

TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP – THURSDAY EVENING
MARCH 19, 2020

PRESENT: Calouro, Sweeney, Teixeira, Parella and Ley (Present through speaker phone per Governor's Executive Order 20-05)

ALSO PRESENT: Steven Contente, Town Administrator
Raquel Pellerin, Town Treasurer

The Council met in workshop session on Thursday evening, March 19, 2020 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 6:40 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

801 – Human Services
Edward Carusi – Director

Human Services Director Carusi explained that this year he has received more than usual amount of requests for assistance for water and rent. He also explained the purpose and use of the emergency fund.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

805 – Human Resources

Council Chairman Calouro observed that due to the corona virus situation (COVID-19) most of those who have applied for Human Resources grants are not present. He explained that their lack of attendance at this year's workshop in no way impacts their application before the Council and that the Council appreciates their absence as a safety precaution for all involved.

Y – Bristol Senior Center
Maria Doherty, President
Maria Ursini, Director

Ms. Ursini reported that center personnel and volunteers delivered 200 meals on behalf of the center to area seniors today.

Ms. Ursini passed out an "infographic" flyer about a recent survey. She noted that the senior center has experienced a 27% increase in participation and obtained 4,300 volunteer hours. She relayed information about the programs offered at the center.

A discussion ensued concerning the distribution meals, participation at programs, etc.

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Councilman Sweeney asked to know how the senior center would plan to spend the additional \$100,000 requested with Ms. Ursini responding that the funds are needed to provide health insurance for employees, repairs to the bus, payroll fees, and workers compensation premiums. She added that the funds would also provide for \$10,000 capital reserves and for a telephone for the bus driver.

A further discussion ensued regarding grant opportunities, a strategic plan.

Ms. Ursini explained that the senior center also sent out an appeal this year.

Councilman Ley asked to know how the senior center compensated for last year's reported shortfall with Ms. Doherty responding that the director did not receive a salary and that she is now paid for twenty hours per week.

It was noted that most senior center programs are provided for free.

Councilwoman Parella noted that some seniors have the ability to pay with Ms. Ursini explaining that it is too complicated for her staff to charge some persons and not others. She noted that members do not pay for membership either.

Councilwoman Parella noted that many seniors join several senior centers and pay dues to belong to these.

Parella/Teixeira - Voted unanimously to decrease the Revaluation line (Finance) by \$2866 and to provide an additional \$2866 to the senior center.

V - Neverland Theater

DD - Bristol Garden Club

Town Administrator Contente stated that he received a late grant application for Neverland Theater which he would like to recommend for a grant of \$350. He suggested that the Bristol Garden Club program could be reduced and that the amount recommended for the Garden Club might be changed to \$650.

The Council, by consensus, agreed to this change.

802 - Rogers Free Library

Tech Specialist

A discussion ensued regarding this matter with Council members generally in agreement that the town should examine options using current staff and services and that it may wish to revisit the proposal next year.

The council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

803 - Parks and Recreation

Salaries

Coordinator of Senior Services

Council Chairman Calouro stated that he believes that the position is appropriate with Town Administrator Contente adding that the Town is informed that the CDBG will be shifting its priorities toward senior centers. He added that the Town will need an employee who can be directed to help prepare for emergency situation, etc.

Councilman Ley suggested that the Town may wish to wait another year before funding this position.

Town Administrator Contente noted that the budget allows that a secretary will be eliminated and that this position utilizes the funding formerly used to support the secretarial position.

Councilman Ley stated that he does not wish to support this position.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

806 - Municipal Observances

Last Night

A discussion ensued regarding the funding of last night with Council members and Town Administrator Contente explaining that it is difficult to obtain sponsorships. It was also reported that the cost of the stage and the required producer is escalating.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the activity has been in place for 25 years and that local restaurants, etc., seem to be benefitting from it.

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Council Chairman Calouro and Councilman Sweeney suggested that the Town must find a way to mitigate the increasing costs or find other opportunities for funding.

Sweeney/Teixeira - Voted unanimously to reduce the Last Night budget to \$20,000 placing no specific obligation on the administration to make up the difference.

Sweeney/Teixeira - Voted unanimously to forward all budget items for consideration for provisional vote at the Meeting to be held on April 1, 2020.

Teixeira/Sweeney - Voted unanimously to add an agenda item concerning the inaugural meeting of the Charter Review Commission.

The Council discussed the possibility of holding an inaugural meeting of the newly appointed Charter Review Commission. It was agreed that the Chairman and the Clerk would investigate systems and procedures that would support remote access to a public meeting.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 9:00 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk