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SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 29, 2009

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Monday, April 29, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Manager's Conference Room, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present from Council: Cascio, Console, Forrest, Hemmann, Kotkin (arrived 7:25 p.m.), Roberts, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Montinieri (arrived 6:50 p.m.), and Chairperson Adil (arrived 6:35 p.m.).

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Lisa Hancock, Finance Director; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk; Nancy Stillwell, Director of Social and Youth Services; RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager; and Amy Bello, Assistant Town Clerk

TOWN CLERK

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, said that under salaries, the two part-time positions have been cut from 19.5 hours a week to 15 hours a week. She said that the positions are not part-time clerical as stated in the budget book but part-time Assistant Town Clerks. They are trained and have been certified to the Secretary of the State's office. They are able to sign anything that the Town Clerk can sign and perform all of the duties, too. She said that the overtime for the full-time union position has been cut from the budget. She has cut down on copying and binding because she anticipates fewer land recordings. She said that there is no money in the budget to update the Code. A hardcopy of the changes are given to the five people who have hardcopy Code books and the changes are put on the website. It is very costly to update annually.

Councilor Console said that the general office supplies budget was cut in half.

Dolores Sassano said that vital statistics binders and Council books do not need to be purchased next year.

Councilor Console asked if there was one assistant part-timer in the office.

Dolores Sassano said that there are two part-time Assistant Town Clerks. Everything that is done in the office, except Clerk of the Council, is done by State Statute.

Councilor Forrest asked about the legal notices.

Dolores Sassano said that legal notices include election warnings and hearing and adoption notices for resolutions and ordinances. These are published in the Hartford Courant. She said that she has looked into other publications like Wethersfield Life and the Rare Reminder but there may be time constraints because the papers do not come out daily.

Councilor Forrest asked if the technology was available to prepare the minutes instead of having staff prepare them.

Dolores Sassano said that there are some software programs available but they are expensive and require someone to edit them. Voice recognition technology works very well for one speaker but is not good for a group setting.

Councilor Walsh asked if both part-time Assistant Town Clerk positions were reduced to 15 hours a week.

Dolores Sassano said that they were both reduced.

Councilor Cascio said that the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association is working with the State Department of Vitals on an electronic death certificate. He said that it will take revenue away from the Towns.

Dolores Sassano said that the State has been talking about it, but the Town Clerks haven't seen anything electronic yet. The State Department for Environmental Protection has started electronic processes. It costs the Town more money to do a sports license and now the Town only receives \$1 per transaction.

RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager, asked if there was money available to keep on-line updates.

Dolores Sassano said that the money can come out of another line item for that expense.

SOCIAL AND YOUTH SERVICES

Nancy Stillwell, Director of Social and Youth Services, said that the special needs services are up with the economy. She said that there are 379 subscribers to Dial-A-Ride. The Independent Transportation Network (ITN) will be coming online shortly and the Department can begin enrolling clients. She said that the special needs caseload is continuing to grow and additional part-time help is needed in this area. The ROPE program has been eliminated along with all adventure and summer trips. She said that she hopes to maintain the Crossroads program with the addition of some part-time help. She said that all of the Town's prevention programs are being cut from the budget. She handed out a needs assessment survey and ROPE worksheet. She said that she would like to make a case for keeping the part-time social work position.

Councilor Cascio said that self-sustaining programming was discussed the other night with the Park and Recreation Department. He asked if that was considered with ROPE.

Nancy Stillwell said that it would be a fairly expensive program cost per child, probably around \$150 per child. She is afraid that the children that need the program the most will be the ones least able to afford it.

Bonnie Therrien said that this is a core education program that the Board of Education will have to replace.

Councilor Cascio asked what the Board of Education is going to implement in place of ROPE.

Bonnie Therrien said that she did know and that the Superintendent can be asked at the Board budget meeting next week.

Nancy Stillwell said that she understands the financial constraints and will work with the Board of Education. In response to Councilor's questions, she said that ROPE is held in Bristol at Pine Lake. It would be more costly to create a course in Town and there are plenty of courses in the area. The biggest cost of the program is the staff. Anyone who is trained and certified can lead the ROPE groups. There are anywhere between 35 and 50 participants in the wilderness/adventure program annually. The participants pay for the cost of the trip but not the cost of the staff associated with the trip. She said that she presented the Town Council will an analysis of the Department with a 10 percent cut to the Department's budget. That analysis included Department staff taking furlough days. The staff approached her with this give back and had not discussed it with their union. This current budget represents a 20 percent cut to the budget. The 10 percent cut included not filling a vacancy that occurred in December, scaling back the adventure program and the furlough days. Finally, she asked that if the Transportation Enhancement Funds become available, can she increase the part-time clerk's hours from 25 hours per week to 30 hours per week and use some of the funds for the salary.

Bonnie Therrien said that the only way the employees in the Social and Youth Services can take furlough days is if the union agrees to have all employees in that union take the furlough days.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked how long the two employees that will have their positions eliminated have worked for the Town.

Nancy Stillwell said that one employee has worked for the Town for 25 years and the other for 2 years. The person with 25 years will be able to retire.

Bonnie Therrien said that she has looked into enhancing the audio/video system in the Town Council Chambers next year. It will cost about \$32,000.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the current system allows for one camera to shoot a last supper type of shot. The camera feeds to a VCR and records the meeting and also transfers it live to channel 16. The computer controls the scheduling of the shows and the scroller. There have been problems with the video tapes not beginning because of the computer system. Town staff has developed specifications for a new system using better technology. There would be two cameras mounted that would be operated remotely. The VCR equipment would be replaced by DVD equipment. Reliability issues would improve and the quality of the broadcast would be better. HB is the best price for the equipment. It will not be in hi-def because Cox Cable does not broadcast in hi-def. IT can be upgraded later.

Councilor Hemmann asked if any grant money would be available for this project.

RaeAnn Palmer said that she would try to find grant money.

Councilor Roberts said that the public won't see the improvements in Town Hall but will see the poor broadcast.

RaeAnn Palmer said that someone from Cox Cable will be coming on Friday and setting up the audio/video equipment installed.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town has been having problem with Cox Cable for years.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri asked if funding can be found in this year's contingency.

Bonnie Therrien said that she will look at it at the end of the year.

Deputy Mayor Montinieri said that this equipment is an important piece for the Town Council Chambers. He said that technology changes so quickly, has Town staff looked into leasing the equipment.

RaeAnn Palmer said that she did not look into it, but will contact the vendors and see if they offer leasing.

Councilor Forrest asked what the timing would be for this equipment.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the old equipment will be up and running on Monday night for the Town Council meeting. A live broadcast will go out. The new equipment can be installed within 30 days of receipt of the order.

Councilor Cascio said that he, too, would like leasing looked into. This equipment changes so quickly.

Councilor Console asked what else the Town Manager would be bringing to Council to purchase this year.

Bonnie Therrien said that she will request the purchase of GIS equipment from frozen funds.

A discussion ensued concerning the rest of the budget workshop dates. The next budget workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6th at 5:30 p.m. There will be a meeting Thursday, May 7th at 7:00 p.m. and Monday, May 11th at 5:30 p.m. The Town Council can adopt the budget on Monday or another day that week before the 15th.

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*April 29, 2009 Notes
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ADJOURNMENT

At 7:40 p.m., Councilor Walsh moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Console. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Amy Bello
Assistant Town Clerk