

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the thirteenth day of March 2019 A.D. the Town Council held a Budget Workshop that was called to order by Town Council President Frank Landolfi at 6:30 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Frank Landolfi, Scott Bill Hirst, Barbara Capalbo, Sylvia Thompson, Sharon Davis; Town Manager William McGarry; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin; Finance Director Brian Rosso.

This final Budget Workshop opened with a moment of silent meditation and salute to the Flag for budget discussions regarding the proposed FY 19/20 budget.

POLICE DEPARTMENT (continued)

There was discussion that this budget had increased approximately \$18,400 due to a potential transfer as well as overtime pay. Finance Director Rosso indicated that he and Chief Palmer had recently gone over records concerning overtime pay which had occurred as a result of ongoing investigations for this money could be reimbursed from a forfeiture account and it was determined that they could be reimbursed \$4,000. Councilor Thompson questioned the forfeiture fund and asked where it was located in the budget and whether it was used to pay for overtime. Mr. Rosso indicated that forfeiture funds had very strict guidelines as to how they could be used, but it could be used for a CIP item. Mr. Rosso indicated the updated figures from the health insurance reduction had been applied to all departments.

PUBLIC WELFARE DIRECTOR STIPEND (continued)

Councilor Hirst had asked to add in a stipend for the elected position of Welfare Director. Councilor Capalbo stated that they had not funded this position for several years and she was not inclined to start now. Council President Landolfi indicated that he would support a stipend of \$50. Councilor Hirst stated that he felt it should be \$100. Councilor Thompson suggested this remain at zero and if something changed they could revisit this matter. It was decided that this would remain at zero.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (continued)

Mr. Rosso indicated that the CIP had gone up slightly due to an oversight with the revaluation not being included in the CIP. He indicated that there was a 60% reimbursement from the State for the reval and a cost to the Town of \$21,600.

CIP/HOPKINTON LAND TRUST (continued)

Marilyn Grant was present and verified that the Land Trust was looking for a \$5,000 increase to their budget. Councilor Thompson thought that this extra money was needed and she supported the increase as did Council President Landolfi and Councilors Capalbo, Hirst and Davis. It was noted that this will decrease the Town Clerk's revenue by \$5,000. Ms. Grant thereafter asked for a little more flexibility on how the Land Trust could spend that money. This request will need to be studied further.

WARRANT ITEMS (continued)

There are no warrant items at this time.

GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS (continued)

Hope Valley Ambulance requested \$52,000 and this was unanimously agreed to. Regarding Ashaway Ambulance, Town Manager McGarry indicated that he still has not received any financial information from them. It was agreed that Ashaway Ambulance would be level funded at this time with the hopes of receiving the required information. Each library had asked for an additional \$2,000; however, it was agreed by all to level fund them. Wood River Health Services asked for \$10,000 and it was agreed to level fund that organization. It was agreed by all Councilors not to fund the Community 2000 request.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT (continued)

Councilor Thompson discussed page 5, electricity, and felt that the approved solar project near Exit 1 on Main Street would provide the Town with a break on its electric bill. She also asked Mr. Rosso to forward the Councilors the tower rental contracts so they could review them.

DEBT SERVICE (continued)

Mr. Rosso indicated that there was nothing to be discussed regarding debt service.

EDUCATION (continued)

Council President Landolfi indicated that there had been a small decrease in the school budget which saved the Town approximately \$21,000.

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS: CONSERVATION COMMISSION (continued)

Harvey Buford of the Conservation Commission was present. Mr. Buford indicated that in the past they had received grants; however, there were none available at the present time and the additional \$1,000 that the Conservation Commission was asking for would be used for trail signs. Councilor Capalbo advised that she supported this request. Councilor Thompson stated that this additional \$1,000 should go into supplies and it was agreed to by all Councilors. Joseph Moreau asked Mr. Buford for the actual numbers spent as of December 31st for consulting and supplies. Mr. Moreau believed that only \$266 had been spent for supplies and there was \$3,500 budgeted. Mr. Buford stated that in the winter they decided on what they wished to accomplish in the spring and that was when they actually spent their money. It was agreed to add another \$1,000 to the supply line of the Conservation Commission's budget.

NET ASSESSED VALUATION, TAX LEVY, COLLECTION RATE, TAX RATE

Mr. Rosso explained that when the school budget was decreased the previous night, this decreased their projected tax rate. At this point the tax rate would increase approximately 80 cents rather than 82 cents as previously thought. The new tax rate will be \$20.87. Mr. Rosso indicated that he had spoken with the Auditor General who may be willing to work with the Town regarding going over the cap; however, they cannot give a definite answer until the school budget is passed and will send a letter. The minimum fund balance is \$4,384,000 and as of this point they will be \$100,000 over that amount. Regarding the changes agreed to tonight, Mr. Rosso indicated the increase in expenses would be \$4,500. Council President Landolfi asked what would happen if the Auditor General said no to the increase above 4% and Mr. Rosso advised that they would be approximately \$26,000 below their two month operating expense in the fund balance.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Other Departments – Building/Zoning Revenue

Councilor Thompson questioned the impact fees which were received every time someone pulled a building permit. She would like the impact fee document sent to legal in order to determine if they should increase those fees. Mr. Rosso indicated that this was an annual goal of the Building/Zoning Department. Council President Landolfi advised that in the past they have used this money to offset educational expenses. Mr. Rosso stated that he was anticipating using those fees for the next fiscal year due to a 3% increase across the board on salaries; an increase in healthcare costs; and, for the Land Trust principal on the loan which will increase debt services by \$110,000. Councilor Thompson wished to increase the revenue in the Building/Zoning budget due to all the construction activity she sees around town. Mr. Rosso advised that they should not increase the revenue because there are less solar projects being proposed now, which was why the revenue was higher for the last few years. Councilors Capalbo and Thompson were adamant that this be increased even by \$2,000. Councilor Hirst asked for this to be increased to \$103,000 which was agreed to by all Councilors.

Council President Landolfi wished to discuss the problem of the dead trees. He stated that Public Works had provided a list of 97 emergency trees that needed to be taken down and indicated that the cost would be approximately \$750 per tree or \$72,000. Mr. Rosso indicated that he had found a dormant account which had been set up as an impact fee for the Pleasant View Estates housing project. He explained that the main purpose of that account was for the repair of Dye Hill Road which several years ago had been repaired by bond. Currently there is \$51,000 in that account which they felt would not be enough to repair Dye Hill Road. Town Solicitor McAllister was of the opinion that this money may be able to be moved to the capitol account. Councilor Capalbo agreed that they should use that money to take down as many trees as they can in the Dye Hill Road, Saw Mill Road or Skunk Hill Road area and thought this would be a good use of those

funds and benefit the residents of Pleasant View Estates as well as all Hopkinton residents. It was suggested that they would check again with the Town Solicitor to assure that this money could be used in this way. Council President Landolfi advised that if they wanted to remove all of the 97 emergency trees that Public Works had identified, they would have to add in another \$21,000 from the budget. Councilor Capalbo did not feel that they could go any further than 4.74%. Councilor Thompson thought it made sense to have a warrant item regarding the removal of the dead trees and spread the payment over several years. Council President Landolfi felt there was a lot of debt service coming up with the Land Trust and believed that they should set aside some money to do what they could. Town Clerk Cook-Martin asked if the title of the account would have to be changed and it was indicated yes. Mr. Rosso stated that Solicitor McAllister had stated that this analysis could be challenged in court and could be incorrect, so they would need to check into this further.

Dorothy Gardiner of Canonchet Driftway asked about a possible increase in next year's budget for cleaning up Rose Townsend's dump, which she assumed that the Town was going to have to pay. Council President Landolfi indicated that the estimate that the Town had obtained was between \$800,000 to \$1.2 Million Dollars to clean up the dump.

Councilor Davis asked if it was possible to poll the residents of Pleasant View Estates to see if they would approve of the spending of that money on the trees or possibly the Town could use the prior invoices for when they fixed Dye Hill Road and be reimbursed. Mr. Rosso suggested setting aside \$50,000 of the fund balance in order to take care of the emergency trees if it is decided that they cannot use the Pleasant View Estates impact fees and that way this would not increase the tax base. It was decided to take \$72,750 from the fund balance and create a separate CIP for emergency tree removal. If it was decided that they can use the \$51,000 in the dormant account, they would reimburse the fund balance.

The workshop was closed at 8:00 PM.

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk

Marita D. Breault

Deputy Town Clerk