

SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 29, 2008

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Wednesday, March 29, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. at the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, Prospect Street, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Console, Forrest, Hemmann, Kotkin, Roberts, Walsh and Chairperson Adil

Absent: Councilor Walsh and Deputy Mayor Montinieri

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, Lisa Hancock, Finance Director, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager, and Pamela Rapacz, Democratic Registrar of Voters

REVIEW OF THE 2008-2009 BUDGET

OVERVIEW

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said this is a horrible year for all Towns in general. Every municipality is in trouble and it is not going to get any better in the coming years unless another revenue source is going to come to municipalities. She said that she is working with Council of Small Towns (COST) to set up local revenue taxes that the Town will be able to get authorization for from the State. If no new revenues are established, the Town Council will need to think about cutting services. The tax increases will be getting worse. Revenues aren't there and expenditures are going sky high. She said that right now the budget is at a 5.53 percent tax increase. That is about \$316 for the average household with a house assessed at \$164,000. The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) cost is rising 7 percent, refuse is rising 6 percent, and insurance expenses are rising 17.5 percent and 4.5 percent. This budget shows items that she would normally not reduce but she feels the Town doesn't have much of a choice. For the fund balance, she used \$700,000. There will be no Connecticut Resource Recovery Association (CRRA) money next year. It is a revaluation year in 2009, so the Town will have to subsidize the tax rate or bring the fund balance down even more. The biggest, key number to remember is 1/10th of a mill is worth \$200,387. In the Budget book, the first column is the actual money spent in 2006, the next column is actual money spent in 2007, and the 2008 original budget is what is allocated during the process last year, and the projected amount spent, so far this fiscal year the Department request for 2009 and the Town Manager's request for 2009, and then the adopted amount. There are no new positions. There are no new hours for part-time employees. She said that she did prioritize new positions and new hours for positions that are really needed if money was found.

REVENUES

Lisa Hancock said that the budget grand total is a little over \$83,000,000 for the Town and Board of Education. Of the non-tax revenues, the Town only has \$14,000,000 to offset that budget amount. That would be State grants, fees and charges and the use of the Fund Balance. She highlighted the major sections:

- Property Taxes \$68,738,000 to offset the current budget. She is using a 98.6 percent collection rate. The prior levy taxes are dropping off at this point. With this budget, she is looking at a mill rate of about 32.94 mills. The taxes account for 83.2 percent of that budget. It is a significant amount. The interest and liens are a State requirement that the Town collect 18 percent per year on outstanding taxes that were not paid by the due date. There are also lien fees charged because the liens are recorded on the Land Records
- In response to Councilor Kotkin's question, she said yes, 07 actual column is the 2006/2007 actual figures and 2007/2008 actual is actual through March 21st, the 2008 projections is what is anticipated to be collected for the entire year, through the end of June. The Town is hoping to collect 100 percent of the 98.6 percent of the current levy, not including prior taxes. When creating the mill rate, she takes into account tax abatements, statutory requirements, elderly tax reductions, and an allowance for uncollectible taxes. It may look like the Town collects

100 percent of the taxes from these reports, it is really not 100 percent of the tax warrant. \$63,700,000 reflects the collection of 98.6 percent.

At 9:15 a.m., Councilor Hemmann arrived.

Lisa Hancock discussed:

- Licenses and Permit Revenue. She said much of this money comes from the Building Department's permitting. Transfer station, engineer, police, and Town Clerk fees also have permit and licensing revenues.
- Fines and Penalties. She said that these are parking tickets, a percentage of the moving violation tickets issued in Town, and municipal ordinance violations like blighted property fines. The grand total is slightly higher than last year.
- Investment Income. She said that the Town is being hit hard in the proposed budget. There is a substantial decrease in the estimated revenues. In previous years, the Town has done extremely well in comparison to what is proposed. Interest rates have dropped so drastically. They are just going below 2 percent. This budget incorporates an estimated investment earnings of 1.5 percent of the funds for a total of \$515,000. It is about half of what is in the proposed budget for the current year. She is estimating ending this year in a shortfall as well. She has taken certain measures to try and lock in the best rate before things became so bad for funds that the Town wouldn't need. Even with that, there will be a shortfall in the current year. She said she took the cash flows and an analysis of all of the investments that the Town currently has and stacked them up a little bit for increases in the budget and cash flow and then estimated what would be available every month. At that point, it is calculated out at how much would be invested at any one time of the month at 1.5 percent investment income return. If rates change for the better, then there would be changes in this later on.

Councilor Kotkin said that the Town's payment to the IRS for the arbitrage should also be going down.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the first phase of the Town Hall was behind so much that the money borrowed was earning too much by law and the Town has to pay it back.

Lisa Hancock said that the Town is reserving it on the balance sheet and setting it aside each month. Each month an analysis is done through the company that is calculating it for the Town. Each month the funds are set aside until it is fully expended at which time the Town will actually have to pay the IRS. The funds are being reserved for that purpose. The rates are an involved calculation that takes into account the rates the Town is earning and what interest the money was borrowed at. The lower interest rates should help. She discussed:

- State Grants-Pilots. The State grants and pilots show a slight increase. Most of these are based on the assessed values of the properties.

Councilor Roberts asked what was the PTR Block Grant that the Town no longer receives.

Lisa Hancock said that it was a one time payment through the State. It was a lucky receipt of funds. She discussed:

- State Grants-Other. The item listed B Int Sub is the way the State used to work. When the Town did any building construction, the State would require the Town to bond 100 percent of the project. After the project was complete, the State would do a final audit and calculate how much the Town would get back based on the payments that would go out each year. The State would set up a schedule and pay the Town back an amount each year based on the debt payments. These funds offset the Town's debt payments for the school construction that was done in prior years. Now the State has the Town only bond the portion that is the grant funding. The Town does a draw down every couple of months as the project expenditures are being made. The Town has to front the money for a couple of months and then there is a draw down process that gets the cash back to the Town. These funds represent the old school construction grants from the past. General Assistance is one that the Town does not always get. Years ago the Town used to handle all the State aid assistance for poverty stricken individuals. It is now done through the State of Connecticut. There are still some liens out there that are collected on. The telephone property tax money is stable. It is money from the cellular phone lines and regular lines. It is set through the State. The Pequot Grant is a State grant. This is using the Governor's numbers.

In response to Councilor Kotkin's question, Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Town is not receiving additional money for the large AT&T V-Rad boxes in Town. AT&T is claiming to the DPUC that the boxes are providing telephone service. She said that the lawsuit is about safety and this issue. The DPUC ruled that AT&T is a utility.

Lisa Hancock said that the Pequot Grant is the funds funneled through from the casinos to the State. The State received the revenue from them and this is the Town's share. These numbers are relative to the revenue brought into the casino. All of the State numbers are based on the Governor's proposed budget. These numbers are subject to change. The Town will not know until after this budget is passed. She said that generally when the Governor's budget is set, the funding to the Towns is capped. There have been times when the final numbers for the grants have changed.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that everything she is hearing from lobbyists is that the Legislators want to adopt the budget by the end of April.

Lisa Hancock said that the Greater Hartford Transit District fund is for elderly and handicap travel assistance and programs.

Councilor Hemmann asked what caused the significant difference in years between the 2008 revised and actual.

Lisa Hancock said that the actual number represent the to-date amount. The Youth Services Bureau Grant is the same way. It is associated with the Social Services Department. The Social Services Block Grant and CADAC Grant are also associated with the Social Services Department. The CRCOG Grant was a one time grant that the Town received this year.

Councilor Kotkin said that there was a lot of money that the Town thought it would get for sharing services with other Towns. He asked if that was for this fiscal year or the next.

Lisa Hancock said that CRCOG will receive that money. She said the Civil Preparedness Grant represents 50 percent of the Town's civil preparedness director's salary. The Town is authorized up to \$5,000 for the salary and will receive 50 percent of that in a State Grant. Mr. Fippinger has asked for the \$5,000 but with the cuts and priorities, he was allocated \$3,000. The Federal Grants usually occur when there is a disaster that costs the Town a lot of money. In 2007, that had to do with reimbursement from a snow storm that caused flooding. The COPS Grant is for the funding of the School Resource Officer which is now complete. That program is now completed as far as the Federal share of that program. The Town is on its own to fund that position now.

Councilor Hemmann asked about the School Building Grant. She asked if there was detail that discussed the remaining debt.

Bonnie Therrien said that information is under the debt section.

Lisa Hancock discussed Charges for Services. The first two charges are the Town Clerk's recording fees and the Town Conveyance tax. There was a drop in the recording fees. The conveyance tax includes State Legislation that allows the Town to collect taxes on the sale of properties.

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk said that the current rate is .025. It sunsets on June 30th and could go back to .0011. This is an issue before the legislators. This is the tax that realtors are saying is a hidden tax. It is not a hidden tax as some buyers aren't aware of it until the closing is through. The seller is supposed to be paying this tax at closing.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Appropriations Committee did come up with a two year extension on the conveyance tax last week. She said that the Town is alright for the year.

Chairperson Adil said that the Federal government is also requesting a whole new detail sheet behind closing documents that will spell that out. Hopefully that will take away some of the real estate agents' argument.

Dolores Sassano said that when a person receives a mortgage, there are a lot of fees and now some banks are not recording the releases when someone pays off the mortgage but giving the release to the homeowner for them to pay to have it recorded. She said that the recording fee is \$43 for a single page, \$26 of it going to the State, \$13 to the Farm Fund, \$3 to LOCIP, and \$1 to the Town Clerk's Office.

Councilor Kotkin said that nine months into the year in recording fees the Town is way off from what was expected. Is that because of fewer properties being sold?

Dolores Sassano said that there are fewer recordings coming through this year. The projections, with foreclosures and lower interest rates, are for more recordings next year.

Lisa Hancock said that with the interest rates going down, the projection will be pretty good. She said that she will continue to monitor revenues throughout the budget process but she is comfortable with this number.

Councilor Kotkin asked if Wethersfield has seen as much of a slow down in house sales as other Towns.

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that she doesn't think Wethersfield is as bad as some Towns.

Lisa Hancock said that the next column represents the Police reports that are requests made through the Police Department. There is a fee involved. The next column represents rents that the Town charges. The \$9,800 represents the Health Departments rental of space in Town Hall. The Private Duty is another extensive revenue source in this category. It is a wash with the Police private duty salary and benefits in the Police budget. Library fees have decreased substantially, due to the decreased space that the Library occupies. Library staff feels that fees will continue to be down next year. Park and Recreation program fees that offset the various programs is the next line. There is a fee to residents taking part in the program. The cell towers located in Town pay the Town a fee.

Councilor Hemmann asked if the cell towers have leases and what is the length of them.

Bonnie Therrien said that they are twenty year leases.

Lisa Hancock said that the Nature Center funds are for offsetting programs being held there. Under other revenue, the big revenue amount is from the Housing Authority. They pay the Town in lieu of taxes about \$97,000. It has been a fairly consistent amount throughout the years. The Town also received money for the portion of Goodwin Park that is in Wethersfield.

Councilor Kotkin said why the recycling revenue is down.

RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager, said that the whole region is down in recycling and Wethersfield is down less than other Towns. She said that she does not know why that is happening. She said that all Town buildings are doing white paper recycling.

Councilor Kotkin asked if it was because the Town is receiving a smaller fee for recycling or if people are recycling less.

RaeAnn Palmer said that she is talking about the tonnage.

Lisa Hancock said that she will look into this and get back to the Town Council.

Councilor Kotkin said that the Green Summit talked about recycling more and to the extend that the Town is getting paid for recycling, rather than paying CRRA, it is important the Town recycles more.

RaeAnn Palmer said that more education is also needed.

Councilor Kotkin said that he would appreciate an analysis of the costs and revenues.

Lisa Hancock said that the next section refers to the Education Grants. This year, the Town is about \$200,000 less than

anticipated. This has to do with the final numbers that come in from the Board of Education. She said that the numbers are derived from another complicated calculation. At this point, she still feels comfortable that the budget will be alright because of the other areas that the Town has done well in. This certainly impacts the revenues. The extra tax revenue will help out here. Again, these numbers are from the Governor's proposed budget. The last category has to do with other financial services. The \$700,000 is from fund balance. The Town has to be very careful with the use of the fund balance both now and in the future, especially when going out to bond.

Councilor Kotkin said that last year, he remembers a discussion on the revenue that the Board of Education receives that doesn't show up on this page.

Bonnie Therrien said that there are other accounts that the Board of Education has that don't show up on this page.

Councilor Kotkin asked that the Board of Education spike it out when they meet with the Town Council. It looked like a part of the Board budget increase is based on Special Education. It would be helpful to see what gets offset by additional special education reimbursement from the State.

Bonnie Therrien said that she will speak to the Superintendent of Schools and ask for a full report.

Councilor Console said that he thinks the Town shouldn't touch a dime of the fund balance this year.

Bonnie Therrien said that next year is revaluation year where the fund balance is usually used.

TOWN COUNCIL (page 1 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that the clerical expense is to pay for the person who televises the Town Council meetings. Unless the Town receives something back from an agency, she said she cut the contribution. Both COST and Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) monies are for dues. Channel 14 money is the Town's contribution. Greater Hartford Transit District money is for the Dial-A-Ride program. The Clean Energy Fund is not really zero but has been moved to another fund. NOth Central Connecticut EMS Council Incorporated (C-MED) dues are for emergency medical services for dispatch. The 375th Anniversary Committee is requesting \$50,000 - \$7,000 for banners and signs, \$5,000 for publicity, \$15,000 for parade and celebration, and \$18,000 for fireworks. She said that she cut back on this because a lot of this is happening after July 1, 2009. The big events will take place during the next fiscal year.

Chairperson Adil asked if they can fundraise.

Bonnie Therrien said that she can ask them to fundraise. RaeAnn Palmer is also looking for grants.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Hartford Foundation has a very specific program for community celebrations. She said that she has asked the Committee to put together a concept of what they are thinking of doing and then the Town can approach the foundation.

Councilor Roberts said that they had talked about inviting a delegation from the Town's sister city. She asked if there was any money the Foundation gives for cultural exchange.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Committee needs to put it all together and have the Town Manager make contact with its funding officer. It should be included in the proposal.

Dolores Sassano said that the Town actually has three sister city relationships- one in Japan, one in the Ukraine and one in Peru.

Bonnie Therrien said that she has removed the funding for the Wethersfield Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities because it had a \$13,000 balance in their checking account. The checking account was closed and the money has to now go through the Town. The next line item - the Audit has to be done. Under create informational materials - Money is included for an explanatory text. The amount allocated for the Annual Report and Town calendar

has been cut. It can be done less elaborately. By law the Town must do an annual report. Under mental health agencies they were both kept in the budget because they help the Social Services Department. Under Community Celebrations, the Council expenses pay for food at meetings like this.

Councilor Cascio said that since everyone is feeling the reduction, maybe the Town Council should look at reducing its amount. The Town Council should lead by example and may need to bring a sandwich from home for these types of meetings.

Councilor Roberts said that when coming from work, a platter of sandwiches for all the hours that people volunteer is not too much.

Councilor Cascio said that he is putting the idea out there.

Chairperson Adil asked that Council Cascio circle the item and bring it up when the motions are being made.

TOWN MANAGER (page 5 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that the first page is for salaries. The floater position is working out very well. She has been used in Park and Recreation, Building Department, and Finance Department. The benefits are on the following page for the corresponding salaries. Under Support Services she would love to recommend the Citizens Notification System because it would be fabulous. But this just isn't the year for it. It is like a Code 911. The system that the Board of Education has is a system that the Town could use to call people for public safety purposes or any kind of notification. It could be done for the entire Town or by area. The Board of Education has this system.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the change between the Department request for health insurance and the Town Manager's number.

Lisa Hancock said that across the board, there is a decrease in health insurance and a substantial increase in retiree medical line item. This more accurately reflects the Department costs. Overall it is about a 17 percent increase in health insurance.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Grant locating service is a computerized program for grant writing that sends a weekly update on federal grants that are available. It can also allow the Town to look for public and private grants. This funding helps her look for the grants. In a lean budget year, there are other things that are more important.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (page 7 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that Richard Fippinger couldn't be at the meeting but sent a letter requesting funds for cages for pets and shelters along with bedding for staff. She said that this is not the year for these new expenses.

Chairperson Adil asked if the Town could use neighboring Towns?

Bonnie Therrien said that one of the CRCOG service sharing grants is for a regional emergency medial shelter. Under copy and binding - external the recycling program has been moved to the Physical Services budget. The money is for public relations. Under office machinery - she said that she is trying to purchase the items this year.

HUMAN RESOURCES (page 9 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that professional training is Town wide. The tuition reimbursement is a union contract requirement. It is always underfunded, but few people ever use it. The recruitment line item funds the Hartford Courant job advertisements and their prices are outrageous.

Councilor Console asked if the Town could recruit over the internet instead of the newspaper.

Bonnie Therrien said that she believes that the Charter states that the Town must advertise in the newspaper. Some jobs she will advertise in the Rare Reminder, others on the internet, but some need to be advertised in a larger newspaper.

Councilor Forrest said that there are a lot of things that the Town needs to advertise like legal notices. There may be an opportunity for change given that the Hartford Courant is changing. The Town has been using the Hartford Courant at very high rates. Maybe there can be an opinion from the Town Attorney that the Town doesn't need to use the Hartford Courant.

RaeAnn Palmer read the portion of the Charter that pertains to it - "...the Human Resources Manager shall cause notice of the closing dates for applications for any position within the classification system to be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the town, and, the Town Clerk shall post in a conspicuous public place designated for the posting of public notices the application opening and closing dates for the position."

Councilor Forrest said that he would like to see the Town Manager look into publishing legal notices in other publications. He said that the Town has seen these costs rising. He said he would like to get the Town Attorney's opinion on whether they need to be advertised in the Hartford Courant.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town pays for employees to receive a flu shot and hepatitis B shot. Foley Laboratory is for employee drug testing. The Labor Attorney, she said she has had great years and other years that are not great. You never know an exact amount to budget.

Councilor Hemmann asked about the EAP expenses. She asked if EAP is part of the behavioral health benefit program or separate.

Bonnie Therrien said that this is separate from the employee health plan. The employee health plan does not cover a crisis.

Councilor Hemmann said that when the Town goes out to bid, sometimes they can be conjoined and that can be an all inclusive part of EPA. It may change some of the costs. Some of the seeking of behavioral health services can start through EPA. It can enhance the service

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town can take a look at it as well as the insurance company.

TOWN ATTORNEY (page 11 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that the budget is at \$150,000. Unexpected expenses may come up. She said that there is zero under the tax appeals. The Finance Director said that there were still funds in the special revaluation account. She suggests that the Town Council leave \$54,000 in that account to be used for tax appeals. It can be reallocated to the Capital Non Re-occurring Account so that the Town can purchase a jeep and leaf truck this year and not put it in next year's budget.

Lisa Hancock said that the funding is in the same account. This was mentioned previously to the Town Council.

Councilor Kotkin asked how the Town Manager budgeted for wages for offices. Does the number represent any increases?

Bonnie Therrien said that increases are always put somewhere else. The numbers are the current wages. There is money in the budget for increases.

TREASURER (page 20 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that the Treasurers are asking for an increase in salary from \$3,000 to \$4,800 for two people. She said that she didn't touch their request as, they are the Town Council's appointees.

Councilor Roberts asked when was the last time they received an increase.

Bonnie Therrien said not since she has been here.

Councilor Roberts asked what they do.

Lisa Hancock said that they sit on the Pension Committee once a quarter, one of them comes in weekly to sign a warrant, and on occasion, when the Town sells debt there may be papers for them to sign or if the Town opens a new bank account, they may have forms to sign.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town Charter mandates a Town Treasurer. The Director of Finance may also have the duties of the Deputy Treasurer.

FINANCIAL CONTROL (page 21 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that the Finance Director has asked for additional hours and a new position. She said that has taken those requests out.

Lisa Hancock said that in the Finance office with the type of workload that is there, she said that she really needs a person that she can call an Assistant Finance Director who would have the account capabilities to pick up on some of the issues that have to be handled on a day to day basis while she is dealing with the higher financial type issues, like the issuance of debt and risk management. The optimum position would be for an Assistant Finance Director but she said that she realizes that this is a tough budget year. In addition to that position, there were two other positions - to raise the part-time Financial Assistant's hours by five hours a week. The position already qualifies for fringe benefits. She said that the 19 1/2 hour position that was added to her Department in the past has tremendously helped with the workload but does not address everything. Wethersfield has a small staff in comparison to other Towns in the area. In addition to the staffing, in previous years, she has had some funds for overtime. She respectfully requests that this money be restored to the budget.

Councilor Console said that the Town has a senior population of retired talent. Perhaps there is a way to tap into that population. The pay may be at a lesser rate.

Chairperson Adil said that may not work with the unions.

Councilor Roberts said that there is a senior job bank in West Hartford.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town has to be careful that it is not violating any union contracts.

Councilor Hemmann said that she would like to put the bug in everyone's ears about combining offices with the Town and Board of Education. The advances in technology are no longer an issue. She said that she thinks that this could be an area worth pursuing and discussing further. There could be cross training of roles and sharing of services and efficiencies of operations.

Chairperson Adil said that the Shared Services Committee can look at that.

Councilor Kotkin asked how much work will go away when Munis is implemented fully. I thought that the purpose of it was to save time.

Lisa Hancock said that certain form processes that are printed and a change in how things are done will create some efficiencies but not necessary time savings.

Councilor Kotkin said that there must be time savings when the implementation of Munis is completed.

Bonnie Therrien said yes, with the implementation for the Finance Director, absolutely. She is in the middle of the implementation and it is a mess. She has worked the last four weekends and late nights. The conversion of the Town side is not going well. The Board of Education wants it implemented by July 1st. The Town is getting rid of the Admins system to do it. Once it is implemented, it will free her up. There are reductions or staying level for the rest of the budget line items.

Bonnie Therrien said that on page 26 under support services - fixed assets appraisal services, the \$10,000 is cut out. As part of Government Accounting Standard Board (GASB) requirements, the Town has to do an inventory requirement and asset system appraisal this year. She wanted to bring in a company that could do both the Town and Board of Education side together. But since times are tight, the Town will have to find another way to do it.

Chairperson Adil asked if it could be done this year.

Bonnie Therrien said if the Council did a budget transfer, it could be done this year. It is a GASB requirement.

CENTRAL SERVICES (page 48 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Lisa Hancock said that this Department is the central copying center, telephone system, and postage for the Town. A small part of this account is salary and wages and insurance. This is for an employee who performs some telephone work for the Town on weekends. A lot of his services this year were because of the renovations. The copy accounts look like they have increased but in reality the cost of paper was in a different account before. The paper supplies are more centrally located to associate the costs with the copier money. There is an increase in the postage budget for the upcoming increase in postage. This year she is anticipating a \$6,000 increase. One thing in the budget that the Town will benefit from, is looking at postage equipment. The Town can lease the equipment for less than it would cost to own it with the maintenance fees. The Telephone and Communication Budget can be addressed when the Fire Marshal is presenting his budget. General Office Supplies is for Town letterhead and envelopes for Departments to use.

Councilor Hemmann asked if this could be a shared service between the Town and Board of Education because she can't imagine that the Board of Education's needs would be different in regard to copying and paper.

Bonnie Therrien said that it could be looked at, but it may be a hard thing to do.

Councilor Hemmann said that it is important to use the same technology between the Town, the Board of Education and the Library, like the phone system

Bonnie Therrien said that did not happen with the telephone system with the Town Hall and Library.

Councilor Hemmann said that the Town will create greater efficiencies and have the opportunity if something goes down in one area to switch services to another area. She said that she feels the same way about desktop services as well. For better efficiencies and better customer service, the Town is at the point where this is something that really needs to be considered in all areas that it can be acted upon.

Lisa Hancock said that she agrees with the comments. She wants everyone to be aware that with copier services, the Town and the Board together has gone out to bid to come up with a combined contract for the lease or purchase of the copiers. The Town went through a complete analysis to try to get that magnitude of consistency. What the Town was able to do was to negotiate contracts with other agencies where they bought out the prior leases. Both sides have looked at the entire process for copiers. There have been substantial savings.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town just switched its cell phones over to AT&T so that the Board and Town are all together now. The Library did go out on its own for the Library telephone system.

Councilor Hemmann said that the people on the Library Board need to be conveyed this message. The budget still

comes out of the taxpayers' pockets and is appropriated by the Town Council. The Town Council should have that ability to leverage efficiencies. If the Town Council sets standards to say that everyone is going to use X, all Departments have to comply with the standards.

Chairperson Adil said that he thinks it is a good idea but will have to look and see what legal requirements there are.

Lisa Hancock said that some members of the Technology Committee will be coming to a budget meeting. This is something that they are looking into.

Councilor Roberts said that it can be discussed in Shared Services, too.

PROBATE COURT (page 57 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that the Probate Judge tells the Town the amount and the Town pays it.

Chairperson Adil asked for a five minutes break.

NON-DEPARTMENTAL (page 200 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Lisa Hancock said that the Contingency Account, funds that the Town has for unanticipated expenditures. She said she increased it to \$350,000 for all of the unforeseen things that tend to happen. It has been \$340,000 for the last few years and the Town has used most of it by the end of each year. The debt schedule for the upcoming year is on page 201. All of these, except the last two items, are payments that are required for principal and interest for the upcoming fiscal year. On the last two items, there is an interest payment of \$200,000 and bond issuance costs close to \$50,000. That is for the upcoming debt issuance that is anticipated to be done this year. It would be structured so that the first payment doesn't come until the year after and there would be a portion of interest expense the first year. The \$50,000 is a modest amount for issuance costs. It could certainly be more.

Councilor Hemmann asked what the funds were for.

Lisa Hancock said that the funds are for the finishing of the Town Hall/Library project and maybe some funds for the sidewalk and road improvement projects and small amounts for the close outs of the Silas Deane Middle School and Webb Elementary School.

Councilor Hemmann said that she thought the debt for the high school renovation ran to 2012.

Bonnie Therrien said that yes the last payment for the high school is 2012.

Councilor Kotkin said that in 2008 the bond issuance cost is \$80,000. Is the Town going to spend that money and another \$50,000 in the next fiscal year.

Lisa Hancock said yes, the \$80,000 will be spent in 2008, and if the Town goes out to issue debt, the \$50,000 will also be used.

Councilor Kotkin asked why the Town would go out to debt in both years.

Lisa Hancock said that it would all depend on whether the Town has a referendum and the Town went out for short term financing. If the Town used Land Acquisitions bond funds before major bonds were being issued, then she would have to issue short term debt. These funds would help offset the costs until the bond could actually be issued.

Councilor Kotkin said that the \$50,000 is for short term debt.

Lisa Hancock said that it could be for short term debt or depending, if it was a big enough amount, long term issuance.

Councilor Kotkin said that it would be inefficient to issue debt in both years. He asked why the Town was issuing debt this year.

Lisa Hancock said that the Town is in a negative cash situation from the other funds.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Town was no longer paying the IRS for accrued fees.

Lisa Hancock said that the Town has not spent all the Town Hall money. That is the one that is causing the fees. This debt is for sidewalks and roads and small amounts for the schools.

Councilor Kotkin said that it seems odd that the Town has a negative cash situation on one hand but is accruing fees on the IRS on the other.

Lisa Hancock said that these are different bond issues. How it is calculated takes into account other projects. The arbitrage looks at the entire picture. The Town did not meet the last spend down.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the last issue was for the Town Hall/Library project.

Lisa Hancock said yes.

Councilor Kotkin said that the \$200,000 in interest, that is for the bond issue that you want to do this spring. How much are you going to issue and what is the rate?

Lisa Hancock said that she will have to get back to him with the figures. She does not have them with her.

Councilor Kotkin said that he thinks it will be helpful to look at the expected amount of interest and the amount of the bond issue expected.

Councilor Hemmann said that she would like to better understand debt.

Bonnie Therrien asked that Lisa Hancock prepare a user friendly sheet on this issue.

Councilor Kotkin asked for a general understanding of what is going to be issued, why it is being issued, what projects it is for and how the IRS payment is calculated and what is the difference between the levy and what the new bonds are being issued at. He said that he thinks the Town is getting the worst of all worlds.

Bonnie Therrien said that:

- with the arbitrage issue, the Town has a company that does that. It is very complicated. She said that she will ask them for a user friendly report. She said that the schedule of the Town Hall/Library Renovation was way off from what the Town was supposed to be spending on phase one and therefore phase two. Therefore, the Town had the money and was earning too much on it.
- on page 202 are the Insurance accounts. These numbers are estimates. The final figures won't be in until May. On page 203 she said that she deleted insurance deductibles. The Town has a \$5,000 deductible per episode. She said that there were two this year. For the longest time, the Town had no claims.

Councilor Kotkin said that he thought that the LAP Policy seems lower and he thought that it would be higher.

Lisa Hancock said that these are the numbers that Greg Bedula gave to her. This is his analysis. This is just for the property and liability. Worker's Compensations has substantial increases, about 6 percent, affecting the Board of Education also.

Bonnie Therrien said that Lisa Hancock will recheck all of the figures. She said that on page 204 is the Metropolitan District Commission. It is a fixed cost. There is a 7.5 percent increase. This is based on ad valerum and the budget.

TOWN CLERK (page 12 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk, said that this budget is very basic. She has one full time Assistant Town Clerk who is in a union. She has two part time Assistant Town Clerks who work up to 19.5 hours a week. The overtime line item is for the full time assistant in the union. One of the Assistants prepares the Town Council minutes, special meeting notices, and legal notices but the salary comes out of the Town Clerk's budget. She said that time spent by her staff on elections is also budgeted here. She said that in copying and binding, the biggest expense is the recording of land records. The office records the land records and maintains the volumes in the vault. It creates the history of ownership for every parcel in Town. The Town has a five year lease with ACS for the land records. They are very good. An independent abstractor comes in to verify the work that is done. Money is also allocated in this account for the update of the Code Book. It should be completed in this fiscal year. The support services account represents the off site storage of vital film.

Councilor Forrest said that under legal ads, if the Town Attorney says that the Town doesn't need to advertise in the Hartford Courant, there would be a reduction to the account.

TOWN WIDE RADIO SYSTEM (page 54 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager, said that this essentially is the budget for the operation of the Town wide radio system. The overtime is for Officer Vargas who is the technical expert on the system. Under consultant fees, the Town is locked into a contract with the original technical consultant to manage the sites. It is related to the income the Town receives on the cell towers. He does the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) component as well.

Councilor Hemmann asked how long the Town is locked into the consultant fees.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town is trying to get out of it quickly. Attorney Morris Borea is looking at the contract.

RaeAnn Palmer said that there are some aspects of the management of the cell towers that the Town doesn't have the expertise for. If a new carrier wants to come on the tower or if an existing provider wants to change frequency, the impact needs to be studied. That is part of the consultant's job. She said that it is possible to get this cost down though. The Motorola contract is support of the radio system. It includes software upgrades, too. The Committee meets every few weeks to make sure that it is doing its share in managing the radio system. All of the procedures have improved.

Bonnie Therrien said that the committee use to be very large and difficult to work with. RaeAnn Palmer has done an excellent job chairing this smaller committee. It is much more efficient.

RaeAnn Palmer said that things have been accomplished, such as staff has reprogrammed the fire and police radios. A re-banding plan is also being worked on. Motorola came in and looked at all of the Town's equipment. Town staff took the actual physical inventory of the user equipment and Motorola determined that the Town needs to replace about 65 portable and mobile radios. None of the Town's infrastructure equipment needs to be replaced, just retuned. There may be a problem with antenna wiring. The Town's technical consultant wants more testing on it. Once that is decided, the Town will know how Motorola will come in and install the new frequencies and equipment so that the Town will be running both of them at the same time. When the actual cut over is made to the new frequencies, Town staff will then take out the old frequencies. As part of this, the Town needs to make sure that it doesn't ever lose one of its sites. There isn't adequate coverage to begin with so it cannot be down for more than two minutes. All of that has not been figured out yet. There is also the cost of staff time. Re-banding will not solve the coverage issue. That will have to be dealt with after re-banding has been completed.

Chairperson Adil said that this has been going on for several years. The comforting part of this is that Nextel is paying for the re-banding and staff time.

RaeAnn Palmer said that Sprint Nextel has to pay for it and what is frustrating is that the people collecting the money are the accountants that are managing the process for FCC and all the attorneys that are negotiating on the Town's

behalf.

Councilor Hemmann said that it is disappointing to hear that the re-banding is not going to fix the problems.

Bonnie Therrien said that is why the lawsuit is still on-going.

RaeAnn Palmer said that they are looking at options for the Town, like a third tower. The Committee is also looking that at some point the radio system will need to be upgraded. As equipment is replaced, the Committee is looking at replacing the equipment with a new version of the match or both digital and analogue. There may be some cost to the Town for this equipment. It will allow the Town to be poised to upgrade the infrastructure in the future. Motorola has extended the time it will provide support and service for the radio system. They have picked up the new technology, but can't manufacture it fast enough, so they are continuing to support what the Town has for a longer time period.

Councilor Hemmann said that the Town needs to fix the coverage issue. It is a huge issue.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Committee requested funding for a tower audit but can use money left in escrow for it. The Town may be able to get the audit done this year, too. The request was made because something fell off a tower.

RADIO BUDGET, ESCROW ACCOUNTS, USER FEES (page 54 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Bonnie Therrien said that there was updated information in the agenda packet.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the schedule of fees is looked at yearly by Town staff and compared with those of surrounding Towns. She highlighted the following changes:

Department/Function	Other/State Fee	Town Fee	Total Fee
Inland Wetlands			
Subdivisions			
Maps		\$7.50	\$7.50
Regulations		\$20.00	\$20.00
Planning & Zoning Department			
Town Plan Of Development		\$20.00	\$20.00
Designed Commercial Site Plan	\$30.00	\$100.00	\$130.00
Sign Review		\$25.00	\$25.00
Multiple Family Special Residential Development (SRD)		\$50 per unit	\$50 per unit
Planned Development (apts)		\$25 to \$1000	\$25 to \$1000
Public Works Department			
Small TV - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$7.50	\$7.50
Large TV - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$10.00	\$10.00
Sofa - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$10.00	\$10.00
Mattress - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$10.00	\$10.00
Cabinet - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$10.00	\$10.00
Tires - Disposal at Transfer Station		\$2.00	\$2.00

Recycling Bin		\$3.65	\$3.65
Social Services Department			
Dial-a-Ride - annual fee		\$40.00	\$40.00

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Public Works Department's proposed changes to the fees will make the Transfer Station more user friendly. An annual permit is \$30 and each trip to the transfer station is \$30 for 1/2 cubic yards. Many times, residents only have one item to get rid of and this fee structure would be better for them. Other Towns use a similar fee structure. The use of the Transfer Station is down. The Department recommended lowering the fee from \$30 to \$25, but she did not recommend that change because she was concerned with the overall revenues. The Recycling Committee would like to give the recycling bins away free of charge. The Town now charges \$7.50. As a compromise, she is proposing a charge of \$3.65.

Bonnie Therrien said that her only thought about this is that the Recycling Committee thinks this will increase the recycling and a bin is not even necessary for recycling. She said that she is not sure that the reduction will achieve what the Recycling Committee is hoping.

Councilor Cascio said that this was talked about in the past. The Town is not in the business of giving things away.

RaeAnn Palmer said that they were given away to start and now many are broken and need to be replaced. Town staff receives a lot of complaints from residents when they come in to get a new bin.

Councilor Console asked if he would need a permit before he could dispose of a television or other single item.

RaeAnn Palmer said that he would need to receive an annual permit first. The permit makes certain that only people from Town use the Transfer Station. It is also important for the funding of the Transfer Station. The other fee increase is for Dial-A-Ride. There are about 40 hardship cases. The increase would be from \$30 to \$40 and it appears the bid will be higher this year.

Councilor Forrest said that the thought from the Recycling Committee was that the Town gets paid by weight for recycling. Once residents fill up their recycling bins, they begin to throw the recycling into their trash can. The Town has to pay for that by weight. The Recycling Committee wants to change that shift. That is the thought process behind lowering the fee for the recycling bins. The second thought is does the Town have a composting pile.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Transfer Station is maxed out landwise. There is an area for wood chips.

Councilor Forrest said that a lot of the cost of the weight is leaves, branches, and shrubs. Residents can put anything they want in the can but the Town has to pay for it by weight. If there was a way for residents to be able to go to the Transfer Station to bring composting materials then the weight does not go into the trash, which would therefore reduce the budget.

RaeAnn said that this was all an attempt to get people more involved with recycling.

Councilor Forrest said that dirt, cement, and bricks end up in the trash bin and they weigh so much. It could be chopped up and used.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town Council will have to formally adopt the fees at some point.

She said that RaeAnn Palmer will discuss the escrow accounts. She said that there are too many accounts. She has encouraged Town Staff to use this money first before requesting more funding.

RaeAnn Palmer summarized the most current update of the Escrow Accounts. The Senior Center Operations, Senionet Computer Center, Camping, Summer Wilderness, Youth Services Crossroads, Solomon Wells House Security, Recreation Dog Park, Recreation Escrow, Wethersfield Community Center, Nature Center are all funds where money

from programs comes in and then money goes out to pay the instructors, the janitorial service plus the revenue. Part of what is earned is given back to the Town as revenue. The Jefferson House is money that the Town receives from the Jefferson House for an elderly program. The Radio System Rebanding is a prepayment for staff time for rebanding. The Town is in the process of giving the Handicap Service Network to the Board of Education. It was a UCONN grant given to the mother of a handicap high school student for his activities. The student is no longer at the High School. The school system will take it over and create an activity fund. The Culture and the Arts account keeps the funding for their operations. The Cookbook Sales account is from the sale of the Town cookbooks. That money will be used for a bench or something once the Town Hall renovations are done. The Wethersfield Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities has \$13,000 in addition to the money in the Handicapped Account.

Councilor Hemmann said that she thought that some of this money was for replacement equipment for the handicap playground at the Community Center.

RaeAnn Palmer said that she was not aware of that and would ask the Director of Parks and Recreation to look into it.

Councilor Hemmann said that some of the Handicapped funds were from the basketball games that they held. The funding helped to provide a lot of the equipment that Therapeutic Recreation children use.

RaeAnn Palmer continued explaining the escrow accounts. The Special Needs account is set up as an emergency for one time use. The Camping Fund is close to the amount that is should be funded at. It is to fund camping in the summer. The Youth Advisory Board Account is funding used for the Advisory Board activities. The Summer Wilderness and Crossroads are used for programs. Some will pay for part-time staff in next year's budget. The Youth Services Escrow account hasn't been used in sometime so the funding is being transferred between the Summer Wilderness and Crossroads. The Police Canine Account is for the veterinarian bills and other expenses with the two police dogs. These are donations. Engineer Securities is money that comes in for people who take out plans or bonds. The Maintenance Evictions account was being charged for the cost of evictions that is now being budgeted in the current year. The Trees Account is money coming for people who have taken down a Town tree and have paid a fine or for donations towards new trees. That money is used to pay for tree replacement. The Silas Deane Highway Trees Account was a budget allotment from a couple of years ago to add some trees along the Silas Deane Highway.

Councilor Kotkin said that it would be nice have all of that money spent this year and have trees planted. He would like an emphasis put on tree planting this year.

Bonnie Therrien said that the Town Council can tell the Tree Warden to use the money or the account will be closed.

Councilor Forrest said that there was a discussion at the Green Summit about planting trees.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Dog Park Account money funds the maintenance of the dog park. The Solomon Welles House and Wethersfield Community Center Accounts are rentals for the facilities. The Millwoods Masterplan Account is donations.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this was included in the Director of Parks and Recreations budget.

Bonnie Therrien said that it should be reflected. She said that she will double check that it is in the Committee building reports, too.

RaeAnn Palmer said that this money was used to help pay for the architects. The Skate Park Account is a small amount. It is being used for repairs. The Nature Center is money that comes in and goes out. The Connecticut Clean Energy Fund is a grant.

Bonnie Therrien said that the grant was for \$5,000. The Committee gave some money to the Church Coalition on energy and "green" issues for public relations.

Councilor Kotkin asked how that relates to the \$10,000 grant.

RaeAnn Palmer said that the Town received the \$5,000 because of the Town's commitment to purchase clean energy with the \$10,000.

REGISTRARS (page 16 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget Detail book)

Pamela Rapacz, Democratic Registrar of Voters, said that even though this is an election year for the Registrar of Voters, they did not put in for a salary increase. She said that they have things to purchase. Money is budgeted for the 2008 Presidential Election in the fall and a referendum in the Spring of 2008. There is talk of a Primary in August that has not been budgeted. It would include Town voting districts 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10. That will cost another \$25,000 in addition to the \$50,000 allocated in the professional services account. Elections are going to get more expensive because the Secretary of the State's Office may not pay for ballots for municipal elections. It is a big expense. There is a bill that may be passed that says Registrars of Voters must purchase 100 percent of ballots. She said that she buys only 60 percent of ballots because she knows that voter turn out is only about 50 percent for a municipal election.

Councilor Cascio asked if the Town's State Legislature knows that the Registrars are not in favor of this bill.

Pamela Rapacz said that she doesn't know if the Legislators know about this bill yet. It is in Senate Bill 444.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Secretary of the State's Office is supporting this 100 percent ballots bill.

Pamela Rapacz said that it is in their bill. They were forced to put it in there by the Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE) because some Registrars during the last election ran out of ballots. Towns will also have to pay for the memory cards for municipal elections. The items that need to be bought are carriers for backup batteries and lights for each of the privacy booths.

Councilor Kotkin asked if all of the voting districts will be back up and running for the election.

Pamela Rapacz said yes.

Councilor Console asked if all of the voting districts have to be open for a referendum.

Pamela Rapacz said that the Registrars of Voters would love to have just one district at the Community Center. The elected officials have always said no. The referendum could have shorter hours, too. If there was enough publicity, everyone would know where to go.

Bonnie Therrien said that there are also way too many voting districts in Wethersfield.

Pamela Rapacz said that some of the districts are necessary because of the way the Senatorial and Congressional districts are set up.

Councilor Forrest asked if there were any signs for disabled voter's access.

Pamela Rapacz said that there are signs for parking and the entrance for handicap voters. At Webb, people are so used to parking in the lot that only has stair access. There were signs telling them handicap parking and entrance was on the other side of the building.

Chairperson Adil asked how the Primary would be funded if there is no money in the budget.

Bonnie Therrien said that the money would come from the Contingency Account.

Pamela Rapacz said that the law for a Primary is that the polling places must be the same as for an election and the same hours to vote, too.

FIRST PAYMENT DATE - TAX LIEN - PELTON'S

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, said that every one is interpreting when the first payment is due in a different manner. She spoke to the alternative Town Attorney and he wrote the motion that makes it extremely clear when the first payment will be. The first payment will be made July 1, 2008. This motion will clarify it for everyone.

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO APPROVE THE SALE OF TAX LIENS FOR 898 SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY TO KIRWIN LLC (PELTON'S) AS SET FORTH BELOW:**

- TAX LIEN BY THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD FOR TAXES DUE ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2004 DATED JUNE 15, 2006 AND RECORDED IN VOLUME 1340, PAGE 250 OF THE WETHERSFIELD LAND RECORDS.
- TAX LIEN BY THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD FOR TAXES DUE ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2005 DATED MARCH 13, 2007 AND RECORDED IN VOLUME 1396, PAGE 351 OF THE WETHERSFIELD LAND RECORDS.
- TAX LIEN BY THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD FOR TAXES DUE ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2005 DATED JUNE 13, 2007 AND RECORDED IN VOLUME 1415, PAGE 281 OF THE WETHERSFIELD LAND RECORDS.
- TAX LIEN BY THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD FOR TAXES DUE ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2006 DATED MARCH 19, 2008 AND RECORDED IN VOLUME 1462, PAGE 309 OF THE WETHERSFIELD LAND RECORDS.
- INCHOATE TAX LIEN BY THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD FOR THE TAXES DUE ON THE SECOND HALF OF THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2006

" seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Chairperson Adil said that Pelton's will owe July 1, 2008, for what period.

Bonnie Therrien said that it will be on the latest grand list, October 2007.

Councilor Hemmann asked for the definition of inchoate.

Bonnie Therrien said that basically it says that the Town is incumbering the taxes because there is no list.

Councilor Kotkin said that Pelton's is paying nothing for the tax lien but is paying in the 2008-2009 tax year, 100 percent of the personal property and 50 percent of the real estate for that fiscal year and the next, and beginning two years from now, they will pay 100 percent of everything.

Bonnie Therrien said that was correct.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 12:30 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PENDING LITIGATION"** seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0. Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, was also present

At 12:39 p.m., Councilor Hemmann moved **"TO LEAVE EXECUTIVE SESSION"** seconded by Councilor Roberts. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:39 p.m., Councilor Cascio moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Hemmann. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 7-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

APPROVED BY VOTE OF COUNCIL AS AMENDED MAY 5, 2008