

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING - MONDAY EVENING - APRIL 22, 2019

PRESENT: Calouro, Sweeney, Teixeira, Parella, and Ley

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

The Council met in special session on Monday evening, April 22, 2019 for the purposed of a Public Hearing on the 2019-2020 Town Budget, in the Town Hall, Council Chambers beginning at 7:00 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

Teixeira/Parella - Voted unanimously to close the Public Hearing.

Teixeira/Sweeney - Voted unanimously, due to the notice from the Bristol Housing Authority advising the town that the lease with the Benjamin Church Senior Center will be terminated as of July 31, 2019, that the funds appropriated for the Bristol Senior Center under the Human Resources (Department 805) line item may be utilized at a location other than 1020 Hope Street and for the provision of Senior Services as may be determined by the Town Council.

Prior to the votes taken, Council Chairman Calouro opened the Public Hearing.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that the Council had multiple meetings and workshops to get to this point and that these included the various department managers.

Council Chairman Calouro thanked specifically the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer for the smooth process and stated that at one time the budget process was contentious. He added that it has not been contentious for a very long time.

Council Chairman Calouro stated that the process involved going through departmental budgets line by line and at that the Council is aware of the challenges caused by the Town-wide revaluation in this budget year.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that the current tax rate of \$15.38 will likely change to \$13.86 due to the revaluation. He outlined the appeal process for revaluation value appeals.

Bill Touhy of 34 Anchorage Court questioned why the mil rate dropped only by 10% if the average assessment increased by 18%.

Town Treasurer Goucher noted that the Tangible Tax and Commercial accounts changed by different percentages. She also noted that the Town budget, provisionally, also increased by 2.14%. Town Treasurer Goucher explained that the tax rate is not set until the tax roll is certified by the Tax Assessor and that all figures are estimates at this time.

Town Treasurer Goucher also agreed to meet with Mr. Touhy and show him the calculations that led to the estimates.

Michael Mello (no address given) noted that there is a marked increase in salaries within Schedule C and asked about this matter as it relates to Sewer Use Fees.

Town Administrator Contente explained that the Water Pollution Control Department will add two new positions and that the Department of Public Works will reduce its employee rolls by an equivalent amount. He noted that there is a need to increase staffing at Water Pollution Control to assure compliance to Department of Environmental Management and Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

Councilwoman Parella added that the Town would be subject to fines if its staff cannot meet the environmental standards.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that the Sewer Use Fee will likely rise approximately \$34 per year per unit for 2019-2020.

Town Administrator Contente noted that the reductions in staff at DPW will be accommodated with automated rubbish and recycling collection trucks.

Robert Breslin (no address given) asked to know if the budget contains innovations to reduce consumption of energy such as solar fields and sustainability plans.

Council Chairman Calouro explained that the Town has a solar field program for the former Minturn Farm landfill. He explained that the Town paid \$7000 for a consultant and that it will obtain approximately \$90,000 in virtual net metering. He

added that this revenue will offset the tax rate in future years.

Councilman Sweeney noted that the Town also changed much of its lighting to LED lamps.

Council Chairman Calouro explained that the LED conversion and the Town's acquisition of its street lights has resulted in energy and maintenance cost savings.

A discussion ensued regarding energy savings programs.

Councilman Ley noted that the Town has a program for open space preservation and conservation with Council Chairman Calouro explaining that the Town recently began a project to prevent rain and ground water from entering, and overloading, the wastewater treatment system.

Town Administrator Contente noted that a homeowner has to pay only \$517 per year to process an entire household's wastewater. He noted that the Town will be adding new infrastructure and employees with this year's increased sewer use fee of \$34.

Town Administrator Contente also noted that the Sewer improvements this year will total \$2 - 2.5 million.

#### 805 - Human Resources

Council Chairman Calouro noted the receipt of a letter from the Bristol Housing Authority making the future of the use of the Benjamin Church House doubtful. He noted that the Council should make it clear that its appropriation is for a senior program and that this program is not specifically tied to any one address. (see motion above)

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the intention is to move the program elsewhere with Council Chairman Calouro explaining that the purpose of the motion is to provide the opportunity to move the funds to support a senior program at another location if necessary.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if this would also allow the Town to "take back" the program as its own. Council Chairman Calouro responded that it would allow for the Town to do this.

A discussion ensued regarding the motion with Council Chairman Calouro explaining that the motion allows the Town to keep its options.

Councilwoman Parella stated that she would agree to a future workshop and that it was unfortunate that the Bristol Housing Authority's letter came to the Council after its budget deliberations were concluded.

Councilman Ley asked to know if the discussion will be held in public with Council Chairman Calouro stating that it would be a public discussion.

Councilman Teixeira agreed that the re-definition of the funding would also the Council options as it moves forward.

Councilman Sweeney agreed with Councilman Teixeira and stated that the only thing that it seems to do is detaches the funds from a particular address.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that the change would not eliminate the possibility that the senior program would remain in its current location.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this public hearing to be adjourned at 7:39 o'clock PM.

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Louis P. Cirillo, CMC  
Council Clerk