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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT APRIL 2, 2019

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chris Eide, Chris Smith, Jordana Bloom, Robert Pickard, Judit DeStefano, Dan Wiedemann, Paul Lundquist, Phil Carroll, Kelley Johnson, Dan Honan.

ABSENT: Ryan Knapp, Jay Mattegat.

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Dan Rosenthal, Finance Director Bob Tait, Selectman Maureen Crick Owen.

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Lundquist called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 pm.

VOTER COMMENT: None.

MINUTES: MS. DESTEFANO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 27, 2019 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING. SECOND BY MR. CARROLL. Mr. Smith asked about the Glen Road communications received. Mr. Lundquist said that was a follow up to a question and could be brought up as a future agenda item. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION PASSES. (10-0)

COMMUNICATIONS: Mr. Lundquist said another email was received regarding the budget. (ATTACHED)

COMMITTEE REPORTS: discussed in unfinished business.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT: First Selectman Rosenthal said the Board of Selectmen met last night, and the Community Center Committee presented their plan, membership information, analysis, costs, which will be part of the minutes. The Board of Selectmen took no action and will wait until the next meeting. There was a transfer taken up in legal and land use, \$50,000 out of contingency for legal, backup will be in the BOS minutes and will eventually come to Council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2019-2020 Town of Newtown Municipal and Education Budgets

Mr. Lundquist asked for committee reporting.

Education Committee – Mr. Honan said the committee met last Thursday night, answered questions submitted, motions, the committee recommended the Board of Education budget as recommended by the Board of Finance. Mr. Carroll added that the committee could not agree on how much to cut. Mr. Pickard said that the motions, based on amendments failed. Mr. Lundquist added that all of the amendments failed. Mr. Lundquist said that most of the Board of Education budget will be discussed tomorrow night when the Board of Education is in attendance.

Mr. Lundquist suggested to further the discussion on the Board of Selectmen side of the budget. Discussed captured savings in office supplies. Mr. Spreyer had suggested a cost savings of 20%, which is \$13,000 on the Board of Selectmen side.

MR. LUNDQUIST MOVED TO REDUCE THE BOARD OF SELECTMAN SIDE OF THE BUDGET IN VARIOUS ACCOUNTS BY \$13,000. SECOND BY MR. WIEDEMANN. Mr. Wiedemann said using the 20% assumptions, can be

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applied to both sides of the budget for office supplies. Ms. DeStefano asked about a first year cost savings, then maybe tapers off due to purchasing methods, like bulk purchases in the first and second year. First Selectman Rosenthal said that it may be a flat discount, let it play out for a year, maybe at the end of next year's budget. Go more conservative than a 28% reduction as was indicated by Mr. Spreyer. Mr. Eide asked if any further specificity is needed, Mr. Lundquist said there are about 20 different departments that purchasing savings can come out of office supplies. Ms. Bloom asked about savings outside of W.B. Mason. Mr. Carroll pointed out that schools had their own suppliers and by consolidating there can be more savings, as indicated previously by Mr. Spreyer. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTIONS PASSES. (10-0)

Mr. Lundquist said there is a possibility to reduce to a 1.5% increase with modest reductions on both sides of the budget. It is important to be cognizant of true spending on both sides and the impact by budgets presented about 1.7% increase, and there may be a way to do better by the tax payers, and try to find some savings for the tax payers while still be responsible to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education. Looking for \$100,000 on the BOS side and \$150,000 on the BOE side.

Mr. Rosenthal said he is open to thoughts around what lines to reduce, and ultimately use flexibility. 40% was salaries and pension, another 30% was the road increase, another 20% was debt service. He presented a reasonable budget which was ratified by Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. Mr. Lundquist understands the guidance, and wants to recognize there are moving parts, and suggested looking for an additional \$87,000 in reductions if possible. Ms. Bloom said does not agree with taking an arbitrary number to make cuts, the boards creating the budget have done a lot of hard work to present a budget that is reasonable and fair, and should be supported. Mr. Lundquist clarified that it is not an arbitrary number but a way to use diligence in order to reduce amount for the tax payer.

Mr. Eide asked for a list of accounts that rolled into unassigned fund balance. First Selectman Rosenthal said most likely is salary and wages, usually that is the big driver. Mr. Eide asked if there could be a cut and make a transfer later should there be surplus in another area. First Selectman Rosenthal said that can't really be addressed with some items like contracts. The reality would be to take the reductions now. Ms. DeStefano asked about the excess into unassigned fund balance helps build that account for bond rating and to restrict that would it be concerning. Going from 1.7 to 1.5, what is an average with the difference for a tax payer. First Selectman suggested to keep a limit on spending growth, and from a real estate standpoint will become more competitive, continue to look at the tax rate. First Selectman said would not reduce contingency line item. Mr. Pickard asked if reductions can be made without touching salaries at all. First Selectman Rosenthal said there are various other ways of savings in salaries and wages but can't really predict.

Mr. Smith asked are if there areas in procurement and use the same logic in savings for supplies as on the Board of Selectmen side. Mr. Smith said there may be additional savings via the procurement process, we should see some reductions.

Mr. Eide asked if voters would know where cuts would come from should the budget be reduced. Mr. Lundquist said the budget would be need to final by the time going to referendum. Mr. Tait said that had been done in the past and identified within the budget document.

Mr. Wiedemann said there will be changes felt with the change in the tax plan. If reductions are made, is should be done proportionally on Board of Ed and Board of Selectmen side. Secondly, he suggested that one place to cut might be contributions to outside agencies. First Selectman Rosenthal explained that there might be able to have reductions there and with other departments. Ms. Bloom asked what the reduction from 1.7 to 1.5 would be. Mr. Tait to provide.

Mr. Pickard said the intent for reductions is positive, likes the idea, do want to know what it amounts to, it is not arbitrary, and optics of a reduction are wonderful, in light of what is going on in the state, and said if we can help the community, it would be appreciated by the community.

Mr. Lundquist asked if more information is needed or can a motion can be made tonight. Ms. DeStefano asked if there is any incentive to act on a motion tonight when we will have more information from Mr. Tait. First Selectman Rosenthal

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said that the difference on a \$12,000 tax bill is \$25.00, from 1.5 to 1.7. Mr. Carroll said to give the discretion to the First Selectman Rosenthal to make cuts if needed. Ms. Johnson said that if Council is struggling with areas where to cut, it is not really obvious, proves that the boards have come in with reasonable budgets, concerned about overcorrecting the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education. It was decided to hold off a motion until tomorrow.

Mr. Lundquist said that on the revenue side, came up in the finance committee, the assumption about senior center membership at being at \$20,000 this year. Mr. Tait said that was an early estimate, it needs to be adjusted down. First Selectman Rosenthal said spending and revenue should be looked at as two different entities. Mr. Wiedemann said that if there is an increase in revenue that is not reason to increase expenses. Mr. Lundquist added that it does not prevent spending reductions. Ms. DeStefano would like a clear understanding of the revenue and made the following motion regarding the revenue line item interest on investments.

MS. DESTEFANO MOVED TO INCREASE THE REVENUE LINE ITEM INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS FROM \$750,000 TO \$950,000. SECOND BY MR. HONAN. First Selectman Rosenthal said this is based on interest rates. ALL IN FAVOR. (10-0)

MR. WIEDEMANN MOVED TO REDUCE THE REVENUE LINE ITEM FOR THE SENIOR CENTER FEES FROM \$20,000 TO \$10,000. SECOND BY MS. DESTEFANO. ALL IN FAVOR. (10-0)

First Selectman Rosenthal said there may be some reduction in ECS funding, and the education budget would need to be adjusted later in the year, will keep the revenue budget as planned.

Mr. Wiedemann asked about the collection rate on taxes, Mr. Tait said still tracking the same rate. Under other revenues, an increase of \$18,000, First Selectman Rosenthal said that is the borough and may take on land use function and compensate would be needed, offsetting.

VOTER COMMENT: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Legislative Council will meet again tomorrow, April 3, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

June Sgobbo, Clerk

Attachments: communication.

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Meredith Campbell Britton via Newtown CT** <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>

Date: Sun, Mar 31, 2019 at 9:56 PM

Subject: Form submission from: Contact the Legislative Council

To: <plundquist.newtown@gmail.com>

Submitted on Sunday, March 31, 2019 - 9:56pm

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

Your name: Meredith Campbell Britton

Your e-mail address: mcampbellbritton@gmail.com

Subject: Supporting the education budget

Message: Good evening! My name is Meredith Campbell Britton, and I'm a parent of two elementary school students at Middle Gate. I'm writing to ask you to please approve the proposed budget from the Board of Education. One of the main reasons that my husband and I purchased a home in Newtown is the outstanding school system. I understand the investments required to maintain this level of excellence, and appreciate the thoughtful analysis and reviews that the Board of Education and Board of Finance have completed in order to maintain high standards while also practicing fiscal discipline. I hope that you will agree, and will vote to endorse the budget. Sincerely, Meredith