

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
NORTH BRANFORD TOWN COUNCIL**

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**Wednesday, April 10, 2002**

**7:15 p.m.  
Town Hall Council Chambers**

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

1. ROLL CALL: Present were Mayor Joanne Wentworth, Deputy Mayor George Guertin, Council Members Vincent Candelora, Michael Downes, Andrew Esposito, Joan Fitch, Jack Krasko and Paul Proto. Also present was Town Manager Karl Kilduff.

Council Member Mary Bigelow arrived at 8:40 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION AND ACTION RE: PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FY2002-2003

The Council began with review of Department 4141 Elections. Town Manager Kilduff presented information regarding the increase in Account 102 Part Time which the Council reviewed. The Town Manager indicated that the monthly payment would be going from \$290 to \$300 a month for the registrars while the hourly pay for elections was increasing from \$12.50 per hour to \$15.00 per hour. The Deputy Registrars' increase was going from \$10.00 an hour to \$11.00 an hour. Councilor Fitch felt this was a large increase percentage wise and suggested a 10% decrease in the part time line item.

MOTION: Councilor Fitch moved, seconded by Councilor Downes, to reduce Department 4141 Elections, Account #102 Part Time by \$2,580.

VOTE: Passed 7 to 0 with 1 abstention in a roll call vote.

FOR: Mayor Wentworth, Deputy Mayor Guertin, Councilors Vincent Candelora, Michael Downes, Joan Fitch, Jack Krasko and Paul Proto

ABSTAIN: Councilor Andrew Esposito

MOTION: Councilor Fitch moved, seconded by Councilor Downes, to reduce Department 4141 Elections, Account #120 Pension & Social Security by \$195.

VOTE: Passed 7 to 0 with 1 abstention in a roll call vote.

FOR: Mayor Wentworth, Deputy Mayor Guertin, Councilors Vincent Candelora, Michael Downes, Joan Fitch, Jack Krasko and Paul Proto

ABSTAIN: Councilor Andrew Esposito

Mayor Wentworth questioned if anything could be reduced under insurance benefits. Town Manager Kilduff stated that this is contingent on the pending collective bargaining

agreements and cannot be reduced at this time.

Councilor Candelora questioned the cleaning services. Town Manager Kilduff confirmed that there is one contract for all of the town buildings. He indicated that this has been reduced at each property level.

The Council next reviewed the Revenue portion of the budget. Under Department 3030 Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), there was discussion on the request from the North Branford Housing Authority to waive the PILOT for fiscal year 2002/2003 for elderly housing. Town Manager Kilduff advised that the PILOT for the elderly housing is approximately \$12,235. Mayor Wentworth noted that the Town pays the sewer user fee for the elderly housing. There was some discussion by the Council on any impact on the residents living at the elderly housing with respect to not waiving the PILOT. It was noted that originally the Housing Authority requested this in order to build up reserves for repairs. Town Manager Kilduff reported on the status of the grant for the repairs to the roofs at the elderly housing, which has gone through the preapproval process.

**MOTION:** Councilor Downes moved, seconded by Councilor Esposito, to increase Department 3030 Payment In Lieu of Taxes, N.B. Elderly Housing by \$12,235.

**VOTE:** Passed 8 to 0 in a roll call vote.

Town Manager Kilduff briefly noted that Department 3210 Investment Program Income is down slightly as interest rates are down.

Under Department 3300, Town Manager Kilduff spoke on the need to increase Building Permit fees. He reviewed with the Council a survey of the permit fees for surrounding towns as well as the proposed changes to the fee schedule for North Branford.

Councilor Fitch questioned Department 3020 Other Taxes Conveyance Taxes and why the rate is staying the same as last fiscal year. She felt that if the value of the properties have increased in town then the amount for conveyance taxes for sales would also increase.

Town Clerk Lisa Valenti spoke on the increase in this year's conveyance taxes due to classified land which was declassified and the large amount of taxes paid on this by DiLungo Estates. She reviewed the amounts collected to date.

With respect to Department 3400 Account 446 Planning Department Fees, Town Manager Kilduff distributed information regarding permit fees for the Planning Department, Planning and Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. He reviewed the surrounding towns' fees and indicated that North Branford's fees have not been updated in a number of years. He indicated that the proposed amendment to the fee schedule is recommended but must be approved by the individual boards and commissions. He anticipates approximately \$7,500 in additional revenue under the new fee schedule.

Town Planner Carol Zebb reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission and Inland Wetlands Agency are aware that an increase is needed in the fees and are in agreement to reasonably increase the permit fees. Town Manager Kilduff spoke on the need for the fees to

capture the actual costs of an application.

MOTION: Councilor Krasko moved, seconded by Councilor Downes, to increase the Sub Total under Department 3400 Current Services Revenue Classification, Account #446 Development & Conservation by \$7,500.

VOTE: Passed 8 to 0 in a roll call vote.

Town Manager Kilduff also spoke on the potential increase in Library fees although there is no report at present.

Under Department 3550 State Grants-Education, Town Manager Kilduff reported that there is no clear indication of what the State budget will be and what the Town of North Branford will be receiving. There was some discussion on this by the Council.

Councilor Candelora questioned the tax collection rate contained in the budget. Town Manager Kilduff indicated that the proposed tax collection rate is 98%. He stated that given the economy and that residents may have a more difficult time making tax payments, this was scaled back from the 98.2% collection rate contained in last year's budget.

There was considerable discussion on the tax collection rate and the effect increasing it would have on the proposed mill rate. The Council credited the tax department employees with doing a good job of collecting taxes in the past.

MOTION: Councilor Downes moved, seconded by Councilor Fitch, to increase the Tax Collection rate for fiscal year 2002/2003 to 98.2%.

VOTE: Passed 8 to 0 in a roll call vote.

Treasurer/Finance Director Anthony Esposito indicated that the increase in the tax collection rate brings the proposed mill rate to 27.72 mills, with one mill equaling \$834,579. With the adjustment for the Regional Water Authority PILOT, he indicated that the proposed mill rate would be 27.81 mills.

Councilor Fitch questioned why commercial, industrial, and personal property taxes have gone down while residential taxes have increased in this revaluation year.

Town Manager Kilduff responded to this issue. He indicated that two factors are that the Fire Lite addition has not been completed to date and that the Tilcon building has been taken out of taxation.

Assessor Donna Price-Bekech noted that during revaluation years the shift in taxes is to residential properties. She noted that over the past ten years, industrial and commercial properties have not accelerated in market value. She also reported that there are not a lot of new industrial buildings in town, and she reviewed the loss of several industrial properties from the Grand List.

The Council began discussion on the Board of Education budget. Councilor Fitch

requested the list of salaries for the Board of Education. Dr. Wolfe, Superintendent of Schools, stated that the request was received too late in the day today and would be available tomorrow.

Councilor Krasko questioned the number of students going from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade as he felt that a certain number of students went on to other high schools and that losses should always be expected going into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Rose Angeloni, Chairperson of the Board of Education, briefly responded to the figures submitted with respect to student enrollment. She also indicated that the Finance Subcommittee of the Town Council has received all background information on the Board of Education budget.

Town Manager Kilduff confirmed that he had copied pertinent sections of the Board of Education budget for the Council. He had previously advised Council members that due to the volume of material they should make any further requests for details as needed to him.

There was some discussion between Council members, Dr. Wolfe and Mrs. Angeloni regarding the Board of Education budget.

Councilor Candelora spoke on the significant increase in utilities. Dr. Wolfe indicated that the increase is due to bringing the auditorium on line.

Councilor Krasko questioned the difference in kilowatt rates being proposed in the budget.

Councilor Candelora also questioned the summer program, which he felt was a duplicate service that is already provided by the Recreation Department. He questioned if this program is self-sustaining.

Mrs. Angeloni stated that the summer program comes under the Family Resource Center and has been a long running program. This year they are increasing the program offerings. She confirmed that this program is totally self sufficient.

Dr. Wolfe briefly responded to the questions regarding electricity. He stated that the Board of Education budget is not a science and spoke on budget fluctuations due to special education circumstances.

The Council took a break from 8:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. for an emergency session.

Deputy Mayor Guertin questioned the cost of the brochures for the summer program. Dr. Wolfe indicated that no funding for the summer program comes from the budget as this comes under the Family Resource Center funding.

With respect to the increase in publications, Dr. Wolfe reviewed the requirements under State statute with respect to the annual report and spoke on the distribution of the annual report throughout the community. He also spoke on such publications as the Strategic Plan, school calendar and the need for adequate communication with staff, parents and the community.

Deputy Mayor Guertin questioned income received by the Board of Education. Dr. Wolfe addressed the income in the annual report which is what he felt the community needs to see. With respect to gate receipts, Dr. Wolfe estimated they bring in approximately \$18,000 to \$21,000 which is factored into the athletic budget. The gate receipts cover such items as transportation, supplies, referees, and insurance.

Councilor Candelora questioned any savings on health benefits. Dr. Wolfe indicated that

due to attrition they could see approximately \$94,000 to \$96,000 worth of savings in health insurance benefits. He stated that \$24,000 of this savings has already been included in the budget, with an approximate additional savings of \$74,000 to \$75,000.

Deputy Mayor Guertin questioned the vehicle maintenance for the Board of Education and why the town garage is not used for maintenance of Board of Education vehicles. Donald Winnicki briefly addressed this issue. Director of Public Works Fran Merola stated that when repairs are made to the Board of Education vehicles at the town garage, the Board of Education must pay for the parts that the town garage uses.

Town Manager Kilduff distributed to Council members a listing of all municipal vehicles, including three vehicles of the Board of Education. He reviewed the Town Hall fleet vehicles, the Public Works Department vehicles and equipment, the Fire Department vehicles and the vehicles which are housed at the Public Works Department which can be disposed of. The Town Manager stated that the Town Hall fleet vehicles could be reduced by one or two as these are general pool vehicles which town employees use on town business.

Councilor Mary Bigelow arrived.

The Council questioned the vehicles owned by the Police Department. Purchasing Assistant Michael Betz indicated that there currently are eight patrol cars, three detective vehicles, a vehicle for the Police Chief, a vehicle for the Deputy Police Chief and the DARE car.

There was discussion by the Council on the vehicles which can be disposed of. It was also noted that these vehicles should be taken off insurance.

Councilor Candelora felt that the Board of Education could see approximately \$150,000 savings under utilities for gas and electric and approximately an additional \$75,000 in medical benefits, for a total savings in the Board of Education budget of \$225,000.

**MOTION:** Councilor Downes moved, seconded by Councilor Candelora, to adjust the increase in the North Branford Board of Education budget for fiscal year 2002/2003 to a 5.5% increase over the fiscal year 2001/2002 budget.

**VOTE:** Passed 9 to 0 in a roll call vote.

The Council reviewed the Capital Improvements Plan for Fiscal Year 2002-03. Town Manager Kilduff spoke on the proposed funding for the items contained in the Capital Improvements Plan.

Councilor Fitch questioned the funding for the Plan of Development and whether or not the plan could just be updated at this time. Town Manager Kilduff confirmed that the \$30,000 contained in the Capital Improvements Plan is for an upgrade of the plan only.

There was some discussion on the Plan of Development between the Council, the Town Manager and Town Planner Zebb. Town Planner Zebb indicated that the Plan of Development

was last updated in January 1991 while components have been updated such as the Open Space Plan in 1996 and the Northford Study in February of 1999. She stated that it is a mandatory statutory requirement that the Plan of Development be updated every ten years and that this reflects on the Town's ability to obtain certain funding. She confirmed that some of this will be done in-house.

Councilor Candelora discussed the Field Expansion Study for Recreation. Town Manager Kilduff responded to this issue. He indicated that in order to obtain federal and State recreation grant funds a needs assessment and demographic profile are required. He advised that that was not part of the original scope of work in the report which was recently received.

**MOTION:** Councilor Fitch moved, seconded by Councilor Downes, to eliminate \$7,500 from the Capital Improvements Plan for Fiscal Year 2002-03 for the Field Expansion Study and to apply the \$7,500 from the Anthem Proceeds to Public Works Equipment Reserve to reduce the Budget Funds.

There was further discussion on the Field Expansion Study and the need for this in order to obtain grant funds. It was noted that if grant funds become available for this that the Council could take the funds for the study from contingency as the need arises.

**VOTE:** Passed 9 to 0 in a roll call vote.

The Council next reviewed Department 4705 Property and Liability Insurance.

**MOTION:** Councilor Krasko moved, seconded by Councilor Fitch, to reduce Department 4705 Property & Liability Insurance, Account #751 Insurance, Self Insurance for Deductibles by \$225,000.

Town Manager Kilduff clarified that Council will have to appropriate from Fund Balance if the need arises. The Council indicated that it is aware of this.

**VOTE:** Passed 7 to 2 in a roll call vote.

**FOR:** Mayor Wentworth, Deputy Mayor Guertin, Councilors Michael Downes, Andrew Esposito, Joan Fitch, Jack Krasko and Paul Proto

**OPPOSED:** Councilors Mary Bigelow and Vincent Candelora

At this point, Treasurer/Finance Director Anthony Esposito indicated that the proposed mill rate is 26.83, a 4.09 mill reduction from last year's budget.

Councilor Fitch returned to the Capital Improvements Plan and questioned the Facility Audit and Security Study proposed by the Board of Education.

Dr. Wolfe responded to this and indicated that under the Capital Improvements Plan the funds could only be used for a feasibility study. With respect to the security audit, Dr. Wolfe

indicated that this review the physical practices and procedures and accessibility to buildings. The results of this will be discussed in Executive Session between the Board of Education and Town Council.

With respect to the federal grant application for a police security officer for the school system, Dr. Wolfe felt that the security audit needs to be completed first.

There was considerable discussion between the Council and Dr. Wolfe with respect to the grant application for a police security officer for the school system. It was indicated that this is a shared position between the Board of Education and the Police Department. There was a discussion on the time the DARE officer spends in the schools.

MOTION: Councilor Proto moved, seconded by Councilor Esposito, that the North Branford Town Council hereby cancels the Special Meeting of the North Branford Town Council scheduled for Thursday, April 11, 2002.

VOTE: Passed 9 to 0 in a roll call vote.

The Town Council completed work on the budget and indicated that the mill rate proposed under its budget is 26.83 mills. This represents a 5.09% increase in the Town budget and a 5.50% increase in the Board of Education budget.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Councilor Downes moved, seconded by Councilor Proto, to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rosanne Krajewski  
Clerk to the Council