

PRESENT: Calouro, Sweeney, Teixeira, Parella and Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Steven Contente, Town Administrator
Julie Goucher, Town Treasurer

The Council met in workshop session on Thursday evening, March 21, 2019 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 6:35 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

801 - Human Services
Edward Carusi, Director

Director Carusi noted that this (2018-19) is a particularly difficult year and that he received many requests for help with utility terminations. He added that he always tries to find alternative funding sources before tapping his department's Emergency Fund. He reported a remaining balance of \$2400 and noted that the charitable funds of local churches will typically help those in need.

Councilman Teixeira asked to know if Mr. Carusi is also paid by the Parks and Recreation Department with Town Treasurer Goucher explaining that Mr. Carusi is paid for both part time positions and that the Parks and Recreation salary is derived from the "Recreation Supervisors" and "Weekend Supervisors" line items.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended.

805 - Human Resources
S - BVFD Emergency
W - Bristol Rotary
Edward Carusi, Coordinator

Mr. Carusi explained that there are 250 dialers in use in the Town-wide program and that he has helped with many installations. It was noted that the Rotary Club provides funds to the program that it receives from the Town.

The Council made no changes to these budget lines.

A - Women's Resource Center

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

B - East Bay Center

Robert Crossley, Director

Mr. Crossley explained the level of service provided to Bristol residents and added that the funds provided by the Town help with paying copays for those persons who cannot afford them. He also reported on the newly established East Bay Recovery Center which occupies St. Michael's Parish House on a regular basis.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

C - East Bay Community Action

Dennis Roy, Director

Mr. Roy outlined the services provided by his agency and explained that the agency also employs 47 Bristol residents. He also explained that funding from various sources including Federal, State, local and private foundations.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

D - Benjamin Church Tenants Association

Carol Pouliot, Member

Ms. Pouliot thanked the Council for its past support.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

E - Visiting Nurse Services

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

F - Community String Project

Alan Bernstein, Director

Mr. Bernstein explained that the program serves 100-125 youth and that the agency derives approximately 30% of its funding from tuition and the remainder comes from fundraising.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

G - Mt. Hope Wrestling Club

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

H - King Philip Little League

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

I - Franklin Court Tenants Association

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

J - Senior Citizens Council

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

K - Boy Scouts

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

L - Mosaico

Amy Bratsos, Sense of Pride Coordinator

Ms. Bratsos reported that the funding supports the annual Mosaico Sense of Pride program which provides instruction to 150 Fourth Grade students.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

M - Bristol Art Museum

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

N - Harbor Lights

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

O - Cornerstone Adult Services

Geri Manning, Director

Ms. Manning reported that the Bristol office has a new Nurse-manager and that there are 21 persons participating in the adult day services program.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know the average daily attendance at the facility with Ms. Manning responding that the facility serves an average of 15-25 persons each day.

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

P - Samaritans

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

Q - Bristol Historical Society

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

R - Coggeshall Farm

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

T - Meals on Wheels

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

U - Art Night

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

V - Neverland Theater

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

W - Rotary (see above)

X - East Bay Food Pantry

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

Y - Senior Center

Maria Doherty, Board President

Olivia Germano, Board Member

Teixeira/Parella - Voted unanimously to increase the Town Administrator's recommended amount for this line by \$10,000 and that these additional funds shall be used for transportation and fuel and repairs of the senior bus.

Prior to the vote taken Ms. Doherty noted the recommended budget line and stated that the center needs more to operate. She reported that the center's budget is \$250,000.

Councilman Ley asked to know the status of the community needs assessment with Ms. Doherty responding that she will be invitations to time and place when the results will be announced. Ms. Germano noted that the announcement will be April 12 at the Community Center.

Councilman Sweeney stated that the Senior Center does a good job.

Ms. Doherty noted that the bussing amount is insufficient and that the Town previously covered any cost overruns and that these cost overruns are not included in the center's current funding arrangement.

Ms. Doherty explained that the bus costs \$400 per month for fuel and \$8000 per year for repairs.

Ms. Germano noted that the Town covered the cost of payroll tax in the past separately from the Senior Center budget and that these amounts are not included in the annual allocation.

Town Treasurer Goucher reported that the amount allocated to the Senior Center during the current fiscal years includes the cost of payroll expenses. She further explained that the previous years' budget (2017-18) included all personnel costs and that this budget was only overspent by \$100.

Ms. Doherty suggested that the cost to operate the Senior Center for utilities, etc., is more expensive than it used to be as a subset of the Town since the Town likely obtains better rates than those afforded to private entities. She added that the Senior Center staff is very frugal.

A discussion ensued regarding the Senior Center bus with Ms. Doherty explaining that the bus picks up seniors "anywhere and everywhere." She added that it is not possible for the bus to provide rides to persons with disabilities who are in need of specially equipped transportation vehicles.

Councilman Ley asked to know if the Center keeps track of bus use.

Ms. Doherty responded that the Center keeps track of bus use but that there a need to keep the bus on the road for longer hours to accommodate senior requests for transportation. Ms. Germano added that it may be necessary for the center to operate a second bus to accommodate those who request a ride. She added that she will soon be a senior citizen in need of transportation and that she expects that the senior bus will be available to her.

Councilman Teixeira noted that the senior services director was recently terminated and asked to know if there is any plan to bring back Senior Center employees as Town employees.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that there was much discussion over a year ago concerning the operation of the Senior Center which resulted in the current financial arrangement. He suggested that if there would be another change to a different arrangement this would require a great deal of work and that such a process would not be simple.

Councilman Teixeira stated that he was uncertain why the arrangement was changed last year.

Council Chairman Calouro stated that the decision was made to provide the non-profit Senior Center with the same dollar amount that was allocated to them previously. He added that the Town Administrator recommends a 2% increase to that amount for next year and that the amount recommended is more generous than the overall Town budget which increases by 1.7%.

Councilwoman Parella suggested that the Senior Center should utilize the funds available to it to plan their own program. She noted that the situation is similar to that of the EBCAP and East Bay Center who receive grant funding and then run their own programs.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Council made its decisions regarding the Senior Center based upon the advice of legal counsel. She added that she still believes that the Senior Center should be a Town department reporting to the Town Administrator.

Ms. Doherty stated that she believes that the Senior Center "brings a lot to the table" and that the Center likes to offer programs to its members free of charge.

Ms. Doherty suggested that Council members might like to visit the Center to "see what is going on" and that the focus of the Center is on senior citizens. She added that the Center staff has received grants and accomplished other types of fundraising.

Councilman Ley asked to know about the personnel expenses with Town Treasurer Goucher explaining that the senior center is paying higher salaries than those paid earlier by the Town.

Ms. Germano reported that the Senior Center raised the salary of the Assistant Director. She noted that the Senior Center provided a financial report.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know the hourly rates of the personnel with Ms. Germano stating that she did not think that those rates could be disclosed.

Councilwoman Parella noted that since the rates are paid with public funds, they must be disclosed.

A discussion ensued regarding the cost of health insurance.

Council Chairman Calouro noted the dates of the Provisional Adoption, the Public Hearing and Final Adoption. He explained that "there is a lot going on" and the revaluation is also a concern of this budget cycle.

Council Chairman Calouro also noted that changing the Senior Center to a Town department would be complicated but cautioned that the topic at hand is the budget only and that it would be improper to entertain a topic that is not on the agenda.

Ms. Germano noted that the Senior Center provides health insurance to two employees and that the cost of this is the COBRA payment related to the Town's former coverage.

Councilman Sweeney suggested that the matter of the Senior Center as a Town department would be best discussed at a special workshop session called for that purpose.

Elizabeth Harvey reported that the Senior Center provided financial reports to the Town in November and January.

Joseph DeMelo stated that he was not surprised to learn that the Senior Center budget increased since he was formerly on the Recreation Board in the 1990s and that its budget was only \$25,000 at the time and that the Bristol County Water Authority raises its rates 3-4% per year. He stated that he did not understand why the Senior Center is not a Town department.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Recreation Department raises half of its budget through fees.

Councilman Teixeira suggested that the Council may wish to consider providing additional funding for the Senior Center grant.

Council Chairman Calouro suggested that if Councilman Teixeira wishes to do so he should make a motion.

Councilman Teixeira noted that if the Council were to provide \$100,000, this may add \$.04 to the tax rate. Town Treasurer Goucher noted that \$100,000 would represent a 72% increase to the agency budget.

Councilwoman Parella suggested that the Council may wish to consider a supplemental allocation to provide extra funds for the senior bus.

Councilwoman Parella stated that she is concerned about tax increases as a result of the revaluation. She noted that she is aware that some tax bills will be raised \$800.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that the school district is asking for 8.5%.

Mr. DeMelo asked to know if the Town has a "surplus" with Town Treasurer Goucher explaining that the Town is using \$525,000 of its fund balance to offset the tax increase. Council Chairman Calouro noted that the Town's fund balance contributes to its ability to borrow at low interest rates and cautioned that using too much of this fund balance could result in more expensive borrowing.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the Town provides extra for transportation, would the Senior Center agree not to spend it on anything else.

Ms. Germano stated that the Senior Center would honor the Council's expectations.

Councilwoman Parella stated that the funds should be used only for fuel and repairs for the senior bus.

Ms. Germano noted that payroll taxes are "hurting" the Senior Center's budget.

Town Treasurer Goucher noted that the Town last year provided the Benjamin Church Senior Center with a pool of funds and that these funds could be spent at the discretion of the Senior Center.

After the vote taken, Council Chairman Calouro asked to know the "bottom line" with Town Treasurer Goucher explaining that the \$10,000 additional gives the Senior Center an overall increase of 8.8%

Z - American Legion Boys and Girls State

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

AA - Wildlife Rehabilitation of RI

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

BB - Bristol Health Equity Zone

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

CC - Bristol County Baysiders

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

DD - Bayside Family YMCA

The Council made no changes to this budget line.

601 - Community Development

Line 0700-417 - Tourism Promotion

At this point in the workshop, as part of its recapitulation, the Council reconsidered the subject line item.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Town's share of the meal and beverage tax has increased and suggested that this was the direct result of the Town's promotional efforts. She suggested that the Council should level fund the line and not cut the \$2000 as recommended.

Councilman Sweeney asked to know the amount provided to Lou Hammond with Town Treasurer Goucher stating that she believes it to be \$17,000.

The Council, by consensus, agreed that this line should be set at \$28,000.

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 8:10 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk