

[NOTE: These minutes are made available to the public prior to Town Council acceptance.]

ADJOURNED BUDGET MEETING MAY 15, 2003

An Adjourned Meeting of the Town Council (adjourned from May 13, 2003) was held on Thursday, May 15, 2003 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall with Chairperson Czernicki presiding.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Fitzpatrick, Flynn, Gardow, Hemmann (5:45), Morin, Sassano, Deputy Mayor O'Connor and Chairperson Czernicki.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Joe Swetcky, Finance Director and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

All stood for the pledge of allegiance to the flag which was led by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

At 5:40 p.m. Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved "**TO TAKE A FIVE MINUTE RECESS IN ORDER TO GIVE COUNCILOR HEMMANN TIME TO ARRIVE**", seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 5:45 Councilor Hemmann arrived and Chairperson Czernicki called the meeting back to order.

Chairperson Czernicki said that Councilors have been provided with information from Town Manager Bonnie Therrien. She asked that the Town Manager review the budget status report.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the current budget shows a Town-side increase of 5.73%, a Library increase of 2.43% and a Board of Education increase of 4.00%. This results in a total budget increase of 4.66% which represents a tax increase of 3.78%.

Chairperson Czernicki stated that she requested Town Manager Bonnie Therrien to confer with Mr. Swetcky to make additional reductions in the budget so as to eliminate the possibility of Town staff furloughs.

Councilor Cascio moved "**RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE FIRE SUPPRESSION RECRUITMENT ACCOUNT BY \$2,000 AND THE OFFICE MACHINERY ACCOUNT BY \$5,000", seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

Councilor Flynn said that he cannot support these reductions. The Fire staff was very clear in their explanation in the need for these funds. In the scheme of the overall budget, \$7,000 will not make much of a difference. The Fire Department is 100% volunteer and the funds that they are given are essential to maintaining their level of service.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that the Fire Chief informed the Council that he is at a maximum for recruitment and even overstaffed.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien what the line item for Fire Suppression Office Machinery is currently at, and was told that it is \$15,350.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn and Morin voted NAY. The motion passed 7-2-0.

Councilor Cascio moved "**RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE REFUSE COLLECTION & DISPOSAL BY \$8,000 BY REDUCING RECYCLING TO EVERY OTHER WEEK", seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Flynn voted NAY. The motion passed 8-1-0.

Councilor Morin moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO ADD \$100,000 TO THE LAND ACQUISITION FUND FOR THE PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE", seconded by Councilor Sassano.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that he would love to add \$100,000 to the Fund, but because of the current economic climate and the burden that the Wethersfield taxpayers are already facing, he is not comfortable with this proposal.

Councilor Morin stated that if Councilors think that it is expensive to not go with this proposal, wait until they see how expensive it will be to provide added education and Town services when these properties are purchased and developed. There are resources available to allowing us to simply keep the land as open space.

Chairperson Czernicki said that Town Manager Bonnie Therrien has recommended the reduction of the proposal of \$100,000 to improve the Silas Deane Highway. Chairperson Czernicki would be comfortable reducing the Silas Deane Highway Revitalization to \$50,000 and proposing \$50,000 for the Land Acquisition Fund.

Councilor Flynn appreciates what Chairperson Czernicki is trying to do. He feels that the \$100,000 for the Silas Deane revitalization is an essential allocation this year and if anything should be increased and not reduced.

Councilors Flynn, Morin and Sassano voted AYE. All other Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted NAY. The motion failed 3-6-0.

Councilor Gardow moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE \$50,000 FROM THE CAPITAL BUDGET CONTRIBUTION TO THE SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY REVITALIZATION FUND", seconded by Councilor Hemmann.

Councilor Sassano supports Councilor Gardow in his effort to revitalize the Silas Deane Highway. Councilor Sassano is intrigued by Chairperson Czernicki's willingness to split the \$100,000 between Silas Deane revitalization and Land Acquisition.

Councilor Flynn had reservations that the \$100,000 would be adequate for the Silas Deane revitalization and Councilor Gardow had said that the \$100,000 would be a good start. Councilor Flynn is concerned about making symbolic appropriations. \$50,000 will not be enough to make a meaningful start on the Silas Deane revitalization. This would be a token allocation and may sit unused. We need to make the commitment to the Silas Deane Revitalization Committee, the Silas Deane business community and the Wethersfield community at large and stick with the \$100,000.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Flynn voted NAY. The motion passed 8-1-0.

Councilor Sassano moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO ADD \$50,000 TO THE LAND ACQUISITION FUND FOR THE PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE", seconded by Councilor Gardow.

Councilor Gardow said that this is an excellent way to put money into the till for the betterment of the Town.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Cascio moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE CNEF CONTRIBUTION BY \$23,000", seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

Councilor Morin clarified that we will still have three Crown Victoria vehicles for the Police Department. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that this is so.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilor Morin voted NAY. The motion passed 8-1-0.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE EARLY RETIREMENT SAVINGS BY \$45,000", seconded by Councilor Gardow.

Councilor Cascio moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE HEART AND HYPERTENSION FUND BY \$12,000", seconded by Councilor Flynn.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Gardow moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE CAPITAL BUDGET CONTRIBUTION BY \$15,000 FOR THE LIBRARY CHIMNEY", seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Hemmann moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE CNEF CONTRIBUTION BY \$33,000 FOR A SURVEY VEHICLE", seconded by Councilor Cascio.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE CNEF CONTRIBUTION BY \$27,000 FOR A PICK UP TRUCK", seconded by Councilor Cascio.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Cascio moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONTRIBUTION BY \$6,992", seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that we will have to have in-house "acting" positions to fill the two early retirement positions for one month.

All Councilors present voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin and Chairperson Czernicki voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

Councilor Cascio moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO FURTHER REDUCE THE BUDGET BY \$80,000 AS PER THE ATTACHED LIST", seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

The list is based on what percentage of the budget each Department represents. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien advised that the applicable Department Head and she decide how these reductions will best be made.

AGENCY	PROPOSED BUDGET	% OF TOTAL	AMOUNT OF REDUCTION
TOWN COUNCL	\$113,996	0.67%	\$538
TOWN MANAGER	235,996	1.39%	1,115
PERSONNEL	139,555	0.82%	659
TOWN ATTORNEY	200,000	1.18%	945
TOWN CLERK	216,564	1.28%	1,023
REGISTRARS OF VOTERS	74,244	0.44%	351
TOWN TREASURER	3,230	0.02%	15
FINANCE	296,186	1.75%	1,399
DATA SERVICES	14,183	0.08%	67
TAX COLLECTION	160,473	0.95%	758
ASSESSMENT	293,300	1.73%	1,385
CENTRAL SERVICES	110,596	0.65%	522
PROBATE COURT	26,980	0.16%	127
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	56,650	0.33%	268
PLANNING	143,345	0.85%	677
PLANNING & ZONING	12,641	0.07%	60
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS	14,391	0.08%	68
POLICE - ADMINISTRATION	716,996	4.23%	3,386
POLICE - DETECTIVE	595,576	3.52%	2,813
POLICE - SUPPORT	846,862	5.00%	3,999
POLICE - PATROL	3,312,054	19.55%	15,642
POLICE - FACILITY	242,633	1.43%	1,146
FIRE SUPPRESSION	567,304	3.35%	2,679
FIRE PREVENTION	86,221	0.51%	407
FIRE FACILITIES MAINTENANCE	54,140	0.32%	256
EMERGENCY MEDICAL	62,339	0.37%	294
STREET LIGHTING	327,000	1.93%	1,544
ENGINEERING	418,953	2.47%	1,979
TRAFFIC & SIDEWALK MAINT	90,000	0.53%	425
BUILDING INSPECTION	245,658	1.45%	1,160
BUILDING SERVICES	238,900	1.41%	1,128
PHYSICAL SERVICES	3,029,772	17.89%	14,309
VEHICLE MAINTENANCE	59,091	0.35%	279
REFUSE & RECYCLING	1,650,403	9.74%	7,794
SOCIAL & YOUTH SERVICES	958,032	5.66%	4,524

RECREATION & PARKS	878,369	5.19%	4,148
COMMUNITY CENTER	232,213	1.37%	1,097
NATURE CENTER	110,775	0.65%	523
PARKS FACILITIES MAINT	103,990	0.61%	491
TOTAL	<u>16,939,611</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>80,000</u>

Councilor Morin feels that Council is going too far and he will not support any further cuts.

Councilor Flynn feels that most of these proposals can be absorbed; however, the \$22,000 reduction to the Police Department budget and the \$14,309 to Physical Services are funds that are needed. He cannot support these reductions.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn and Morin voted NAY. The motion passed 7-2-0.

Councilor Cascio asked where Council is at this point, in terms of reduction dollar amounts.

Mr. Swetcky said that at this point the reductions to the budget are \$256,992 and the budget represents a 4.2% increase.

Councilor Cascio said that a 3-3 1/2% total budget increase roadmap has been designated to the Council and he would like to know what it would take to get to this percentage.

Councilor Flynn said that he recalls the roadmap calling for a 4-4 1/2% spending increase. The 3-3 1/2% was for the tax increase.

Mr. Swetcky said that another \$400,000 reduction would need to be made to bring the budget to a 3 1/2% spending increase. Right now Council is at the 4-4 1/2% spending increase which will result in a 3-3 1/2% tax increase.

At 6:45 p.m., Councilor Flynn moved "**TO TAKE A FIVE MINUTE RECESS**", seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Chairperson Czernicki called the meeting back to order at 6:50 p.m.

Mr. Swetcky reported that Council is currently at a 3.24% tax increase.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that he is looking at doing more with less and consolidating services. He asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien what she did in the area of Human Resources in the Town of Berlin.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the Berlin Town Council had eliminated the HR Director position and replaced it with an Assistant to the Town Manager. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien took over the negotiations and the Assistant did the benefits, enrollments, workers comp, pension work as well as being a general assistant.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor asked if Wethersfield could do these tasks with a part-time position. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said it could probably be done if she did the negotiations. The part-timer would need to be responsible for the benefits, paperwork, training, etc. Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that we need to look at the Administrative Staff and require that they take on more in order to consolidate services. He asked if we could have a Director of Human Resources in a part-time position and still provide the Town employees with the services they currently have. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that the part-timer would cover approximately 80% of the services. She would take on negotiations and grievances. Deputy Mayor O'Connor would like to get feedback from the Council members of their opinions on creating a part-time position for Human Resources as a way of showing the Town that Council is doing their best to consolidate services.

Councilor Flynn said that this is certainly a subject to explore in detail, but it is not the type of action that should be done on the fly. Collective bargaining negotiations will be starting shortly. This needs to be planned and implemented

properly.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that Town Manager Bonnie Therrien has elaborated on what was done in her prior position and that this would not be off the cuff. A resolution was passed to consolidate services which directed the Town Manager to do so and this is an opportunity to show that we are capable of doing that.

Councilor Morin believes that the intent of the resolution was to look at the duplication of services between the Board of Education and the Town. Berlin is a smaller community with less Town employees and Town Manager Bonnie Therrien also had a 35-hour per week Assistant Town Manager working for her. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien would be required to handle a larger town that has more employees, with less assistance than she previously had. The person we've had doing the job had done a good job helping with negotiations and providing training. Councilor Morin suggests a study with a detailed report before making any type of decision.

Councilor Flynn asked how much this proposed staff cut would reduce the budget and how much would the part-time position increase it.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that the cut would reduce the \$100,000 budgeted amount by one-half.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that there is a range for the salary of the Human Resources Director. The current Director is earning \$74,000 as salary and approximately \$12,000 for benefits.

Councilor Fitzpatrick asked if the resolution was to study the consolidation of services or to actually take action to consolidate services. He was told that the resolution directed the Town Manager and Superintendent of Schools to bring forth specific recommendations to the Council and Board for implementation. Councilor Morin wonders why we are paying a staff member \$74,000 and Town Manager Bonnie Therrien will be doing the negotiations. We also have a Town Attorney for whom there is a budget line to handle grievances. If there aren't any other responsibilities left to the Personnel Director other than handling the benefits, it seems that this position is one of a clerical function. It is hard to justify \$74,000 to manage benefits. It appears that this task could be accomplished on a part-time basis.

Councilor Flynn wants to get a handle on what the specific proposal is that Council is to take action on tonight. This needs to be built into the budget. We need to know what the position will be paid, whether benefits will be offered, and what the hours will be. This may be a fine idea, but we need to have hard and fast numbers to factor into the bottom line tonight when the budget is adopted.

Councilor Cascio asked if benefits begin with twenty hours per week and if nineteen hours and under constitutes no benefits.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that benefits are offered to employees who work 20+ hours per week.

Councilor Cascio asked if a nineteen hour per week position would be considered.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that it could be considered; however, the inclusion of benefits is key to some people seeking work. She's not sure who would be attracted to the position.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"TO CONSOLIDATE SERVICES BY REDUCING THE HUMAN RESOURCES POSITION TO A PART-TIME, 19 HOUR PER WEEK POSITION AT A SALARY RANGE OF \$38,000-\$45,000"**, seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

Councilor Flynn does not disagree with the concept, but thinks that \$38,000-\$45,000 is too high. He said that Council needs specific details for the position; some of the pieces are still missing.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Town Manager Bonnie Therrien what type of skills she'd be looking at when considering applicants for the position.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said that she would certainly like someone with some experience in personnel

benefits. She said that the \$25,000-\$30,000 range would be acceptable.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"TO AMEND THE PREVIOUS MOTION TO CHANGE THE SALARY RANGE TO \$25,000-\$30,000"**, seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Morin voted NAY. The amendment motion passed 8-1-0.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Morin and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 7-2-0.

Councilor Fitzpatrick moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO REDUCE THE ALLOCATION TO THE TOURISM COMMISSION BY \$5,000", seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

Councilor Fitzpatrick said that we need to set a precedent for future Councils that when a group requests money, that it must be a specific allocation for a specific plan.

Councilor Gardow said that this would net out to \$5,000 to the Tourism Commission.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

Chairperson Czernicki moved **"RESOLVED, THAT THE BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER APRIL 28, 2003 BE AND HEREBY IS AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:**

TO ALLOCATE \$5,000 TO FACES", seconded by Councilor Cascio.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Chairperson Czernicki commended the Council for putting forth a budget that is fairly balanced. She thanked Council for their support in coming up with a budget that did not have to include furloughs. She feels comfortable that core services will continue to be provided at the best level possible in all departments Town wide.

At 7:15 p.m., Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"TO ADJOURN FOR TEN MINUTES"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

At 7:25 Chairperson Czernicki called the meeting back to order.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved **"THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPT THE TOWN BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE INTERIM TOWN MANAGER ON APRIL 11, 2003 AND AS AMENDED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL IN THE SUM OF \$23,488,566 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2003"**, seconded by Councilor Cascio.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

Councilor Cascio moved **"THAT THE TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR LIBRARY PURPOSES BE SET AT \$1,108,846 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2003"**, seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn and Morin voted NAY. The motion passed 7-2-0.

Councilor Hemmann moved **"THAT THE TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES BE SET AT \$34,141,325 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2003"**, seconded by Councilor Gardow.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

Councilor Fitzpatrick moved "**THAT THE TOTAL AMOUNT TO BE RAISED BY TAXES FOR THE TOWN, LIBRARY, AND SCHOOL PURPOSES COMBINED BE SET AT \$49,565,907 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2003**", seconded by Councilor Gardow.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin, and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

Councilor Gardow moved "**THAT THE TAX RATE ON ALL REAL AND PERSONAL TAXABLE PROPERTY BE SET AT 34.86 MILLS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2003**", seconded by Councilor Cascio.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson, voted AYE. Councilors Flynn, Morin, and Sassano voted NAY. The motion passed 6-3-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 p.m., Councilor Fitzpatrick moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Cascio. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk