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## **ADJOURNED BUDGET MEETING APRIL 19, 2006**

An Adjourned Meeting of the Town Council (adjourned from Monday, April 17, 2006) was held on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 at 5:30 p.m. at the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center with Chairperson Russell A. Morin presiding.

Present: Councilors Adil, Cascio, Drake, Forrest, Kirsche, Kotkin, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Fortunato and Chairperson Morin.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk; Fire Chief Charles Flynn; Nancy Stilwell, Director of Social and Youth Services; Gary Santoro, Fire Marshal; Rae Ann Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager, and Lisa Hancock, Finance Director.

### **FIRE - 430, 431, 433**

#### FIRE SUPPRESSION - 430

Fire Chief Charles Flynn explained that the big change in the Fire Suppression budget is the line item for Salaries & Wages which reflects the stipend reimbursement for recruitment retention of firefighters. He said that this account also reflects a request for a full-time secretary rather than two part-timers. Chief Flynn reviewed the line item for Employee Insurance Coverage which includes a request of \$3,436 for Supplemental Insurance which will increase the benefits for an in-line-of-duty death from \$150,000 to \$250,000. Chief Flynn explained that the Travel, Training & Dues account appeared to be under funded in previous years for subscriptions and dues; therefore he has requested an increase. He said that a number of courses have been held in-house which have saved in costs for training. Chief Flynn said that he has requested the same amount as last year in the Support Services area which is for company care of quarters. He explained that the firefighters maintain the firehouses themselves, other than major repairs, and this line item offsets those costs.

Councilor Drake asked what the \$12,500 request for Health and Wellness Reimbursement is for. Chief Flynn explained that this would be for a program to reimburse firefighters for gym memberships to maintain their health and wellness, since they are required to pass a physical each year. Councilor Drake asked what the increase in FICA and Medicare is for under the Employee Insurance Coverage line item. The Town Manager explained that if a stipend is granted, these taxes would need to be paid. Chief Flynn said that the requested amount also includes the FICA for the requested full-time secretary position. Councilor Drake asked if the Fire Department could be considered a non-profit organization and the Town Manager said that she would have to look into that. Ms. Hancock said that this could be done if the Fire Department chose to form their own organization and develop their own charter and other incorporation documents.

Councilor Adil asked about the \$32,005 amount in the Part time staff line item and was told by the Town Manager that this is the amount for the two part-time secretaries rather than the requested amount of \$43,026 for a full-time secretary. Chief Flynn explained that there is a definite advantage to having a full-time secretary during the day to perform work during regular working hours. Councilor Adil asked if the two current part-time positions couldn't be scheduled so that one is there during the morning and one during the afternoon. Chief Flynn explained that it is difficult to oversee two part-time people and maintain continuity. He said that he'd like to have a full-time secretary to free him of administrative work so that he can have a greater opportunity to concentrate on services. Chief Flynn explained that under the Office Machinery Service account he has requested the funds for UHF/VHF radios in addition to the 800 system used for the Town. The Town Manager explained that she approved the line item for Hose Testing since the firefighters have enough to do already and also that the liability should fall on a private company rather than Town staff. Chief Flynn explained that the Clothing account is for the essential equipment required for each firefighter

to do his job. He explained that he is required by mandate to have at least 10% of equipment available in case equipment is lost at a major incident and by not having the line item for Fire Turnout Coats & Pants not funded, he would have to come back to the Council for funding should there be a major loss of equipment. Chief Flynn pointed out that this has not occurred for at least ten years; however. He explained that the \$6,375 request for Leather Firefighter boots is for better quality leather boots, which provide better support for firefighters' feet and backs. Chief Flynn explained that the \$6,000 request for New Class A Uniforms would cover the cost of ten dress uniforms used for ceremonies and parades.

Councilor Adil asked about the cleaning system at Company #3 and was told by Chief Flynn that this is strictly for the cleaning requirements of turn out gear.

Chief Flynn explained that a number of items in the IT Equipment and Software account have been moved into the Town's IT budget. The Town Manager addressed the server configuration stating that there is currently a wireless system on top of the Town hall that has not been reliable at all and she had this issue brought to the Information & Technology Committee who unanimously recommends that the Town go with the wireless system proposed in the budget. Chief Flynn explained that the Furnishing account contains line item requests pertaining to training and the remodeling of the Company #2 kitchen. The Town Manager stated that the folding cots and bedding will be available through the CRCOG Homeland Security funding. Chief Flynn stated that the \$1,500 request for the replacement of the office copier has been covered through a donation by the Wethersfield Country Club. He said that the Town Manager has recommended capital account funding of an architectural study of firehouse and ambulance space needs. Chief Flynn reviewed the items he is requesting in the Capital Account and these include two F350 Pickup Trucks, a Hazmat Enclosed Multipurpose Trailer, and Scott Air Packs Upgrade.

Councilor Kotkin asked if there would be no pension if the proposed abatements are approved and the Town Manager answered that the Chief's proposal is to maintain the pensions. Councilor Kotkin asked for an explanation of the Volunteer Pension line item request of \$0 and the Town Manger's approved amount of \$45,000 and he was told that this is an error and that the \$45,000 should appear in the Department Request column as well. Finance Director Lisa Hancock stated that she will check her spreadsheets to determine whether the \$45,000 is included in the \$75,129 total for FICA and Medicare for Abatements and Staff line item. Councilor Kotkin asked who qualifies for the Firefighter Point System and Chief Flynn stated that any active firefighter qualifies as well as the Assistant Chief, Chief, Deputy Chief, Engineers and Secretaries. Councilor Kotkin asked for an explanation of the breakdown of the calculations and Chief Flynn said that he calculates the point system on each hour spent away from the firefighter's family as well as reviewing the procedure used by the Towns of Glastonbury, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Ellington. Councilor Kotkin asked Chief Flynn if he considers the present range to be the permanent range and Chief Flynn stated that he sees this as just a starting range. Chief Flynn stated that he hopes the stipend program will keep firefighters in Wethersfield longer.

Councilor Kirsche asked if there will be a predetermined dollar amount paid out for each point accrued and if this was used to calculate the \$81,000 budgeted amount. Chief Flynn said that he based the amount on each member accruing 150 points per year at \$6 per point. Councilor Kirsche asked if there is vesting involved and Chief Flynn said that there is not and this keeps everyone working together as a team.

Finance Director Lisa Hancock verified that the \$75,129 Department Request for FICA and Medicare for Abatements and Staff includes the Town Manager amounts for the other line items and should have been broken out instead.

### FIRE PREVENTION - 431

Fire Marshal Gary Santoro explained that the only change to his Salaries & Wages account is for payment to the part-time Deputy Fire Marshal for 150 hours which he must work to cover for Fire Marshal absences. Mr. Santoro explained that there are specialized training sessions that are required of him and the Deputy Fire Marshal for continuing education credits and the Association Dues are for both him and the Deputy Fire Marshal as well. He stated that membership in NFPA entitles him to purchase codes at a reduced rate and is therefore worth the cost of the dues. Mr. Santoro explained that the Support Services budget covers the user fee of the GOTMS service tying him into the

database of the Town's Building Department to track permits. He explained that he is an administrator of the Visionair CAD Fire software system which resides at the Police Station and since his office is in the Town Hall he has to cross over a VPN to connect him with the Police Station. He said that this makes his computer unique due to the accessibility he has and the different firewalls that have to be maintained. He said that he will still have the availability to connect with the Police Department as an administrator; however his database will reside in the Town's IT Department and moved to a server connected with the Fire Department.

Councilor Kotkin asked Mr. Santoro where he would have preferred to be located if his Department were just being set up and Mr. Santoro stated that his Department was once located at Company #1 and this didn't work because he did not have access to information provided by the Building Department. He said that although he has no preference either way, it makes more sense for the Fire Marshal to be with the Fire Department and this setup would open the lines of communication. He said that without a full-time secretary however, this would not work. Councilor Kotkin questioned the 2006 Projected amount of \$58,145 asking if this should have been \$68,145 and Ms. Hancock told him that the amount should be approximately \$65,000.

At this time the Town Manager distributed a handout of and reviewed the answers to questions asked by Councilors at the previous Budget workshops. Ms. Hancock provided an explanation of the Estimated Investment Income of \$400,000 for fiscal year 2006-2007.

Councilor Drake asked Ms. Hancock what interest rate she used and she answered that she used rates between 4.5% and 4.8%. Ms. Hancock explained that the amount of \$400,000 is conservative due to State grants being uncertain.

Councilor Forrest asked why there is such a difference in the Investment Income amount of July and August. Ms. Hancock explained that the July collections do not occur until at least halfway through the month so that only a half month's worth of interest earnings are built into that month. Councilor Forrest asked if the Town's Fund Balance is included in this and Ms. Hancock said that it is. Councilor Forrest asked what the Fund Balance was at the end of last year and Ms. Hancock said that it was approximately \$5 million; however not all of that is cash therefore she worked with a starting amount of \$3.5 million.

Councilor Kotkin asked Ms. Hancock to explain the benefit to the investment income should she receive the additional full-time staff person she has requested. Ms. Hancock explained that better cash flow analysis schedules could be put together to help invest the money more quickly. She said that the cash flow schedule would also allow that all the money wouldn't be only invested in the State Investment Fund (STIF), but to bid out the investments based on a cash flow schedule and look at all the alternatives.

The Town Manager said that she has asked Ms. Hancock if the position could pay for itself through investing, grant management, and State reimbursements, and Ms. Hancock stated that it would come very close.

Councilor Drake questioned why the Town would want to bother with the position if it only comes close to paying for itself.

Councilor Forrest asked Ms. Hancock if she is being as conservative as she was with the last budget and Ms. Hancock said that the last budget did not anticipate the significant market changes that have occurred this year, and the Town is presently doing very well with its income process. She said that the Town is doing much better than anticipated.

## SOCIAL & YOUTH SERVICES - 625

Dr. Nancy Stilwell reviewed the highlights of her Department over the past year which included the relocation of her office to its newly renovated space in the Town Hall. She announced that her Department received the preliminary approval for the Dial-A-Ride Expansion grant which will expand coverage for medical services days of operation and regions covered. Dr. Stilwell stated that she is down a staff member and the Town Manager has not approved filling the vacancy. Dr. Stilwell stated that her Department serves a sub-sample of highly at-risk school children with many programs they offer, and she found it difficult to listen to Dr. Proctor proclaiming that the Board of Education will maintain all of their current programs and offer further initiatives, while she is down a full-time staff member and her

part-time salary funding has also been cut by the Town Manager. Dr. Stilwell said that because of this she needs to cut some of her programming and she finds the imbalance to be rather glaring.

Councilor Drake asked why the Salaries & Wages line item increased in spite of what Dr. Stilwell has just stated and she answered that this is due to step increases for the staff.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien pointed out that Dr. Stilwell plans to use some of her escrow funds for part-time staff; however, Dr. Stilwell stated that this funding won't last forever and once an item is cut, it's hard to get it back at a later time.

Dr. Stilwell stated that the Senior Center is getting busier and busier and she has requested an increase in the hours of the Senior Center Coordinator from twenty-five to twenty-eight per week due to this. She said that because of the increased programming, the current Coordinator often performs work at home without being compensated for it. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien mentioned that with the increased aging population, eventually there will be the need for a full-time Coordinator.

Dr. Stilwell said that the Youth Opportunities Coordinator has been funded at 75% for several years, and the CREC grant received the past few years for the summer youth program has allowed for the position to be funded at full-time, with the Town funding the benefits. Dr. Stilwell stated that it is stressful each year to question whether the grant will be received again or not; therefore she'd prefer to have the position fully funded in her budget. She said that this does not mean that grant funding won't still be pursued.

Dr. Stilwell explained that a lot of time in her Department this year has been dedicated to the reallocation of Medicare Part D and the questions associated with this. She said that because of this, there has been a shift in resources, training, and staff available in her Department.

Dr. Stilwell distributed a handout of the Social & Youth Services Utilization of Services for Fiscal Year 04-05 which provided the number of individuals making use of various programs offered by her Department.

Chairperson Morin stated that Deputy Mayor Fortunato is leading a subcommittee to evaluate the Social & Youth Service programs offered, and he asked when results may be anticipated. The Town Manager stated that the committee has met twice and they will try to get as many recommendations as possible to the Council during the budget process.

Councilor Adil asked if a program such as the "friendly shopper" program affects Dr. Stilwell's budget and she answered that this is a low priority, volunteer program which is of very low cost to her Department. Dr. Stilwell noted that none of the homebound clients were surveyed.

Councilor Kotkin asked about the increase in the Special Needs escrow amount and asked how this funding can be used. Dr. Stilwell said that the Special Needs escrow funding can only be used for food, clothing, housing or shelter. Councilor Kotkin asked if fuel bank funding comes from this account and Dr. Stilwell said that the fuel bank is a separate fund. Dr. Stilwell stated that there was an inheritance donation left to fund the Special Needs program and some of the changes are indicative of the fact that the investments have done well. She said that, in general, her Department will not turn down someone in need unless the person is perpetually going into the hole and will not follow suggestions to obtain consumer credit counseling.

Dr. Stilwell reviewed the other escrow accounts in her Department's budget stating that all of the accounts were in place when she took her position and have been barely touched. She said that the Youth Service Counseling fund is expected to be used for some new furniture in her Department and the remaining balance transferred to the CNEF to be used toward a new van in the next couple of years. Dr. Stilwell explained that her Department does not put any money in or out of the Youth Services Advisory Board escrow fund without the permission of the Board. She said that the money in this fund is used to help with special projects and educational programs. Dr. Stilwell said that she'd like to turn the Summer Wilderness Program and Youth Services Crossroads escrow accounts into standard revenue accounts so that the money coming in from program tuition funds the program expenses. Dr. Stilwell stated that the Crossroads program is currently self-sustaining, but the Wilderness Program is not since high-needs, high-risk kids are involved in this program. Dr. Stilwell explained that a number of years ago the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving set up the

Salter Fund from which her Department receives interest income every year. She said that she'd like to deposit some of the Youth Services Escrow funding into the Salter Fund to continue to earn money to cover Department expenses. Dr. Stilwell explained that the CASAC Youth Services fund is from a grant received every year and used as a normal grant revenue account.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked if there are restrictions on the use of Salter Fund monies received and Dr. Stilwell stated that she is unaware of the restrictions off-hand; however she will look into this. Rae Ann Palmer, Assistant to the Town Manager verified that one of the restrictions is that the money must be used for youth-related activities.

Councilor Drake asked if the purpose of the Salter Fund is to put money into a bigger pool to earn interest and Deputy Mayor Fortunato stated that the Fund is a pool trust where the money is being invested with other benefactors and therefore yields a higher return.

Councilor Adil questioned whether the escrow accounts are earning interest and Ms. Hancock said that all of them do and that the investment income goes into the General Fund as revenue to the Town.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien stated that due to budget constraints, the Social & Youth Services Department has been through a tough few years and she recommended that the Council make some policy decisions to level off the services offered in Dr. Stilwell's budget. Chairperson Morin commented that this is why the subcommittee has been formed.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato stated that the Town provides services to at-risk and disabled youth through the Social & Youth Services Department that augment what is offered by the Board of Education, and there is a question as to whether some services are actually being duplicated. Deputy Mayor Fortunato said that the ROPE program is offered through the Board of Education to sixth graders; however it is paid for on the Town side and if the Town were to discontinue the program, the Board of Education would need to come up with a new curriculum. She said that she is not recommending that this be done; however enhancements need to be considered. Dr. Stilwell stated that she was not completely satisfied that a cross-section of enough kids was chosen for the survey focus groups; therefore she doesn't have much faith in the resulting data. She said that she does agree with the survey result that her Department should perhaps be taking a better look at more aggressive marketing to the High School and some time-limited focus support groups.

Councilor Kotkin asked Dr. Stilwell if her Department is currently structured to spend its \$900,000 budget in the way she would like. Dr. Stilwell said that her vision would not be very different; however, she has always favored putting resources into prevention rather than treatment. She said that she would prefer to develop more parenting education programs and more senior management programs to enable seniors to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

#### OTHER FUNDS - DEBT SERVICE - 920

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien stated that she'd like to see as many of the Escrow Accounts closed out as possible. Ms. Palmer reviewed all of the Escrow Accounts listed in the Other Funds budget and what is proposed to be done with the balances. She explained that the Recreation Programs Escrow is money received for all of the recreation programs and each quarter the Recreation Department makes a transfer to the General Fund to cover overtime and staff time for the programs. She said that this fund also holds the monies collected from some of the adult sport leagues to cover field maintenance and program expenses. Ms. Palmer stated that money is already being collected for summer programs and deposited into this escrow fund.

Councilor Drake asked if there is always a balance in this fund that the Town could be using in other ways and Ms. Palmer said that this can't be done since the monies are constantly coming in and going out for programs. She said that once a year, part of the escrow balance is transferred into the Town's General Fund. Councilor Drake asked where the monies in the escrow accounts actually sit and Ms. Hancock said that it commingles with the fund balance earning the same interest.

Councilor Forrest asked if the \$900,000 in the Escrow Accounts is part of the fund balance and was told by Ms.

Hancock that it is not, but is invested and some of the revenue from the investment income goes back into the escrow fund; therefore it is not considered income into the general fund.

### NON-DEPARTMENTAL - CONTINGENCY - 910, DEBT SERVICE - 920

Ms. Hancock stated that there is currently a balance of approximately \$179,000 in the Contingency Fund and that the Manager's proposed amount of \$340,000 is consistent with previous years less items such as the Webb windows.

Ms. Hancock said that the Debt Service amount reflects the impact of the new bonds that were issued last June. She indicated that there was an interest savings between the 2006 original budgeted amount and the 2006 projected amount of the Bond Issuance Costs due to a better rate on the bonds.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the issuance of the new bond for Phase II of the Town Hall renovations will increase the Debt Service amount and Ms. Hancock said that she anticipates issuing new debt in June, 2007 and issuance costs for a bond are included in the proposed budget.

Ms. Hancock stated that the rates for Insurance & Risk Management are determined by CIRMA and this coverage protects the Town and Board of Education from losses due to accidents and suits. She said that the amount reflects a 10% reduction offered by CIRMA.

Ms. Hancock explained that the amount paid to the Metropolitan District Commission is required by the Town for sewage disposal. She said that she and the Town Manager have been participating in the MDC budget sessions to voice their opinions and concerns, and the MDC has been very receptive. Councilor Forrest asked what the \$12,000 amount for Sanitary Sewer Charge is for and Ms. Hancock explained that this is due to an agreement made many years ago between the Town and the Housing Authority that the Town would pay their MDC bills and for a number of years the Town hadn't been charged for this; therefore the \$12,000 is for that payment.

Ms. Hancock reviewed the list of Capital Non-recurring Expenditure Fund (CNEF) items including vehicles for the Police, Fire, and Physical Services Departments as well as items for Town-wide Radio Reserve, Property Revaluation Reserve, MUNIS System, and Lease Payments.

Councilor Kotkin asked for an explanation of the \$196,000 request in the Physical Services Department for dump trucks and Ms. Hancock stated that the Department originally requested one medium and one large dump truck and the Town Manager had cut out the jeep with a plow. In order to save money, the Department changed the request to two medium dump trucks in order to also get the jeep with the plow added back into the budget.

Ms. Hancock explained that the Reserve-Retiree Costs is to fund the cost of employee compensated absences and medical benefits provided for retired employees. She said that the budgeted amount is significantly less than last year because extra money was built into the budget last year to cover the shortfall in the Police Heart and Hypertension fund.

### **OTHER FUNDS**

Ms. Hancock provided an overview of the Town's Other Funds including the Canine Fund, Library Trust Fund, Agricultural Land Preservation Fund, Employee Compensated Absences and Retiree Medical Reserve Fund, Hospital Medical Insurance Fund, Heart and Hypertension Fund, Volunteer Firefighters' Pension Fund, Pension Trust Fund, Land Acquisition Fund.

Councilor Forrest clarified with Ms. Hancock that money comes into the Employee Compensated Absences and Retiree Medical Reserve Fund from the General Fund and then payments are made from this fund. Ms. Hancock explained that the General Fund provides some of the funding for the payments that come out of this fund. Councilor Forrest asked if this fund creates its own interest and was told that it does and that the interest earned goes directly back into the fund. Councilor Forrest asked if this is so with all of these funds and Ms. Hancock said that it is and that

there is a line item in each of the funds for interest income. Councilor Forrest asked why the interest income in the Hospital Medical Insurance Fund is so low and Ms. Hancock explained that some of the revenue has not been put in all at once and the Town tends to keep money in the General Fund for as long as possible so as to earn interest in that account. She said that money is moved into the account as payments are being made; therefore there is not a lot of cash float in this fund.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked what the Stop Loss amount is for insurance claims and Ms. Hancock said that once the Town hits \$100,000 in insurance claims, the Stop Loss insurance takes over.

Councilor Kotkin asked where in the budget the \$400,000 for retiree medical benefits appears in the budget and Ms. Hancock answered that \$370,000 of this is in the Reserve-Retiree Costs.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:39 p.m., Councilor Adil moved "**TO ADJOURN TO THE BUDGET WORKSHOP ON APRIL 24, 2006 AT 5:30 P.M. AT THE ELEANOR BUCK WOLF NATURE CENTER**", seconded by Councilor Walsh. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores Sassano  
Town Clerk