

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016 AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Robert Oris, Chairman; Paul Bowman, Vice Chairman; Councilors - Michael Ecke, Sylvia Nichols, Thomas Ruocco, Tim Slocum, Peter Talbot.

Absent: Patti Flynn-Harris and Liz Linehan.

Staff: Town Manager Michael A. Milone; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Louis Zullo, Personnel Director; Attorney Floyd Dugas; Medical Insurance Consultant Tom Kowalchik.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Oris moved agenda items 6 and 8 to the end of the agenda for Executive Session.

3. ADOPTION OF COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE.

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Mr. Slocum.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves Resolution #0126-16-1

RESOLUTION #012616-1

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council adopts the amended Council Rules of Procedure as amended, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Resolution #120715-1 setting the meeting dates for 2016 Town Council Regular Meetings is amended to reflect the new meeting time as 7:00 P.M. as adopted herein in the amended Rules of Procedure.

Discussion

Chairman Oris stated two items have been amended. The Order of Business, #3, has the start time of meetings to 7:00 p.m. in order to move Executive Session to earlier in the meeting, and moving approval of minutes to #5.

Section "X - Committees" remains unchanged.

VOTE The motion passed 6-1; Ruocco opposed.

4. APPROVAL OF THE TOWN'S LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

MOTION by Mr. Bowman; seconded by Ms. Nichols

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves Resolution #0126-16-2

RESOLUTION #012616-2

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves the Town's Legislative Recommendations as presented and attached, and authorizes their submission to Cheshire's Legislative representatives.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. CALL FOR PUBLIC HEARING FOR SMALL CITIES GRANT FOR THE HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM.

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Ms. Nichols.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves Resolution #0126-16-3

RESOLUTION #012616-3

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council will conduct a public hearing on (February 23 or March 8, 2016) at Town Hall 84 South Main Street, Cheshire CT 06410 to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 Community Development Block Grant Program and to solicit citizen input.

Maximum award limits: \$700,000 for PUBLIC Facilities; \$700,000 for Public Housing Modernization of 25 units or less, or \$800,000 for 26 units and over; \$550,000 for Infrastructure; \$400,000 for Housing Rehabilitation Program for single towns, \$500,000 for tow-town consortium, and \$600,000 for three or more towns; \$25,000 for Planning Only Grants; \$500,000 for Economic Development Activities, and \$500,000 for Urgent Need.

Major activity categories are: Acquisition, Housing Rehabilitation, Public Housing Modernization, Community Facilities, Public Services, and Economic Development. Projects funded with CDGB allocations must carry out at least one of three National Objectives: benefit to low and moderate income persons, elimination of slums and blight, or meeting urgent community development needs.

The purpose of the public hearing is to obtain citizens' views on the Town's community development and housing needs and review and discuss specific project activities in the areas of housing, economic development or community facilities which could be part of the Town's application for funding.

Also, the public hearing will be to give citizens an opportunity to make their comments known on the program, and for approval of the Program Income Reuse Plan. If you are unable to attend the public hearing you may direct written comments to the Town of Cheshire, Human Services Department, 84 South Main Street, Cheshire CT 06410, or you may telephone (203) 271-6660. In addition, information may be obtained at the above address between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday.

The Human Services Department, on behalf of the Town of Cheshire, anticipates applying for the maximum grant amount of \$400,000 under the Housing Rehabilitation Program. In addition, the town will create a revolving loan fund with program income (principal and interest) generated from the grant for a housing rehabilitation loan program.

The Town of Cheshire promotes fair housing and makes all programs available to low and moderate income families regardless of age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual preference, marital status or handicap.

Discussion

The Council was informed by Mr. Milone that the resolution paragraph #2 is the exact wording from HUD, and it is required to be adopted for all grants. He noted that Ms. Piccerillo discussed this issue in collaboration with Interfaith Housing, private property owners within certain income levels are eligible and apply for grants. These are zero interest loans and the Town gets money back to be used for other loans. Mr. Milone stated it is unlikely the Economic Development Commission can get the grant because of the income levels required. It is not the standard EDC grant, i.e. West Main Street project, but is for low income property owners. There will be a similar resolution coming from the Housing Authority for upgrades to some of their facility infrastructures and whether they can use the Boulder Knoll Property. The grants must come through the Town as a conduit without oversight, and the Council must approve these grants.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

6. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEGOTIATIONS STRATEGY (executive session) Moved to end of the agenda.

7. TOWN MANAGER'S FY 15-16 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES STATUS REPORT

Mr. Milone stated that under his contract there is a requirement for him to provide the Council with a status report on his goals and objectives. He reviewed the current status with the Council.

I. Preserve Financial Stability and Sustainability of Town Operations.

Cheshire has a healthy surplus of \$1.1 million; Fund Balance is \$9.3 million, which is 9.3% of the operating budget; last year there was a healthy balance in the WPCD and Community Pool budgets; tax collection rate of 99.79% was the highest ever, and could be exceeded this fiscal year; the Town maintains its AAA credit rating.

The Town continues to be aggressive in pursuing the money owed by the State of Connecticut to the Town. The final report to the Claims Commissioner will receive the Town's report on January 29th; he has 60 days to submit the report to the Legislature; our legislative delegates are working to get the approval sooner for approval in the next session. The next part is the lawsuit for \$5 million for the State's portion of the treatment plant upgrade. The judge has stated that with success at the Claims Commissioner and Legislature, it might change the State's position in settling the \$5 million lawsuit for the upgrade.

Works in Progress - Mr. Milone cited labor negotiation strategy, mitigation of anticipated debt service; \$6.5 million in debt service account can be used to manage the upcoming debt spike associated with the treatment plant; question is how to use it to maximum and not expend all funds at one time, while providing consistent relief for taxpayers over the next five years.

Land acquisition will be discussed with Council, and is part of the EDC issues.

Succession Plan - is 2/3rds completed and will be important as current staff ages; must have solid plan in place to insure the sustainability of the Town and government; there will be a video/audio to make it easier for successors to know what has been ongoing.

II. Programs Enhancing Staff Morale

Town staff has received extensive training on Microsoft products which has potential to make everything more efficient using technology to the maximum. There will be repeated training sessions for staff.

ICM Accreditation - Mr. Milone received his ICM accreditation again; it is part of his professional training.

Mindfulness Program - this program is ongoing for the last 6 months; there will be a two part employee survey; staff is working on a better design for the outdated performance evaluation forms; survey monkey is being used; there are ongoing safety programs and receipt of another CIRMA award.

Town Hall has an Employee Safety Committee and Executive Safety Committee, and they meet quarterly with the risk managers from the insurance company, discuss concerns, problems, and issues; committees are responsive; and Town has received many awards.

With regard to staff morale and support, Chairman Oris asked how customer service is delivered to the community and how it is measured.

Mr. Milone explained that there is no clear and easy measure of customer service. There used to be resident evaluation cards in all departments, but this has not been done for a while as there was little feedback. A "secret shopper" has been used with

hiring someone to be a customer, present a problem to employees, and evaluate response. The plan is to reinstitute the evaluation cards in departments for public comments, use the website, Facebook, for feedback. At this time there is no consistent process with information coming back on citizen satisfaction with customer service. The new website will have the ability to give information to Town staff, and the goal is to heighten people's awareness, and let staff know of any problems or issues.

It was suggested by Mr. Bowman that the new telephone system provide, via voice mail, a way for people to respond to the customer service received by Town departments.

According to Mr. Milone the survey monkey on the website is a good way for people to evaluate Town services, as it receives immediate attention. Other than direct mailing and direct contact, the public response is sporadic. When he is walking around Town Hall, Mr. Milone noted that he acknowledges people, and talks to them. The evaluation cards will be started again, along with a strategy to better extract feedback in a meaningful and measurable way.

Ms. Nichols commented on the need to call people back after stating an opinion, and there should be a well designed plan to make everything work as planned.

III. Improve Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness

Website upgrade RFP is going out; CPD new Canine Unit with dog trained for narcotics and lost people; CFD ladder truck acquisition is moving along, down to two vendors with decision made within a week, along with savings and getting best truck for CFD.

E-commerce - trying to expand into the Building Department and Town Clerk's Office.

With regard to CFD, Mr. Milone and Chief Casner working on concerns about reduction in number of volunteer firefighters so as not to reach a crisis situation. The report will be re-issued to Council with identification of problems and alternatives to be considered.

Chief Casner has a good relationship with the University of New Haven, and 2 or 3 students have been bunking in at the fire houses during vacations periods, help with first response, and getting trucks out for quick response. Chief Casner will continue working with UNH on this program.

IV. Enhance Communications with all Stakeholders...

This includes the website upgrade, conversion to the new telephone system, upgrade of building surveillance and security systems.

The new phone system is working out well, has call recordings on computers; security system is the last of the I.T. program initiatives.

Outreach program - Mr. Milone will meet with elected and appointed volunteer officials; improve relationships with board and commission members; maintain better lines of communication and also bolster memberships.

Cheshire Bedding Capital program is still being worked on with growers.

V. Initiate, Advance or Complete Key Town Projects

Significant projects include the upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is completed and came in under budget.

Community Pool ribbon cutting will be held on Sunday, February 7th, 11:30 a.m. or 12 Noon.

West Main Street Project is completed; Mixville Park projects done including dam, dredging and bridge.

Town acquisition of streetlights is completed.

Creamery Road bridge work is completed, and designs being done for East Johnson Avenue bridge.

Linear Trail will be great addition to the Town upon spring completion of the project.

Open Space policies and land acquisition tie into the land development initiative.

Issues of Importance include: Succession planning, maintaining tight fiscal controls for the rest of the year with preparation of subsequent budget and upcoming debt spike, maintenance of infrastructure, road projects, and getting trail completed.

Regarding the trail project, Mr. Milone cited the importance of the concerns of homeowners along the trail on safety and privacy due to the closeness of their yards to the trail. There must be more money spent on thicker screening and higher sense of privacy for these homeowners, who are very upset and concerned. They have been asked by Mr. Milone to wait until spring time when plantings can be undertaken. These people are worried about their safety, and Mr. Milone and Chief Dryfe are working on this important issue and concern.

Charter Revision - This is a Council decision on how to proceed. Mr. Milone is putting together files and background information from the last charter revision process.

6. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEGOTIATIONS STRATEGY

8. DISCUSSION RE: APPOINTMENT OF TOWN ATTORNEY

MOTION by Mr. Ruocco; seconded by Ms. Nichols.

MOVED that the Town Council enter Executive Session at 8:25 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone, Finance Director Jaskot, Personnel Director Zullo, Attorney Floyd Dugas, and Medical Insurance Consultant Tom Kowalchik to discuss collective bargaining negotiations and appointment of Town Attorney.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Mr. Ruocco; seconded by Ms. Nichols

MOVED that the Town Council exit Executive Session at 10:00 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Ruocco; seconded by Ms. Nichols

MOVED to adjourn the special meeting at 10:00 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk