



Jeff Wright
Mayor

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 18, 2009

Mayor Wright called the Special Meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room, Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present

Councilor Banach
Councilor Boni
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Bowen
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Lenares
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Lori Verreault, Executive Assistant
Ann Harter, Director of Finance
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL - None

IV CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A Budget Review – Human Services: Ken Freidenberg, Director

There is little change in the Human Services Department budget other than a slight adjustment in Consultant/Special Contractors for additional clinical therapist services due to increased needs as a result of the depressed economy, especially for seniors on a fixed income and family stress brought about by economic hardship.

With regard to fuel assistance, Mr. Freidenberg indicated there are several levels of assistance. The Community Renewal Program provides services through the Senior and Disabled Center for people who qualify, followed by Operation Fuel (State funded but administered by Human Services), followed by private and/or Special Needs Fund assistance.

Private donations are holding their own due to the generosity of the community; the Jefferson House Good Samaritan Fund helps provide assistance for residents 60 and over; there are fewer private resources for the younger populations.

Many positive youth development programs were begun this year and continue to be enhanced. The Committee on Community Safety is discussing an Asset Community Building approach which is a listening model and assists in empowering youth and the community.

Staff is handling the caseload, but some of the complexity is tough; early identification, early intervention is the key.

With regard to Parks and Recreation programs, Mr. Freidenberg indicated that various funding mechanisms have been used in the past for residents who need financial assistance to participate. A \$7,500 subsidy had previously been budgeted in the P&R budget or in the Human Services budget, but that was cut about 6-7 years ago. At present, Human Services approves discounts at various levels and both Human Services and Parks and Recreation offer payment plans, if needed. Other ways to offset these needs might be fundraisers or something similar to the \$1 contribution to Operation Fuel included in the utility bills.

- B Budget Review – Public Safety (Fire, Police, Street Lighting, Emergency Management, EMS): Kevin Ziegler, Kent Stoddard, Tom Jascowski, Board of Fire Commissioners; Chris Schroeder, Fire Chief/Fire Marshal; Richard Mulhall, Chief of Police; Roxanne Verbridge, Assistant to the Chief

Fire Department:

There is little change in the Fire Department budget other than a slight decrease in hours for the Deputy Fire Marshals because of less construction activity. Safety inspections will not be impacted.

Mr. Ziegler was happy to report they have had a large increase (20) in membership, which resulted in a shortage of funding for gear during the current fiscal year. They were able to compensate based on a bequest and by transferring funds within the current budget. There are 14 applications pending and 10 in the Cadet program. They are satisfied with the proposed budget as is. The pay-per-call program seems to be working, but they will have a better feel in November (suggestion made to consider renaming the program).

Police Department:

Mr. Salomone distributed a handout showing the aggregate budget figures for the department. Right-sizing the department by increasing the staff has resulted in lowering overtime, allowing a reduction in excess hours worked by officers, and

providing an opportunity to be proactive in staffing. There is no change in staffing proposed. No increases in salary are included for administrative or AFSCME staff members. The contractual 3.75% increase for IBPO members as well as step increases are included in the proposed budget; however, negotiations continue with the Union in regard to the contractual salary increase.

Chief Mulhall indicated that each department will be at full staffing with eight officers assigned to the Detective Division, one Youth Officer, and one Community Service Officer, with a second to be added in May once the new officers complete field training.

There was discussion regarding increased traffic enforcement and possibly additional officers in the future. The bicycle/foot patrols will resume shortly in the Town Center, and can be moved to other areas of the town as needed. Private duty work (performed by Officers outside their normal work day) does not impact the department's overtime or budget. Private contractors are billed on a weekly basis at 100% plus an administrative fee. By contract, Officers earn a minimum 4 hours pay, in 4 hour blocks of time. Defibrillators will soon be in every cruiser; officers are completing their training.

There is little change in the remaining budgets under Public Safety.

C Budget Review: Health

The Health budget reflects Newington's share on a per capita basis for being a member of the Central Connecticut Health District. While the Town's cost share hasn't changed, the funding subsidies for the CCHD have been cut by the State.

V PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – IN GENERAL

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Thanked the Council for their efforts, McDonald's has an "Enter" sign under the "Do Not Enter" sign.

VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Mayor Wright spoke of a letter received recently from the Vernon Police Department commending the Newington Police Department for its role in a recent arrest for a crime in Vernon involving a Newington resident.

VII ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 8:34 p.m. by Councilor Nagel, and seconded by Councilor Banach. Motion passed 9-0.

Loretta R. Verreault, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

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