

Town Council Meeting
May 9, 2016
6:30 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:30 p.m.
RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (1)

1. Consideration of applications for Planning Commission

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to come out of Executive Session. All voted aye.

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Councilman Laboissonniere to seal minutes of Executive Session. All voted aye.

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Councilman McGee, Vice-President Carlson, Councilwoman Duxbury, Councilman Laboissonniere, President Shibley, Town Manager Waters, Town Solicitor Gorham

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation

Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

Presentation – Police Station/Human Services building

Colonel MacDonald and Human Services Director Pat Shurtleff advised the Town Council of their research so far into the costs of an upgrade to the senior center/police station. Estimated costs of \$12,000,000 include equipment, fees, bonding, parking, site development and furnishings. They feel that the Wood Street location is the most desirable and sensible since the town already owns the property, and all the costs would be in building/construction and retrofitting. Three architectural firms, Saccoccio & Associates, RGB Architects and Northeast Collaborative have given us an idea of what actual numbers would be to build the facilities and it was realized that the total cost would be in the twelve million dollar range.

We need to have a strong marketing campaign to get the community's support and need to stress that we will actually get two buildings for the price of one for that cost. Additionally the town is in possession of 20+ acres of land adjacent to this location which could present an opportunity for expansion for the town in the future. Human Services Director Pat Shurtleff stated that although this whole process process has taken place quickly, we are looking for permission to go ahead and get it on the November ballot. We need to establish a strong marketing campaign to get the community's support.

Vice-President Carlson expressed her concerns about traffic, ingress and egress, especially the way that South Main Street gets backed up if you head out towards Dave's Market. Sandy Bottom can get backed up too. She would like to see a traffic study done on Wood Street and asked whether some kind of traffic light would be planned at that location. She also wondered if they have had a meeting with the neighbors.

Colonel McDonald thought perhaps the type of light that you would find at a fire station could be installed. As far as a neighborhood meeting, he would be agreeable to that. There are several options pertaining to where the school busses would be housed.

Mrs. Carlson also asked whether the property behind Burger King has been considered as a location and remarked that she is in support of this endeavor, but is just concerned about ingress and egress at the Wood Street location. Mrs. Shurtleff responded that over the years there have been a number of plans put into play at the "Burger King" location, and nothing has happened yet. It would be a more costly location for the town since the town would have to purchase the land.

President Shibley thinks Wood Street is a great location, especially with 20+ acres.

Councilwoman Duxbury agrees that there is a need for a new police department but is also concerned about the traffic and questioned whether there are wetlands in the vicinity. She asked about the cost of a feasibility study. Colonel MacDonald advised that as far as wetlands, there was no flooding in 2010. He has received quotes and believes that he can get a feasibility study done for \$5,000 to \$9,000. Ms. Duxbury asked if we could use impact fees to do the study and Finance Director Thibeault replied that you can, but if the bond for the police station does not pass, the money would have to be paid back to the impact fee fund.

Mrs. Duxbury supports the project, has toured the police department and agrees 100% with the need for a new building. Since it would mean about 1.5% increase in taxes, the people need to speak on it. She's not sure if this is the right time to do this.

Councilman Laboissonniere agrees that this may be a difficult choice for the taxpayers at this time and asked if Colonel MacDonald will apply for grants. The Colonel responded that he needs to do some research and see what it out there, maybe there is some kind of EMA grant.

Councilman McGee is in support and thinks it will be great to get two buildings for the price of one. He realizes this is a tough sell, but our police station is in deplorable condition. This is not going to get any cheaper the longer we wait. Mrs. Shurtleff added that fire alarm dispatch should also be configured into the building and possibly EMA.

Presentation – Community Development Block Grant

Planning Director Paul Sprague and CDBG Coordinator Gail Hardink presented this year's proposal for the CDBG application. Mr. Sprague explained that this report will lead to a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to submit an application to the state CDBG agency for grant money. Each year HUD provides funds to assist low and moderate income residents. Funding has decreased over the years, however, last year we were successful in getting \$400,000 out of the \$508,000 we applied for.

This has been submitted to the Planning Commission and they have ranked the activities. This year a total of \$164,000 will be applied for as follows: Coventry Housing Authority roofs for 48 units at Mulhearn Drive \$54,000; Coventry Housing Authority centralized public housing voucher program wait list \$50,000; Housing rehabilitation/major repairs \$50,000 and 1st time homebuyer assistance at \$10,000.

Vice-President Carlson thinks we really have to look ahead to RhodeMap RI, and asked if we know where that bill stands as it's making a comeback. Coventry Housing Director Julie Leddy replied that it is being held at the legislature for further study. Planning Director Paul Sprague advised that the town does not have to meet the 10% low/moderate income requirement until 2025. As far as where we stand now, we are pretty high up as far as being close to the 10% than most communities, not including Central Falls and West Warwick. Councilman McGee added that it would be great if the state delegation would consider mobile homes in meeting our low/moderate income housing quota.

Mr. Sprague explained that in this year's grant application, the Housing Authority would be receiving the bulk of the money that is granted.

APPROVAL of Town Council minutes for April 11 and April 25, 2016

A motion was made by Vice-President Carlson seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to approve minutes of April 11, 2016. All voted aye.

With regard to the April 25 minutes, President Shibley commented that a correction needed to be made on Page 2, Paragraph 3, where "President Shibley" made a comment, however, he was absent from that Council meeting.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Councilwoman Carlson to approve minutes with correction. All voted aye

President's Comments

1. President Shibley explained that he was absent from the April 25 Town Council meeting due to the birth of a new granddaughter, who arrived three weeks early, in North Carolina.
2. The town will hold a Compost Fest on Saturday, May 14, from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at the Town Annex. The event is free, workshops will be held and there will be raffles.
3. Also on Saturday, May 14, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and again on Sunday, May 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the 4th annual re-enactment of the revolutionary war will be held at General Nathanael Greene Homestead on Taft St. Admission is \$6.00 adults, \$4.00 for children with a \$20 maximum per family.

COUNCIL DISTRICT UPDATES

District 3 Councilman McGee reported no issues, only that he has received a couple of questions regarding when Route 116 will be complete. DPW Director McGee replied that should be complete by mid summer.

District 5 Councilwoman Duxbury advised that the town has prevailed in court over T. Miozzi Inc. with regard to vacating the consent agreement. Therefore, they will no longer be operating overnight.

District 1 Vice-President Carlson asked about pickup of the old rubbish bins. Mr. McGee said all you need to do is call DPW for a pickup.

District 2 Councilman Laboissonniere asked if the Department of Transportation had any plans to close the Sandy Bottom Bridge for repair and Mr. McGee replied that it is not scheduled until 2018.

District 4 President Shibley thanked DPW for a job well done paving New London Turnpike and remarked that there is also some paving going on in the Oak Haven neighborhood. The issue of the pink clothing bins on Arnold Road is being looked into, there may be some violations issued, both for the property owner and the owner of the bins and we are working with the solicitor to get this taken care of immediately. Library Director Lynn Blanchette has received a grant for construction of a tot lot next to the library and that is now in the works.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Authorizing Town Manager to submit application for CDBG grant

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Vice-President Carlson to approve resolution. All voted aye.

2. Awarding contract for townwide crack sealing on asphalt roadways

Councilwoman Duxbury asked if there is still money left from the 2014 infrastructure bond and Mr. McGee replied that there is and it is all part of this program. The award is for \$199,624.10 through the master pricing agreement.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to approve resolution. All voted aye.

3. Appointing Nicholas Gorham as Moderator for Financial Town Meeting

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Vice-President Carlson to approve resolution. All voted aye.

4. Authorizing the use of impact fees for the Department of Human Services

Human Services Director Pat Shurtleff explained that there are two main bathrooms at the Wood Street facility that are badly in need of repair and upgrade in addition to being made ADA compliant. This project will encompass plumbing, fixtures, flooring, panels and fans in the two main bathrooms. While this repair is going on we will use port-a-jons in addition to two other bathrooms in the building. The bathrooms will be down for about two weeks. Mrs. Duxbury remarked that all but \$5,000 of her impact fee money will be used. Mrs. Shurtleff explained that even if the bond passes for the new police station, these bathrooms will be used in the new station, the money won't be wasted.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Vice-President Carlson to approve resolution. All voted aye.

5. Adopting Capital, Municipal and School Department Budgets for FY 16-17

Manager Waters explained that there have been a number of changes since the budget was originally submitted to the Town Council and a memo has been sent to the Council with those changes. Mr. Thibeault added that there have been some changes to include some assessed growth as work on the tax roll continues. Electrical and plumbing inspectors now have to be recognized as employees per IRS, but there will be an increase in permitting fees which will make that wash. We will also realize additional medical and dental savings.

Mr. Thibeault stated that the estimated tax rate is down to 3.01 now and on the budget resolution itself, we are changing Section 4 capital improvements from \$208,960 to \$219,732 with \$10,772 remaining and placed into the capital improvement reserve fund. The offset to that would be in Section 1, from \$27,085,801 to \$27,075,029 (reduced by the same \$10,772.)

Councilwoman Duxbury asked if we ever looked into using impact fees wherever possible rather than going right to surplus as far as capital items, for instance the remote gate at Briar Point. Manager Waters responded that yes, we have researched how we must use the impact fees and they can be used for that gate.

She supports what is being done with surplus, but thinks we may get a bigger bang for the buck if we use impact fees first where possible. She recommended pulling out the \$25,000 for the gate; DPW Director McGee will look for alternatives. Mrs. Duxbury feels that we have to be careful not to let the impact fees accumulate to such large amounts that they are used as slush funds.

Solicitor Gorham added that the impact fee ordinance does not state that you have to make these decisions before the voters pass the capital budget. If it is discovered through research, after the budget passes, that there are certain items that meet the criteria, you can just do it and then have a surplus.

Councilman McGee feels that we need to be cautious, it has been good to have impact fees for emergencies, I just want to be careful with it.

Councilwoman Duxbury also commented that she feels that the EMA director position may not be a necessary item and she also has a problem with a part time engineer. That should have been considered when we voted on a \$10.8 million dollar bond. She asked if the AFSCME contract had been considered in this budget and Mr. Waters replied that it was and money will be moved if necessary.

Councilman McGee doesn't think that at this time spending money to video our meetings is appropriate. We are asking tax payers to pay a lot now with all day K and the school budget. There are plenty of opportunities for people to come to the meetings or read it on-line.

IT Director Warzycha explained that the package Clerkbases offers to do video was originally placed in the budget for \$30,000, covering the costs of the software program and equipment. The manager cut \$15,000 so we went to plan B, a program to run it in house and cut the costs, so \$15,000 of the \$30,000 Clerkbases cost has already been removed. Councilman McGee is in favor of removing it totally from the budget. Mr. Warzycha added that we are digitally recording all meetings now.

More discussion took place with regard to videotaping meetings, with Vice-President Carlson commenting that almost half the towns and cities in RI are videotaping, and not just Town Council meetings. She believes we need more open government and at \$30,000 cost, would come out to about .86 cents per person. Council McGee replied that its not about hiding anything, but the availability of the records is already there. There is plenty of opportunity for people to get any information they need on meetings. We have the website, we have the minutes.

Councilwoman Duxbury remarked that elderly and disabled are unable to participate in their government and disagrees with Councilman McGee.

Councilman Laboissonniere mentioned that in the last fiscal year, we did a one time \$40,000 appropriation for software upgrades of the police computers, but I am seeing that we only spent \$25,000. Mr. Warzycha explained that the project is not done yet. The money will be gone by the time we are done. We still need to purchase some hardware.

Additionally in the IT budget, there is a change in medical due to the IT assistant having to go into the town medical plan.

Councilman Laboissonniere also is not in favor of spending even \$15,000 for video and commented that West Greenwich has been video taping for \$800 or \$900 a year. Students do the taping and the money is used as a stipend. He agrees with Councilman McGee that it should be removed from the budget. Manager Waters stated that if the amount is removed from the budget, the Council could recommend that we find it within the annual funds appropriated to the IT Department to implement a system. Vice-President Carlson expressed concern with

regard to what we would get from the students as compared to a professional.

Councilwoman Duxbury commented that if we are going to change the budget pertaining to video taping, she suggested another change to the budget by cutting out the EMA director (\$20,000) and the part time engineer (\$29,000), with the understanding that we will not let it drop about taping our town meetings.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Councilwoman Carlson to cut the budget an additional \$49,000.

Councilman McGee feels that it is a disservice to the town to eliminate the EMA director. Mrs. Duxbury responded that she thinks it would be a poor decision to eliminate open government by eliminating video taping.

Vice-President Carlson stated that taping would include other town meetings such as Planning, Zoning, School Committee, not just Town Council.

Mrs. Duxbury amended her previous motion, to remove \$64,000 from the budget for three items: \$15,000 for clerkbase, \$20,000 for the EMA director and \$29,000 for the part time engineer. Motion was seconded by Vice-President Carlson.

President Shibley stated that he is not in agreement to eliminate the EMA director; Colonel MacDonald feels this is sorely needed. Also, half of the EMA director's salary is reimbursed annually through RIEMA.

Councilman Laboissonniere asked about the necessity of the part time engineer and Manager Waters replied that DPW is trying to get caught up on a backlog of improvement projects and advised that we are in need of additional engineering support. DPW Director McGee explained that this would be temporary until the asphalt work and infrastructure work is done. We may not even use all the money requested.

Councilwoman Duxbury questioned why this was not mentioned when the bond was passed, it is like a hidden cost to the taxpayers, they voted for that bond not knowing that they have to pay for the extra engineering costs. Mr. McGee explained that the infrastructure bond includes the physical work that had to be done, not support staff, and we worked to get the most bang for the buck, whether it is bridges, asphalt work or crack sealing. The bond was for the cost of the actual construction work, not for support staff.

Council wished to vote individually on the three items in Mrs. Duxbury's motion. Mrs. Duxbury withdrew amended motion, seconded by Vice-President Carlson.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to remove \$15,000 for video taping from budget. Vote taken: Aye (3); No (2) – Councilwomen Duxbury and Carlson voted no. Motion passes.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Vice-President Carlson to remove \$20,000 for an EMA director from the budget. Vote taken: Aye (2); No (3) – Councilmen Laboissonniere, McGee and Shibley vote No. Motion fails.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Duxbury seconded by Vice-President Carlson to remove \$29,000 for a part time engineer from budget. Vote taken: Aye (2); No (3) – Councilmen Laboissonniere, McGee and Shibley vote No. Motion fails.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to pass the budget as amended. Vote taken: Aye (3); No (2) – Councilwomen Duxbury and Carlson vote no. Motion passes.

Finance Director Thibeault remarked that as amended, the new rate tax would be 2.99%.

Authorizing bond referendum for police station on November ballot

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to approve resolution. All voted aye.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Renewal of Second Hand licenses

1. D's Walk In Closet, 820 Tiogue Avenue
2. Little Pumpkins, 759 Tiogue Avenue
3. Sew-Phisticated, 303 S. Main St., Suite #2
4. Twice Is Nice, 1049 Tiogue Avenue
5. GameStop, Inc., dba Game Stop, 672 Centre of New England Blvd.
6. Anthony Village Antiques, 658 Washington Street
7. Rainbow Relics, 89B Sandy Bottom Road
8. DAI Collectables, 1000 Knotty Oak Road
9. Sandy Bottom Bait & Tackle Inc., 97 Sandy Bottom Road
10. Capwell Sport Center, Inc., David Capwell, 35 Pilgrim Avenue
11. Bulldinks LLC, dba Uptown Music & Video, 192 Pilgrim Avenue, Unit 2

A motion was made by Councilman McGee seconded by Vice-President Carlson to open public hearing. All voted Aye.

There was no public comment on the above license renewals.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Vice-President Carlson to close public hearing. All voted Aye

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Vice-President Carlson to approve license renewals. All voted aye.

Renewal of Auto Salvage licenses

1. Capozzi's Auto Sales and Salvage, Inc., 2015 New London Turnpike
2. Chatelle, Russell L. dba RC Repair, 625 Hammet Road

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to open public hearing. All voted Aye.

There was no public comment on the above license renewals.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilwoman Duxbury to close public hearing. All voted Aye.

A motion was made by Councilman Laboissonniere seconded by Councilman McGee to approve license renewals. All voted Aye.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kenneth Jackson, 2799 Harkney Hill Road, believes Council just gave the school department \$300,000. I met with Mr. Levis last Friday and he told me that the \$300,000 in capital is for the chrome books next year. This is all maintenance of effort. Feels this needs to be discussed at the FTM.

Representative Sherry Roberts spoke regarding the CDBG grant. She has done extensive research on RhodeMap and it is a bad thing, just another way for HUD to get their tentacles into our cities and towns so that it doesn't have to sit on the shelf anymore. She will send the Council more information.

Robert Nardolillo, 960 Maple Valley Road, spoke on open government and transparency. It sounds like there are a few council members who feel strongly about this (video taping), but it also sounds like it is a financial issue. I feel strongly about this because people work two jobs and they work long hours. There are elderly and disabled that want to participate in government and it is very difficult.

Also, we need to be concerned about accepting federal grants with strings attached. We don't want to lose our town sovereignty.

Superintendent Mike Convery thanked the Town Council for their consideration and adoption of the school budget. It is needed and much appreciated.

Raymond Budziak, 429 Fairview Avenue said that it is hard to do business in Coventry, everytime you turn around, there's something else, as he referred to the T. Miozzi Asphalt business leaving Coventry. He is also in favor of GPS devises in the town trucks.

James Pearson, 8 Nicole Lane, echoed what Representative Nardolillo said, that open government is important, to be able to serve elderly and disabled folks, those working multiple jobs, those caring for their families. It's all about sharing information in order to make informed decisions and I urge you to find a way.

A motion was made by Vice President Carlson seconded by Councilman McGee to adjourn meeting. All voted aye.

Town Clerk