



John Salomone  
Town Manager

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

**STEPHEN WOODS, MAYOR**

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
Conference Room L-101 – Town Hall  
131 Cedar Street**

**March 21, 2013  
7:00 p.m.**

## MINUTES

---

Mayor Woods called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in conference room L-101.

### **I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **II. ROLL CALL**

Councilor Borjeson  
Councilor Bottalico - absent  
Councilor Castelle  
Councilor Cohen  
Councilor DelBuono  
Councilor Klett  
Councilor McBride - absent  
Councilor Nagel  
Mayor Woods

#### Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager  
Ann Harter, Finance Director  
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director  
Bruce Till, Parks and Recreation Superintendent  
Donna Miller, Library Director  
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Assistant

### **III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA**

Prior to Public Participation, Mayor Woods announced that the Northwood Plaza has been sold at auction by a company that plans to open a grocery store in the plaza by the end of this summer. He thanked Economic Development Director Andy Brecher for his hard work in relation to this item.

Public Participation – none.

### **IV. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS**

Councilor DelBuono stated that Councilor Bottalico is absent from the meeting due to illness.

Councilor Borjeson congratulated Mr. Brecher on his accomplishment and expressed confusion over hearing about a budget cut proposed by the Republican Party that would reduce Mr. Brecher's contracted salary by 33%.

### **V. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS**

A. Budget Review: Parks and Recreation/Grounds

Town Manager Salomone and Parks and Recreation Superintendent Bruce Till reviewed the following sections of the budget:

#### 810 – Administration

- Slight increase in conferences, meetings and training due to trend.

Councilor Nagel inquired about the increase in training costs. Mr. Till stated that he encourages his staff to participate in National Parks Association-related training.

Councilor Klett inquired about the part-time Cemetery Maintainer and Special Events Coordinator positions. Mr. Till replied that the Special Events Coordinator position has been moved to the special revenue fund of the budget and that the Cemetery Maintainer position was not filled last year.

#### 820 – Recreation Programs

- Has been eliminated due to recreation programs being self-sufficient.

#### 831 – Grounds Maintenance

- Overtime and seasonal salaries adjusted to account for a shift towards seasonal staffing to be utilized during peak workloads.
- Technical supplies and materials reduced to trend
- Technical equipment increased to purchase a backhoe tractor attachment

Councilor Cohen inquired about whether there would be any additional savings in personnel benefits. Town Manager Salomone replied that only overtime is being reduced, no positions are being eliminated. Town Manager Salomone stated that the plan is to hire more seasonal people in order to better handle heavy workloads during peak times.

#### 832 – Cemeteries

- Part-time salary reduced to trend.

#### 833 – Historical Properties

- No change from prior year's budget

Councilor Nagel inquired about the Town's duties towards maintaining the Town's two historical houses. Town Manager Salomone replied that the Parks Department will continue to perform exterior maintenance at the two properties and major structural projects capital expenses are accounted for in the CIP budget. Councilor Nagel noted that the historic buildings are unique in nature and must be maintained and preserved because they cannot be replaced.

#### 834 - Tree Maintenance

- Slight increase in training for Tree Warden.

Councilor Borjeson noted that the Republican Party sent their proposed cuts to the media prior to the Council receiving the cuts. He asked Mr. Till about the impact that would be caused by the proposed cuts, including closing the Churchill Park pool, a decrease in park improvements and a decrease in the Mill Pond park renovations study, for a total decrease of about \$135,000. Mr. Till replied that the attendance at Churchill last summer was about 13,557 versus 9,009 at Mill Pond pool. He also noted that the pool is used by summer camp attendees as well as for swimming lessons. He noted that while some programs in the special revenue funds help to subsidize other programs, none of the special revenue fund programs use tax dollars. He noted that the utilities and chemical cost for the Town's three pools (including the pool at Newington High School) is about \$16,000 and stated that the monthly water cost for the Churchill Park Pool is about \$2,500 - \$3,000. Mr. Till indicated that there are studies being conducted at both Churchill and Mill Pond pools and he recommended that the Council waits until both studies are complete prior to making any decisions about preserving and/or closing pools. Town Manager Salomone clarified that the monthly water cost is actually for all of the pools. He stated that he is unsure whether closing the Churchill Park pool would achieve the quoted \$50,000 savings and estimated a savings of closer to \$25,000 - \$30,000.

Councilor DelBuono noted that the subject of the Churchill pool and water loss issue has been discussed for the past several years. She addressed Councilor's Borjeson's comments about the newspaper article and confirmed that the Republicans did send in their recommended reductions in order to make the public aware and to gather the public's opinions on the proposed cuts. She stated that no decisions have been made about the cuts and said that she would forward the document with the proposed cuts to any Councilor who has not received it. Councilor Nagel agreed with Councilor DelBuono's comments and stated hope that any conversations about what to include or not include in the final budget would be done in a gentlemanly manner.

Councilor Klett inquired about how the Parks and Recreation master plan addressed the Town's pools. Mr. Till replied that the master plan was done several years ago and addressed turf fields, the pools, including the possible closure of one pool as well as building a facility that would be large enough for the needs of the community as a whole. Councilor Klett noted that the master plan cost the Town about \$50,000 and inquired whether it specifically recommended closing Churchill pool. Mr. Till replied that the plan recommended studying both pools and possibly closing one of them but did not take a specific position towards closing Churchill pool. Councilor Klett questioned spending \$35,000 on another study. Mr. Till stated that the cost of the study is \$16,000 and will look at both pools, including the loss of water at Churchill and other issues in order to give the Town a better handle on a direction on its aquatics program. Town Manager Salomone stated that the master plan process started in 2005 and was finalized in 2007. He stated that it is simply a master plan for the future and is not an engineering study; specific projects that are undertaken based on the plan may require specific engineering studies. Councilor Klett remarked that people might be frustrated with spending money on a study only to need additional studies. Town Manager Salomone replied that it is an important document and cited the turf field as a successful project that was a result of the study. He noted that not all recommendations from the master plan will be implemented. Councilor Klett inquired about whether the usage figures include non-residents. Mr. Till replied in the affirmative but noted that non-residents must be accompanied by residents and stated that all annual pass holders are Town residents.

Council Cohen inquired what would happen to plans for the new community center if the study indicates that Mill Pond pool can remain useful. Mr. Till replied that the study will take into account that both pools are over 45 years old and will look at their useful life spans. Mayor Woods indicated that there are different studies being discussed: 1) the master plan, which is a global overview of the needs of the community for the next 25 years and 2) a separate study of the pools that will determine the life span of the two pools, whether they can be fixed or shut down. He noted that he is surprised that Churchill pool has higher usage. Mayor Woods indicated that a third study is possible for next year if it appears that the community center project will move forward. He indicated that he doesn't believe that the Town will be able to afford one pool that will be large enough to meet the needs of the Town. Town Manager Salomone stated that the Churchill pool wouldn't be closed due to the leak; rather, it would be closed if the studies determine that closing it would better serve the Town.

Councilor DelBuono inquired whether the 13,000 attendance number is the number of people who used the pool or the number of visits to the pool. Mr. Till replied that there were 13,000 visits to the pool. Councilor Klett inquired whether usage has decreased over the past years. Mr. Till replied in the negative.

#### B. Budget Review: Library

Town Manager Salomone and Library Director Donna Miller reviewed the following sections of the budget:

##### 711 – Library Administration

- Slight decrease in longevity due to personnel changes throughout the Library.

##### 712 – Children's Services

- Slight overall salary increase due to step increases, balanced by a reduction in part-time salaries.
- Increase in dues and subscriptions due to increased use of various online databases.

##### 713 – Reference and Community Services

- Slight decrease in overall salary due to personnel and reclassification changes.

##### 714 – Building

- No change from prior year's budget.

### 715 – Collection Management

- Decrease in salaries due to retirement and reclassification of position.

### 715 - Circulation

- Slight increase overall in salaries due to reclassification and step increases.

Councilor Castelle inquired about the increase in salaries. Ms. Miller explained that the budget requests a reclassification of a staff member to help oversee the circulation department, rather than having the same person overseeing both circulation and technology. She stated that the increase is offset by a decrease in collection management salaries.

### 730 – Hubbard Book Fund

- No change from prior year's budget.

Councilor Borjeson again referred to the Republican's letter to the newspaper with proposed cuts. He inquired about the request for an automated collection system, requested by the Library through the CIP. He noted the Republican's proposal to remove the \$65,000 item and inquired about the impact such removal would have and also how the system would save money in security and staffing. Ms. Miller replied that the current system does not allow for security tags to be placed on CD's and DVD's and that the system for checking out CDs and DVDs is extremely antiquated and thus it takes twice as long as it should for staff to check out these items. She stated that the time needed to check out these materials would be cut in half with the new system. Ms. Miller also noted 46 instances of stolen books since September, in which the page with the bar code was removed and the book was stolen. She stated that the cost of these 46 items is over \$900.00. She also stated that the new system will include 3-4 self-checkout stations with credit card machines attached, which will reduce the amount of time staff spends collecting fines. She noted that the Town of Simsbury's fine revenue has increased since it implemented this system. Ms. Miller stated that the system will improve productivity, revenue and will save money in the long run.

Councilor Castelle stated support for the system and stated that it is an essential item for the Library to maintain its status and reputation. He expressed concern over this item being identified as a possible reduction. Councilor Klett expressed support for the system. Councilor DelBuono clarified that there is nothing personal about these proposed cuts and that the recommendations are across the board. She stated that they do not come easily and noted that she had asked Councilor Bottalico about the CIP vote and he had said that he voted for the items in order to forward them to the Council for consideration and that a vote at the CIP level is not necessarily a vote in support of everything on the list. Councilor DelBuono agreed that a security system is needed, but questioned whether this is the year to do it. She expressed great respect for the Library. Ms. Miller noted that this item had been deferred by the CIP Committee twice in the past years. Councilor Cohen expressed disappointment in the possibility of cutting this important system but noted that this is an example of the Council's difficult task in considering what to cut. Councilor Nagel noted that as a Liaison to the Library Board he supports the Library but noted that this is the first time that this item has been brought to the Council for consideration. He stated that due to this as well as the current financial situation, this item has been brought forth as a potential adjustment; nothing personal towards the Library.

Town Manager Salomone noted that this is a two-year project; with the second half to be considered during the next budget.

### C. Budget Review: Employee Leave Liability, Special Reserve Funds/Other Funds

#### 3000 – Employee Leave Liability

Town Manager Salomone explained that the Town budgets for unused sick leave-time that is accumulated by employees and paid out upon separation. He stated that employees that were hired after 1994 are not eligible to be paid for unused sick leave upon separation, so this fund will eventually be eliminated once all of the employees hired prior to 1994 retire.

#### 5000 - Special Reserve/Other Funds

Town Manager Salomone reviewed the various special revenue funds and explained that they are self-sustaining funds, including Cemetery, Road Aid Maintenance, LOCIP Fund, Recreation Program, Human Services Needs and Donations, and Senior and Disabled Center Donations.

D. Budget Review: Revenues

Town Manager Salomone reviewed the Town's various sources of revenue:

Taxes – includes current levy, prorated and prior year tax, and liens.

Town Manager Salomone noted that if the Governor's proposal to eliminate the car tax passes it wouldn't go into effect until next year. Mayor Woods inquired about how such cut would affect the mill rate. Mrs. Harter replied that the mill rate would increase about 5.3 mills, or 16.5% if the car tax were to be eliminated.

Town Manager Salomone noted that the State is considering reducing tax penalty interest from 18% to 12%.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS)

Town Manager Salomone noted that the State-owned PILOT has been eliminated but the private hospital reimbursement has been increased. He noted that the overall PILOT revenue is expected to decrease by \$287,000.

Licenses and Permits/Rentals/Investment Income/Fines

Town Manager Salomone noted that permit fees related to the Victory Garden projects were received in 2012-13; therefore the revenue is expected to decline in 2013-14 due to a lack of large building projects.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that investment income is very slight, due to low interest rates. He noted, however, that low interest rates are favorable to the Town's bonding costs.

State Aid/Federal Aid

Town Manager Salomone indicated that State Aid is expected to decrease about \$169,000 and Federal Aid is expected to decrease about \$140,800.

E. Budget Review: Other Programs Not Previously Discussed

962 – Special Contingency

- Increase to account for potential union wage increases due to contract negotiations, retroactive increase for AFSCME personnel for 2012-13 due to ongoing negotiations and potential administrative group salary increases for 2013-14.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA**

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive – Ms. Kenny requested clarification as to why the Library is undergoing unusual scrutiny for the proposed automated collection system and cited the turf field project as an example of how certain departments are held to different standards of accountability when it comes to requests for significant funding. Ms. Kenny inquired as to whether the promised savings and revenue related to the turf field has ever been accounted for and she also inquired about the utility bills for the lights at the turf field.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive – Ms. Lyons noted that the Parks and Recreation master plan recommended that the turf field have a baseball overlay, and indicated that this never happened as well as several other recommendations that have not been followed. Ms. Lyons noted the age of the Town's two pools and the 2007 recommendation to replace both pools in the near future. She noted that she will also be keeping a close eye on the Town Hall renovation/Community Center project and asked people to take a look at the master plan as the project moves forward.

John Slusarski, 40 Grandview Drive – Mr. Slusarski expressed shock in the lack of interest by the residents about the budget and expressed concerns about the under-funded pension funds and the Board of Education's proposed increase. He thanked the Council for addressing his questions and concerns and encouraged citizens to get involved.

## **VI. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS**

Councilor Borjeson noted that the Councilors are volunteers who are trying to do right for the Town and remarked about a number of personal verbal attacks against him by various parties. He stated that he has been troubled by these actions as he has been working hard on various bi-partisan groups and committees to settle the budget in a very difficult year.

Councilor DelBuono remarked that it is unfortunate that the comments are becoming personal and clarified that her stance is to not have an increase to the Town budget of more than 3%. She stated that the Council has a difficult job and that she is doing her best to make appropriate recommendations. She indicated that she has not made any personal comments in any publication or public forum.

Councilor Cohen requested to have a discussion of the entire long-range CIP at the next Council meeting. Mayor Woods instructed the Town Manager to add an item for the CIP discussion to the next agenda.

Councilor Klett stated appreciation for Councilor Borjeson's hard work but stated that one's feelings about being attacked does not give the right for one to attack others. She stated that it is unfortunate when it becomes about what's right for individual Councilors rather than what's right for the Town and asked the Council to be more respectful of each other.

Councilor Castelle thanked the Town Manager, Mrs. Harter and staff for their hard work towards the budget and thanked the members of the public who have come out to voice their opinions.

Mayor Woods indicated that the lights at the turf field are paid for by the various groups that use the field. He stated that while there are some groups that wish to rent the field, the field is typically in use by Town groups during the desired times. He stated that the field is widely used by many groups and said that he will ask Mr. Till to report any cost savings to the Council. He agreed about Mr. Slusarski's comments about the lack of public interest in the budget process and urged the public to attend and speak.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Nagel moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. Motion seconded by Councilor DelBuono. Motion passed 8-0 (Councilor Bottalico absent)

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Trevethan  
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager  
Town of Newington