

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the fourth day of May 2021 A.D. the said Remote Financial Town Assembly was called to order by Town Moderator Edwin James at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Stephen Moffitt, Jr., Sharon Davis, Robert Marvel, Acting Town Manager Brian Rosso and Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin participated remotely. Scott Bill Hirst, Michael Geary and Edwin James were present in the Meeting Room with IT Director Jeffrey Frenette.

The Financial Town Assembly was held remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Order of Business included instructions for participating in the meeting. The proposed budget and Capital Improvement Plan were posted on the website.

Town Moderator Edwin James called the remote Financial Town Assembly to order with a moment of silent meditation and salute to the Flag. He introduced the Town Council Members, Acting Town Manager and Finance Director and IT Director and went on to read the following rules of procedure:

- There will be no votes taken as there are no conflicting warrant items or petitions filed by electors, making the requirements of a quorum unnecessary.
- Access to the proposed FY 21-22 Budget and Capital Improvement Plan is available to the public to view on-line on the Town website @www.hopkintonri.org.
- On May 10, 11 or 12, 2021 at 7:00 PM the Town Council will make final revisions to the budget and adopt the same for placement on the ballot for the all-day Referendum.
- The electors of the Town will vote on the budget at the Financial Referendum scheduled for June 8, 2021 at the Town Hall. Polls will be open from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM. The vote will be an approval or rejection of the municipal budget for FY 2021/2022 including the most recently approved Chariho budget - there are no warrant items proposed. In addition, the Town Charter requires the publication of an alternate budget comprised of the most recently approved Chariho School budget and the previous year's approved municipal budget and all approved warrant items. There is no ability to approve or reject individual budget line items. The deadline for receiving objections to individual line item(s) was by April 9, 2021 via the filing of a petition signed by 200 of the Town's electors submitted to the Town Clerk. None were received.

Council President Moffitt gave a summary of the proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. The Town's FY 2021/22 overall budget is \$27,863,096. This is an increase of \$659,209 or 2.4% from last fiscal year's budget. Education expenses are budgeted at \$20,561,560. This is an increase of \$468,636, or 2.3%, from the last fiscal year's budget. Municipal expenses and Capital Transfer are budgeted at \$7,301,536. This is an increase of \$190,573 or 2.6% from the last fiscal year's budget. Departmental revenues are budgeted at \$2,726,135. This is an increase of \$130,283, or 4.8% from the last fiscal year's budget. The FY 2021/22 property tax rate is projected to be \$18.59, per thousand, which is an increase from the FY 2020/21 property tax rate of \$18.28. He mentioned there were a couple of items of interest: In FY21/22 the Town intends to use \$13,000 to fund a new Town website and the FY21/22 budget includes funding for capital projects in the amount of \$237,774. The main projects include funding the demolition of the 1904 (old Ashaway Elementary School) Building and the purchase of one (1) new police cruiser.

He provided a tax math example:

FY 2020/21 – A typical home valued at \$300,000, at the current tax rate of \$18.28 per thousand, results in a total tax bill of \$5,484 (300 x \$18.28);

FY 2021/22 – that same home would, at the proposed tax rate of \$18.59 per thousand, results in a total tax bill of \$5,577 (300 x \$18.59), resulting in an annual property tax bill increase of \$93.00.

Education expenses represent 77% of the total FY 2021/22 budget and Municipal expenses represent 23% of the total FY 2021/22 budget.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2020

Councilor Hirst noted typically, the Moderator would go through the revenue and expenses line items and deal with any questions that arose with those line items. There were no questions on any of the expense line items or revenue line items.

Councilor Hirst pointed out the importance of approving the budget, explaining that last year the budget was rejected and when a budget is rejected it creates a problem for the Town Council and Administration. He noted the Chariho budget increase is included in the proposed budget and to reject the budget, impacts the

running of the town and he wanted people to be cognizant of that fact. Mr. Rosso noted the FY 21 budget had been approved; it was the FY 20 budget that was not approved. Councilor Hirst thanked him for that comment and stated he was concerned about the operation of the Town. He is aware people are frustrated over the Chariho budget and felt it was important for him to express his concerns.

Joseph Moreau of Old Depot Road spoke on the CIP regarding Town Hall consolidation; that he was aware the Council may be taking a look at that. He questioned if there would be a partial remodel or would they wait until they have full funding of the estimated cost of the expansion. He noted he read that real estate values and valuation of homes were up 40%-50% higher; people were still paying taxes at the lower rate; which he felt were positive signs. He noted 77% of the Town budget goes towards the school budget which is a big part of the budget. He thanked the Town Council for what they have done in developing the budget.

Mr. Rosso stated the Town Hall consolidation project is at a stand-still for now until we get the remainder of the funding to complete the project. He knows the Council is interested in learning more and commented that the Town Council has had a lot on their plate with the solar ordinance amendments but he would be pulling together a package of information for the Council to review. He explained that historically, in the years we don't see an increase in enrollment, those were the years we can add funding for CIP projects but when there is a \$500,000.00 hit right off the bat from Chariho it is difficult to fund any projects.

Councilor Davis requested a copy of the summary report. She reiterated Councilor Hirst's concerns; though the taxpayers had voted against the Chariho budget, they should vote for the Town budget which Mr. Rosso had done a good job with.

The Town Clerk asked the Council for their preference in scheduling the meeting to adopt the budget. Council consensus was to hold it on Monday, May 10, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

The Town Moderator called for a motion to adjourn which was made by Councilor Hirst and seconded by Councilor Geary and the Moderator declared the Financial Town Assembly adjourned. Adjournment was at 7:50 P.M.

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk