

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers
1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI
April 14, 2008

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Present: Kenneth Cloutier, Anthony Colaluca, Justin Pomfret, Frank Hyde (late),
Bruce Thompson

Acting Town Manager Paul Sprague
Assistant Town Solicitor Richard Sullivan

Pledge of Allegiance led by President Pomfret
Invocation led by Councilman Colaluca
Review of evacuation plan.

Motion made by Anthony Colaluca seconded by Bruce Thompson to approve minutes of the March 31, 2008 Town Council meeting. All voted Aye (4-0). So voted.

- PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke at public comment.

- Rhode Islanders for Fair Elections

No one present. Motion made by Bruce Thompson seconded by Anthony Colaluca to table presentation at this time. All voted Aye (4-0). So voted.

- CONSENT AGENDA

1. Resolution approving sewer tie-in application for 15 Sandy Bottom Road
2. Resolution approving sewer tie-in application at 170 Fairview Avenue
3. Tax abatements for the month of March 2008 in the amount of \$2,158.52

Motion made by Anthony Colaluca seconded by Bruce Thompson to approve consent agenda. All voted Aye (4-0). So voted.

LICENSES

1. Application for new sewer contractor's license for:

1. G. Lopes Construction Inc.
2. Site Resources, Inc.

Motion made by Kenneth Cloutier seconded by Anthony Colaluca to approve contractor's license for G. Lopes Construction Inc. All voted Aye (4-0). So voted.

Motion made by Bruce Thompson seconded by Kenneth Cloutier to approve contractor's license for Site Resources, Inc. subject to submission of proper documentation to the Town Clerk's Office. All voted Aye (4-0). So voted.

Councilman Hyde arrived.

- WORK SESSION - SCHOOL BUDGET WITH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

In attendance were School Committee members Raymond Spear, D1; Catherine Patenaude, D2; Ben Perra, D3; Karlene Murray-Toppin, D4; Donna Hayden, D5.

Chairman Spear gave overview of requested school budget including efforts to keep costs down; detailing programs and positions which have already been cut from the budget over the past five years; mandates which have been implemented over the past three years; concerns the School Department has regarding the budget; items for council consideration; proposed budget and analysis with enrollment projections and impact statements; adjustments planned to the 2008/09 budget; compliance with Senate Bill 3050 along with further cuts to achieve this compliance; and the impact of cuts to programs, services and positions. Given by power-point presentation. See worksheets in Town Council folder.

Chairman Spear noted that the School Committee is asking for the full amount of 5%.

President Pomfret and Councilman Hyde expressed concern regarding the cut of a teacher in the music program. Would like to see the whole program reinstated.

Chairman Spear said that the music program will still be there, but not under the same design. Mr. DiPietro stated that a new schedule would be developed and may include before or after-school time. Not cutting the program, just redesigning.

President Pomfret questioned the amount of teaching positions cut in recent years. Superintendent DiPietro replied that the schools have gone from 500 to 472 teachers in the past four years due to loss of enrollment.

Chairman Spear suggested sports transportation be addressed through funding. In the past there was a very loud indication that the community would be able to fund if necessary.

Councilman Cloutier stated that the amount needed for transportation is huge. Booster clubs don't have that much money. Would rather see the elimination of middle school sports and use that money for transportation. Middle school students have the option to play in other leagues whereas high school students do not.

Superintendent DiPietro assured Town Council that they have no intention of canceling sports programs at the high school. We have to find a way to get the transportation money without asking the taxpayers. Find another way to offset this.

Chairman Spear mentioned that he was also looking at cameras to be installed on the busses to replace monitors. Superintendent DiPietro said there were some problems with this option, but are still looking into it.

Mr. Cloutier asked about the status of Oak Haven School.

Chairman Spear – To close it would not be the most desirable thing, though one of these days it will have to be seriously considered. It is a possibility. If you look at the declining enrollment, the children can be absorbed into the other five schools.

Mr. Colaluca – What is the cost of the pre K program?

Mr. Ferrucci - \$390,000, subtract \$90,000 in revenue, so that's \$300,000

Ms. Hayden - If the school is abandoned, you would have an empty school, house values will drop. Wouldn't everyone living there appeal their taxes? And, how would that effect what the town collects?

Mr. Thompson – No matter what you do, would be affecting people. It will be the School Committee's decision as to what to take the money from and what to cut.

Mr. Colaluca – How can you knowingly level fund heat and oil.

Mr. Ferrucci – We do a lot of guaranteed contracts and buying futures, such as fuel, electric or gas. Level funding is an accomplishment, something we did last year anticipating this year.

Mr. Colaluca – Very responsible to purchase ahead. Will the potential retirement of eight teachers be replaced by mid-step teachers or teachers coming right out of college?

Mr. Spear – We will seek to hire the best people we can for the job. If you have two people who are fairly equal, one on Step 8 and one on Step 3, then we might go with the Step 3. Want to maintain the excellence in staff that we have.

Mr. Colaluca – This budget states that it is exclusive of state and federal grants.

Mr. Spear – Because at this point we don't know what they are. That's generally not part of our budget anyway, comes later in the year.

Mr. DiPietro – We are just talking about your dollars here, not the federal dollars.

Another concern of the Town Council was reduction in the nursing staff.

President Pomfret – Does anyone in the schools have training in CPR?

Mr. DiPietro – There must be a number of people trained in every building by regulation, the principal, the nurse and we actually train teaching assistants and teachers, so we have 4 or 5 people in each building.

Motion made by Bruce Thompson seconded by Anthony to place Public Forum before the Executive Session. All voted Aye. So voted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2)

Pertaining to litigation

1. MSB v Town of Coventry

Motion made by Frank Hyde seconded by Anthony Colaluca to go into Executive Session . Roll call vote. All voted Aye.

Motion made by Anthony Colaluca seconded by Frank Hyde to come out of Executive Session. All voted Aye. So voted.

Motion made by Frank Hyde seconded by Kenneth Cloutier to seal minutes of Executive Session. All voted Aye. So voted.

Motion made by Bruce Thompson seconded by Frank Hyde to adjourn meeting. All voted Aye. So voted.

Town Clerk