

**CITY OF GROTON
SPECIAL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2014**

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
6:30 PM

Mayor Galbraith called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Marian Galbraith, Deputy Mayor William Jervis, Councilors Andrew Ilvento, Jay Dempsey, Stephen Sheffield, Keith Hedrick, Lawrence Gerrish and City Clerk Debra Patrick.

REFERRAL ITEM # 501CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Building and Zoning Department

Carlton Smith, Building & Zoning Official went over his proposed budget citing an increase of 10.95% for a project that will allow for Building Department records to be viewed online, continuing the scanning of department files into the document manager program and to expand the use of Springbrook and consolidate functions. He said \$25,000.00 is needed to implement the online viewing of records. It will cover the costs for licensing, and testing by the IT Department to ensure the network will be safe.

Mayor Galbraith said this is in keeping with what the Council has been discussing to allow the public greater access online to records and relieve the staff of having to look records up.

Councilor Dempsey asked if there would be additional costs on a yearly basis.

Mr. Smith said there would not be once all the licensing is purchased it is ours to use. He said once in use it can free up time staff is spending getting records for people now.

Councilor Ilvento agreed it would be a time and money saving feature.

Mr. Smith said other departments will benefit from it as well once it is up and running since we will own the license.

Councilor Hedrick asked if the line item on page 44 of \$38,900 is for this project.

Mr. Smith said it was.

Councilor Dempsey asked if revenues offset expenses for the department.

Mr. Smith said there is a monthly report to the Mayor detailing all revenues and that the budget is generally determined based on conservative projections of revenues.

Councilor Dempsey asked if it is realistic to say that revenues pay about 2/3 of the department's budget.

Mr. Smith said yes, most of the time.

There was some discussion on how much to base revenues on and not over estimate for expenses.

Mr. Smith went over the expenses for Boards & Commissions that he oversees. He said the legal ads and costs for legal counsel make up the majority of the budget. He went over training he likes to provide for the members of the commissions both on site and off site.

Mayor Galbraith said there is time prior to the may meeting where the budget will be approved for any additional questions they may have for Mr. Smith.

Councilor Ilvento asked if the new blight ordinance will have an impact on his budget.

Mr. Smith said there is funding in place for a part time blight officer.

Mayor Galbraith thanked Mr. Smith for his time.

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Parks and Recreation Department

Mary Hill, Parks & Recreation Director went over the recreation portion of her proposed budget and noted an increase of 1% due in part to the increase in the minimum wage that will be implemented over the next couple of years. She said with the increase in the minimum wage returning employees will have to have adjustments to their wages in order to keep the current gap between new and senior seasonal staff.

Mayor Galbraith noted the funding for the costs for the design and engineering costs for the improvements at the costa property, fencing and pillars for the Tyler House.

Councilor Gerrish asked if there has been a big loss of income due to the closing of the Zbierski House.

Ms. Hill said about \$12,000 but she hopes they will be able to recoup that with the improvements that are being made.

Ms. Hill said maintenance costs are down due to the completion of some capital projects. She said personnel costs are level during the summer months with a consistent schedule each week. She said the winter months are much more erratic.

Councilor Ilvento said the maintenance costs at the beach can be a little higher due to the need to keep the historical integrity.

Ms. Hill agreed that it was important to preserve the historical integrity of the buildings.

Mayor Galbraith thanked Ms. Hill.

Mayor Galbraith gave an overview of the proposed budget and highlighted where reductions were. She said she asked all departments to cut their budget requests. She went through the areas where there were increases including funding for creation of an Economic Development Commission, online access to records and getting the Colonel Ledyard building ready for a hoped for Fall occupancy.

Mayor Galbraith stated that she is recommending a tax increase of .227% which translates into an increase of \$22.70 per \$100,000.00 in assessed property value. She went over the chart for the impact of alternate budget options.

Councilor Dempsey asked Mayor Galbraith to explain surplus and capital carry over funds.

Mayor Galbraith said there is 6.196 million in surplus and represents 15.3% of the budget. She said if all the money approved isn't used on a project the excess goes into a capital carry over. She said it is also advisable to fund for a project over time.

There was a discussion on whether funding can be moved from one department to another.

Mayor Galbraith said surplus can but not capital carryover.

Mayor Galbraith went over the decrease in legislative policy from \$3,000.00 to \$1,000.00 for conferences for Councilors. She said there is an increase of \$10,000.00 for office supplies and advertising for the Economic Development Commission and \$3,000.00 for contractual services for the Ethics Board and Retirement Board. She went over decreases in Citizen Participation, Capital Projects moved to Public Buildings and a position for a Records Clerk to half time in this budget and half time in the Fire Department budget.

Mayor Galbraith went over salary increases in the General Government Administration budget for the City Clerk and the Administrative Assistant to the Mayor. She said all non-union employees will receive a 1.5% increase this year after 2 years at 1% while union employees were given contractually higher increases.

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II. POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

III. COMMENTS FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Ilvento moved Councilor Sheffield seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Mayor Galbraith adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Debra Patrick
City Clerk**