

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the sixth day of May 2008 A.D. the said Financial Town Assembly was called to order by Town Council President Vincenzo Cordone at 7:30 P.M. in the gymnasium of the Ashaway Elementary School on 12 Hillside Avenue, Ashaway, RI.

PRESENT: Vincenzo Cordone, Beverly Kenney, Sylvia Thompson, Thomas Buck, Barbara Capalbo; Town Solicitor Patricia Buckley; Town Manager William DiLibero; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin.

Also present: Finance Director James Lathrop, Public Works Director Doug Reese, Deputy Town Clerk Lorraine Arruda, Accounting Clerk Agnes Hall.

The meeting opened with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

Town Manager William DiLibero served as Town Moderator for the purposes of the budget hearing as the Town Moderator position is presently vacant. The warrant had been duly advertised in the Westerly Sun and posted in nine locations in Town. The agenda was posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Law. Copies of the proposed budgets were made available to the public. There were no conflicting warrant items. No voting occurred, a quorum was not required.

Mr. DiLibero introduced Finance Director James Lathrop. Mr. Lathrop explained proposed budgetary expenses were at \$23,485,749.00, with \$17,720,106.00 of that associated with the educational expense portion of the budget resulting from the Chariho budget approval. He noted the Debt Service budget had increased by \$55,000.00; the Public Works budget had increased by \$64,000.00; \$20,000.00 had been added to the General Government budget for architectural services for the 1904 Ashaway Elementary School and the Town Hall. He stated increases related to contract based obligations had been offset by savings in other areas; He reported \$109,000.00 of the fund balance had been utilized to offset the budget, with \$9,000.00 of that amount specified for the implementation of a One Call Now emergency notification system. He stated the proposed budget would result

in a property tax increase estimated at 1.9%. He stated for the third straight year the Town expected to receive flat State Aid to Education funding.

Mr. DiLibero introduced Council President Cordone who would be presenting the proposed budget. Council President Cordone reported the Council had held four budget workshops, spending over eight hours refining and trimming the budget. He noted the police budget had been decreased by one detective, what was reflected in that budget line was a pro-rated amount for this position through the fall. He instructed anyone with questions on a particular budget to call out “question” as he ran down and read off each department.

BOARD OF CANVASSERS BUDGET:

Scott Bill Hirst requested an explanation of the increase. Council President Cordone stated the extra funds were intended to allow for extra help in order to clean up the voter list. Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin explained that it would allow one of the three Board of Canvassers to come in on a regular basis and work on the Statewide Central Voter Registration System for processing voter registrations, DMV voter registrations, nomination papers - election related work. David Gever asked for a breakdown of the hours and rate of pay and was informed that it would allow for one person, seven hours per week as needed, compensation at \$11.00 per hour.

GIS/IT BUDGET:

Scott Bill Hirst questioned the increase in this budget. Mr. DiLibero explained that all departments’ computer-related needs were in this budget for hardware and software, as an example: the Opal Data tax software, Great Plains software, CRC/Cama software; was responsible for the development and maintenance of the Town’s website, assisted with the Recreation Department’s online registration forms.

Patricia Fontes commented that it had been her prediction that there would be an increase in expenses for this department. She asked what the savings were in other departments since going full time. Councilor Thompson she had met with the department head to compare this year to previous years. She stated the GIS/IT

department had increased and explained that all computer related services and capital expenditures related to computers for the Town were this department's responsibility and that those items formerly in other departments were now in the GIS/IT budget. She stated that this department had collected data for Town infrastructure, from culverts to bridges, as required by GASB 34 and that outside consultants would have cost up to \$25,000.00. She stated GIS/IT and Public Works had completed the task in house. In addition she stated a town-wide standard for all department operating systems had been established; implemented a 5-year computer replacement plan; installed a firewall for the Town Hall and Police Department; had created a network for the municipal court VPN consistent with the municipal court software; provided technical support for the police department where consultants had been used before; established a data base for Animal Control to track complaints, frequency, etc.; established a pavement management system for DPW; eliminated the expense to update tax maps, they were done in-house; was responsible for the Town Website; maintained roughly 60 computers town-wide – including installing software, troubleshooting problems, operating support/training for staff, keeping computer anti-virus updated. In addition, Councilor Thompson reported that current projects involved mandates for EPA for a storm water inventory that included mapping of drainage basins, manholes, outfalls, location, condition and digital photos that will go towards the completion of a new database. She referenced many other pending projects and spoke in support of the budget. Ms. Fontes stated that was not the issue she objected to. She pointed out that many departments still had contract services expenses listed, it had not gone down. She asked where the savings were to justify the increase in the budget. Councilor Thompson pointed out that the police department budget was \$8,000.00 - \$10,000.00 less. Mr. DiLibero stated since funding the department full time, three different consultants had been eliminated. Councilor Buck referred to the 06/07 budget year actual figures that showed there was a reduction.

TAX COLLECTOR BUDGET:

David Gever questioned the increase in this budget. Mr. Lathrop explained that the Tax Collector had asked for several years for additional hours for a clerk to

work during collection times. Councilor Capalbo noted that the additional hours had been placed in the budget as a stipend so to avoid additional expenses related to pension and health care costs. Mr. Gever questioned mileage reimbursement. Council President Cordone stated the mileage covered trips to the bank.

TOWN PLANNER BUDGET:

David Gever questioned the decrease in the health insurance. Mr. Lathrop responded that the decrease was due to a change from a family policy to a single policy.

POLICE/DISPATCHERS BUDGET:

David Gever questioned if this department were required to contribute to their a health insurance and was informed that a 10% co-pay was required starting next year, depending upon the date of hire and that the Department of Public Works per the new labor contract would be 10%, 11% and 12% health insurance co-pays. The goal was to get to a health insurance co-pay of 15%.

Mr. Gever questioned the Gas Other line item. Mr. Lathrop stated the intention was to break out the costs for cruisers and other vehicles to allow for the monitor and tracking of information to compare costs with other Town vehicles. Mr. DiLibero noted no one drove their own car or re-fueled their own car from the Town's fuel depot. All the vehicles had its own key, with a vehicle policy in place. He noted those officers on call 24/7 were entitled to a vehicle.

Mr. Gever questioned the increase in revenue. Mr. Lathrop stated the Town's auditors recommended police details be identified, which included cruisers and administrative fees plus the Federal and State drug fund had been previously listed as a net item. Revenue included fines and penalties as income.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY BUDGET:

Scott Bill Hirst asked for the background on the disaster notification system. Mr. DiLibero responded the Town would be participating with the One Call Now notification system with the School Department. The \$9,000.00 start up fee included a term of four years and would require phone numbers. He stated it was a messaging system similar to E911. Councilor Thompson stated the system

would not be used for political reasons, only for emergencies. Councilor Capalbo stated the Council chose to take the funds out of surplus vs. taxing the residents for the service. Mr. Gever questioned how one would register. Mr. DiLibero commented that the notification system would handle that issue, but once a phone number was established, the system would allow a person to change their own protocols in the system.

PUBLIC WORKS BUDGET:

Scott Bill Hirst commented on how he used to joke with former DPW Director Charles Niles in regards to this budget. He asked if there could be an explanation of the budget and the related warrant items. DPW Director Doug Reese stated there were two warrant items an Emergency Winter Operations and Snow Removal restricted account and the restricted Public Works Capital restricted account, the latter they would be tapping into this spring for chip sealing purposes. He would address the road bond later during discussions on the warrant items. Mr. Reese stated in trying to keep this department's equipment up to date, they had sent trucks up-State to the ACI for sandblasting to keep costs down. He reported repairs on catch basins had started as well as the brush cutting program and road sweeping had begun.

GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS BUDGET:

Michelle Walker and Penn Martin spoke in support of additional funding for the libraries. Council President Cordone noted the Council had not addressed increasing funding for the libraries because it was a tough budget year. He reported the Town's increase was below the 5% cap and was currently estimated at 1.9%. He stated the services provided by the libraries were appreciated and that the Council still could consider additional funding before the budget was adopted on May 13, 2008. Councilor Capalbo noted she hoped to be able to provide another \$1,000.00 for each library. Mrs. Walker reported that there had been an increase in their expenditures as a result of the increase in the cost of heating oil. Carol Baker spoke in support of more funding for the libraries. Scott Bill Hirst stated he was in favor of increasing the library funding as they may see an increased need for services this year because of the economy. He stated the

libraries served the youth and conduct fundraisers during the year in support of their programs which were free to the public.

Councilor Thompson questioned if either ambulance companies had provided any other information. Mr. DiLibero reported he had received some information from the Ashaway Ambulance Corp. Mr. Gever questioned how the Council had arrived at the \$33,500.00 funding level for the ambulance corps. Councilor Thompson stated there had been an idea that the Hope Valley Ambulance Corp had held a significant amount in savings, but was not sure what it was for.

Councilor Capalbo stated she was aware the Hope Valley Ambulance Corp had increased their annual subscription rate to \$35.00, and that Ashaway Ambulance Corp had remained at \$30.00. Council President Cordone noted that contact attempts had been made to the ambulance corps.

PROPOSED WARRANT ITEMS:

The proposed warrant items were read:

1. A resolution to restrict \$10,000.00 of the unspent balance in the 2007/2008 Fiscal Year Public Works Budget, to be placed into a Restricted Emergency Winter Operations/Snow Removal Account. There were no questions about this item.
2. A resolution to restrict the remaining unspent balance of the 2007/2008 Fiscal Year Public Works Budget, to be placed into the Restricted Public Works Capital Account. There were no questions about this item.
3. A resolution to restrict the unspent balance of the 2007/2008 Fiscal Year GIS/IT Budget, to be placed into a Restricted Technology Account. Mr. Gever questioned this item. It was explained that restricting the unspent balance in this budget would allow this department to plan for future needs for computer related equipment for all departments. Councilor Thompson stated based on a recent conversation with the head of the GIS/IT department, that it would allow her to plan at the end of the year. Mr. DiLibero added that it would be used for capital purchases.
4. A resolution to restrict the unspent balance in the 2007/2008 Fiscal Year General Government Unemployment line item #4140-0000. This item was

determined unnecessary and was eliminated from consideration.

5. A resolution authorizing the borrowing of \$3.5 million dollars for a road improvement bond. This item was explained by Mr. Reese. Carol Baker felt the taxpayers would support a road bond. Mr. Gever asked about the plan for the roads. Mr. Reese reported a plan was currently being developed and would encompass Town roads in equal portions. That the roads were presently being assessed to determine how best to address their needs such as chip sealing or overlay, which was more costly. He stated the culvert on the Dye Hill Road Bridge would be replaced. He stated as the road assessment was not finalized, specific values had not yet been assigned. Councilor Capalbo stated the bond would also cover general infrastructure such as guard rails, culverts and lighting, it was not just for road repair. Councilor Thompson noted the culvert on Dye Hill Road would definitely be done. Mr. Gever questioned if impact fees could be used for road improvements. Mr. Lathrop reported that impact fee revenue had accumulated, and had been drawn down. Mr. DiLibero explained that impact fees could only be used for the schools based on how the analysis had been done when the requirement for impact fees had been adopted. Carol Baker asked if impact fees were still collected and was informed that they were.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR KENNY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR BUCK TO SUSPEND THE FINANCIAL TOWN ASSEMBLY TO TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2008 AT 7:00 PM AT THE TOWN HALL.

SO VOTED

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk