Fippinger said that they are. Councilor Czernicki agreed with Mr. Fippinger that funds need to be allocated for a more significant shelter in Wethersfield and questioned whether \$2,500 will be enough. Mr. Fippinger said that the shelter may be moved from its current location because of its shortfalls. Mr. Fippinger said that \$2,500 is not a lot, but it will go a long way with

an extended operation. Councilor Czernicki suggested that this is a good time to initiate conversations with the Board of Education regarding alternate sites for a shelter. Mr. Fippinger said that a newly-formed committee will be doing this.

Councilor Fortunato said that six years ago when she was on the Facilities Committee of the Board of Education, Wethersfield High School was discussed as an emergency shelter. It was suggested at that time that the Town approach FEMA to obtain a generator for the facility. Councilor Fortunato said that there are a number of Federal Home Security Grants and verified that the Town continues to seek additional grants. Mr. Fippinger said that he will be involved in the interior organization to insure that Wethersfield gets their fair share and more benefits from shared funds.

Councilor Montinieri said that the Webb building was suggested as a shelter at a recent Building Committee meeting. Mr. Fippinger said that the Red Cross has a working list of five sites that have been checked seismographically, and the Webb building is on this list.

Councilor Forrest asked Mr. Fippinger why he has decreased his request for funds from \$10,000 to \$5,000. Mr. Fippinger said that the original \$10,000 budget includes \$5,000 for the emergency command center setup which will come from CRCOG. Mr. Fippinger invited Council members to attend an emergency management demonstration on Saturday at Rentschler Field or at the Town Hall for the tabletop exercise.

Chairperson Morin asked Mr. Fippinger how many hours he puts in as Wethersfield's Emergency Management Coordinator. Mr. Fippinger said that he puts in approximately 15-20 hours per week. Chairperson Morin suggested that a stipend for Mr. Fippinger of \$1,000-\$1,500 be submitted for the State to match.

Deputy Mayor Karangekis moved **"TO ALLOCATE \$1,500 IN THE 2004-2005 BUDGET FOR A STIPEND FOR THE WETHERSFIELD EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR AND TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO SUBMIT THIS TO THE STATE FOR MATCHING FUNDS"**, seconded by Councilor Adil.

Councilor Cascio verified that the plan Mr. Fippinger is developing is for the Town of Wethersfield and he was told that this is so. Councilor Cascio asked how many staff members are trained in disaster management. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that not many are and that part of this program will provide for the proper training. An all day unified command training session will be held by the State on June 5. Councilor Cascio expressed his concern that a chain of command must be firmly set in place within the emergency management plan.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

POLICE - 420, 422, 423, 424, 425 (C-51 to C-65)

Present: Police Chief James Cetran, Lieutenant Andrew Power, Administrative Analyst Ellen Walsh

(420) Office of the Chief/Administrative Services Bureau

Chief of Police Cetran explained that the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) system needs to be replaced as the Department is 100% dependent on the system and he has set up a system to replace the current ten MDT's three at a time. Chief Cetran is also planning to apply for a grant to acquire a fully-equipped SUV for \$9,000. This vehicle could be used for many purposes including the use of its 4-wheel-drive in the Meadows.

Councilor Czernicki asked about the \$10,000 allocation for the Police Department in the telephone budget. Chief Cetran said that there is a \$1,000 per unit user fee and he does not anticipate this figure increasing in the near future. Councilor Czernicki asked for clarification of the Materials & Supplies figure as well as a breakdown of the expenditures of the \$56,000 DUI Grant Funds.

Chairperson Morin reviewed the Contractual line item figure with Chief Cetran.

Councilor Forrest asked if the Consultant Fees will continue to increase and if anything can be done to stop them from increasing. Chief Cetran said that they will continue to go up and that there is nothing to be done about this. He said the fees pertain to the hiring process relating to physical and psychological exams and the increased requirements of such.

Councilor Czernicki asked if the Contractual Fees amount has increased because the Chief expects a greater amount of hiring in the upcoming year as compared to the current year. Chief Cetran said that he does not expect an increased amount of hiring, but that the fees for the current number have increased. Councilor Czernicki asked if there is any way to tap into bio-terrorism funding to offset the cost of pulmonary function testing. Chief Cetran said that he is hoping this is so and that he will be checking into this.

(422) Detective Bureau

Councilor Fortunato asked why there is such a large decrease in the Contractual line item. Chief Cetran said that this is because the cars have been taken out of this budget. Chief Cetran explained the system for rotating police cars through the system.

(423) Support Services

Councilor Fortunato asked for clarification of the full- and part-time Animal Control Officers. Chief Cetran said that the Officer in charge of Support Services is considered the full-time Dog Warden; however he is not out patrolling Wethersfield's dogs. The Chief said that there are currently two part-time Animal Control Officers and that he would like to have a full-time, full-fledged Dog Warden.

(424) Patrol Bureau

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the decrease in Personal Services is due to the cutback in overtime. Chief Cetran said that the budget covers all of the mandatory training; however there is other training in which he would like to participate. Chairperson Morin asked the Chief how much additional funding this would require. Chief Cetran said that he can look at this and get back to the Council.

Councilor Czernicki asked if the Radio Consultant is a civilian function. Chief Cetran said that a trained officer serves in this function although his primary function is as a Patrol Officer.

Councilor Fortunato suggested that a breakout of training be provided so as to separate training/development from safety overtime.

(425) Building & Facility Maintenance

Chief Cetran explained that the Capital Outlay line item has increased because of the Visionair contract.

Councilor Adil asked Chief Cetran if paper is shredded in-house. The Chief said that shredding is done in-house.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien reviewed the Police Revenue handout and said that the Council can approve them as a package. Councilor Adil reported that the Budget & Finance Committee is in favor of the fee changes.

Councilor Czernicki asked if the user charge for cruisers is in line with what surrounding communities are charging for this service. Chief Cetran said that he could check into this. Councilor Czernicki said that this seems to be an area where the Town could generate more money.

FIRE - 430(C-66 to C-68)

Present: Fire Chief Will Clark, Deputy Chiefs Mark Mahder, Charles Varca, and Mark Console.

Fire Chief Will Clark said that the Fire Department is not very happy with the Manager's Proposed Budget #2 as the figures are detrimental to the Department. He would like to see a minimum proposed budget of \$368,000-\$370,000.

Chief Clark said that it costs approximately \$3,000 to get a firefighter trained and up and running. Chief Clark said that the Volunteer Firefighters perform many services in Town such as mandated hose and pump testing without charging a fee to the Town. He said that 61% of the municipalities throughout the State now hire outside contractors for these services.

Mark Mahder, Deputy Fire Chief, gave an overview of the Fire Suppression budget and explained that there are numerous materials that need to be replaced periodically and are expensive. He said that training is a top priority for the Department for both firefighting and for chemical, biological and mass destructive weapons. There is also a necessity for Standby for Storms which has been cut already. Deputy Chief Mahder said that a 15% cut to Fire Facility Maintenance is reasonable, but a 40% cut is not a reasonable request. He said that the Firefighters enjoy what they do and that they need the tools to properly perform their jobs.

Councilor Hemmann asked if the SCBA bottles are replaced on a rotating basis. Deputy Chief Mahder verified that they are replaced in this manner. Chief Clark said that there are approximately seventy-five bottles maintained.

Chairperson Morin asked what the reduction in Support Services is a result of. Deputy Chief Mahder said that the police dispatch portion of \$55,000 was moved out of this budget into the Police budget and there is a cut to the reduced standby for storms and the Memorial Day post parade open house.

Councilor Fortunato verified that the two part-time Secretary salary positions totaled \$31,073 and asked why the benefits cost is \$57,968. Mr. Mahder said that this covers workers compensation for the firefighters. Councilor Fortunato asked for a breakdown of the associations and dues. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she can provide an itemization to the Council.

Councilor Cascio asked Deputy Chief Mahder what he would consider as a compromise amount for the budget. Deputy Chief Mahder said that the \$369,870 figure is the bottom line budget amount to keep the Fire Department operational and maintain morale. Chief Clark asked if the \$100,000 balance in his current budget can be encumbered to his 2004-2005 budget. Councilor Cascio said that he would hate to see the pride of the Fire Department go backwards; therefore, he would hope to see this adjustment made in their budget. Councilor Cascio pointed out that if Wethersfield had a paid Fire Department it would be costing the Town much more than they are budgeting for the Volunteer Department.

Councilor Forrest said that he is impressed with the 13% increase in volunteers in the past two years and asked if this trend will continue. Deputy Chief Mahder said that a recruitment officer has been appointed to get people on board and hopefully continue this trend. Councilor Forrest said that the more people who volunteer, the more training that is required. He asked if there is a point where there will be too many firefighters. Chief Clark said that he tries to maintain approximately thirty-five firefighters per fire station.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien reviewed some proposed fees for revenue to the Fire Department. These include boat calls, tow backs to the Cove, false CO calls, and basement pumping. It has been proposed that a resident would be entitled to one free call and then there would be a charge after that.

Councilor Adil asked if the Fire Department has come up with any other fund-raising ideas. Deputy Chief Mahder said that the Town Manager is going to look into whether the Town Charter allows the Fire Department to do outside fund-raising.

Councilor Czernicki asked how the Support Services budget decrease will affect the retention of firefighters. Chief Clark said that the firefighters naturally need an occasional pat on the back and may not want to volunteer their time if they do not receive that. He said that the recruitment officer has done a tremendous job developing procedures for recruiting new members and this needs to be funded. Councilor Czernicki asked if the volunteers for administrative duties also qualify for a pension or receive a tax benefit. Chief Clark said that they do not and that they volunteer simply out of good citizenship.

Councilor Fortunato asked how many Wethersfield volunteer firefighters move on to become professional firefighters. Chief Clark said that an average of two per year go on to become professionals. Councilor Fortunato noted that

firefighters are getting free training in Wethersfield and then move on to become professionals in other communities. Councilor Fortunato asked if there are items in the 2004-2005 budget that could be purchased out of the current 2003-2004 budget surplus. Chief Clark said that he is trying to do that. Councilor Fortunato said that it is important for the Council to know what items are being considered as they deliberate the Fire Department's 2004-2005 budget. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she will also need to look at the Charter and get a legal interpretation. Councilor Fortunato asked if any of the funds from the Homeland Security grant could be used to support the firefighters' training. Councilor Fortunato asked Chief Clark to explain in more detail the standby for storms. Chief Clark said that there are approximately 5-6 standby storms per year and gave an explanation of the type of coverage that the firefighters provide.

Councilor Hemmann asked for an explanation of the 460 Mobile Radio Repairs amount of \$3,000. Deputy Chief Varca explained that the Town went to the 800 MHz system this past year and the older radios that operate on 400 need to be repaired in order to communicate with surrounding communities.

Councilor Czernicki asked how many pagers are on the 400 system. Deputy Chief Varca said that there are 120 on the 400 system. He thanked the Council for approving a new roof for the Company 3 station.

NON-DEPARTMENTAL - 910 (C121)

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she left the Contingency amount the same as the current year.

OTHER FUNDS - DEBT - 920(C122- to C-123)

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that this budget is put together by Webster Bank's Financial Manager Terry Larson and Interim Finance Director James Reynolds. She said that the new debt has increased due to the Police Facility and Silas Deane Middle School projects. She said that refinancing is not an option at this point as interest rates have not changed since the last refinancing.

INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT - 930 (C-124)

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Council approved CIRMA and locked in with them for workers compensation for three years at a 5% reduction. She said that this budget covers all insurances except for the health insurances.

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT TAX - 940 (C-125)

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the MDC went up 8.1% and is expected to increase even more in the coming years. Town Managers of eight area member communities are talking with the MDC to tighten their budget so as to alleviate further increases to member communities.

Councilor Forrest asked if this tax could be charged to residents individually. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that some Towns do it this way so that residents receive both a water bill and a sewer tax bill.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 p.m., Councilor Czernicki moved "**TO ADJOURN TO THE BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION ON MAY 6, 2004 AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE TOWN HALL**" seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores Sassano
Town Clerk