

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers
1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI
May 4, 2009

6:00 P.M. EXECUTIVE SESSION
R.I.G.L. Section 42-46-5 (a) (2)
Pertaining to Collective Bargaining and Litigation

Present: Frank Hyde, Raymond Spear, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague
Town Solicitor Patrick Rogers

Absent: Kenneth Cloutier

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to go into Executive Session. All voted Aye.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to seal minutes of Executive Session. All voted Aye.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to close Executive Session. All voted Aye.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Laura Flanagan to adjourn Executive Session and return to Town Council meeting. All voted Aye.

Town Council Meeting

Present: Frank Hyde, Raymond Spear, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague
Town Solicitor Patrick Rogers
Absent: Kenneth Cloutier

Invocation by Fr. Amaral of Our Lady of Czenstochowa
Pledge of Allegiance
Review of evacuation plan

President's Comments

President Spear announced that the Town Manager and the Superintendent of Schools are keeping informed regarding reports on the Swine Flu. They will make sure that the Town Council and School Committee know of any problems. Superintendent DiPietro said that although there is one confirmed case in Westerly, according to the CDC there are no confirmed cases in Coventry at this time. Daily status reports on the flu are available through the Department of Health website, www.health.ri.gov.

1. Amend Tax Abatements for month of March 2009

At the last Town Council meeting the March abatements were amended and approved with the names of Charles Rennick (\$474.69) and Louis Roy (\$434.81) excluded for further review.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to amend March abatements and include the names of Charles Rennick (\$474.69) and Louis Roy (\$434.81). All voted Aye.

2. Resolution approving sewer tie-in at 698 Washington Street, Coventry, RI

Chairman of Sewer Subcommittee, Bill Hall, explained that this is an emergency tie-in. The request was forwarded directly to the Town Council since there was no quorum at the last Sewer Subcommittee Meeting.

Motion made by Frank Hyde seconded by Laura Flanagan to approve tie-in. All voted Aye. So voted.

Introduction of Sewer Ordinance

Solicitor Rogers explained that the existing ordinance was revised a few weeks ago. The Town Council made a few adjustments: 1) Increase in the standard housing unit from \$6,600 per unit to \$12,900; 2) Commercial rate was adjusted from \$50 per thousand to \$60 per thousand; 3) automatic CPA adjustment; 4) overall cost is allocated among the users; 5) the existing ordinance has an 8% interest rate on those who finance over 20 years. The ordinance would reduce the rate to the higher amount of 1.5% over what the town pays for current bonding cost, or 5%. This is a substantial reduction.

Discussion took place regarding interest, assessment amounts, method of calculation and a few changes in language. Councilwoman Flanagan clarified with Solicitor Rogers that Section 14.7.1 should reflect the same language as Section 14.6. Base will be set at 5%.

Councilwoman Flanagan – Will be setting the floor at 5%.

Mr. Jim Geremia advised that certain language should be restored pertaining to West Warwick's administration of the industrial pre-treatment program. This has been excluded and you will be in violation of DEM and EPA regulations. Solicitor Rogers will restore language on Page 7, Section 4.1.

Mr. Rogers commented that several indexes had been explored and it was concluded that CPA is the most community-understood index. We would use the CPA rather than the ENR.

Kent Nichols, Weston and Sampson, expressed his concerns regarding Article 14.7.2 pertaining to flows. Solicitor Rogers and Mr. Geremia further discussed Article 15.1.5. Mr. Geremia also recommended that the town annually adopt fees and make adjustments.

Mr. Geremia explained that the base on the rates would be \$12,900. If the project cost comes in at \$16,900, that's what they pay; the total EDU divided into the total cost equals the dollar value. If cost is less than \$12,900, then they still pay \$12,900. However, there will be no ceiling on costs.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Laura Flanagan to accept sewer ordinance revisions. Mr. Hyde is not comfortable supporting an ordinance where sewer assessments may be doubled and will not support this ordinance. Councilwoman Flanagan believes we have to do this in order to get our reserve account in place. Mr. Shibley agrees and supports the ordinance.

Vote taken 3-1 (Mr. Hyde votes no.) Motion passes to accept revisions.

Discussion, consideration and potential impact to the FY 2009-10 Town Budget

President Spear highlighted the problem the town is facing regarding a shortfall in revenue, discussed level funding the town budget and in addition requested department heads to further generate an additional 10% cut. The Town Council advised the School Committee that it will be level funded. On May 18 the Town Council will act on a budget to be recommended to the Financial Town Meeting in June.

Inasmuch as this is still an on-going process, Manager Sprague is meeting with the unions to attempt to iron out some issues.

Councilwoman Flanagan reiterated that the Town Council, Paul Sprague and Warren West have gone over each line item of the municipal budget and the Town Council feels they have to make a \$1.3 million dollar cut on the town side.

Ms. Liss of 22 Circlewood Drive asked the Town Council not to shut down Tiogue School.

Gary Cote, 29 Pettine Street asked if the Town Council is still at 10% for the town departments and Mr. Spear responded that not all cuts are 10%, some are a little better.

Bruce Desrosiers, 8 Acacia Court questioned the intention of the town regarding charitable donations. Councilwoman Flanagan remarked that the town has eliminated any charitable contributions.

Nancy Sprengelmeyer, 26 Taft Street, questioned how many individuals would be affected by lay-offs in the town departments and further recommended that the Department of Human Services and the Police Department are spared any cuts.

Pat Shurtleff, 468 Carrs Trail – Any lay-offs should be kept confidential until the employee is notified by their boss.

Marsha Liss, 22 Circlewood Drive – Need to look for income and encourage new business to come into town.

Discussion on reinstating the Economic Development Commission and have that commission look for other sources of revenue for the town.

Joe Brown, 52 Colvintown Road – You said you have plans to meet with the union; how about the School Committee?

Ms. Flanagan – The School Committee is the responsible body, maybe you should attend a School Committee meeting.

Dawn McNamara, 2 Raven Blvd., Are there any current incentives for business to come into town?

Mr. Sprague – No, there is some on-going development, but even that has slowed down.

Travis Zellener, Wood Estates – As Chairman of the Committee for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, if you close a school, how would you maintain your blue ribbon standing? Urge you not to close Tiogue.

Mr. Spear – The Town Council does not make the decision to close a school. That is the School Committee.

Joel Johnson, Gough Avenue, states there needs to be creative thinking on the school side. Didn't see bus monitors on the list of potential cuts.

Mr. DiPietro – The legislature hasn't taken that under consideration and they are not prepared to change at this point. Mr. Hyde is against dropping monitors.

Gary Beaudoin, retired teacher, 10% cuts on the municipal side is terrible. Offered proposed solution to the Town Council.

Public Comment

Mary Vandervelde, 7 White Oak – Need to raise taxes to 4.75% or we will always be short.

Republican Committee Chairman Charles Vacca congratulated the Town Council in moving forward in the right direction, need a sound fiscal policy.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Frank Hyde to adjourn meeting. All voted Aye.

Town Clerk