

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023

The council met in a workshop session on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, and called to order at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the Town Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Council Chairman, Nathan Calouro
Vice-Chairwoman, Mary Parella,
Councilman, Antonio "Tony" Teixeira
Councilman, Timothy Sweeney
Councilman, Aaron Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente
Town Treasurer, Sara Hassell

404 TOWN SOLICITOR

Michael A. Ursillo, Esq., Town Solicitor

Town Solicitor Ursillo provided an overview of the budget, highlighting a gradual salary increase. He emphasized his longstanding association with the town, which commenced when he joined as an assistant solicitor back in 1985.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

603 PUBLIC WORKS

Chris Parella-Public Works Director



Public Works Director Parella appeared before the Council and provided the council and provided an overview of the department budget.

Director Parella discussed the reduction in tree care due to new equipment and training; and elaborated on the increase in grounds maintenance due to the new contract.

Director Parella noted that the Protective Boots line item was coupled with the clothing line item for simplicity.

Councilman Teixeira pointed out a significant decrease in departmental landfill receipts, which went down from \$310,000 to \$65,000. Director Parella clarified that this reduction in

revenue was a result of stricter regulations imposed by the RI Resource and Recovery Corp. He further explained that the municipal service agreement now restricts the disposal of materials to only residential waste and what is essential for the well-being of public health, primarily applying to primary residents' trash. Substantial revisions have been implemented, and there has been a restriction imposed on commercial dumping. The curbside pickup for local businesses will remain in operation. It was noted that RI Resource and Recovery Corporation's decision to discontinue commercial dumping was made to prolong the lifespan of the central landfill. Initially projected to reach capacity in 7 years, these imposed changes will effectively elongate its operational duration to 20 years.

Director Parella noted that the 2023 tipping fees will increase from \$54.00 per ton to \$58.50 per ton.

Discussions ensued regarding the exploration of potential solutions aimed at decreasing the volume of trash.

It was noted that savings were seen in the transfer station operations.

A suggestion was put forward to publish clear and effective recycling guidelines on the town's website, with the aim of educating the public about proper recycling practices and waste reduction.

The Council made no changes to this budget as recommended by the Town Administrator.

604 WATER POLLUTION CONTROL

Jose DaSilva- Water Pollution Control Superintendent

Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva updated the council on current sewer system repairs. He explained that there was a significant increase in the pretreatment line item due to the increase of state-required regulated testing of local industries within the pretreatment program. He further updated the council on the I&I progress updates and sub-pumping issues.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

606- COMPOSTING FACILITY

Water Pollution Control Superintendent DaSilva provided the council with an overview of the composting facility budget and provided details of the building improvements.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

607- ENTERPRISE FUND

Town Treasurer Hassell explained the costs associated with the Enterprise Fund.

Treasurer Hassell explained that there was an interest bond debt decrease due to bond drop-offs in 2023-2024.

It was noted that the expenses for the enterprise fund increased by \$200,000 compared to the previous year, and there has been a decline in revenue. This decline can be attributed to several factors, including a reduction in sewer assessments and the number of units. The decrease in the number of units was mainly a result of improved water efficiency practices and a reduction in water consumption.

(*) The Council addressed the possibility of allocating funds from the Fund Balance to potentially reduce the tax rate and to further review options for level funding the sewer assessment. it was proposed that \$80,000 be allocated from the enterprise fund balance to reduce the sewer rate assessment, bringing it down to \$599.21.

There was apprehension about using the funds to reduce this year's sewer assessment only to potentially face the need to double it in future years or structural deficits. It was explained that the sewer enterprise fund currently holds enough funds to support the reduction in the sewer assessment while maintaining the necessary level of service. It was explained that the

It was noted that the proposed \$25 sewer use fee increase was a significant increase, which was unusual. Additionally, it is anticipated that sewer use units will grow due to extensive planned developments which should offset some of the costs in future years.

806- MUNICIPAL OBSERVANCES

Fourth of July Committee

Chuck MacDonough, Chairman of the Fourth of July committee, addressed the challenges posed by sponsor drop-offs, which have slightly impeded the ability to secure additional funding. He emphasized the importance of any additional funding and expressed gratitude to the town for all they do to help support the committee.

Vice-Chairwoman Parella reminded everyone of the town's contribution through expended funds, not reflected in the budget, used for police, security, fire, and DPW services.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

Veterans Holiday

Town Administrator Contente mentioned that he received a response from Walter Coelho, the President of the Veterans Council, that expressed gratitude for the council's consideration of a contribution to the Veterans holiday.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

Christmas Festival

Dave Scarpino, Chairman of the Christmas Festival provided an overview of their budget, and the impact the town's contribution makes on the event.

A discussion ensued regarding the popularity of the Christmas events.

The Council made no changes to the budget as recommended.

Holiday Lighting-Patriotism

Town Administrator Contente pointed out that the management of Holiday Lighting and Patriotism events has been handled logistically by the DPW department, and both expenses have been transferred to the DPW budget, to enhance clarity and

transparency. He clarified that although the budget line items have been transferred to DPW, the funding request for patriotism remains at a consistent level. However, an increase in funding was proposed for the Holiday Lighting category to address electrical circuit issues and to expand lighting on streets like Bradford, Franklin, Church, and Constitution Street.

The Council noted the changes made to the line items.

803-Parks and Recreation
Warren Rensehausen-Director

Director Rensehausen explained the details of his budget. He highlighted upcoming improvements to be implemented on the town's website to streamline event and program registrations.

Discussions ensued concerning pickleball and the possible need to provide portable toilets. There was apprehension that if they were to be installed near the pickleball courts, similar requests might arise for other parks throughout the town. It was noted that public restrooms are available in close proximity, and the suggestion was made to install signage indicating their locations. Additionally, it was proposed to assess whether the signage effectively informs the public about the restroom facilities' whereabouts or if the need for portable toilets should be taken into consideration in the future.

Further discussions ensued regarding park programs and scheduled events.

The Council noted the changes made to the line items.

802-ROGERS FREE LIBRARY
DAWN JENKINS- Library Director

Library Director, Dawn Jenkins provided the council with an overview of the library budget. She explained that the state grant aid increase was to assist with the median salaries for RI Librarians to assist with retaining full-time employees.

Discussions ensued regarding eBooks and library programs.

Discussions ensued regarding addressing a group of kids that are testing boundaries and the library is working with the schools,

police, and parks and recreation to assist with finding a solution to engage the group to use services available to them.

The Council noted the changes made to the line items.

Recap

Chairman Calouro recapped the following question items to be discussed for consideration at a later time (asterisk items)

- **607- ENTERPRISE FUND**

(*) The Council agreed by consensus to consider the possibility of allocating \$100,000 from the Fund Balance to potentially reduce the tax rate, (*) and to further review options for level funding the sewer assessment.

- **501 FINANCE**

Sara Hassell, Town Treasurer

(*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk at the Finance budget line so that the Council might consider the possibility of budgeting for finance software.

- **401- Town Council**

(*) The Council agreed by consensus to place an asterisk (*) at the Town Council's budget line so that the Council might consider the possibility of reviewing Public Media funds.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Ley, and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk