

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Robert F. Parisi Council Chambers

TUESDAY

APRIL 19, 2022

6:30 P.M.

FY 2022-2023 BUDGET

RECORD OF VOTES & MINUTES

The Special Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Councilors in attendance were Autumn Allinson, Samuel Carmody, Thomas Laffin, Joseph Marrone, III, Christina Tatta, Councilor Zandri and Chairman Cervoni. Councilors Fishbein and Testa were absent. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr., and Comptroller Tim Sena were also present.

1. Moment of Silence
2. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call
3. FY 2022-2023 BUDGET

LIBRARY

*In Attendance: Jane Fisher
Carol Mikulski*

Ms. Fisher stated there is a modest increase in budget and things are going well.

Chairman Cervoni commented on new carpeting and Ms. Fisher stated it looks amazing.

Michael Saldamarco, 3 Burke Heights Drive, commented on his fond memories of the library and the Mother Goose program but how the library went woke and he will not let his children go. He expressed disappointment about transgender restrooms in the library and sexual orientation books on display in the children's rooms. He stated we live in the greatest country and he wanted to find a book on the Constitution or founding fathers or American exceptionalism. He went on to state for Easter there were no crosses and no books about Jesus. He remarked \$3.2 million to push one sided agenda.

Councilor Carmody thanked Ms. Fisher for having a welcoming library. Ms. Fischer stated we appreciate continuing support.

EDC

There were no questions.

VETERANS CENTER

In Attendance: George Messier, Veterans Service Officer

Chairman Cervoni thanked Mr. Messier for his service to the nation and to the town.

Councilor Tatta said to Mr. Messier that she is supportive of what he does.

SENIOR CENTER

There were no questions.

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

*In Attendance: Joan Parisi, Registrar
Robert Avery, Registrar*

Councilor Tatta inquired about Line 22 – New Voting Machine - \$165,000.

Ms. Parisi stated they were told at the conference they had to replace voting machines within the next year. She said she is not sure if Town will pay or State, but wanted to make sure they are covered. The Mayor said we will deal with it when the time comes and indicated that the State should pay.

Councilor Zandri inquired where we would pull funds from if State doesn't pay. He then stated he feels comfortable enough in contingency.

Councilor Carmody asked if notifying voters of new voting locations is reflected in the budget. Mr. Parisi stated it's in the current year's budget.

PARKS & RECREATION

In Attendance: Ken Michaels, Director, Parks & Recreation

Councilor Tatta inquired about ARPA funding for parks asked Mr. Michaels if he was to receive ARPA funds what would he use it for. Mr. Michaels responded the pool, surveillance at Doolittle Park, and also mentioned drainage problems at the new field at Pragemann Park. Councilor Tatta stated our Parks & Rec does a wonderful job.

Councilor Zandri asked for an update on Harrison Park. Mr. Michaels stated we do not have an update, just curbing and he will check with Rob about that.

Councilor Zandri asked Mr. Michaels if he has seen dumping at parks. Mr. Michaels stated he has received minimal calls.

Councilor Zandri then asked for an update on pickleball and Mr. Michaels said the contract was signed and it starts on Friday.

Mr. Gross referred to Councilor Tatta's questions/list of projects. He asked when portals open if it's possible that Parks & Rec send a list that needs to be tended to. Chairman Cervoni said that can be addressed at the next Town Council meeting.

Bill Comerford, 5 Broadview Drive, asked if Parks & Rec has its own crew maintaining fields or if that comes out of Public Works. Mr. Michaels stated we work hand and hand and provide them with a monthly schedule.

YOUTH & SOCIAL SERVICES & COALITION

In Attendance: Mandy Miranda

Councilor Marrone inquired about Y&SS and Coalition being in the same budget and asked why they would not be separate. The Mayor explained we're providing service connected with Y&SS and Y&SS would express continuing or not continuing with partnership. Councilor Marrone asked if we have a contract as far as expectation and Ms. Miranda said it may have been set up prior to her coming in.

Councilor Marrone inquired about the social contribution page - Mission Statement - Contract with SCOW. The Mayor stated he believes there is a contract through the State of Connecticut that provides services for Wallingford. Councilor Marrone asked if there is a contract for Coalition. The Mayor indicated it would be a service under the auspices of Y&SS. Ms. Miranda said we're assisting them and they're assisting us. The Mayor stated it enables ability to avoid duplicating services.

WALLINGFORD CENTER, INC.

There were no questions.

WCI CAPITAL/FACADE

*In Attendance: Mike Glidden
Liz Davis*

Councilor Marrone asked how much WCI could use to improve downtown. Ms. Davis responded that she is trying to look at where facades need help. She mentioned the building on the corner of 4 & 8 Center Street needs work.

Councilor Tatta stated she did not like the decoration of snowflake decorations and also stated she has been told businesses don't like looking at the cemetery wall and sidewalk. She suggested removing the wall and replacing it with wrought iron.

Mr. Glidden stated the wall is listed as a resource.

The Mayor remarked that the State got involved and it's listed as a historic treasure. He went on to say this is a very difficult process.

Councilor Zandri said the wall is protected and there is not a lot we can do.

Councilor Zandri asked if businesses have had issues with parking spaces. Ms. Davis answered no.

Councilor Zandri said we are seeing more turn-over with businesses. He asked what we have available on second floors and if there is any effort being made. Ms. Davis said they will meet with landlords and review what they are looking for, look at retail space and model that after other towns.

The Mayor stated P&Z just did new zoning overlay and noted this issue has been discussed quite a bit in the past couple years.

Councilor Zandri mentioned Orchard Street and asked if we see any need to branch into those street areas and expand commercial space. Mr. Glidden said he defers that to Planning & Zoning.

Lucille Casagrande, South View Drive, commented that all the work used to be accomplished with volunteers and no one got paid. She suggested making decorations on Center Street uniform.

Mr. Gross stated the cemetery wall can come down but not for economic reasons. The board is in disagreement on what to do with this. The Mayor said he does not think this is a simple matter.

Mr. Comerford feels flags should go all the way down and asked if new flags were purchased. Ms. Davis answered yes, 75 of them.

Mr. Comerford asked if their budget has anything to do with the railroad and Mr. Glidden said no, that's EDC we are not part of the selection process.

HISTORIC PROGRAM MATCH

There were no questions.

CENTER STREET CEMETERY

*In Attendance: Bob Gross, President
Bob Beaumont, Vice President*

Mr. Comerford referenced Chairman Cervoni's letter and asked if that information was supplied to Town Council. Chairman Cervoni stated some of that information was provided.

Mr. Gross said we don't look at this as a contribution. He went on to state we have the 2018 contract which outlines what we're responsible for.

Mr. Comerford asked how many employees there are and Mr. Gross answered one employee and others as needed – 1099 at end of year.

Mr. Comerford inquired about gravestone repairs and asked how much was budgeted. Mr. Gross stated it's under cemetery supplies.

Councilor Tatta asked when the wall was built and Mr. Gross answered 1911. Councilor Tatta then said it looks like a wrought iron fence in old photos/paintings.

Mr. Beaumont stated he is not for taking the wall down and is concerned that salt and chemicals could have adverse impact on stones.

Chairman Cervoni thanks Mr. Gross and Mr. Beaumont for their hard work.

COLUMBUS HOUSE

There were no questions.

SCOW

*In Attendance: Adriana Rodriguez, Executive Director
Jeffrey Necio*

Ms. Rodriguez stated she reached out and met with the Mayor and noted that SCOW was eliminated from the State budget and that they want to make sure they can continue their services. Ms. Rodriguez stated they are creating a plan to bring in different revenue streams.

Mr. Necio stated we are aggressively pursuing other grants.

Ms. Rodriguez mentioned they are finally able to have their annual wine tasting fund raising.

Councilor Laffin thanked SCOW for their service.

Councilor Tatta stated the Town gets a lot of bang for their buck and it's unfortunate what happened at the State level. She thanked SCOW for what they do and stated they are a good investment for the Town.

Councilor Carmody jokingly asked when is the wine tasting. Ms. Rodriguez answered September 29th.

COALITION FOR A BETTER WALLINGFORD

There were no questions.

Vincent Cervoni, Chairman

Date

Deborah McKiernan Town Clerk

Date

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 4-25-22
AT 3:00 p.m. AND RECEIVED BY
Deborah McKiernan TOWN CLERK

MERIDEN-WALLINGFORD VETERANS SERVICE CENTER

WALLINGFORD TOWN HALL

45 South Main St.

203-294-2165

203.294.2137 fax

George Messier - Veterans Service Officer

Monday, 18 April, 2022

To: Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr.
Town Council Chairman Vincent Cervoni
Council Members

Via: Town Clerk

Subj: Operation of the Meriden-Wallingford Veterans Service Center

The Veterans Service Center has been in continuous operation since its inception in 1945.

The Center provides information, guidance and administrative services to veterans, their spouses, and/or other surviving family members in conjunction with benefits and assistance to which they may be entitled in accordance with federal, state, and local enactments. On that point, the Assessor's Office reports to the State with regard to veterans currently in receipt of tax easements. That data is submitted separately, and is not addressed in this letter.

Applications for assistance, and such other correspondence as may be required are prepared, and forwarded to the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office (VARO) in Newington, CT, the State of Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, Rocky Hill, the National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO, and to the Soldiers', Sailors' & Marines' Fund (SSMF) in Hartford. No federal, state, or municipal funds are disbursed directly to veterans/families from this office.

The office schedules monthly visits to both municipal Senior Centers, holds a voting position on the Wallingford Veterans Memorial Committee, participates

in graduation exercises at both Lyman Hall and Sheehan High Schools to recognize seniors opting for military service, and is available for presentations at the various Posts (VFW, American Legion, and AmVets).

It bears mentioning that the Center exercises no management or oversight responsibilities whatsoever in connection with the membership, leadership, or financial matters pertaining to the several veterans posts in these communities. The Posts are overseen and audited periodically by corresponding state-level entities.

Requirements effective 1 October, 2013, pursuant to Public Act No. 13-34, now codified in Connecticut General Statutes Section 27-135, stipulate that each municipality may either establish a local veterans' advisory committee, or designate a city or town employee to serve as a veterans' service contact person.....to ensure that each local municipality has a designated individual familiar with services and benefits available at the federal, state, and local level.

Turning to the Center's clientele, we are witnessing the inevitable decline in the number of veterans of the World War II, Korea, and Vietnam eras. The office handles few new claims for service-connected compensation from these groups. Instead, one sees an increasing number of elderly wartime veterans and/or their widows/family members seeking financial assistance under the VA category of Non-Service-Connected (NSC) Pension Benefits, augmented typically with additional financial assistance for Aid & Attendance, or Housebound benefits.

Turning to modern-day vets, the office sees but a small number of younger veterans. Typically, these individuals are more thoroughly briefed and prepared with respect to available VA benefits, perhaps owing to their ongoing affiliation with components of the CT National Guard. Moreover, they are more comfortable with modern communications devices and methods ranging from cell phones to computers and the internet. Simply stated, they're already "plugged in."

There has been a very modest uptick in volume with respect to younger veterans seeking temporary financial assistance from the SSMF as they endeavor to weather the economic tumult in which we find ourselves immersed.

The office serves as a representative for the SSMF. Established in 1919, The Fund operates as a quasi-independent agency of the State of Connecticut, administered by the American Legion.

Currently, roughly one quarter of office activity is in support of veterans' requests for assistance from that entity. Remaining budgeted time is taken up providing assistance ranging from locating discharge documents, requesting gravesite foot markers and burial benefits, and literally everything in between. In contrast to earlier years, budgeted time is more evenly spent between Wallingford and Meriden veterans, with but a very small and insignificant amount of time used to assist callers/visitors from surrounding towns.

BUDGET. In recent years, the office has been downsized, both physically and in terms of funding and manning level, reflecting both the dwindling number of older veterans and dependents, and the relative improvement in both the quality and level of services and communications options provided by the cognizant agencies (VA, and SSMF). Those trends will continue. The budget for the new year commencing 1 July 2022 (25.4k) is split evenly between the two communities, and may be seen as "steady-state".

Looking ahead, it may be useful to explore a time / cost-shared relationship with other communities such as Hamden, North Haven and Cheshire, where comparable services may be lacking.

Respectfully,

G.A. Messier