

**Wethersfield Town Council--Budget Workshop  
May 8, 2014**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a Budget Workshop meeting on Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Hemmann, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, Martino, Rell, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Berry, and Chairperson Montinieri.

Also present: Mike Turner, Town Engineer, Jeff Bridges, Town Manager and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Mayor Montinieri asked Town Manager Bridges to start the meeting. Mr. Bridges started with page 3 of his handout, and asked Town Clerk Sassano to present her department budget.

Town Clerk Sassano reiterated the duties of the Office of the Town Clerk are required by Connecticut State Statute: land records, vital records, some election responsibilities and licenses. Only 1 item is set by Town Charter and that is the position as Clerk to the Council.

Department revenue, brought in by fees set by CGS, is listed on page 3. It did not list the fees collected for the state which is the bulk of the monies collected. Some of the state money is returned directly to the general fund using a formula recently instituted and is not listed in department budget but under the revenues in the proposed budget.

Councilor Hemmann asked a question concerning revenue currently collected, being lower than anticipated vs. the higher projections listed in the new budget. Revenue for this current budget year is incomplete until June 30, 2014.

Town Clerk Sassano stated the department is upgrading the land records process. The office will have information online, for those wishing to use it for a fee. This contract the Council previously endorsed for the next 5 years.

Mr. Bridges also provided information on questions asked at their previous session, Monday, May 5, after the regularly scheduled meeting.

Town Manager Bridges moved onto the other handouts and reviewed the 18 proposals of the budget for 2014 – 2015. After some discussion the Councilors were deciding between numbers 16, 17 & 18 to finalize the budget. Proposals are attached. Mr. Bridges explained that Option 18 includes everything that we discussed. It raises the Board of Education by the \$200,000 because there was a comment about the Board of Education, an additional \$200,000. Then we took out the debt service of \$498,000 and then added \$300,000 in the road budget and then we added \$300,000 of fund balance for paving. So Option 18 is the full meal deal. A question was asked to explain those two \$300,000. Mr. Bridges explained there's a \$300,000 use of fund balance

that we talked about putting in the paving for the parking lot so that's in 18 and then there's another \$300,000 that we increased the road budget by for more road paving. One increases the mill rate, the road improvement will increase the mill rate for roads. If you look over here .42 rather than if you look at number 1 it is .28. A question was asked what parking lot is that for. Mr. Bridges responded that is for the Highcrest parking lot.

Mr. Bridges explained that if you look at any of the other options, for instance Option 11, you can see how the road budget is still \$607,000 but as you go down you add the \$300,000 and it increases its percent spend for us and the mill levy for that item. A comment was made that the one \$300,000 is in the road budget and the other \$300,000 is just to do Highcrest. Mr. Bridges responded that the \$300,000 for Highcrest actually shows in the Capital Budget because that is where we put parking lots. In addition to this you have money for tar and LOCIP. This is just a general fund spend. So the other \$300,000 will show up in the Capital Budget as an increase to the transfer. Mr. Bridges pointed out the transfer on the slides. Mr. Bridges explained that the design of the parking lot is fine and we would just be digging it out and repaving. A question was asked where does that put our fund balance for Option 18. Mr. Bridges responded the far right number on your spreadsheet shows the fund balance. It will be 9.82% at the end of next year because we are anticipating what we changed in the current year rather than the \$300,000, we are only spending about \$50,000. In the present budget if you look at what was adopted, that number is \$300,000. We don't anticipate spending it, so we are only going to spend \$50,000. So we changed that so that's lacking \$250,000 and then we are adding, see how it says \$600,000 for next year. Councilor Kotkin asked did you think we weren't going to spend any. Mr. Bridges responded that we thought we were going to spend \$50,000. Councilor Kotkin commented so you were going to spend the contingency, which is \$340,000 or whatever, and then this \$50,000, but not the other \$250,000. Mr. Bridges explained, two different things. The contingency is on the appropriation side, the fund balance is on the revenue side. We believe we will have enough revenue in the budget or in that year to fund all of the appropriations without the use of the fund balance. If we got to the point where we wouldn't have enough revenue for all the appropriations, we'd have to not spend the full appropriation but we believe we will have revenues in excess of the total appropriation without using the fund balance by \$250,000. Councilor Hurley asked if the adjusted revenues per the adopted State budget help us a lot? Bridges responded he saw numbers in the governor's adopted budget that only showed \$47,000, there may be more, but we just don't know at this point. Mr. Bridges explained that this one here that you are looking at is Option 18. If you go to the expenditures side, there's the \$423,000 from the Board of Education, the \$498,000. We haven't touched any other departments. A discussion ensued regarding the use of the Trolley and the funds collected for that. A discussion ensued regarding the funding of a couple of mental health groups which was discussed in a previous budget workshop.

Councilor Kotkin asked Mike Turner to talk a little bit about roads. Mr. Turner commented that we shouldn't see an increase or a decrease. We will have the same number of roads that are in good shape and in bad shape. What that also does is it locks us into spending only on good roads to keep roads good and spending some money on real bad roads to completely reconstruct them.

So, it's kind of a mix. We did find clearly that if we dumped all the money into the very worst roads, our overall town average would drop spending the same amount of money. He stated that the program does work and it provides a good mix and balance. If you proposed increasing the funding level for the roads, there could be two ways to look at it. You could add it into the computer mix and let the computer do the selection or we actually provided Jeff with a hot list of complaints so it's more a verbal word from the public of complaints and pot holes and we actually did it independently. There were a few roads where everybody agreed should get something. Hang Dog and Avalon seemed to come up on everyone's list. The total of those three is \$319,000. If you are looking at \$300,000, we are right in that ballpark to add those three. Mr. Turner commented that they have developed a list of up to \$2,000,000. A question was asked about the condition of Back Lane and who is responsible for that street. Mr. Turner responded that we own the sidewalks and we own the roads. A discussion continued on the cost of road repairs. Mr. Turner explained that they set aside \$50,000 for crack sealing, \$50,000 for mulch sealing and \$100,000 for physical services with their road repair. Mr. Bridges stated that out of the \$1.2 million we use \$1,000,000 for milling the roads. Mr. Turner responded typically we set aside about \$200,000 for our reconstruction projects. A discussion continued regarding the extra funding that is needed for some badly needed road reconstruction projects and STEAP grant funding that is available to use.

Mr. Bridges asked how folks felt about the \$498,000 for the debt service. He stated that it is nice to have and a good tool for the future but is not immediately necessary for the high school project. Deputy Mayor Barry asked is that the full amount taking that away. Mr. Bridges responded that \$498,000 is what we would need for next year. We are going to issue bonds this year and there will be an interest payment next year so we do need a little bit of that to make payments. Deputy Mayor Barry asked how much in terms of next year. Mr. Bridges responded that we would need about \$140,000 which is the difference between the \$641,000 averaged over the 40 years and the \$498,000. So the \$498,000 is not necessary. That would have been banked for future years. Deputy Mayor Barry asked is it that third year out that's the big one. Mr. Bridges responded yes. Councilor Kotkin asked about what the interest rate assumptions were for bonds. Mr. Bridges responded that he thought that we were using a standard 3 something percent and he will have to check.

Councilor Kotkin commented that in a revaluation year, it's not a "got to do" in terms of setting money aside for future.

Councilor Hemmann commented that we are not going to know what the impact is of revaluation. There is that next group up that is really going to be impacted so I don't know what the total impact of that is. Then when you read the article in the paper today about foreclosures in the greater Hartford area and you look at the map, it wasn't a totally good story. So what is that going to mean.

There was some discussion about appraisals and revaluation appeals regarding a couple of commercial properties.

Mr. Bridges asked if \$498,000 was in or out and this is what we won't need for next year. It was unanimous that \$498,000 is out and we are good with the \$300,000 for the parking lot. Mr. Bridges asked if we were good for the \$300,000 extra for roads. It was decided to come back to it. Mr. Bridges commented that the Board of Education, we got \$223,000 on the table that is what they are giving up, where do we go from there. A discussion ensued regarding the Board of Education budget. A breakdown of Options 16, 17 and 18 was discussed. Mr. Bridges commented that it takes \$2.2 million dollars to move a mill levy one mill. The real question is you're not going to be able to move your mill levy too much, what are you going to get for it. A discussion ensued regarding the Board of Education budget. Mayor Montinieri commented that the \$200,000 would not have a discernable impact on the taxpayers. Councilor Manousos commented that he thinks the taxpayers will be happy to save wherever we can. A question came up as to what services would be cut from the Board of Education budget and Mr. Bridges stated that it is up to the Board of Education to decide what is being cut after a budget has been approved.

Mr. Bridges commented that they will meet on May 13, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Montinieri asked Mr. Bridges to explain the Tax Relief for the Elderly Program. Mr. Bridges explained the program. There was a brief discussion on mental health services.

Mr. Bridges commented that the only outstanding issue is the Board of Education. He announced that there will be a meeting on May 13, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers and he will just narrow it down to three options. Mr. Bridges stated that if everybody has a different number, to give it to him before Tuesday.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:45 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk  
Approved by Vote of Council  
June 2, 2014

