



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
Conference Room L-101 Lower Level – Town Hall
7:00 P.M.**

March 13, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Woods at 7:00 p.m.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ROLL CALL

Councilor Baume - Absent
Councilor Borjeson
Councilor Castelle
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Dinunzio
Councilor Klett - absent
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Lisa Masten, Library Director
Karen Benner, Assistant Library Director
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Assistant

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

IV. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS - none

V. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A Budget Review: Library

Library Board of Trustees President Anna Eddy recognized the other Library Board members present at the meeting.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that he had originally recommended a \$10,000 reduction in the Library's budget; which according to the Library board would eliminate 15 Sunday openings for the Library. He stated that in conversations with the Library Board and staff they have submitted an alternative budget for Council consideration with a \$5,000 reduction. He stated that this reduction will restore the Sunday openings.

Councilor Nagel inquired as to whether the Council had previously received the proposed alternate budget. Town Manager replied in the negative and indicated that the changes were just received prior to the meeting.

Mr. Salomone reviewed the following sections of the Library budget:

711 – Administration

- Salaries increased per AFSCME contract
- Postage and shipping reduced to trend

712 – Children's Services

- Salaries increased per AFSCME contract

713 – Ref. and Community Services

- No major changes
- Dues and Subscriptions include online subscription services

714 – Building

- No major changes

715 – Collection Management

- Salaries increased per AFSCME contract and step increase for new personnel

716 – Circulation

- Salaries increased per AFSCME contract and step increase for new personnel

730 – Hubbard Book Fund

- No change

Board President Anna Eddy spoke regarding the proposed Library budget. She noted that the Library submitted a zero-growth budget in December as requested. She indicated that salaries make up 80% of the Library budget; her comments will focus on the 20% non-salary component, or \$349,143 and the Town Manager's request to reduce the budget by an additional \$10,000. She indicated that the Board and staff met regarding the budget and determined that the Library would have to be closed for 15 out of 25 Sundays due to the cut as there were no other cuts to be found to the non-salary component of the budget. Ms. Eddy indicated that Library Director Lisa Masten found \$5,000 in cuts that could be made to the materials budget in order to restore the Sunday openings. Ms. Eddy expressed concerns on behalf of the Board regarding a cut to the budget after several years of no-growth budgets. She indicated that from FY 2007-2008 through FY 2013-14 the Library's total budget increased from \$1,675,000 to \$1,688,000, or \$13,000. She indicated that with the payroll component removed, the Library's materials-only budget decreased from \$400,000 to \$349,143 during the same period, a decrease of \$51,000. She expressed concern that the Library has had to do more with less over the past six years and is additionally being asked to take an additional \$5,000 decrease. She indicated that with 12.8% cumulative inflation, the library's purchasing power has decreased by about \$103,000 since 2007-2008. Ms. Eddy indicated that the Library's total proposed budget represents 1.5% of the Town's budget, or 1.5 pennies of every tax dollar. She stated that according to the Library Use Value Calculator (available on the Library's website) the community receives \$20.00 in value for every \$1.00 invested. She also indicated that the Library will be able to reduce the CIP cost of phase II of the Radio Frequency Identification System from \$89,115 to \$70,300, an \$18,850 reduction to the Town's CIP budget. She expressed concern over impact of the reductions on the Library's purchasing power for materials and programs that the patrons desire, including hard copies, electronic books, large print books and books on CD. She stated that the Library

cannot continue to keep up with demand with continued budget cuts. She stated that with the proposed \$5,000 cut the Library will be operating at pre-2007 levels and expressed concern about future budgets.

Councilor Nagel thanked the Board for the factual information presented. Councilor Borjeson inquired about the increase in full-time salaries due to an additional full-time position. Mrs. Masten indicated that it is actually a step increase for an employee who started in December. Councilor Borjeson noted the CIP funding for Library automation software to increase efficiency. He inquired whether this automation will have a positive budget in the operating budget. Ms. Eddy stated that while it will have a positive impact in operations, it will not reduce the budget, only reallocate circulation resources in order to better staff other areas such as technology and to provide better and more efficient service to the patrons. Councilor Borjeson stated that the Council has been supportive of the Library's needs.

Councilor Castelle thanked the Board for the presentation and expressed gratitude to the Library for its level of service to the community. He stated support for improving funding. Councilor Dinunzio inquired about how difficult it was to determine the items to be included in the \$5000 cut and he also inquired about Sunday traffic and usage of the Library. Mrs. Masten replied that on average 350-400 people visit the Library with an average circulation of 800 items during the four-hour Sunday openings. She stated that one of the biggest challenges is the rising costs of books and e-books. She indicated that e-books can cost three times more for a library to purchase than a consumer. Councilor Klett inquired about other area libraries' Sunday hours. Mrs. Masten replied that it varies – some are never open on Sundays and some area open for certain Sundays each year; none are open on Sundays year-round.

Councilor Nagel inquired about the effect of the new tracking system software. Mrs. Masten replied that there will be a change to the software through May and June, in which the first phase involves placing a chip on each item and the second phase will be the software and equipment to read the chips for self checkout and check-in. She stated that this is in progress and that the requested funding is for the second phase.

Mayor Woods thanked the Board for their presentation and stated that he is in favor of restoring a portion of the Library's budget.

B. Budget Review: Parks and Recreations/Grounds

810 – Administration

- No major changes

831 – Grounds Maintenance

- Overtime reduced to reflect utilization of additional seasonal employees
- Seasonal increased to fully staff seasonal employee allotment

832 – Cemeteries

- No major changes

833 – Historical Properties

- No major changes

834 – Tree Maintenance

- No major changes

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons inquired as to how the busway will affect the town's budget in the future and asked who will be responsible for maintaining the grounds at Newington Junction. She asked what percentage of the Town's budget is allocated towards Human Services and the Assessor's office and how many residents each department serves.

Ann Marino, 38 Dalewood Road: Ms. Marino stated that she is the Membership Chair of the Friends of the Library and she shared the following statistics:

- In 2009 the Library offered 78 adult programs with an attendance of 3,300 patrons

- In 2012 the Library offered 139 adult programs with an attendance of 4,700 patrons
- During the same time period, children's programs increased by over 30%, with an attendance of over 30,000 patrons

Ms. Marino stated that the Library often has to limit the attendance of popular programs and expressed concern over the lack of space in the building for these programs. She inquired about what has become of the proposals to expand the Library since the two adjacent properties were purchased seven and thirteen years ago.

Mady Kenney, 53 Crestview Drive: Ms. Kenny remarked that the Town is nickel and diming the Library by asking for a cut of \$5,000 and noted that in this economy more people rely on the Library services. Ms. Kenny note that while the Parks Department does a great job in preparing school grounds landscaping each spring, the landscaping is overgrowing with weeds by the end of the summer. She also noted that the trash containers in the municipal parking lot are often full and inquire about whether they are emptied on a regular basis. She also asked where the Parks and Rec income is allocated in the budget and whether the Department is self-sustaining. Ms. Kenny also asked Mr. Hedberg to maintain the planter pots on his property in the center.

VII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Mayor Woods indicated that the State DOT will maintain the busway area and stations. He also stated that the Library Board is looking into the Library's needs in regards to expansion and this information would then go to the Town Manager's office and Town Council for discussion. He noted that per State law the Town cannot use herbicides at school locations, which is why weeds appear on school grounds during the summer and stated that the Town doesn't have the manpower to weed the landscaping by hand. He stated that while several Parks and Recreation programs are self-sustaining, the department as a whole is not.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Borjeson made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 p.m. and was seconded by Councilor Marocchini. The motion passed 8 – 0 (Councilor Baume Absent).

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Trevethan
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager