



Watertown Town Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays
Councilor At Large

Anthony J. Donato,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Kenneth M. Woodland,
District D Councilor

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. MEETING WILL ONLY HAVE REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS MINUTES

In accordance with the provisions of Rule 2.6 of the Rules of the Town Council, and pursuant to the Call of the Council President, the members of the Town Council of the City known as the Town of Watertown were hereby notified of a Special Meeting of the Town Council held on Monday June 29, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, this meeting had only remote opportunities for participation with public access provided as follows:

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. The meeting was televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <https://wcatv.org/government-channel/>
- B. Public was allowed to join the virtual meeting online at: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/91777824276>
- C. Public was allowed to join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: 877 853 5257 (Toll Free) or 888 475 4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 917 7782 4276#

1. ROLL CALL

Council President Sideris called to order a special meeting of the Town Council at 6:00 p.m. in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, through remote opportunities for participation with public access. Those present were Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony J. Donato, John G. Gannon, Lisa J. Feltner, Angeline B. Kounelis, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, and Council President Mark S. Sideris. Also present were Michael J. Driscoll, Town Manager, Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor and Assistant Town Manager for Finance, and Marilyn W. Pronovost, Town Council Clerk.

2. THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Public Hearing and Vote on the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget and Related Matters

Town Council President Sideris stated that the Committee of the Whole had referred the [budget to the Town Council for action](#). He stated that the budget was within the limits set by Proposition 2 1/2 and that it could not be increased. If a change was requested, the increase had to be offset by an equivalent decrease in other budget items.

Mr. Driscoll stated there were [two amendments being made to the budget](#):

1. Increase the Public Safety Budget by \$45,000 with a corresponding decrease in the Town Council Reserve. These funds will be used to increase grants to the Jail Diversion Program by hiring a second full-time Mental Health Clinician. There were 304 mental health diversions in 2018 and 331 diversions in 2019.
2. Decrease the Police Budget by \$420,000 and increase the Town Council Reserve by the same amount. It was determined that if there was no agreement with the unions at the time of the budget vote, this amount would be transferred.

Highlights of the budget include:

- No layoffs
- Funding of the three Elementary School renovations
- Fully funded Retirement Plan
- Creation of a Plan to fully fund OPEB liabilities
- Initial funding of Information Technologies Assessment Recommendations

The budget as proposed is a balanced one for an amount of \$152,442,000.

Town Council President Sideris opened the Public Hearing:

Russ Arico – 49 Fayette Street – Appreciated the work on the budget and asked that the Police be funded as needed as they are a lifeline from chaos

Anne Marie Cloonan – Raised concerns regarding line items of the School Budget and asked the Town Council to review these items. Council President Sideris explained that the Town Council is not permitted to review line items of the School Budget by state law; it can only review the total amount requested. Concerns should be brought to the Chair of the School Committee.

Sarah Pardo – Stated she was happy that the Town was hiring a second mental health clinician to assist the Police Department. She asked that prior to forming the FY 2022 budget that the Town Council review the services provided by the police and to determine if other services are needed.

Zach Waltch – Stated he was encouraged by the hiring of a second mental health clinician. He also requested a review of current services with a report providing an assessment of the services and if there should be a funding of services to be provided by other service professionals.

Audrey Lin – 68 Spruce Street – Stated that she agreed with the hiring of the second mental health clinician and requested a review of the police services and if there were services needed to provide measurable steps to help residents

Chloe Quilter Votts – 12 Upland Road – stated her agreement with the hiring of the second mental health clinician and requested a study on current police services and if services could be better provided by other service professionals.

Miranda Popke – Expressed her agreement with the hiring of the second mental health clinician; she requested a review of current services and the best way to provide them. She was also encouraged by requests of the younger citizens requesting this review.

Scott Hand – Stated that he felt the Police Department does an excellent job protecting the citizens of Watertown; that they deserve the community's support; and that there is nothing indicating any police impropriety.

Claire Bunn – Stated she too agreed with the hiring of the second mental health clinician and she echoed the request of previous speakers for review of police services and stated that no community is immune from systemic racism.

Daniel Damico – Stated that all parts of the community needed to come together in open, transparent, and respectful dialogue to discuss the many challenges of policing and the concerns of the community. The Department needs to review what improvements it has made over the years and what services it feels are needed to improve the quality of the policing services.

Elodia Thomas – As a former crisis mental health clinician, she was concerned by the rote proclamation of several speakers. She felt that people had to learn the issues by talking with participants such as Chief Lawn and participate in activities such as the Police Academy. Investigation was a word that sounded too confrontational. People should know about the issue rather than just react to it.

Jeremy Ornstein – 54 Fairview Street – Stated his agreement with previous speakers and there is a need for this added mental health clinician because there is so much hurt and need in the community. By caring for others, we remind ourselves of who we are and what we are about.

Russ Arico – 49 Fayette Street – Stated that a police officer does not know what is occurring until arrival on the scene and that the level of force is dictated by the occurring event. Replacing police officers will not work.

Miranda Popke – Stated that young commentators were asking for accountability and transparency, something that is due from officials and civil servants. These remarks are not an attack but people thinking about the role of police and when services should be provided without the need of a gun. This is a rethinking of what the community can offer to improve itself.

Councilor Piccirilli read two statements sent by email:

Sarah Pardo – Please her [statement listed above](#).

Casey Halle – Asked that before next year’s budget is completed that there be a study of the [services provided by the Police](#) and to determine if more situations could be handled by other service professionals. She cited Chief Lawn’s statement that the police rely on the current clinician’s services and knows that she is stretched thin. She felt that the budget should reflect community values.

There being no other speakers, the Public Hearing was closed.

Council President Sideris stated that matters brought up for discussion would be reviewed. He asked those that were interested to please participate and to be aware that the process of change may take some time.

Mr. Tracy read the [amounts to be provided under each of the five budgets](#):

1. FY 2021 General Budget - \$152,442,000
2. FY 2021 Other Financing Sources General Fund - \$4,373,710
3. FY 2021 Financing Sources General Fund - \$3,250,000
4. FY 2021 Water and Sewer Enterprise Budgets - \$19,070,250
5. FY 2021 Other Financing Sources – Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds - \$250,000

After the General Budget was read, concerns were raised about the substantiating data underlying the need for the hiring of the second clinician; the ability of the Recreation Department to maintain revenue for its programs; COVID expenses; and the elimination of the Deputy Town Manager position.

Mr. Driscoll referred the Town Council to the letter sent by Chief Lawn requesting a second clinician. He also stated that Recreation has a revolving fund and that this should sustain them especially if programs can be offered in the latter part of FY 21. He also stated that there are COVID funds available of almost \$3.1 million; he would like to use some of those funds for revenue replacement.

Mr. Tracy stated the Town will apply for FEMA reimbursement and is currently obtaining the needed data. If the expenses are not covered by FEMA, the Town will apply for reimbursement under the CARES Act.

Town Council President Sideris stated his awareness of the importance of the Deputy Town Manager position; however, that was prior to the arrival of the unplanned COVID emergency.

Mr. Tracy then continued to read the remainder of the budget and their respective appropriations. There were no passes on the budgets; therefore they passed unanimously; however, Councilor Donato recused himself from consideration of the School Department Budget.

In the discussion that followed appreciation was stated for all who worked on the budget and their efforts and the hiring of the additional mental health clinician. Concern was raised about not hiring the Deputy Town Manager, the need for housing services due to the 11% unemployment rate in Watertown, and for expanding OPEB services.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to reconsider the budget with the hope that it does not pass; Councilor Feltner seconded the motion. The motion failed on a roll call vote of 0-9.

3. MOTIONS, ORDINANCES, ORDER, AND RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of Funds in the Amount of \$285,000 from Various Fiscal Year 2020 Electricity and Gas Accounts to the Fiscal Year 2020 [ESCO](#) Capital Project Stabilization Fund Account

Mr. Driscoll provided background on the Energy Stabilization Fund. Councilor Piccirilli moved to authorize a transfer of funds in the amount of \$285,000 from various Fiscal Year 2020 Electricity and Gas Accounts to the Fiscal Year 2020 ESCO Capital Project Stabilization Fund Account; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. Resolution Authorizing a Transfer of \$440,000 from the Fiscal Year 2020 Town Council Reserve Account to the Fiscal Year 2020 Transfer to [Collective Bargaining](#) Stabilization Fund Account.

Mr. Driscoll provided background stating this fund would provide the funding for a collective agreement that has not yet been completed. Councilor Piccirilli moved to authorize a transfer of \$440,000 from the Fiscal Year 2020 Town Council Reserve Account to the Fiscal Year 2020 Transfer to Collective Bargaining Stabilization Fund Account; Councilor Gannon seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

- C. Resolution Approving the Fiscal Year 2021 [Retiree Health](#) Insurance Appropriation and Authorization of Expenditures from the OPEB Trust Fund.

Mr. Tracy provided background on the Trust Fund payment. Councilor Piccirilli moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Retiree Health Insurance appropriation and authorization of expenditures from the OPEB Trust Fund; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

- D. Establishing Fiscal Year 2021 [Expenditure Limits](#) for Revolving Funds.

Mr. Tracy provided background on the limits being set for the eight revolving funds. Councilor Piccirilli moved to establish the Fiscal Year 2021 expenditure limits for revolving funds; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

- E. Motions to Appropriate the [Community Preservation Act](#) (CPA) Funds for Fiscal Year 2021.

Mr. Tracy stated the CPA revenue had to be reserved in the following minimums:

10% - Affordable Housing

10% - Historical Preservation

10% - Open Space/Recreation

An additional 5% could be appropriated for administrative purposes.

For FY 2021, the Town Council is requested to appropriate \$2,600,000 from the Community Preservation Funds to be used for the following funds:

Administration - \$130,000

Affordable Housing Reserve - \$260,000

Historical Preservation Reserve - \$260,000

Open Space/Recreation Reserve - \$260,000

Undesignated Fund Balance - \$1,690,000

Mr. Tracy requested the Town Council to adopt this action.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to have the Town Council appropriate CPA funds of \$2,600,000 to be divided in the following manner:

5% for Administration - \$130,000

10% for Affordable Housing Reserve - \$260,000

10% for Historical Preservation Reserve - \$260,000

10% for Open Space/Recreation Reserve - \$260,000

65% for Undesignated Fund Balance - \$1,690,000

Councilor Feltner seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

In comments made by the Councilors regarding the budget, it was stated:

- ♦ That best practices for financing do not use one-time monies, such as the reserve, for current expenses
- ♦ Aggressively funding long-term liabilities helps the Town with a financial rating and with a good rating, whereby, the Town is able to reduce the costs of borrowing money for other needed items.
- ♦ The Administration was commended for its judicious planning.
- ♦ The benefits of this budget was no layoffs, funding of the building plans for the three elementary schools, and the hiring of an additional mental health clinician
- ♦ The Health and Public Safety departments have worked hard in the COVID pandemic with a lean staff and that is very much appreciated
- ♦ While not all of the budget goals for that were planned for this year were funded, there were no layoffs which is laudable.
- ♦ When we get beyond the pandemic, the community will have the ability to plan for future growth.
- ♦ A thank you was sent to all who worked to complete the budget and the taxpayers for supporting it.

4. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Feltner seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

ADDENDUM

I hereby certify that at a special meeting of the Town Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted by a vote of _9_ for, _0_ against, _0_ present on August 11, 2020.

Mark S. Sideris, Council President
s:/MWP

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M.
MEETING HAD ONLY REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

1. Action on the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget – Council President Mark S. Sideris – June 29, 2020 – Item 2
2. Amendments to the Fiscal year 2021 Proposed Budget – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – June 29, 2020 – Item 2
3. Comments from Watertown Youth: WPD Budget Reallocation – Sarah Pardo – June 29, 2020 – Item 2
4. Comments on Tonight’s Budget Meeting – Casey Halle – June 29, 2020 – Item 2
5. Listing of Five Budgets Voted Upon and Approved by Town Council – Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor and Assistant Town Manager for Finance – June 29, 2020 – Item 2
6. Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds Request Regarding the ESCO Capital Project Stabilization Fund – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – June 25, 2020 – Item 3A
7. Agenda Item – Transfer of Funds Request Regarding the Collective Bargaining Stabilization Fund – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – June 29, 2020 – Item 3B
8. Proposed Resolution – Authorization of the Fiscal Year 2020 Retiree Health Insurance and Related Expenditures from the OPEB Trust Fund – Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor/Assistant Town Manager for Finance, to Town Council and Michael Driscoll, Town Manager – June 25, 2020 – Item 3C
9. Proposed Resolution – Fiscal Year 2021 53 E1/2 Revolving Funds Expenditure Limits – Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor/Assistant Town Manager for Finance, to Town Council and Michael Driscoll, Town Manager – June 25, 2020 – Item 3D
10. Fiscal Year 2021 Community Preservation Fund Budget – Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor/Assistant Town Manager for Finance, to Town Council and Michael Driscoll, Town Manager – June 25, 2020 – Item 3E