

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

June 8, 2009

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

6:00 – 6:30 P.M. Town Council and School Committee Collective Bargaining Review

6:30 – 7:00 P.M. Town Council Collective bargaining

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - 7:00 P.M.

(Town Hall Annex Auditorium)

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

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague

Town Solicitor Patrick Rogers

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation by Pastor Barbara DaCosta of First Christian Church

Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

President Spear announced that no action was taken in Executive Session.

Resolution adopting budget for FY 2009-2010

President Spear reviewed proposed budget which establishes level funding for the schools and a budget for the town reflecting level funding plus an additional decrease of approximately \$1.5 million. This budget will do what the community wants and reflects no tax increase.

Councilman Cloutier responded that he thinks the idea of 0% increase is a good thing, as it is not a great year for a lot of folks. But it is a difficult budget and some cuts are severe on the kids and leagues as they could lose \$7,000 - \$8,000. Councilman Cloutier noted that he is not comfortable with the cuts proposed in the Human Services Department.

Mr. Hyde echoed Mr. Cloutier's comments, noting that he also believes it would be great to have a 0% tax increase, but is not comfortable giving up certain things such as a snowplow driver and cutting the Recreation Department so severely that children will have to pay to play on the fields. Mr. Hyde remarked that cutting this deeply will hurt; he doesn't want to hurt the community and believes Council should look into the reserve funds.

Mr. Spear asked Mr. West for clarification regarding surplus money.

Mr. West replied that the town has \$4.9 million in the unrestricted reserves; \$5.5 million in Tax Anticipation note debt and further noted that the town has to maintain the reserves in order to roll over the note. There needs to be \$4.4 to 4.5 million in order to maintain our bond rating, which leaves about \$400,000 of reserves that we can utilize. Of that, \$140,000 is being used in this budget. I believe Mr. Hyde is referring to restricted money, which is not part of the operating budget.

Councilman Hyde asked what is left in the cell tower fund and Mr. West replied about \$630,000. Approximately \$50,000 has been set aside for the Rice Field project and about \$370,000 will be used to cover the deficit for this year (a deficit that was created by the state). The remaining \$200,000 is included in the budget to balance next year's budget.

Councilwoman Flanagan stated that she does not feel these sacrifices will cripple us or impair the important services the town provides. Next year and the following year we may find ourselves in a worse position. I support 0% tax increase, however, do feel badly about some of the cuts, especially the charitable donations.

Councilman Shibley stated that he was told by taxpayers while walking house to house, that taxes are too high, and he supports no tax increase.

President Spear commented that after consideration of many factors, he has concluded that obligations are extended beyond reasonable and responsible levels of expectation, resources and funding. There is need for more careful and responsible planning based on more stable assurance that such commitments can be responsibly met.

It is not in the best interest of the Town Council to impose increased financial obligations upon the community. We need to begin to achieve better control of financial considerations and must work together to resolve contract settlements. This can best be accomplished by not establishing Town budget obligations beyond the year immediately facing us, and to do so until the economic situation facing us becomes more stable and predictable. It is appropriate and in the best interest of the taxpayers to set forth the programs and services for fiscal 2010 as established in the budget that herewith is presented.

President Spear recessed meeting briefly, then reconvened meeting, announcing that on June 30 at the Financial Town Meeting the budget may be amended and increased up to \$175,000 before the need to go to an all day referendum.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Laura Flanagan to adopt budget. Motion passes 3-2. (Mr. Cloutier and Mr. Hyde vote No)

Mr. Hyde further commented that legal fees have been raised 157%.

Public Comment

Charlene Szczsponik commented that public should be allowed to comment on the budget before it is adopted; Angela Hoff, Wisteria Drive, admires what the Town Council has done and taxpayers need to abide by that decision.

The President of the Veterans' Council asked to have their \$4500 donation restored in order to continue services the Veterans provide and Denise Penichia, Director of the Samaritan Suicide Hotline, also asked the Town Council to restore its \$500.00 grant.

Ms. Appolonia, 11 Orchid Trail, told the Town Council that her calculations indicate a cost to the taxpayers of \$3.30 a month to keep Oak Haven School open.

Wendy Bettez, 32 Wright Road, asked if the Town Council has a long range financial plan and President Spear responded that they do not.

Kelly Erinakes, Coventry Teacher's Alliance President, stated that as requested by the Town Council and School Committee, the CTA did come forward and gave back to the town this year.

Ms. Flanagan noted that the teachers aren't willing to make concessions without a three year contract, and this reflects a 9-14% increase.

Mike Baird, 2172 Plainfield stated there is a need for leadership on boards and commissions. Also, the Town could be making more money if mobile home parks are taxed at a commercial rate, people selling hay should be taxed commercially, and the tax freeze for the elderly should not be freezing the taxes of people who can afford it. The windmill project should be looked into, can bring in a lot of money. The town needs a planner; you can't put everything on one man.

Joe Brown, Colvintown Road, stated that he is not against the teachers, but against their contract. He supports the current budget and wants to understand what the concessions are.

Allison Doder, Audubon Lane stated that the teachers did make concessions. Judy Liver of Lynn Drive has two children in the school system and would like the Council to revisit the budget.

Gary Beaudoin commented that the teachers did give back in this contract and he will work as hard as he can to defeat the budget at the FTM.

Gary Cote feels it is impossible to have no tax increase and by level funding the schools, Oak Haven School will be closed. We need a very small increase. If you can make the smallest tax increase that we've seen in the past 20 years, you would have accomplished your goal.

Gordon Davignon, Hickory Road, advocates for the elderly and disabled. He suggests money be reinstated, and further suggested the need for consolidation of services.

Nancy Sprengelmeyer, 26 Taft Street, encouraged people to remain positive. The School Committee has some difficult decisions to make next week.

Scott Guthrie, 31 Maplewood Drive, believes that most of the people here feel a small tax increase would be appropriate.

President Spear replied, asking how it would be determined who would get the increase, how much, and where would it be spent?

Mr. Guthrie noted that the State may be looking at a supplemental budget in September with the possibility of more money being cut from the town.

Rick Kalunian - Need to balance the needs of everyone, including the programs at Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Hyde further added that some of his purposes are to reinstate charities, licensing at the rabies clinic, the part-time clerk in Town Clerk's Office, a snow plow driver, and programs at parks and recreation.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to adjourn meeting. All voted Aye.

Town Clerk