

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the twenty second day of February 2018 A.D. a budget workshop was held in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02832 beginning at 6:30 P.M to discuss the proposed FY 18/19 budget.

PRESENT: Frank Landolfi, Barbara Capalbo, David Husband, Sylvia Thompson; Town Manager William McGarry; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin. Absent: Thomas Buck. Also present: Finance Director Brian Rosso.

#### Land Trust Budget & CIP

Land Trust Members present: Marilyn Grant, Cynthia Johnson, Carol Baker, Mary Gibbons & Paul Wilcox; also present: Conservation Commission Chairman Harvey Buford.

It was noted Land Trust Stewardship amount remains level funded at \$10,000.00; the funding source comes from the Town Clerk Real Estate Transfer Fees that is taken in by her department. The Land Trust Stewardship is listed in the CIP with a notation added at the bottom of the Town Clerk's budget page. The Land Trust had reported as required on the activities accomplished with this funding which included consultation with Audubon Society relative to invasive species such as autumn olive and bittersweet; routine mowing and maintenance at trailheads; had sent Harvey Buford to a trail building session; debris removal and two big projects planned: to remove a huge stand of autumn olive on one of the properties and to install foundations at Kenyon Crossroads. Councilor Thompson asked if they went out to bid for projects and was told that they do follow the Towns procurement policy. In response to how much Real Estate Transfer Fees were taken in last year, Mr. Rosso reported \$81,369.00. He noted that the Land Trust had received the \$10,000.00 within five months. In response to how the Real Estate Transfer Fees are used, the Town Clerk indicated the revenue is reported into the Town's General Fund. Mr. Rosso explained that the Real Estate Transfer Fees are factored into the budget as revenue and without this revenue the town would have to make it up elsewhere. Council President Landolfi added the

revenues help to balance the budget by offsetting expenses and to control the mill rate. Councilor Capalbo suggested reviewing the amount again next year. The first year the Stewardship Fund had been capped at \$15,000.00. Councilor Thompson noted this year had been a good year business-wise. Councilor Capalbo would like to see additional trails considered to accommodate wheelchairs for adults and children to open the land for the disabled and elderly. Councilor Thompson noted there may be a time when a one-time infusion of revenue was needed for a specific purpose to let the Town Manager know anytime during the year and that pertained to budget requests as well. Mrs. Grant reported one additional benefit is they were able to hire help. She noted that person is Christine Anderson who made a huge difference in their organization and record keeping. Councilor Husband asked how the revenue was reported by the Town Clerk. Mrs. Cook-Martin explained it was reported on a monthly basis with a separate check issued to the Stewardship Fund. Councilor Husband would like to see the Land Trust have permanent labels affixed to trees identifying what they are along the trails; he asked if the Land Trust could take over stewardship of historic cemeteries. Mrs. Cook-Martin indicated they probably would be willing, but it may not be a part of Land Trust charge. She indicated an objective in the Comprehensive Plan is for the Historic District Commission to be involved in the maintenance and preservation of historic cemeteries. Councilor Husband asked about the people who used to annually maintain a couple of cemeteries. Mrs. Cook-Martin explained there used to be someone that maintained one or two specific cemeteries who submitted bills that increased every year. These cemeteries had perpetual care accounts but the accounts were gaining very little interest so notice had to be given that they could not draw down from the accounts any longer.

Council President Landolfi reported he has spoken to Mr. Rosso and Mr. McGarry about potential savings to be had in the future that had to do with the Land Trust purchasing property and whether they could do it within a certain time frame if possible; to spend their money in a certain time frame. This would be beneficial to the Town cost-wise and help the Town financially if they could do it

sooner rather than later. Mr. Rosso noted the Land Trust was in the process of purchasing a \$500,000.00 property; \$1 million has been spent to date. The Town has fronted money to the Land Trust from the Capital Improvement Account which will have to be paid at some point so Mr. Rosso would like to avoid going out to bond twice. When the Land Trust needs to access that \$500,000.00, they will need a BAN. The BAN's are only good for one year; they can be rolled over for up to three years. He noted if on the three year anniversary of the first BAN, which would be the \$500,000.00, if the Land Trust could spend the remaining \$500,000.00 that has been authorized, that would be ideal because then they could go to bond for the entire \$2 million; that would pay back the Town the \$1 million and bond out the remaining \$1 million for a total of \$2 million bond meaning the Town would then only have to pay the cost of bond issuance once. He noted the cost to bond out is between \$40,000.00 and \$60,000.00. Mrs. Grant noted that in the past month there were three or four additional properties that have been on the back burner become available. Mrs. Baker reported the Land Trust was the recipient of a \$400,000.00 RIDEM Open Space Grant which the Land Trust must match to buy property. The property that was being purchased is on Tomaquag Road consisting of 124 acres and it abuts other open space properties.

#### Tax Assessor Budget

Tax Assessor Liz Monty was present. Mr. Rosso reported he had received another update from The Trust for medical insurance expense; that the latest projection was a 1.5% increase, down from 3% which offset the budget increase from the last workshop. The Tax Assessor Department budget was reviewed and discussed. Councilor Capalbo asked why there was no cell phone stipend listed for the Tax Assessor who is on the road on occasion. Ms. Monty uses her own phone. Mr. McGarry noted it wasn't requested but it was not a problem to add the \$420.00 cell phone allowance. A cell phone allowance offsets the expense of their personal phone if it is used for town business. It was noted line item #5270 printing & copying showed an increase and a decrease in line item #5390 supplies. Mr. Rosso explained the expenses had been reallocated for accuracy as some bills had been applied to different accounts. No other changes were made to the Tax Assessor's Budget.

Tax Collector Budget

Tax Collector Rita Deane was present. The Tax Collector Department budget was reviewed and discussed. Mrs. Deane has been Tax Collector since 1995. Councilor Capalbo questioned the level in the year to date revenues column showing \$2,262.00 and Mrs. Deane noted that the level would be closer to \$5,000.00 now. No changes were made to the Tax Collectors Budget.

Municipal Court Budget

Municipal Court Clerk Marylynn Caswell was present. The Municipal Court Department budget was reviewed and discussed. Councilor Capalbo suggested adding \$200.00 to the Municipal Court Judge stipend. Council President Landolfi did not support this and objected to the suggestion. The suggestion was debated further and led to a consensus to add \$200.00 to the Administrative Salary line item #4000. In addition, \$200.00 will be added to the Probate Court Judge Stipend line item #4000 as well. Council President Landolfi reiterated his objection. Councilor Thompson suggested bringing up the Municipal Court Revenues during discussions on the Police Budget. No other changes were made to the Municipal Court Budget

Recreation Department Budget & CIP

Discussions on the Recreation Department Budget and related Capital Improvement Plan Recreation Project will be discussed on February 26, 2018.

Warrant Items, Other Departments, Agencies and Budgetary Matters

The next budget workshop is scheduled for February 26, 2018.

The workshop was closed at 7:15 PM.

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk