

**CITY OF GROTON
SPECIAL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2015**

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, Lawrence Gerrish, Finance Director Ron Yuhas and City Clerk Debra Patrick. Excused: Councilor Keith Hedrick.

REFERRAL ITEM # 538 CITY BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Galbraith gave a recap of the proposed budget and stated that in the meeting with the Town Council on Saturday, April 11, 2015 the City was informed the town would be cutting \$830,000.00 from the Highway budget and just under \$74,000.00 from the Police budget. She said if the City has to absorb those cuts the mill rate would increase by .77 mill rather than the .34 mill she had proposed. That would bring the mill rate to 1.11. She went on to say the City taxpayers pay 31.5% of the total taxes to the Town coming to about 26 million and we are asking for \$4,240,000.00 in return. She said the City taxpayers pay 31% of the town Highway budget, 31 % of the town Police budget and 31% of the town Building & Zoning/Planning budget with no return in services to the City.

Sanitation Budget

Finance Director Ron Yuhas presented the proposed budget saying it was down 9.09% or \$915,440.00. He said they arrived at that reduction by altering the pick-up schedule to once a week and a reduction in staff. He noted there was a salary reduction of \$17,230.00.

Mayor Galbraith said 2 retirement incentives have been offered to employees who are of normal retirement age and have contributed to the pension for 30 years. She said that represents potential for further reduction.

Mr. Yuhas went over the medical benefits cost increase and the pension costs. He said there is an increase for workman's comp based on claims history and that operating expenses are down.

Mayor Galbraith said this budget includes the \$35.00 fee for bulky waste.

Councilor Dempsey asked what the equipment maintenance line item was for.

Mr. Yuhas said it is for vehicle maintenance.

Mayor Galbraith said they will vote on this in May and if they have any questions or suggestions they can bring them forward before then.

Public Buildings

Mr. Yuhas said there is a 33.79% reduction in this budget. He said 1 sanitation worker and a portion of Tim Umrysz's salary was moved here including the benefits portion. He explained the reduction is largely in fuel costs and minimal maintenance on the Colonel Ledyard Building. He noted an increase in facility material supply line item due to phones that will have to be replaced over time.

Councilor Gerrish asked if GU owns the building.

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Mayor Galbraith said the City does and GU pays rent and for custodial costs minus the Police Department.

There was further discussion of the expenses in the building paid by either the City or GU, medical insurance and capital costs that were cut.

Mayor Galbraith said the Council will vote to divert the bonding meant for the Colonel Ledyard building to do capital projects.

There was further discussion on the diverting of the bonding.

Building & Zoning

Building Official Carlton Smith said his budget is down 10%, nearly \$50,000.00. He said there is a savings in not implementing the Springbrook program for permits. He said the street files will still go online with staff doing a great deal of the work. He noted an increase in office supplies, attorney fees and a new computer for him. He said there was a decrease in funding for the Blight Officer from \$29,000.00 to \$14,000.00 and they will continue to work with the Police and Sanitation Departments on this.

Councilor Ilvento said a great deal of time was spent on the blight ordinance and he has already seen results in the City.

There was discussion on the collaborative effort between B&Z, Police and Sanitation and the State Prosecutors office to identify the responsible parties and getting the areas cleaned up.

Councilor Dempsey asked how much income is generated by the department.

Mr. Smith said a conservative estimate is \$240,000.00 annually but there are no guarantees. He went over the Boards & Commissions he oversees and noted a fund will be established for the Harbor Management Commission in the amount of \$4,000.00 to be available to them if needed. The Councilors thanked Mr. Smith.

PAF/WPCA

Rick Stevens said the proposed budget is flat with only a 1.19% increase due to contractual obligations. He said they will replace 1 vehicle that is 16 years old. He noted decreases in fuel and chemicals and an increase in electric use, medical benefits and pension. He said maintenance work has been folded into the bond fund.

Councilor Dempsey asked what the 9S payment was.

Mr. Yuhas said it is paying down a truck that was purchased that wasn't bonded.

Councilor Gerrish asked about revenues generated versus costs.

Mr. Stevens said there are no sewer use fees for City residents.

There was discussion on how the Council has been looking at implementing sewer use fees for non-profits but has had difficulty getting the needed information and who would be affected by the new charges.

Councilor Dempsey asked if there was anything that could be cut.

Mr. Stevens said he could look again.

The Councilors thanked Mr. Stevens.

There was discussion on where the City would go with cuts made by the Town of Groton.

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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. Motion carried.

Mayor Galbraith adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

**Debra Patrick
City Clerk**