

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020**

A Virtual Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Ludwick on Wednesday, May 6, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Bosco, Cekala, Hemmeler, Kiner, Ludwick, Mangini, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire. Also present were Town Manager, Christopher Bromson; Assistant Town Manager, Kasia Purciello; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki; Chief of Police, Alaric Fox; Director of Finance, John Wilcox; Chief Technology Officer, Paul Russell; Director of Libraries, Jason Neely; Director of Development Services, Laurie Whitten; EMS Chief, Erin Riggott; Director of Social Services, Cynthia Guerreri; Director of Public Works, Donald Nunes; Director of Human Resources, Steve Bielenda

RESOLUTION #5421 by Councilor Muller, seconded by Councilor Mangini.

WHEREAS, the Town of Enfield (Town) owns the property located at 2 Chapel Street; and

WHEREAS, the Town intends to redevelop the existing open space at the property into a new Community Garden with a total of 50 new garden beds; and

WHEREAS, the Enfield Town Council must refer this proposed change to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a report in conformance with the requirements of Connecticut General Statute 8-24

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the proposed conversion of the property at 2 Chapel Street to a Community Garden is referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission in conformance with the requirements of Connecticut General State 8-24.

Mr. Bromson stated this is for the additional garden plots that the Council authorized and funded at a recent meeting. He noted this must be referred for approval, so they can proceed.

Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared **RESOLUTION #5421** adopted 11-0-0.

RESOLUTION #5422 by Councilor Muller, seconded by Councilor Mangini.

WHEREAS, the Town of Enfield (Town) owns the property located at 104 Middle Road (the Enfield Central Public Library); and

WHEREAS, the Town intends to redevelop existing open space at the property into a new Community Garden with a total of approximately 10 new garden beds; and

WHEREAS, the Enfield Town Council must refer this proposed change to the Planning and Zoning Commission for a report in conformance with the requirements of Connecticut General Statute 8-24,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the proposed conversion of part of the property at 104 Middle Road to a Community Garden is referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission in conformance with the requirements of Connecticut General Statute 8-24.

Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared **RESOLUTION #5422** adopted 11-0-0.

DISCUSSION: BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Councilor Kiner stated his understanding the Town will be using \$3.3 million dollars from the Fund Balance this year, and he believes that the policy is that the Fund Balance cannot go below 9% of expenditures. He questioned with the \$3.3 million that the Town will be using, is the Town within that 9% parameter. Mr. Wilcox indicated the Town is within the parameters.

Councilor Kiner requested a list of unallocated expenses for this year. Mr. Wilcox stated his understanding Councilor Kiner is referring to the items in CIP, the Town's Capital Non-Recurring Fund, that have not had any expenditures on them in the last three years. Councilor Kiner responded that is what he's referring to. Mr. Wilcox stated they do not actually expire until June 30th, therefore, they have not finalized their analysis as yet. He noted there may be some change until that point in time, but by the end of the month, he will provide a list of what they expect will be expiring.

Councilor Kiner stated his understanding the fire protection service at \$1.2 million dollars is in litigation at this time. He questioned if that topic can be discussed at this time. Mr. Bromson stated it is not in litigation at the moment. He deferred to the Town Attorney for any legal analysis. He noted the Council previously directed that Mr. Wilcox send a letter to the water companies indicating the Town would no longer be responsible for payment of those expenditures commencing on July 1, 2020, and that letter was sent. He stated because the money was allocated from last year's budget through June, the letter was sent, therefore, the Town honored its obligation up until that point, but beyond that the Town will not be paying those water protection charges going forward commencing July 1, 2020.

Councilor Kiner questioned how the Town can put together a budget when they don't know where that \$1.2 million dollars is going to be coming from, i.e., whether it will be an expenditure on the Town side or the fire department side.

Councilor Kiner stated his understanding there's \$1.8 million dollars in lease payments. He questioned if it would make sense to purchase rather than lease. Mr. Wilcox stated in the past they developed a process to try and level out capital acquisition costs in an effort to keep them at a flat level over multiple years, so that they didn't have big fluctuations in the budget. He noted there are several things they financed or leased over multiple years, i.e., the remount of ambulances, which is paid for over a five-year period. He stated they pay for police cruisers over a three-year period. He noted the winning lessor on the energy performance upgrades was TD Bank, and that's a large annual payment, which makes up for the biggest share of the lease payments.

Councilor Kiner referred to the purchasing process and stated his understanding the policy is that only one bid is required for anything less than \$5,000. Mr. Wilcox responded that's correct.

Councilor Kiner questioned if that's common practice for most towns, and Mr. Wilcox responded yes and noted Enfield is a little lower than a lot of other towns. He noted State law requires the lowest limit is \$25,000 for towns to go out to bid. He stated Enfield's limit is set by Charter at \$15,000, therefore, Enfield's limit is a little more restrictive than State law.

Councilor Kiner stated his impression WPC costs are out of control. He noted in 2018, the WPC budget was \$4.1 million; 2019, \$6.4 million; 2020, \$7.1 million, and it keeps increasing. He feels these costs are incredible, and he's unsure how they can stop these costs from escalating as high as they are, and he finds this very upsetting. He stated his hope some mechanism can be put in place to slow down these incremental increases.

Councilor Cekala stated she is a proponent of the referendums. She stated she would like a roof referendum on the ballot in November. Chairman Ludwick stated after the budget is passed, that can be a legitimate discussion item for the next Town Council meeting, and if Council members wish to push that forward, they need to debate that on the Council floor and then set up Public Hearings for the summer, and that's assuming they can set up Public Hearings.

Councilor Cekala stated her belief referendums have a lot to do with the budget because she feels they might be talking about what kinds of projects can go forward and what they will fund in CIP as well. She noted if they aren't going to do a roof referendum on roofs, then they need to have a discussion as to what they will include in the CIP as far as a roof project.

Councilor Cekala stated she would like the Grant Writer to be included in the budget. She added her belief this position shouldn't be just for Social Services. She noted she would support a Grant Writer position that serves multiple departments.

Councilor Mangini stated with talk about a resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall season, would it behoove the Town to add or keep the two EMT's, or at least one EMT since Enfield is limited with what they have for medical, and Enfield has been sharing.

Mr. Bromson stated that would be a policy decision. He noted the long-term objective was to increase the staff in the hope of doing different things with shifts and trying to increase some coverage issues and reduce overtime costs. He noted he wouldn't recommend an increase at this time. He stated there's no empirical data about what the fall season will hold in regard to this particular illness.

Councilor Mangini questioned if the Town could entertain the idea of at least one additional EMT. She noted the EMS Chief requested two additional EMT's. Mr. Bromson stated they could add that as an item for consideration.

Councilor Mangini questioned the possibility of having further discussion about the proposed work at the transfer station. Mr. Bromson stated they were unable to include the transfer station project, although it's known there's a need for an upgrade.

Councilor Sferrazza stated Connecticut was not in a good position before COVID-19, and he learned 2,500 Enfield residents have filed for unemployment as of April 8th. He noted the State of Connecticut has lost their sales tax, and not a lot of money is coming in. He stated the projected deficit for next year is projected to be \$3 billion dollars next year. He stated with the economic uncertainty, he would not support any tax increase whatsoever. He noted if someone wished to propose something, and they can find an acceptable corresponding decrease, so it wouldn't impact taxpayers, he would consider that.

Councilor Sferrazza referred to Public Safety and Employee Separation and noted there's \$100,000 in that line item. He noted within the next several months they have at least two long-term officers retiring. He questioned if the Employee Separation fund is adequate to pay out those retiring people. Mr. Wilcox stated that is a reserve fund, and typically \$100,000 is enough.

Councilor Szewczak referred to Councilor Kiner's comments about leasing and noted all the leases are a buy-out in the end for \$1.00, therefore, they are a lease-to-own.

Councilor Szewczak stated there's no cost to go to referendum, and she would like to keep the roof and road referendums. She acknowledged these are terrible times, but it will be catastrophic to let the Town's infrastructure deteriorate.

Councilor Szewczak stated the Council needs to know the revenues being generated by WPC and what the two rates are that were used for that revenue generation. She noted short-term bonding is always more expensive than long-term bonding. She questioned whether the Town can go back out into the market and refinance and perhaps this might be a way to realize some revenue.

Councilor Szewczak stated her understanding there's no money in the budget for the transfer station, however, she thought there was some design money available. She stated her belief some money should be put in that budget. She noted she'd be willing to support just bringing out water, putting in the septic system and the new trailer, and perhaps refurbishing the existing scale. She suggested a figure of \$300,000 be considered. She believes the employees should have running water with COVID-19. She stated she would like to fund this through things that the Town will not be doing this year because of the COVID-19, and those funds can be replenished next year.

Councilor Szewczak stated they should be sure they have enough postage funds available because everyone is getting an absentee ballot.

Councilor Szewczak stated the Town normally buys gasoline in bulk, and she questioned if the Town has been looking at some of the savings that they could garnish. Mr. Bromson stated the Director of Public Works and Director of Finance are looking at that.

Councilor Szewczak questioned whether any energy savings have been realized with schools being closed. Mr. Bromson stated they can look at such savings over the upcoming months.

Councilor Szewczak referred to the energy performance contract and questioned whether energy savings are going towards that lease, and Mr. Wilcox stated there are a couple things that offset

those costs, i.e., the Eversource energy credit, which was about \$1.6 million dollars, and a couple years earlier in the lease they knew they were going to be getting that credit, therefore, they increased the payments to help reduce the overall interest costs, and they applied some of that revenue to offset costs this year.

Councilor Muller stated there are some things he would like included, but in reality, he doesn't believe they can be included. He expressed his appreciation for the explanation provided regarding stipends.

Councilor Unghire referred to the rental equipment for EMS vehicles and noted for the last few years it was \$33,000 and \$32,000, but it jumps down to \$11,000, and then in 2021 it's proposed to be \$36,000. Ms. Riggott explained those related to cardiac monitors, which are lease-to-own, and they have a useful life of eight to ten years, so they finished paying them off last year, therefore, they now need to start again with their replacement plan. She stated her belief they put in for four, but that was cut down to two due to budget constraints.

Councilor Unghire referred to the Senior Citizens Bus Committee line item and noted the last several years it was zero, and now there's a \$25,000 amount. Ms. Guerreri explained it was originally included because there was going to be a proposal to apply for two new buses that were state-funded, but with the state funding, the Town would have to match by 20% and historically it would come out of this line item. She stated her understanding the Director of Finance was looking to see what the amount was that was in there, and there was going to be a match if they proceeded with an application.

Councilor Hemmeler agreed with Councilor Sferrazza in that the budget has to be flat. She noted she's also concerned about what the state is going to do, therefore, she has no additions. She stated she did previously submit questions, which were answered by the Town Manager and Director of Finance.

Councilor Bosco stated he is supporting a zero-increase budget. He added he has no problem adding items, however, there would have to be cuts elsewhere. He thanked the Town administration for all the work they've done on this budget proposal.

Chairman Ludwick questioned whether there's any indication as to how the State is going to handle its budget. He noted he heard the Governor stated it would have to be a flat budget for the State. He questioned if there's a timeline as to when the State will pass its budget. Mr. Wilcox stated he emailed CCM today to get an update and was told they're projecting a large deficit for next year, and they haven't heard anything as far as what they're going to do and how it will impact municipalities.

Chairman Ludwick requested Mr. Wilcox share how well Enfield funds its pension. Mr. Wilcox stated Enfield's pension fund is funded at over 90% in both the Police and Town pensions. He noted he doesn't anticipate those dropping down very far, but they might come down into the 80% range as far as the Town's funding percentage.

Chairman Ludwick stated his understanding the Town invested in some cameras throughout various parts of town. He requested the Chief of Police highlight some of the positives that have come out of that investment. Chief Fox stated they've solved an incredible number of cases that otherwise wouldn't have been solved. He acknowledged cameras are expensive, but they have great value.

Chairman Ludwick stated although there are projects he would like to see get done, there are unknowns regarding the State deficit and what the Town's cash flow will be over the next six to seven months. He stated it's important that the Town is very disciplined as to how they spend money. He noted he will not support any add-ons, and even though he supports the referendums, he would vote no at this point because he can't ask people to take on more debt even for needed projects when the Town doesn't understand what the cash flow will be for the next six or seven months. He voiced concern there will be more bad news from the State by the summertime when the State starts focusing on its lack of revenue. He pointed out there is a trickle-down effect for the Town's funding. He noted in the past, the State significantly cut the Education Cost Sharing grant. He stated the Town needs to be prudent.

Votes were then taken on the following items:

Grant Writer Position – Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared a vote of 3-8-0, with Councilors Bosco, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, Szewczak and Unghire voting against.

EMT Position - Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared a vote of 4-7-0, with Councilors Bosco, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Muller, Riley, Sferrazza, and Unghire voting against.

Transfer Station Project - Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared a vote of 5-6-0, with Councilors Bosco, Hemmeler, Ludwick, Muller, Riley, and Sferrazza, voting against.

Councilor Sferrazza stated if a referendum went forward in November, and the voters approved it, the Town would be taking on more debt service. He acknowledged the Town has debt service with the high school and middle school, and he questioned if the Town took on extra debt, would it have an impact on the Town's bond rating. Mr. Bromson stated it is not recommended going forward with a referendum unless they were confident that it wouldn't adversely affect the Town's bond rating. He noted the Town is getting close to the Rubicon that they don't want to cross.

Mr. Bromson stated having been the former Public Safety Director, he believes in all the departments and all of the jobs and missions that they have, but he's very sensitive to EMS and to the Police Department. He stated if he thought for a moment that they needed to add additional EMT's at this time, he would have included that in the proposed budget. He noted by not including that position, that does not show there is not support for EMS. He stated EMS has done a stellar job since their inception, but particularly in the last couple months. He noted they are truly heroes, and the Police have done a remarkable job as well.

Discussion followed regarding Water Pollution Control. Mr. Bromson stated the Town has done several presentations with Woodard & Curran, and they showed the current costs of running the plant. He noted that cost is right in the middle compared to other municipalities. He stated with the over \$36 million dollar upgrade, Enfield will have a state-of-the-art facility, which many surrounding communities do not have. He stated he left the fees flat for this year, however, the Water Pollution Control increases based on what Woodard & Curran recommended would require an increase of about \$40 per month this year on the quarterly, and if they don't do that, the next year, when all of those bonded monies come due, it will be \$80. He noted he proposed spreading this out over two years. He stated they left the volumetric flat, but that would have the same theory. He stated the Novak Study is recommending between four and five employees be added for maintenance and running the plant. He stated this year, they put in for a half position starting the next half of the year.

Mr. Wilcox stated the rates are the same at \$3.49 for under 20,000 gallons and \$5.24 for over 20,000 gallons and \$30 per quarter.

Councilor Cekala stated in the Town Manager's presentation he provided two options for WPCA – one was to stay at \$30/quarter this year and \$48/quarter next year. The other option is to go up \$9.00 this year and another \$9.00 next year. She stated her recollection that each and every year, they would be told that the revenue being produced is not going to cover the WPCA expenses, but yet she recalls that the Council was asked to give breaks to certain groups of people. She feels they put themselves in this position year after year. She stated her belief next year, it will have to be more than \$48/quarter. She suggested they need to go up to \$39/quarter this year. She stated her belief doing zero this year isn't going to help people at all next year, but rather it's going to be a shock to everyone if they go from zero to a large increase next year. She feels they need to raise the rates this year and do another increment next year.

Councilor Mangini agreed with Councilor Cekala.

Councilor Riley agreed with Councilor Cekala's suggestion.

Councilor Sferrazza agreed with Councilor Cekala.

Councilor Szewczak agreed with Councilor Cekala. She went on to state she would be in favor of one billing per year and rolling that into the tax bill. She questioned whether the \$1.8 million-dollar delinquent collection helped at all. Mr. Wilcox stated in the past revenues weren't high enough, so they borrowed money from the General Fund, and this delinquent collection could help accelerate the process of paying back the General Fund.

Councilor Szewczak requested verification that Water Pollution Control personnel are doing just Water Pollution type things.

Councilor Muller agreed with Councilor Cekala's suggestion.

Councilor Unghire agreed with Councilor Cekala's suggestion

Councilor Hemmeler agreed with Councilor Cekala.

Councilor Bosco stated his heart says going with the 50% increase, however, his head says no.

Chairman Ludwick stated if it is \$9.00 per quarter this year, that's \$36.00 additional per year before any of the usage charge. Mr. Wilcox stated the amounts would be \$39.00 per quarter and \$3.60 and \$5.39.

Chairman Ludwick questioned how much the Town has collected in unpaid sewer fees over the last year. He questioned if they collected \$2.5 million for the prison. Mr. Wilcox stated the \$2.5 million dollars for the prison was collected, and that is used to help pay for the actual plant upgrades, and it went into the Water Pollution Control Facility Upgrade Fund.

50-50 WPCA Fee Increase – Upon a **ROLL-CALL** vote being taken, the Chair declared a vote of 10-1-0, with Councilor Bosco voting against.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #5423 by Councilor Mangini, seconded by Councilor Muller to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #5423** adopted 11-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne F. Olechnicki
Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council

Jeannette Lamontagne
Secretary to the Council