Watertown Town Council

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

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.
MEETING WILL ONLY HAVE REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
MINUTES

The Town Council of the City known as the Town of Watertown held a public meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 7:00 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://cloud.castus.tv/vod/#/watertown/video/5f490e6f9e1d640008a803ae?page=HOME&type=live
B. The Public was able to join the virtual meeting online: https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/929913313344
C. The Public was able to join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 929 9133 1344 #
D. Public was able to comment through email: vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov

1. ROLL CALL
Council President Sideris called to order a regular meeting of the Town Council at 7:00 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 Driscoll, Town Manager, Thomas Tracy, Town Auditor and Assistant Manager for Finance, Mark Reich, Town Attorney, and Marilyn W. Pronovost, Town Council Clerk.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC FORUM
   Council President Sideris opened the Public Forum. There being no speakers, the Forum was closed.

4. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS
   A. Minutes of the September 8, 2020 Town Council Meeting
      Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the minutes as written; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

   B. Minutes of the September 22, 2020 Town Council Meeting
      Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the minutes as written; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
   Council President Sideris stated that the last day to register to vote is October 24, 2020. There is a ballot box outside the Town Clerk's Office as required by state law and is clearly identified. A sign has been placed on the Library Box indicating where the proper drop off box is. In the previous weekend, the Town Clerk collected over 700 ballots.

   Early voting begins on October 17, 2020 and will be available on a daily basis, including weekends, until October 30, 2020. In-person voting will be on November 3, 2020 from 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Any drop off ballot must be dropped off no later than 8:00 p.m. on election day in order to be counted.

   Council President Sideris also stated that there was a topping off ceremony of the final beam on the Cunniff School and that the pouring of the floor concrete is beginning. It is anticipated that the building will be enclosed in January. This is an achievement to be proud for the community and all those directly involved.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS
   Public Hearing and Vote on a Proposed Loan Order authorizing the Town Treasurer, with the Approval of the Town Manager, to Borrow and/or Expend Monies in the Amount of $188,000 under M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 7(1) or Pursuant to Any Other Enabling Authority, and to Issue Bonds or Notes of the Town Therefor; For the Purpose to Pay Costs of Repairing and Upgrading the Town Hall Elevator, Including the Payment of All Costs Incidental Or Related Thereto. Any Premium Received Upon the Sale of Any Bonds or Notes Approved by this Order, Less Any Such Premium Applied to the Payment of the Costs of Issuance of Such Bonds or Notes, May Be Applied to the Payment of Costs Approved by this Order in Accordance with M.G.L. c.44, §20, Thereby Reducing the Amount Authorized to Be Borrowed to Pay Such Costs by a Like Amount.

Mr. Driscoll provided background information on the request. Ms. Kable, Director of the Public Buildings Department, stated the elevator is more than twenty years old and is in need of repair as it does not meet current codes. If it were grandfathered in, it would meet code; however, the desire is to bring it up to the current code as the public frequently uses it. There have been problems with it recently and people have been stuck in it. It failed a recent inspection and those repairs need to be completed within ninety days. The change will modernize the elevator, redo the hoist and the door clutch, and modernize the interior. The elevator will be inoperable for about five weeks but this is a good time to complete this work due to the low traffic in the building.

Mr. Driscoll stated that the repairs would be paid for over five years beginning in Fiscal Year 2022 terminating in Fiscal Year 2026. He asked for the Council's favorable consideration.

Council President Sideris opened the public hearing:
Ann Marie Cloonan – Asked why this was not placed in next year's budget. Mr. Driscoll stated this item was included in the Capital Improvements budget with the hope of obtaining financing in this fiscal year and having the first payment in the subsequent fiscal year, as is usually done with capital purchases.

There being no other speakers, the public hearing was closed.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to authorize the Town Treasurer, with the approval of the Town Manager, to borrow and/or expend monies in the amount of $188,000 under M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 7(1) or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the town therefor; for the purpose to pay costs of repairing and upgrading the town hall elevator, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto. Any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this order, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this order in accordance with M.G.L. c.44, §20, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

7. MOTIONS, ORDINANCES, ORDER, AND RESOLUTIONS
   First Reading on a Proposed Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

   Mr. Driscoll stated that the proposed amendment would be taken up at the next Town Council meeting on October 27, 2020. There are five changes:
   - The New Growth number is being updated
   - The State Aid number has been updated
   - There is an appropriation of $102,175 for the development of the Watertown Climate and Energy Master Plan
   - There is an appropriation of $10,000 to fund added resources for the November 3, 2020 election

- There is an appropriation of $90,000 to fund the operation of the Commander's Mansion for FY 2021

The change represents an increase of revenues and expenditures of $1,571,280 for FY 2021

8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
   A. Committee on Economic Planning and Development Report Regarding the Application and Preview Process for Adult-Use Marijuana Institutions – Sira Naturals Inc. at 48 North Beacon Street – Kenneth M. Woodland, Chair
   ACTION ITEM:
   That the Town Council Authorize the Town Manager to Execute the Host Community Agreement, As Presented, for the Adult Use Marijuana Application for Sira Naturals, Inc. at 48 North Beacon Street.

   Councilor Woodland read the Committee Report. Councilor Piccirilli moved to adopt the Report; Councilor Gannon seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

   Councilor Piccirilli moved to have the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute the host community agreement, as presented, for the adult use marijuana application for Sira Naturals, Inc. at 48 North Beacon Street; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

   B. Committee on Media and Public Outreach Report Regarding Creating a Town Council Newsletter and Reviewing the Recommendations of the Kitchen Table Conversations – Anthony Palomba, Chair

   Councilor Palomba read the Committee Report. Councilor Piccirilli moved to accept the Committee Report; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

9. NEW BUSINESS
   Referral to the Public Works Committee – Review the Proposal for the New EPA Regulations Regarding Stormwater Management

Councilor Piccirilli moved to refer to the Public Works Committee the review of the proposal for the new EPA regulations regarding stormwater management; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

10. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

A. Pleasant Street Shuttle Funding

The Watertown Transportation Management Association was notified that the Commonwealth funding to the Shuttle Program would be reduced by $100,000. In addition, a voluntary partner will no longer participate due to the lack of on-site employees. Mr. Driscoll requested that the matter be referred to Committee for further discussion. Councilor Piccirilli moved to have the funding for the Pleasant Street Shuttle referred to the Committee on Economic Development and Planning for further review; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Report

Mr. Driscoll stated that the draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Report was submitted with the hope that it be referred to Committee to have the consultant discuss the recommendations in the report draft. Councilor Piccirilli moved to refer the matter to the Committees on Economic Development and Public Works; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion.

In the discussion that followed, a concern was raised as to why the report was not shared with all at the same time. Mr. Magoon stated that it was for efficiency purposes and would gladly provide information to all and that the report was available via the link. A request regarding the status of Arlington Street to the Fresh Pond Parkway connection was brought up.

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote of 8-1. All Councilors voted in the affirmative, except for Councilor Palomba who voted in the negative.

C. Preliminary Budget Overview for Fiscal Year 2022.
Mr. Driscoll provided his Fiscal Year 2022 Overview. He stated that Fiscal Year 2020 was a good budget year but Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 are filled with uncertainty due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Fiscal Year 2020

Revenues

- Tax revenues (about 80% of the budget) were $114,571,108, showing a shortfall of about $1.5 million; however, this variation is being attributed to the change of the Tax Date from May 1 to June 1, 2020
- Evidence of this assumption seems to be borne out by the payments of taxes in July of $1.3 million, and August of $245,000.
- State Aid (about 7% of the budget) is slightly higher than anticipated at $13,279,891
- Local Receipts include

- Fees: Inspection, Ambulance, and Building provided more than $1,451,000 than the anticipated amount of $4.1 million
  - Investments - $500,000 was budgeted, but the Town realized $1,072,666; however rates have decreased and such an increase is not anticipated for FY 21
  - Motor Vehicle Excises: These taxes brought in almost $272,000 more than expected; however, there is a concern if that will be realized in FY 21
  - Miscellaneous: The amount of $810,000 is an unanticipated FEMA reimbursement of $258,000 with the remainder being an accrual reversion
  - Fines and Forfeits: The amount collected $503,000 was $200,000 less than anticipated
  - Medicaid: The Reimbursement of $132,000 was $188,000 less than anticipated
- Local Receipts provided almost $3 million more than anticipated ($13,406,684) at $16,288,060
- Other Sources
  - Parking Meter Fund was funded at $350,000 but the expected amount for FY21 will be reduced to $250,000 due to COVID issues
  - Free Cash – This is usually funded at $2,000,000 but due to COVID, it will be budgeted at $3,250,000 on a one-time only basis
  - These revenues represent about 5% of the budget
- Revenues for FY 20 budget ended with a .94% increase (from 149,911,809 to $151,332,445) from those anticipated

Expenditures

- Departmental Expenditures were budgeted at $94,619,541 but only $91,619,541 was expended, leaving more than $3 million unspent
- Town Expenses were budgeted at $149,911,809; however, $146,312,836 was actually spent
- The total amount not expended was $3,598,973; this represent 2.40% of the budget
- The Town has a Financial Reserve representing 15.66% which is sufficient to help retain its AAA bond ratings; with this rate the Town was able to sell bonds at a 1.47% rate

Fiscal Year 2021

- The FY 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) totals $524,150,500
- Debt
  - The remaining debt of $100,000 from FY 2007 will be paid off this year.
  - The Town began with a total debt of $41,735,000; paid off $5,785,000 leaving a debt amount of $35,950,000 for FY21

- The Town has authorized a debt level of $110,230,738, which has yet to be issued, to be used for the Hosmer/Cunniff Schools, a new ambulance, and a repaired Town Hall elevator
- Once issued, the Town's total amount of debt will be $146,180,738

Fund Balances

- Sewer/Water Enterprise Funds
  - The Sewer Fund has a balance at $10,945,624 but received $10,633,157 in payments, creating a deficit of $512,467
  - The Water Fund has a balance at $8,395,278 but received $7,932,772 in payments, creating a deficit of $462,506
  - Consumption has lowered and the rates are insufficient for the needed budget; therefore, the rates will need to be reviewed
- Overlay Accounts, used to offset tax abatements and unpaid taxes, is funded at $2,973,514
- Special Revenue Accounts have a balance of $9,384,218
  - $1,979,752 is available for potential Special Education Needs
  - $175,000 of the Community Development Block Grant will be used for Emergency Rental Assistance
  - The budgeted for meter usage amount of $250,000 may need to be reduced due to the lack of usage during COVID-19
- CPA has a current balance of $7,000,177 with an additional $2.6 million anticipated from FY21 taxes
  - The Committee is completing its planning process
  - Guidelines and Criteria for Project Recommendations are anticipated in 2021
- CIP
  - Has a $23,224,856 balance
  - Some Projects include the elementary schools ($9.6 million) and Arsenal Park renovation ($2 million)
- Stabilization Funds have a balance of $19,586,456

Status of FY 2021 Budget

- There is continuing uncertainty due to the effects of COVID-19 and the lack of federal budgetary guidelines making it difficult for the Commonwealth to determine its budget
- The Town has lost revenue of up to $4 million and the Cares Act prohibits using the local funds towards lost revenue
- The State has committed to a level funding of the Schools

Fiscal Year 2022

- Uncertainty continues to describe Fiscal Year 2022 for the reasons listed above

Revenues

- New Growth is anticipated to be at $6,000,000
- The Property Tax levy is anticipated to provide $131,476,106 of revenue
- Anticipated State Aid is estimated to be $10,565,000 – due to the economic uncertainty, the fiscally prudent estimated amount represents a 20% reduction of the FY 2020 amount
- Local Revenues
  - Due to COVID-19, the Motor Vehicle, Meals, and Hotel revenues were reduced by $697,500 for FY 21; there is some doubt if the Town will receive this amount
  - For FY22, the assumption is that there will be some growth, so the anticipated revenue for these items was increased by about $350,000
  - Due to the sale of the Tufts Building, the PILOT grant will be reduced by $939,000; however, the property owner will be paying property taxes as an offset.
  - Overall, it is anticipated that Local Revenues will be reduced by about $524,000
- Other Sources
  - The anticipated Parking Meter revenue is reduced from $250,000 to $150,000
  - Free Cash will be reduced from $3,250,000 to the regular amount of $2,000,000
- Anticipated revenues for FY 22 are $159,907,698, an increase of 3.82% from FY 21

Expenses

- Town expenditures are anticipated to increase 2.5%, or $1,461,946
- School Expenditures will decrease from a 5% to a 3.5% increase in funding of $1,817,806
- The MBTA Assessment will increase $2.4 million
- Insurance will increase by $1.2 million; participation in GIC has had an average increase of 2.7% since FY 2010
- The GIC agreement needs to be renewed by June 30, 2021; due to concerns over COVID-19, rates are uncertain beyond that
- The Retirement System will be fully funded on July 1, 2021; due to statistical factors such as mortality and disability, the pension funding was increased from $1,008,276 to $7,509,084
- Once the Retirement obligation is funded and the excess funds will be available to reduce the OPEB liability
- In order to fully fund the pension, the OPEB funding was reduced from $13,677,996 to $7,752,188
- Debt and Interest is anticipated to be $19,511,601, a $4 million increase
- Expenditures are anticipated to increase $5.6 million from $154,013,280 to $159,645,814

Forecast

- It is anticipated that the budget will have a surplus of $261,880; however, there is a caution of uncertainty about the forecast due to the effects of the pandemic
- Revenues currently are higher than was projected by $1.7 million – much of which is due to the sale of the Tufts Medical Building
- Expenditures increased by $631,375
- There was a projected shortfall for FY 21 of $825,078
- With all of the above factors, there is currently a small surplus
- Issues affecting the FY 21 and 22 Budgets
  - The uncertainty of COVID-19
  - Pension Liability and OPEB
  - The Elementary School Projects (Anticipated Completion Dates: Cunniff – Fall 2021; Hosmer – Summer 2022; Lowell – End of 2023)
  - The Design and Debt exclusion vote for the High School
  - Collective Bargaining – agreements for three of the six unions are still open plus that of the Schools
  - Acquisition of Land for Open Space using CPA Funds
  - Park Improvements
  - Climate and Energy Master Plan
  - Charter Review
  - Add a Deputy Town Manager position

11. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION/REVIEW OF LIST OF PENDING MATTERS

Councilor Kounelis requested information regarding the southbound bike lane markings on Arlington St. and documents relating to the current and proposed conditions of Arlington St.

Councilor Feltner had questions relating to the budget overview and stated she would submit them to the Town Manager.

Councilor Palomba requested information relating to the charter review and asked for copies of the 1991, 2001, and 2011 town election ballots and for the related documentation sent to citizens of the community regarding the charter review.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Piccirilli stated that the Budget and Fiscal Oversight Committee would be meeting on November 2, 9, and 16, 2020 to prepare the FY2022 Budget Guidelines. He requested that each Councilor provide their priorities to him by 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, October 28, 2020 so that he can prepare material for discussion.

Mr. Magoon stated that on Friday October 16, 2020 at 9:30 a.m., there would be a ribbon cutting ceremony at Arsenal Yards for the Blue Bike Station.

Councilor Donato stated that on October 17, 2020 from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m., the Community Fund would be sponsoring a food drive at 80 Mount Auburn Street to support the Watertown Food Pantry and the Catholic Collaborative Food Pantry.

13. PUBLIC FORUM
Councilor Piccirilli read a statement from Marilyn Petitto Devaney who raised concerns about having Charter Review meetings at this time during the pandemic. She requested delaying consideration of the Charter until at least Spring of 2021.

Ann Marie Cloonan – Requested that a comparison of tax rates with surrounding communities be presented to the public when the budget is considered

John Portz – School Committee Chair – Thanked Mr. Driscoll for highlighting the School Projects and for the support received by the community.

Councilor Feltner thanked all for their support especially with the technology issues to provide access to town proceedings.

14. RECESS OR ADJOURNMENT
Councilor Feltner moved to adjourn; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

ADDENDUM

I hereby certify that at a regular 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 November 10, 2020

____
Mark S. Sideris, Council President
s:/MWP

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.
MEETING HAD ONLY REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS
LIST OF DOCUMENTS

1. Minutes of the September 8, 2020 Town Council Meeting – Item 4A

2. Minutes of the September 22, 2020 Town Council Meeting – Item 4B

3. Agenda Item – Proposed Loan Order Regarding the Repair of the Town Hall Elevator – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – September 17, 2020 – Item 6

4. Additional Information – Proposed Loan Order Regarding the Repair of the Town Hall Elevator - Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – October 8, 2020 – Item 6

5. Proposed Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – October 8, 2020 – Item 7

6. Committee on Economic Development and Planning Report Regarding The Adult-Use Marijuana Institution at 48 North Beacon Street/Sira Naturals – Kenneth M. Woodland, Chair, – September 30, 2020 – Item 8A
   * Proposed Host Community Agreement
   * Letter of Support – Massachusetts AFL-CIO – Steve Tolman, President, to Town Council – September 30, 2020

7. Committee on Media and Public Outreach Report Regarding a Town Council Newsletter and Recommendations of the Kitchen Table Conversations – Anthony Palomba, Chair – September 28, 2020 - Item 8B

8. EPA Considers New Regulations on Stormwater Pollution in Charles River Watershed – Item 9

9. Pleasant Street Shuttle Funding – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – October 8, 2020 – Item 10A

10. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Report Michael Driscoll, Town Manager, to Town Council – October 8, 2020 – Item 10B

11. Fiscal Year 2022 Town of Watertown Preliminary Budget Overview – Michael Driscoll, Town Manager – October 13, 2020 – Item 10C

12. Request for Information Regarding Arlington Street Bike Lane Striping – Councilor Angeline B. Kounelis – October 13, 2020 – Item 11

13. Request for Information Regarding the Preliminary Budget Overview – Councilor Lisa J. Feltner – October 13, 2020 – Item 11

14. Request for Information Regarding Past Charter Review Procedure and Documents – Councilor Anthony Palomba – October 13, 2020 – Item 11

15. Statement Regarding Charter Review – Marilyn Petitto Devaney – October 13, 2020 – Item 13