

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers
1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI
February 5, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Capital Improvement Budget

Present: Frank Hyde, Raymond Spear, Laura Flanagan, Glen Shibley
Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague

Absent: Kenneth Cloutier

Vice-President Spear opened meeting with an announcement that preliminary consideration will be given to the FY 2009-10 Capital Improvement Program tonight as the Council will have to act on this at the council meeting Monday night. Per the wording of the Town Charter, we have to adopt our Capital Improvement Program thirty days prior to the presentation of the operating budget.

Interim Manager Sprague noted that overall requests were \$15,312,912 and the manager's proposed recommendations for FY 2009-10 are as follows:

The School Department requests \$1,270,000.

Manager's recommendation:

\$250,000 for fire code upgrades
\$250,000 for roof replacement at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School

- ***Total for School Department*** **\$500,000**

Superintendent DiPietro stated that first priority is the high school fire safety code and the next is the roof at Feinstein. He is working with Chief Seltzer to obtain a fire code grant for \$500,000. Don't know if it will be successful. Also, any stimulus money from the Federal government would be applied to these two projects. Would ask that if you reduce the numbers, you would combine Feinstein Middle School and fire safety, preferable as roofing and/or fire codes. The schools can't open if the fire codes aren't up to date.

Parks and Recreation requests \$ 580,712

Manager's recommendation:

\$35,000 for Western Coventry Park – Ravenwoods
\$49,000 for athletic field security and property fences
\$10,000 for matching grant re Anthony Village (Recreation Director Lefebvre noted that we only need \$5,000 for matching grant)

- ***Total for Parks and Recreation*** **\$89,000**

Police Department requests \$12,420,000

Manager's recommendation:

- \$175,000 for sprinkler system
- \$240,000 for purchase of 25 more radios

Manager Sprague noted that the police department acquired 39 portable radios through a \$120,000 grant. Even though there is a dire need for a new police station, it may be better left for either the federal stimulus package or a bond issue

- ***Total for Police Department*** **\$415,000**

Colonel DaSilva commented that although \$240,000 sounds like a big amount to upgrade the radio system, without the assistance of Rhode Island Emergency Management you're

talking probably over a million dollars if we were to do this on our own. We will also be joining the State system and the State will be responsible for the antennas, towers and infrastructure.

Discussion ensued regarding a firing range, the projection for future years and the previous appropriation of \$20,000. Colonel DaSilva explained that the first goal was to secure the land, then slowly build up the range.

Finance Director Warren West stated that \$20,000 had been set aside for a range, and if not used within three years, may revert back to the general fund.

Councilwoman Flanagan indicated that in light of the fact that the council is trying to obtain a new building for a police station, that perhaps the sprinkler system could be put off for a year rather than spend that amount of money on sprinklers.

With regard to the firing range, Vice-President Spear requested that Mr. West find out when the three years expires.

Human Services requests \$90,000.

Manager's recommendation:

\$90,000 for installation of air conditioning units at Town Hall Annex

- **Total Human Services** **\$90,000**

Director Pat Shurtleff was able to secure donation of air conditioning units, but they need to be installed.

Dept. Public Works requests \$952,200.

Manager's recommendation:

\$127,000 for dump truck

\$109,138 for recycling truck (\$200,000 minus award of \$90,862 = \$109,138)

DPW was successful in securing an award of \$90,862 from RI Resource Recovery in August of 2008, so suggest that you purchase truck, deduct \$90,862 award from it, for a total of \$109,138. Currently 65% of DPW fleet is over 10 years old, with one 25 year old truck.

- **Total DPW** **\$236,138**

Dennis Smith – That would meet the bare minimum needs of the department.

Councilwoman Flanagan asked if the trucks would be cash purchases or leases. Requested that Mr. Smith come up with figures pertaining to leasing vs. purchasing.

Mr. Smith indicated that a lease is a commitment and is risky if not approved the following year. He will look into comparison figures and report back to council.

Mr. West stated that it is very difficult to talk about long term commitment when we don't know what the state government is going to do and what our operating budget will be.

Mrs. Flanagan requested that Mr. West prepare a list of items that could be moved into the operating budget.

Vice-President Spear stated that we have a recommendation from the Town Manager for a capital budget of \$1.3 million. It has been noted by the Town Manager that if we were to establish a capital budget for next year that is in line with Senate Bill 3050, we are in a position where we could only approve around \$550,000. If that's the case, then we have nearly \$800,000 to take out of the manager's recommendation if we are to stay within those parameters. I would think we have no choice but to pare down this \$1.3 million to about \$550,000.

Councilwoman Flanagan indicated that she is not comfortable with spending all of the 4.75 % and feels that taxpayers would expect something different.

Councilman Hyde asked Mr. West what .01 on the tax rate would be. Mr. West responded that historically it's been about \$25,000. Tax collections are pretty much on target, around 98 – 98.5%. We are meeting payments on bonds. Our annual debt service is around \$3 million.

Mr. Hyde questioned Superintendent DiPietro about the 50/50 match.

Superintendent DiPietro stated that yes, the school receives the match on capital improvements, but it doesn't come for two years. This year the school received \$69,000 from a project two years ago.

Mr. Shibley - Can't see spending this money requested for capital; we still have yet to deal with the operating budget and don't know what's coming in from the State. I think we should spend less than last year, even though we have a great collection rate.

Mrs. Flanagan thinks we should move as much as we can over to the operating budget. This way we can look at where we can trim and incorporate the capital into the operating budget.

Mr. Shibley in agreement. If you commit to capital and don't get the operating money, then you're in trouble.

Motion made by Frank Hyde seconded by Glen Shibley to adjourn Town Council meeting. All voted Aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Town Clerk