

PRESENT: Calouro, Sweeney, Tyska, Parella, and Stuart

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

The Council met in workshop session on Friday evening, March 23, 2018 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, beginning at 6:37 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

Board of Canvassers - 406

Frances C. O'Donnell, Chairman

Ms. O'Donnell explained that the requested budget for elections will cover both the Statewide Primary in September and the General Election in November of this year.

The Council made no changes to this recommended budget.

Boards and Commissions - 405

No representatives present.

Town Treasurer Goucher noted that the grass mowing normally funded through this budget will now be part of the Town's "grounds maintenance" contract.

The Council made no changes to this recommended budget.

Recreation - 803

(line items previously continued for further discussion)

Supervisors Line Item

Lifeguards Line Item

Walter Burke, Director

Recreation Director Burke reported upon the proposed increase in the salaries of the lifeguards explaining that the department is attempting to keep its lifeguards on a par with those employed by the State at State beaches. He further explained that there is a three-tiered pay scale ranging from \$11 to \$13 per hour.

He noted that the State's new lifeguards are paid approximately \$11 per hour and that the "seasoned" lifeguards receive \$12-13.

Recreation Director Burke also noted that the range for Bristol lifeguards is \$11.30 to \$12.75 and that these are paid similarly to the State depending upon work experience.

Recreation Director Burke reported that lifeguards receive a pay rate of time and one half for Fourth of July duty and explained that the beach is "mobbed" on the Fourth of July. He added that the Town employs triple the number of lifeguards on Fourth of July due to the high attendance of beach patrons.

Recreation Director Burke explained that the Department of Environmental Management recommends that lifeguards should be on duty whenever the admission booth is open. He noted that the Town now follows this recommendation and that it had not done so in the past.

The Council made no changes to this recommended budget.

Human Services - 801

(line item previously continued for further discussion)

Emergency Fund

A discussion ensued regarding the position of Human Services Director and the Department's "Emergency Fund" budget line.

Councilwoman Parella suggested that there may be a misunderstanding that the only thing that Mr. Carusi does is manage the Emergency Fund. She explained that Mr. Carusi spends a considerable amount of his time as Human Services Director by helping people navigate State and private social services agencies and filling out complicated benefits application forms.

Councilwoman Parella stated that she does not believe that there is a duplication of effort between what Mr. Carusi does and what is expected from the Senior Services Coordinator.

Council Chairman Calouro recalled that Mr. Carusi reported that 75% of his time is spent helping families and 20% helping senior citizens.

The Council made no changes to this recommended budget.

Senior Center - 807

Maria Doherty, Board President

Ms. Doherty read the mission of the Benjamin Church Senior Center aloud and also provided copies of its most recent newsletter. She reported that the Senior Center has 1500 members and that its meal site served 5185 lunches in 2017.

Ms. Doherty explained that Donna Wilson saved \$4200 by obtaining sponsors for senior lunches and that East Bay Community Action helped Bristol citizens with their income tax returns resulting in \$330,000 in income tax refunds for them.

Ms. Doherty reported that the center arranged to have University of Rhode Island students available to help senior citizens with their application for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other programs offered by the center.

Ms. Doherty explained that the center serves as a hub for the Meals on Wheels program.

She expressed concern that the Town and the center are "not on the same page" and stated that she would like for the Town and center to continue with the partnership that was enjoyed in the past.

Ms. Doherty stated that the center is grateful for the proposed budget and that she wishes for the program to work. She drew attention to the amount listed in the budget (\$121,000) and explained that this does not include the cost of health insurance and further explained that the addition of health insurance would bring the total to \$146,000 since \$24,000 is needed for medical and dental.

Olivia Germano stated that the addition of the \$24,000 would make the proposal acceptable.

Council Chairman Calouro asked for a breakdown of the \$121,313 with Town Treasurer Goucher explaining that this covers the existing budget with an additional 2% provided for salary increases over the amount allocated in the current fiscal year.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the former Town employees who worked at the Senior Center were provided with health benefits with Town Administrator Contente responding that they were.

Ms. Doherty stated that she would prefer if the Town maintained its "partnership" with the center.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the former director Maria Ursini and her assistant Donna Wilson appeared before the Council in the past and testified that the current senior center building was inadequate and advocated for a new building entirely.

Ms. Doherty stated that the Quinta Gamelin building would be unsuitable since it is filled with children in the summer during the summer camp. She questioned if the children would have to be displaced if the Quinta Gamelin building was used as a senior center.

Ms. Doherty explained that the senior center does advocate for a new and larger building but that it has been able to share the space at the Benjamin Church Manor community room and also that the center "customizes and makes work" the space that they have.

Ms. Germano noted that the senior center's reach is "broad" and that it wishes to also reach home-bound individuals.

Councilman Tyska stated that he is aware that the Quinta Gamelin Community center is "maxed out" during certain times of the year. He added that he believes that the Town should appropriate the \$146,000 and come up with a framework for the future.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Senior Services Coordinator was hired initially to be the director of the senior center. She asked to know if there is a plan to have a senior center director, an assistant director and a Senior Services Coordinator. She noted that this might be a duplication of effort.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Town adopted an ordinance to create the senior services coordinator position and clarify the reporting structure. She also noted that the previous director had asked numerous times to be considered as a "department head" reporting to the Town Administrator. She stated that the reporting structure for the senior center director seems to have become a controversy of convenience.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the Town's position is that if it is paying the salary of an employee it should supervise that employee. She also expressed concern that the Senior Services Director, hired by the Town, was not welcomed to the senior center.

Ms. Doherty suggested that there was poor communication between the parties.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that there was a workshop planned for March 13 which was cancelled due to a snowstorm. He also noted that there is another Special Meeting scheduled for April

3 to approve the Provisional Budget and that the budget does not become final until it is adopted on May 2.

Town Administrator Contente explained that the intention of his budget recommendation is to level-fund the senior center and agreed that some other issues need resolution. He noted that the matter began in June and that he has tried to "make it work."

Town Administrator Contente also explained that the issue on the table at this point is accountability and that the budget, as presented, provides the funds to allow the senior center to continue operate. He added that the budget puts the power to operate the senior center in the hands of its board and it is conforming to the lease agreement with the Town.

Town Administrator Contente explained that the lease agreement does not require the Town to pay for health benefits.

Town Administrator Contente noted that the Town's labor attorneys agree that the reporting structure is currently problematic. He stated that he believes that the Senior Coordinator position should be given a try at running the Town's senior program and at this point this does not include the senior center.

Ms. Doherty stated that she believes that the Senior Services Coordinator is duplicating services already provided by the Senior Center.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the lease of the building will expire in 2019.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that there is a plan to have a workshop with the parties on April 5, 2018.

Town Treasurer Goucher noted that the budget needs clarification regarding the Town's participation in providing the cost of a medical plan.

Council Chairman Calouro suggested that the amount to add might be \$20,000 and also suggested that the budget amount could be increased to \$146,313.

Councilwoman Parella agreed that the allocation amount should include something for medical and dental.

Councilman Sweeney stated that he was in support of increasing the budget.

Councilman Stuart stated that he looks forward to the workshop on April 5.

Tyska/Sweeney - Voted unanimously to increase the provisional amount for the senior center contained within the Human Resources budget to \$146,037.

Human Resources - 805

Rotary - Y

After a brief discussion, the Council agreed, by consensus, not to change the recommended budget for this item.

Human Resources - 805

East Bay Community Action - C

A discussion ensued with Councilwoman Parella explaining that the Town used to provide a much larger grant to this agency. She suggested that based upon the level of services provided to Bristol persons, a modest increase was warranted.

Parella/Sweeney - Voted unanimously to increase the provisional amount for East Bay Community Action in the Human Resources budget to \$20,000.

General Public Comments

Brian Willner asked to know the reason for the rate of pay for the new Recreation Director Sarah Klein with Town Administrator Contente explaining that Ms. Klein was nearly as senior in her position as Recreation Director Burke and that she possesses all of the necessary credentials for the job.

Patricia Willner questioned the payment in lieu of taxes provided by Roger Williams University.

Councilwoman Parella noted that the University provides a certain amount of cash and also provides scholarships and \$25,000 in support of Town non-profit agencies. She explained that the Town has endeavored to work with the University to increase these amounts and that the Town received much less in the past.

Town Administrator Contente added that the University has contracted with a private ambulance service to reduce its dependence upon Bristol Rescue.

Mr. Willner suggested that the Town might limit the number of allowable containers per residence for curbside pick-up in order to save money.

A discussion ensued regarding rubbish collection and recycling.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Tyska and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:21 o'clock PM.

Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk