

WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

**Special Meeting:**

**Joint Meeting with the Willimantic Service District**

**Tuesday, March 8, 2011 - 7:00 P.M.**



**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Eldridge called the Town of Windham Council meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Town Council members present: Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge, Erika Haynes, Jerry Iazzetta, Arnaldo Rivera, N. Joseph Underwood, Christel Donahue, Kevin Donohue, Teresa Santucci and Charles Krich

Mike Lessard arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Town Council members excused: Lorraine McDevitt

Department Heads in Attendance: Tara Risley-Marquez, Matt Vertefeuille, Mary DeMarco, Don Muirhead, Brad Wojick, Lisa Maruzo-Bolduc, Marc Scrivener, Brian Hathaway, Ted Perch, Gay St. Louis, Patricia Spruance, Tom Pesce and James Finger. Executive Secretary Neida Rosado and Finance Assistant Karen Williams were also in attendance.

Town Manager Neal Beets was also in attendance.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Eldridge led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Citizens and Delegations**

Dawn Niles, North Windham, passed out a flyer from the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities and explained the Commission would be at the Windham Town Hall on March 21, 2011 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for a forum on Inside the Complaint Process & Anti-Bullying Community. Mrs. Niles encouraged all to attend.

Jeff Viens, spoke against any tax increases in Windham. He also gave suggestions on where to cut the budget.

Lori Jeffers, Willimantic, stated she had received a letter from the State regarding the bleachers at the Magnet School. She noted the letter stated the bleachers would be reimbursed at 95% of the reasonable cost of them. She questions what is reasonable. She feels there will be trouble passing the budgets, especially the Education budget. She

noted people are telling her they aren't happy about the budgets or the proposed plans for the Kramer Building and the Town Hall.

Leo Santucci, 74 Windham Street Willimantic, feels as we enter these difficult budget conditions we must be sure the citizens know the situation the Town is in. He believes we have done a pretty good job staying within our budget but feels we are now facing a tsunami of debt. Mr. Santucci gave a short summary from CCM of the States' deficit.

#### **4. Resolutions**

- a.** Discuss and possible action to adopt a resolution to extend the due date for SIFT's initial report to April 5, 2011.

Mr. Underwood read the Resolution and moved for its adoption.

Underwood MOVED, Iazzetta seconded, to adopt Resolution #2529 to extend the due date for SIFT's initial report to April 5, 2011. All were in favor.

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council THAT**

The Ad-Hoc Committee on Strategic Initiative to Finance Education (SIFT) shall produce an interim report at the April 5, 2011 Town Council regular meeting instead of the March 15, 2011 date as stated in resolution # 2520.

#### **5. Old Business**

- a.** Discussion and possible action by the regular Town Council and/or the Willimantic Service District on the proposed Town of Windham General Government budget for FY 11-12n and the Willimantic Service District budget for FY 11-12.

Town Manager, Neal Beets, gave a brief overview of the adjustments made to the proposed budgets since 3/1/2011 and the affect in would have on the mill rates. He also briefly reviewed the list of items in his proposed budgets.

Discussion and questions from the Council followed.

**MOTION:** K. Donohue MOVED, Underwood seconded, to amend the Town of Windham General Government proposed budget to add \$10,000 for Charter Revision. All were in favor. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**MOTION:** Krich MOVED, Rivera seconded, that the Town Manager reduce the Willimantic Service District budget to an amount not more than \$8,755,744, an amount approximately 2% greater than the current FY budget of \$8,584,063, that the Town Manager submit the revised budget to Council members from the Willimantic Service District no later than March 11, and that a special meeting of the Willimantic Service District be scheduled for March 15 for discussion and action on the revised budget.

Krich, C. Donahue, Rivera and Underwood were in favor and Haynes, Santucci and Eldridge opposed. MOTION PASSED.

**MOTION:** Iazzetta MOVED, Krich seconded, to reduce line item #50110-280 from the Elections budget from \$6,000 to \$1,000 to eliminate the paving of parking spaces at the Franco-American Citizens Club Inc. All were in favor. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**MOTION:** K. Donohue MOVED, Rivera seconded, to approve the Town Managers General Government budget including the changes made by motions tonight, March 8, but keeping the amount to be raised at no more than the published amount of \$8,336,634. All were in favor except Iazzetta and Krich and one abstention from C. Donahue. MOTION PASSED.

**6. Citizens and Delegations**

Peter Quercia, 300 Walnut Street Willimantic, noted he had attended the Board of Education meeting on Wednesday. He stated he is very concerned about the number of people on social security and disability in Windham and feels any tax increase would be a hardship to them.

Chief Lisa Maruzo-Bolduc, stated in 2009 this Council voted by Resolution to apply for the COPS grant which was not received. She noted again in March 2010 this Council voted by Resolution again to apply for the COPS grant and did receive it. She explained the work that it requires to achieve these grants and the negative affect it will have if not taken. Chief Maruzo-Bolduc also explained the Town would be giving away \$500,000 of which the cost to them is only \$160,000 in year four. She also believes the Town would be responsible for any Federal money already spent. In addition, Chief Maruzo-Bolduc, stated that a good portion of her budget is for medical insurance and pensions that she has no control over. She also shared her concerns with regards to the dispatch center. She feels if a company is proposing taking over the dispatch center for \$50,000 that is a huge red herring.

Acting Fire Chief Marc Scrivener, 109 Bush Hill Road South Windham, stated he agreed with Chief Maruzo-Bolduc. He explained the current positions opened and the contractual obligations to them as well as the minimum manpower needed. He noted with the SAFER grant there would be no cost to the Town other than to train and outfit the men. He feels it would be pennywise and pound foolish not to accept the grant.

Jeff Viens, gave suggestions to the Council on where to cut the budget. He believes certain jobs could be shifted to other departments. He also feels that the federal government does not abide by their own mandates so why should the Town.

Lori Jeffers, Willimantic, thinks there will be a lot of trouble passing the budgets. She also feels it was a big mistake to cut the \$5,000 from Elections to pave the Franco American Club because it is free money until the \$5,000 amount is reached.

Larry Kellogg, Spring Street Willimantic, feels it was a big mistake to cut Police and Fire. He reminded the Council of the railroad accident and the involvement both departments played in those. He also stated he lived on Spring Street, one of the worst streets in Town, and the impact the police had in changing the street for the better. He noted by accepting the grant he is willing to pay the \$160,000 that it will cost in the fourth year for the great piece of mind it will give him.

Ilna Stone, Willimantic, commented on the action taken tonight by the Council regarding the Police and Fire. She doesn't understand if grants are available why we are not going to take advantage of them. She feels it is putting the district in jeopardy and she noted she will advocate that the budget be denied until the 2 firemen and 2 police officers are in the budget. She asked the Council to look at the budget with new eyes.

Leo Santucci, 74 Windham Street Willimantic, thinks it would be foolish to give up the grants. He feels other budget items should be looked at. He stated we are now seeing the structural problems facing us and thinks we are spiraling down rapidly due to union restrictions and other mandates.

Jerry Iazzetta, South Windham, stated people are always asking why we need a Board of Finance and tonight is an example of why. He feels by not making the budget cuts necessary tonight the decisions are now given to the Board of Finance. He feels by giving the Board of Finance that control they are now making policy decisions which should be made by the Council.

Joe Marsalisi, Gifford Avenue Willimantic, stated the Board of Directors of the dispatch center had been asked to give a presentation to the Board of Finance which they did and during the presentation the finance chair shared a quotation from QV dispatch center dated January 2010 to dispatch police and fire for \$50,000. Mr. Marsalisi thinks this should be looked at however he feels it sounds too good to be true. He noted on March 17<sup>th</sup> he and Acting Chief Scrivener would be attending a meeting that the State is having regarding the study for all the dispatch centers and thinks that is something we should probably wait for before making any changes. Mr. Marsalisi also noted the amount of calls and citizens coming into the current dispatch center that were handled on a daily basis.

## **7. Adjournment**

K. Donohue MOVED, Iazzetta seconded, to adjourn the Town of Windham Town Council Joint Meeting with the Willimantic Service District Special Meeting at 9:24 pm. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.