

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers
February 9, 2009

WORK SESSION – Pre-budget meeting with School Committee

Superintendent DiPietro presented FY 2010 Budget projection. The school administration builds its FY 2010 budget to comply with the S3050 limitation of \$1,975,085.

Staffing represents the most significant cost in the budget including salaries and benefits. Coventry Schools project reductions including two elementary [teacher] reductions, four at the middle school and up to eight teacher retirements.

The Coventry School Department projects benefits to be flat funded (possible reduction of \$25,000) due to the reported decrease in pension contribution and the elimination of the tax sheltered annuity (-\$350,000). The primary increase in benefits is a projected 5% increase (\$300,000) in health care (Co-pay = 15%).

Purchase services are planned at an increase of \$245,000 to address known increases in tuitions, transportation contract and utilities. Supplies are budgeted at an increase of approximately \$60,000 (5% increase) with capital improvements reduced by \$75,000 to offset the increase to supplies. Dues and fees are flat funded

The only additional revenue projected is \$150,000 to \$180,000 in career & tech. Superintendent DiPietro explained that there is a new cosmetology program and the schools expect eight to ten new tuition students. Revenues offset expenses to reduce the request to the Town of \$1,975,000 (under S3050.)

If State Aid, Professional Development Funds or Gambling Revenues are lessened, the school system would need to absorb these deficits. The State projects level funded State Aid offset by the stimulus. If PD funds are cut, the program costs would be cut. Gambling revenues were projected at \$300,000 but Coventry planned for only \$100,000 and does expect to realize that revenue in 2008/2009.

The FY 2010 budget does include Oak Haven School, athletics, art and music, etc. The concerns of the past that programs should not be lost have been addressed in the budget and can be maintained if funding is acquired as projected.

(Full presentation in Town Council folder.)

President Cloutier asked if there was any relief on mandates yet. Superintendent DiPietro responded that Representative Serpa is presenting the mandate relief tomorrow.

Ms. Flanagan asked if we knew the status of being able to remain in the collaborative and Mr. DiPietro responded that the legislature is reporting back information regarding the collaborative.

Ms. Flanagan – How would it effect you if we were to give you maybe ¼ million in a capital budget, or in operating, adding that amount on to the 1.9 million?

Mr. DiPietro – If it's in the [capital] budget, that's fine, I can use it flexibly and will still get the 50% reimbursement. But, if you give it to us in operating, that goes against your tax levy, which means that does change your rate. By segregating it, what you do is limit the school's operating budget.

Ms. Flanagan asked if that action would have any adverse impact and Mr. DiPietro responded that it would not.

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Present: Raymond Spear, Kenneth Cloutier, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague
Town Solicitor Patrick Rogers

Absent: Frank Hyde
Pledge of Allegiance
Invocation
Review of evacuation plan

Motion made by Raymond Spear seconded by Laura Flanagan to approve January 26, 2009 Town Council minutes. All voted Aye.

President's Remarks

President Cloutier announced that the Town Council will try a new format, placing Public Comment at the end of the meeting and business items up front. Also, district updates will be done once

a month. The resolution approving Bennet Yarger as a consulting firm regarding the search for a permanent Town Manager is being rescinded as the firm was sold. An ad will be put in the paper requesting proposals.

- Vice-President Spear District 1

Mr. Spear distributed updated copy of ten most significant issues facing the community. Moved some items further up the list and added #40 (turning over road maintenance of the New London Turnpike/ Arnold Road intersection to the state).

- District 2, Laura Flanagan

Ms. Flanagan is scheduling a meeting with Warren West, attorney Renee Evangelista, and Paul Sprague in order to determine exactly how to spend the income from the Waterman and Fiske funds and to determine what items will be funded from the trust funds.

- District 4, Glen Shibley

No real news except that for those who do not know, Jerry's Supermarket will be closing. Not sure what will be coming in.

- District 5, Ken Cloutier

Nothing new other than the Hopkins Hill condo situation, which is still being worked on.

CONSENT AGENDA

1) Tax abatements for months of November and December, 2008 in the amount of \$116,459.73 with additions of \$15,861.21

2a) Resolution rescinding Resolution 2-09-2958 authorizing the engagement of services of Bennet Yarger Associates

2b) Resolution authorizing Interim Town Manager to seek requests for proposals regarding a recruitment firm to hire a permanent Town Manager

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Raymond Spear to approve Items #1 and 2a. All voted Aye.

Vice-President Spear made motion to remove Item #2b for discussion.

Mr. Spear suggested time constraints in order that we can have the matter of a new permanent town manager confirmed no later than July 1 in order to start our new year. The screening process, firm selected and final recommendations for council consideration should take place by the last meeting in May, so that we have two or three weeks in June for interviews and to make the final selection.

Ms. Flanagan suggested placing an ad in the ICMA and the Providence Journal as soon as possible, giving a two week window, until February 25, 2009, to submit proposals.

Motion made by Ray Spear seconded by Laura Flanagan to pass Item 2(b) resolution seeking requests for proposals regarding a recruitment firm to hire a permanent Town Manager. All voted Aye.

Resolution adopting Capital Improvement Budget

Motion made by Raymond Spear seconded by Glen Shibley to adopt Capital Improvement Budget in the amount of \$359,138 as follows:

School Department Roof Repair Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School	\$250,000
Department of Public Works Recycling truck	\$109,138

Mrs. Flanagan - Can the Department of Public Works operate without that truck if we don't approve this \$109,138? Are we doing this purely so that we can use that grant money? Or because we need it?

Mr. Sprague - The grant was to be used for recycling purposes, whether this year or next year. According to Dennis Smith, we are in dire need of the truck, it is more needed than the dump truck, and that is his priority regardless of the grant.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Zelly's Last Stop Café, 2260 Flat River Road (90 day license review)

Colonel DaSilva informed Town Council that there had been an incident at the location last weekend. Consensus of the Town Council to further investigate. Motion made by Kenneth Cloutier seconded by Laura Flanagan to table public hearing, extend Mr. Petrarca's license to Town Council meeting on February 23, 2009. All voted Aye. So voted.

Ordinance pertaining to the timing and procedures for Town Council appointments and re-appointments to Town boards, commissions and committees

Charles Vacca
124 Fairway Drive

Town Council should approve this; it is a good idea.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Raymond Spear to adopt ordinance. All voted aye. So voted.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

- Ordinance adopting codification of the ordinances of the Town of Coventry

Solicitor Rogers explained that this ordinance amendment must be adopted in order to recodify the Town ordinances. The Town had contracted with the publishing company to reorganize, bring the code book up to date, making it more user friendly. New code books cannot be used until this ordinance is adopted. Ordinance will be advertised for public hearing.

- Ordinance pertaining to the removal of Town Council appointees on Town boards, commissions and committees for cause .

Solicitor Rogers gave overview of ordinance, defining what constitutes "for cause".

Notation - Change in Section 2-77(a) – Change to "for" cause, (not "due" cause)

Ordinance will be advertised for public hearing.

Discussion regarding proposed legislation by Senator Leo Blais regarding tax increment funding, granite curbing and earth removal

Senator Blais urged the Town Council to consider bills regarding earth removal, granite curbing and Tax Increment funding.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Raymond Spear to move ahead with a resolution of support for granite curbs on Route 3. All voted Aye. Council will look into the other two matters. Senator Blais stated that a resolution or letter may be sent to him, and he will forward it on to the Clerk of the appropriate committee hearing the bill.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gail Tatangelo
Shippee Plat Road

Ms. Tatangelo, from URI's Master Gardeners, explained to Town Council that this group sponsors "Harvests from The Heart Project". They wish to establish a pilot program in Coventry and start a garden in the community. All produce harvested from the program will be donated to local agencies. Master gardeners from URI will act as mentors in teaching volunteers to grow plants and harvest produce.

Ms. Tatangelo seeks permission from the Town Council to use the front lawn of the Town Hall/Library for the garden. This location was chosen because it is a public place and people can see it, although the group is amenable to using a different location.

The Town Council was in agreement that this program is a good idea, but an alternative location would be more desirable, possible location suggested would be the rear of the Town Hall annex across the street from the Town Hall/Library.

Michael Baird
2172 Plainfield Pike

Mr. Baird identified a couple of ideas that he believes could save the Town of Coventry some money. He raised the issue of impact fees with reference to trailer parks in town, questioning if fees

apply when a new trailer is put in a park. Also, trailer parks are commercial businesses and should be taxed at commercial tax rate.

Another issue is privatizing. Consider taking DPW and privatize trash and snow plowing, leaving a small division of foremen and laborers, and a superintendent with a small group of men to handle emergencies. Privatize the rest. The money you would save by eliminating all of that equipment, overtime, payroll, would be catastrophic.

Greg Laboissonniere
131 Colvintown Road

Mr. Laboissonniere – Spoke regarding TIF finance districts and projects districts. Originally, they didn't have to be one in the same. The thought process we had was that a plan could be put in place to put money toward school roofs. As the increment was growing, the funds would be there. With S3050, would take a little looking into to see how that law has changed. I know that a concern was that the funds should remain in the TIF district.

Mr. Sprague – Yes, they restricted the law. Originally you could take the money and build something in another area, but now they have restricted that law and right now construction has to be within that financing/project district.

Mr. Rogers explained that you can't do, for instance, a school three miles away from the TIF district. However, if the school were immediately adjacent to the parcel, you might get that approved. That is something we will have to look into with Mr. Blais.

Ron Gizarelli
50 Harrington Road

Mr. Gizarelli – Privatization does work in some instances. Need to list the pluses and minuses to see if it would be cost effective. Think you should put it on the table to see if there can be any savings. Should also have public comment prior to voting on an issue.

Michael Baird
Plainfield Pike

Mr. Baird – Frozen tax rates on homeowners over 65 should be based on income, not on the fact that you are over 65.

Motion made by Ken Cloutier seconded by Ray Spear to adjourn meeting in memory of former Town Councilman Edward S. Inman, Jr. All voted Aye.

Town Clerk