



Jeff Wright
Mayor

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 8, 2010

Audio verbatim transcript of meeting available in Town Clerk's Office

Mayor Wright called the Special Meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room, Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

Councilor Cohen
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Klett
Councilor Lenares
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Councilors Absent

Councilor Banach

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Director of Finance
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Bruce Till, Parks and Recreation Superintendent
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Maddy Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: Mrs. Kenny noted that the budget process is beginning and remarked that the residents will live with the consequences of the budget. She stated that it is the right, responsibility and obligation of residents to voice their opinion and urged residents to attend meetings, ask questions and express their opinions.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons urged the Council not to ignore smaller projects that are needed throughout the Town, including various safety issues such as the stairway at Mill Pond Falls. She urged the Council to allocate funds needed for the various departments throughout the Town to do their jobs. She again urged the Council to focus on smaller projects and safety issues to be addressed.

IV CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A Overview of Budget and budget Procedures

Town Manager Salomone indicated this was the first of many budget review sessions prior to final adoption of the budget on April 13 and he reviewed the schedule of upcoming budget meetings. He commented that while these are challenging times the Town has been fiscally conservative, with a solid fund balance and a high tax collection rate; therefore the current year budget is pretty much on schedule. Town Manager Salomone cautioned that the situation with the State budget alludes to possible cuts to Town funding over the next year, and although there may be reductions there is no specific information available at this time so it is difficult to make a determination about what may or may not be cut. He noted that State aid accounts for approximately 20% of the Town's budget. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the proposed General Government budget reflects an increase of 1.0%, or \$281,625 over 2009-10, and the proposed Board of Education budget reflects an increase of 3.0% or \$1,726,449. He stated that based on this proposed budget the mill rate would be 29.36, with an average tax increase of \$143.00 or 3.0%. He noted that the AFSCME and Town Administrative employees took a zero-percent wage increase last year, and indicated that the Town is in negotiations with both the AFSCME and IBPO unions at this time.

Town Manager Salomone gave an overview of various departmental budgets:

Facilities Management

- Phase out custodian position at the Senior and Disabled Center, contract cleaning services
- Reduce Building Department staffing; allocate time for one of the Building Inspectors to work a partial schedule in the Facilities Department to assist with the management of four major upcoming projects.

Public Safety

- No wage increases or step increases have been included for NPD staff. The Town is in contract negotiations with the IBPO.
- Fire Department budget has been increased in the areas of training and equipment due to a successful drive to increase volunteers.

Public Works

- Reduced snow removal budget slightly due to efficiencies in road salt/treatment application
- Refuse disposal reduced to reflect decrease in tipping fee to \$69/ton, as well as for the single stream recycling program, which is estimated to reduce solid waste collection by 1000 tons.

Building Department

- Reduce staffing to one Full Time Building Official, 1 2-day per week Assistant Building Official, 1 3-day per week Assistant Building Official and one Administrative Secretary to be shared with the Engineering Department. This reflects a continued downturn in building permits.

Senior and Disabled Center

- Phase out custodian position, contract cleaning services

Library

- Hours reduced by eliminating Sunday hours year-round and closing on eight Saturdays in the summer.

Medical Insurance/Pension

- Medical claims are down
- Pension costs have risen, due to a reduction in investment proceeds used to fund the account.

CRRA

- The Town's contract with CRRA will end during FY 2011-12, and the Town will need to make a decision soon about which direction to go in for waste removal after the current contract ends.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that each departmental budget as well as the CIP and Board of Education budgets will be discussed in detail during the upcoming meetings.

B Budget Review – Dept. of Parks and Recreation: Bruce Till, Superintendent

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Bruce Till addressed the Council regarding the Parks and Recreation budget. He indicated that the upcoming budget is flat. Mr. Till remarked that last year's budget included some cuts to positions, which made for a challenging year; however he is pleased with his team and the general direction of the department. Mayor Wright praised Mr. Till for his strong sense of accounting and cost management. Mr. Till noted that the department is utilizing accounting software to help track costs. He also noted that the Extravaganza is being run as a self-supporting program for the first time. Town Manager Salomone elaborated on the software implementation.

The Council discussed changes to the proposed staffing level for the upcoming fiscal year. The Town Manager's proposed budget includes an addition of one part-time Program Coordinator, which will be funded by a reduction in the transfer to the Recreation Fund. The Council and Mr. Till discussed the purpose of the new position, which will be to assist the Recreation Supervisors and coordinate various recreation programs, and also discussed how this position differs from previous positions which were eliminated in past budgets.

C Budget Review – Metropolitan District (MDC)

The Town Manager and Council briefly discussed the MDC budget. Town Manager Salomone explained that although the budget reflects a 2.08% increase over FY 2009-10, there is no increase in the cost of MDC service. Mayor Wright elaborated that the increase is because the Town's fiscal year is July 1 – June 30 and the MDC's fiscal year is January 1 – December 31; therefore the increase is an adjustment from the Town's previous fiscal year equal to the difference between the 2010 MDC tax and the amount the Town has paid for 2009.

V PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL (none)

VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Klett inquired about leaks in the Mortensen Center gym. Town Manager Salomone stated that there have been ongoing problems with leaks and although the leaky areas have been patched the roof needs to be addressed as a part of the Town Hall renovations.

Councilor Nasinnyk noted that Councilor Banach was absent from the meeting due to family issues and stated that he plans to attend the March 9 meeting.

Mayor Wright urged the Councilors to contact the Town Manager or department heads with any questions regarding the budget, preferably prior to that department's meeting.

VII ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 8:39 p.m. by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion seconded by Councilor Klett. Motion passed 8-0 (Councilor Banach absent).

Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Trevethan
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

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