

APRIL 7, 2016
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

The April 7, 2016 Special Town Council Meeting was called to order by John L. Lewis, Jr., President of the Foster Town Council, at the Town House, Foster, Rhode Island, at 7:03 p.m.

The following members were present:

John L. Lewis, Jr., President
Denise DiFranco, Vice President,
Gordon Rogers,
Jon Restivo, and
Cheryl Hawes

Also present:

Renee M. Bevilacqua, Town Solicitor
Kelli Russ, Treasurer
Joe Cardillo, DPW Director
Police Chief William Ziehl
Joe Carey, Planning Board Chair
Guenter Bay, Assistant EMA Director

**I. OPEN
SESSION
PLEDGE OF
ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

John L. Lewis, Jr. stated that the notice of the meeting was properly posted on the Secretary of State's web site.

**III. PUBLIC
COMMENT**

None.

**IV. OLD
BUSINESS**

None.

**V. NEW
BUSINESS
a.) Town House
Fire Code
Upgrades/
Funding**

John L. Lewis, Jr. reviewed a letter from DPW Director Joe Cardillo containing an itemized list of the fire code upgrades required by the State Fire Marshal's office for the Town House and Woody Lowden Recreation Center.

-and-

The Fire Marshal's office had ordered the replacement of the failed emergency lighting system at the Town House. Mr. Cardillo's report included corroborating statements from the town's electrical inspector, and vendor Universal Electric Company.

**b.) Woody
Lowden Fire
Code
Upgrades/
Funding**

The estimated cost to purchase eight new batteries for the old, and now obsolete, 3k power inverter was \$2,500.00; with no guarantee that the old inverter would function once the new batteries were installed.

Universal Electric proposed the installation of a new, energy efficient 1k power inverter, and replacement of the 25 existing 75 watt lamps with 25 LED lamps, with an associated load reduction from 1875 watts to 375 watts. Universal Electric's ballpark figures were \$4,950.00 for the power inverter and \$650.00 for the LED lights. Town electrical inspector Peter DiSpigno had provided an opinion that these were reasonable prices.

Mr. Lewis mentioned that the special Town House fund had a balance of \$20,000.00, and could be utilized to cover this work. Would the Council prefer to purchase just the batteries, or to purchase all new equipment?

Mr. Lewis also asked if the Council wanted to consider this an emergency situation, and proceed to purchasing and installing the necessary components

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**V. NEW
BUSINESS, cont.**

a.) Town House

**Fire Code
Upgrades/
Funding**

based on the figures given; or if they would prefer going through the bidding process for a project exceeding a cost of \$5,000.00, per the Town Charter.

The second issue at hand was the Fire Marshal's report of the Woody Lowden Recreation Center, requiring replacement of the fire alarm system and installation of an additional egress door.

-and-

**b.) Woody
Lowden Fire
Code
Upgrades/
Funding**

The following issues were discussed:

- Pros and cons of purchasing emergency lighting batteries only vs. all new equipment
- Rescheduling events at the Town House and Woody Lowden
- The advantages of going out to bid for the projects
- Closing the buildings to the public until the repairs are made
- Utilization of the contingency fund for the estimated \$9,500.00 replacement of the Woody Lowden fire alarm system
- Adding the egress door to the bidding process
- The wording and timing of the bid advertising
- The likely timing of the repairs, specifying expediency in the ad
- Presence of a volunteer fire department member with radio capabilities on fire watch at any function in either building

Gordon Rogers moved, Denise DiFranco seconded, to roll these two projects together, including the DPW Director going out to bid and including the egress door in the specifications; and suspend the use of both buildings until such time as the issues were corrected.

Gordon Rogers moved, Denise DiFranco seconded, to amend the motion to include advertising on April 14th and 21st, with the bids due and opened by 5:00 on April 28th, and awarded at the Town Council meeting the same night.

Gordon Rogers moved, Cheryl Hawes seconded, to amend the motion to State that if the Preservation Society, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts or any group wishing to use the buildings could provide a volunteer fire member to stand fire watch during their meeting, it would meet with Council approval.

It was noted that the DPW department would post notices on both buildings, and the Town Clerk would alert all parties normally utilizing the buildings of the temporary requirements.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. First amended motion passed 5 – 0.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Second amended motion passed 5 – 0.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Main motion passed 5 – 0.

**c. Review of
Comments
from Budget
Public
Hearing**

John L. Lewis, Jr. referenced that comments had been received during the public hearing from the various department heads, and the public in attendance at the hearing, and that the Council would review them now to decide whether to make amendments to the budget or leave it as it is. Mr. Lewis stated that there had been no comments for the Legislative/Legal,

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**V. NEW
BUSINESS, cont.**

Planning, or Building & Zoning departments.

One audience member commented on salaries at the previous meeting; whether to keep them at 2% or raise the non-union salaries to 3%. Denise DiFranco stated that she had asked treasurer Kelli Russ to calculate the costs of the raises at 3%, along with the associated FICA, retirement and administration costs; and that the total increase would be \$4,599.76. Factoring that increase along with a change in the police department would change the previous budget increase from a 3.34% to a 3.40% increase.

Cheryl Hawes moved, Jon Restivo seconded, to increase the non-union administrative positions pay scale to 3%.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, nay. Main motion passed 4 – 1.

Mr. Lewis commented that there had been no changes or comments to Finance, the Assessor Department, or General Administration. The Human Services Director's request for a raise was addressed with the 3% pay increases just discussed. Her request for \$300 each for Northern RI Conservation District and the Wildlife Rehabilitators, under community funding, was denied.

The line item for contractual Refuse Removal had no changes.

The Police Chief proposed a net increase of \$3,839.00 to his budget, based on an increase in overtime salaries, FICA and Medicare adjustments, partially offset by a decrease in a proposed dispatcher position salary, and a delay of a promotion.

Cheryl Hawes moved, Denise DiFranco seconded, to increase the bottom line of the police budget by \$3,839.00 based on the changes presented.

Discussion: Chief Ziehl explained the overtime scheduling of officers. Fuel costs were also discussed and the potential impact to the Police and Public Works departments.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Main motion passed 5 – 0.

The budgeted amounts for Conservation, Land Trust, Libraries, Recreation, Providence Water Supply Board and Capital had no changes.

The total capital budget amount \$422,997.00. A 2% transfer of \$247,997.00 is required per the Charter. The Council is proposing an additional \$175,000.00 transfer to capital fund this year.

The Paine school budget will be reduced by 1%; the Regional school budget was set at the regional meeting and was fixed.

Kelli Russ stated that the total expenditures amounted to \$13,284,572.00, an increase of 2.60% (\$ 336,562.00). The projected tax increase is 3.40%. Without the Providence Water payment, the tax increase would be 2.6%

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**New Business,
cont.**

**e.) New Police
Station**

Kelli Russ asked that the Council decide how they were going to go forward with this topic in order to bring it to a financial town meeting; whether to finance or go out for a bond.

Chief Ziehl gave an overview of what steps had been taken so far towards preliminary plans based on a building needs and assessment review, and formation of a building committee to determine options and costs.

Town solicitor Renee Bevilacqua advised the Council of the risk of having the existing police building condemned by the fire marshal's office if no proof of progress is made toward a solution by the financial town meeting.

Treasurer Russ advised that there will be costs associated in making a determination on direction, through a building committee in cooperation with architectural firm(s), which could be approved at a financial town meeting; after which the town could authorize a bond. That committee will need money to develop a plan; the associated costs could run \$20,000.00 or more.

Various options were discussed. It was determined to bring a resolution forward at the May 2016 Financial Town Meeting authorizing a cost to proceed with creating plans for a new facility; the cost of which could later be rolled into a bond for repayment if the taxpayers voted to approve a new police station.

Kelli Russ asked the Council to create a resolution for putting the \$30,000.00 into the bond for the Financial Town Meeting.

The Council asked to have a Building Committee mission statement prepared, to include time lines, for the April 14 Council meeting.

Jon Restivo moved, Gordon Rogers seconded, to allocate \$30,000.00 to come from fund balance to be used to come up with a plan.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Main motion passed 5 – 0.

Jon Restivo moved, Gordon Rogers seconded, to adopt the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 budget as presented and amended this night.

Jon Restivo moved, Gordon Rogers seconded, to amend the motion to include the final budget figure of \$13,284,572.00.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Amended motion passed 5 – 0.

John L. Lewis, Jr., aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Jon Restivo, aye; and Gordon Rogers, aye. Main motion passed 5 – 0.

**VI. EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

There was no executive session.

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**VII. ADJOURN-
MENT**

Gordon Rogers moved, Jon Restivo seconded, and it was so moved to adjourn the meeting.

John L. Lewis, Jr, aye; Denise DiFranco, aye; Chery Hawes, aye: Gordon Rogers, aye; and Jon Restivo, aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

A digital sound file is made a part of the record for a complete account of the council meeting.

Submitted by,

Jane H. Christopher
Town Clerk