



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW
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TOWN COUNCIL

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Kathleen G. Hill, President
Michael J. Kane, Vice President *Joseph A. Ford*
Donald J. Anderson Kevin M. Manley
Paul L. Federici Thomas C. O'Connor

MINUTES

Town Council Minutes – FY20 Budget Workshop Session
November 13, 2018 at 5:00 P.M.
Council on Aging Media Room, 328 North Main Street
East Longmeadow, Massachusetts 01028

Present: President Kathleen Hill, Vice President Michael Kane, Donald Anderson, Paul Federici, Joseph Ford, Kevin Manley, Thomas O'Connor, Town Manager Denise Menard, and Clerk of the Council Thomas Florence.

President Hill opened the meeting at 5:06 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a Moment of Silence. Announcements were made in accordance with Mass General Law, and it was noted that ELCAT was taping the meeting.

President Hill said she and Town Manager Denise Menard have talked on numerous occasions regarding finding a group friendly activity that could be used to do some brainstorming. The brainstorming would include the needs of the Council to have the various forms of data they felt would be helpful as they are looking over requests and submittals for the FY20 budget. A budget workbook or binder leading up to February, March and April of 2019 would be helpful, for example.

President Hill commented that many of the Council members have probably participated in think tank types of activities, and one that she found useful while working with the School Department was SWOP (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Problems).

President Hill added that in the very first year of the Council there was no specific, formal process laid out in the Charter for the budget. In the past, Appropriations and Capital Committees delivered everything to the Selectmen, and then went to Town Meeting. In that transition to Town Council, the ability to have an Appropriations Committee was lost, but there can still be a Capital Planning Committee. Ms. Menard said what was accomplished by the Appropriations and Capital Planning, now fall under her duties.

President Hill asked what kind of data points the Council would be interested in having going into the budget season. The department heads' requests for capital are in, but they have not yet been given direction regarding the budget. The Council, together with the Town Manager, will develop a formula to give them that direction.

Ms. Menard said in the past, she asked the Council to give their goals to her and the departments could then try to address those goals. She would like to get those ideas from the Council earlier rather than later which will give them the timeframe they need as outlined in the Charter. Ms. Menard then discussed the

budget process last year with detail for each department, but also mentioned that a detailed budget by line is beyond the realm of what the Council is supposed to see.

President Hill commented that last year the Council questioned any budget items that decreased or increased by \$5K. Ms. Menard said that personnel will have big jumps due to the salary survey, and anyone "red lined" will stay at their salaries until they are caught up and not be adjusted down. The Council should see a standard increase because they were able to stay within 2% increase after union contract negotiations, which was the same as last year.

Mr. Florence took notes of what the Council would like to see, which are shown on Attachment A. In addition to those notes, the following was discussed:

Councilor Ford said one of the mistakes made last year was that the department heads made a wish list, and when the Council realized some items were not tenable they had to erase all that work. President Hill said Ms. Menard should suggest there is no supplemental list. Ms. Menard said she has already done this and if any of them are over the bottom line they have to give a reason why.

The Council also discussed the school and their requests for capital repairs as it relates to any pending or future accelerated program projects. President Hill has talked with Superintendent Gordon Smith and the School Committee regarding this.

President Hill asked if any department head is requesting new employees and Ms. Menard said she has not asked that question but she can at the next department heads meeting. The Council discussed what requests for new employees were not approved last year and how the salary of a replacement is set.

Councilor O'Connor questioned the recent hiring of a Water & Sewer Commissioner (Ms. Menard stated it was titled Water & Sewer Administrator) and Operations Administrator for the DPW, and felt that was a violation of Article 5 Section 1 of the Charter (Organization of Town Agencies). He felt since this was a reorganization of the department, it had to be Council approved first. It was felt by Ms. Menard and some councilors that the organization didn't change, and it was within a department. Ms. Menard added that relative to the budget there is no impact from that hire, and it will be absolutely corrected if it needs to.

Regarding a binder for the Council's use for budget planning, Councilor O'Connor said he has worked with one in the past and it gives him all the information he needs in one place. He found it frustrating to get information piecemeal, and when information is updated and changed he would like the whole Council to get it so they're working with the same documents. In addition, whenever any information is changed, he would like to know what that information is and the date of the change.

Councilor Ford said he would prefer information electronically, and Councilor Federici said four or five years ago the Selectmen had a binder separated by department and he felt it was a lot easier. President Hill said she can appreciate the electronic piece, but when you have to reference something quickly, she felt a hard copy was easier.

Councilor O'Connor discussed the budgeting of items that need to occur, such as elections, and not including them in a supplemental budget request. Ms. Menard said she is already considering that, and elections will come directly from the Clerk's budget, which will fluctuate from year to year as needed.

Councilor Ford said he was approached again by residents to finish the high school turf project, which was tabled last year due to so many critical items. He said this needs to be addressed with a combination of public money and private money, and the biggest issue is the bathroom; the other factors are not as critical.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Manley to recess from the Budget Workshop Session in order to enter the Council's Open Session Meeting, and reconvene after the Open Session Meeting concludes. Vice President Kane seconded and all were in favor.

At 8:39 p.m. the Council reconvened to the Budget Workshop Session, and the Council continued the discussion of finishing the high school turf project.

Councilor Ford felt that the high school shouldn't be burdened by the maintenance of the field since it's used by the community and youth sports. He has talked to a few businesses and private residents that would donate money. This was brought up three budgets ago, but lost in the wash. He would volunteer in getting a group together for fundraising efforts.

There was much discussion regarding the high school turf project, and it was agreed that bathroom facilities were the priority. Ms. Menard will put this on the list of priorities, and will share it with DPW Superintendent Bruce Fenney since it will be a capital project. Councilor Federici encouraged the Council to not underestimate the cost and size of the bathroom facilities and then find that they are too small afterwards.

Councilor Anderson asked if the field would have to be moved if the Town ever got money for a new high school, and President Hill replied that the field would stay where it is.

In conclusion, Ms. Menard said she took pictures of the notes taken during this meeting showing what the Council's priorities are, and bring those to the next meeting (Attachment A).

Motion: Councilor Manley made a motion to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.. Councilor O'Connor seconded and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne R. Guertin
Assistant Town Clerk