

Special Municipal Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 16, 2009
7:00PM Town Hall Auditorium

Councilor Lavoie, Acting President of the Municipal Council called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. He explained that Mayor Kezer is on active military duty this week which means that President Benson is Acting Mayor and as such is unable to participate in the Municipal Council meeting.

He stated that Councilor Benson did ask him to explain that he is in favor of the Finance Committee budget as recommended and he voted that and it is a matter of the public record.

Members present: Councilor Lavoie, Councilor Ferguson, Councilor Neale, Councilor Gilday, Councilor Chatigny, Councilor Dunford, Councilor Sherwood. Councilor McMilleon had an excused absence. President Benson is present but in the capacity of Acting Mayor.

2009-073 Reappoint to the Master Plan Implementation & Oversight Committee term to expire 6/30/2012

Councilor Chatigny moved to approve re-appointment of Susan Deily-Swearingen to the Master Plan Implementation & Oversight Committee for a term to expire 6/30/2012. Councilor McMilleon seconded. Voted Unanimous

Public Comment - None

2009-001 FY10 Budget Hearing

Acting President Lavoie explained the Kaufman Ordinance, the rule of unquestioned recommendations, and stated this would be followed. Councilor Neale would give a brief summary of what the Finance Committee did and its recommendations and then the public hearing will be open and time will be allowed for public comment on the budget. Then Chairman Neale would read in order the summary report of the Finance Committee on the bill with every section starting with the Municipal Council budget and if there is any objection by any Councilor they must object at that time.

Councilor Neale explained the Finance Committee met with each department head over a period of six nights where they were allowed to explain their budget. The committee then questioned them and went over their budgets line by line. There were several information requests which were answered over the course of the process. At the end of the process the committee reviewed all of the information they had gathered and they developed finance recommendation for a total appropriation of \$51,037,388 which is a reduction from the Mayor's budget of \$106,437.00.

Acting President Lavoie stated the Finance Committee had two changes in animal control and fire department. The fire department was an \$87,000 capital item that should be capitalized rather than coming out of the operating budget. The Mayor's budget as recommended to the Mayor with those two minor modifications was adopted by a 7-1 vote of the finance committee. He opened the public hearing.

Peter Hoyt, Cashman Elementary School Principal, 33A Pleasant Valley Road, asked the Council to support the FY10 school budget as presented. He thanked the council for the time committed to this process.

Acting President Lavoie thanked Principal Hoyt for his service as he is retiring.

Barbara Coutinho, 27 Paige Farm Road, asked the Council to support the School budget.

Gail Browne, 2 Woodlawn Street, asked the Council to fully fund the School and Library budgets as submitted.

James Thivierge, 106 Friend Street, told the Municipal Council they should look at the Mayor's budget, the auditing services, and MIS department budget. He is concerned about the Health Department and supports the schools one hundred percent.

Cynthia Yetman, 31 Portsmouth Road, asked for the Council to support the school budget as presented. She is representing AFT Amesbury Local 1033, as their president. She stated they have been sensitive to the financial situation the town is in.

Dr. Chaurrette, Superintendent of Schools, supplied the Council with a handout and asked the Municipal Council to support the school budget as proposed. He stated it was a level service budget which would probably sustain cuts in Chapter 70 funds that the School department would absorb in the proposed budget.

Acting President Lavoie stated Dr. Chaurrette is retiring and thanked him on behalf of the Council for his years of service.

Sherri Ziomek, 5 Ash Street, asked the Council to support the school budget as submitted.

Debra Bibeau, School Committee, 17 Monroe Street, stated Stan Schwartz, Vic Chair of the School Committee is unable to attend but asked that she relay that "We need to maintain what we have to keep our competitive edge." She stated the Amesbury School Committee along with the Administration of the School Department has been at the cutting edge and in the forefront of cost savings since 1999-2000. Over two million dollars have been saved by outsourcing their food service and starting special ed transportation for in district. They have also realized significant savings with outsourcing the janitorial service. She asked the Council to support the school budget as submitted.

Suzanne McLaughlin, 25 Cedar Street, stated she has been to most of the budget meetings. She has no special interest in the budget except that her property taxes are what she thinks are ridiculously high. She also doesn't believe you can complain unless you understand so she attended the meetings. She was impressed and proud of the way the City Council behaved, how respectfully they disagreed and how respectful they were of everyone who testified. She now realizes the way their hands are tied because of state mandates, contracts, prevailing wage provisions and the loss of state funding. She thinks everyone needs to contact the State Legislators and tell them they need to be responsible and come through with the promises they made to the cities and towns.

Les Murray, High School Principal, stated his daughter graduated from to Amesbury High School this year. She was a school choice student and she came because of all the programs that are offered at the high school. He urged the Council to support the School budget as submitted.

Councilor Lavoie closed the public hearing portion.

Councilor Sherwood stated approximately five percent of the budget is debt service. He stated that he is comfortable with that number because it demonstrates that the Town makes long term

investments in our infrastructure which includes the schools, the bond to upgrade the water treatment plant, to put in new water lines, etc., on Elm Street and Hillside Ave that are important long term investments. Since 2002 the Town has had a 15% real decrease in local aide and the lottery aide has dropped 32% in just two years. All of that aide together is about \$12 million dollars which is about 25% of the budget. In reviewing the budget there were thirty five vacated positions that were not funded that had been previously, 4 in fire, 3 in health, 2 in council on aging, 6 in the library, 2 in community development, 9 in DPW, etc., etc. He stated he is very comfortable with the level of lack of service in this budget because the responsibility for absorbing it has been shared across the community.

Councilor McMilleon stated his biggest frustration is they can't add to the budget. A particular concern to him is the Library which is central to the community. He expressed thanks to the School Committee and Dr. Chaurette and David Jack for the clear, forthcoming and helpful information to help him make an intelligent decision about the budget. The school system has exemplified what all departments need to be doing, particularly in these economic difficult times that we are in now. He also expressed his appreciation to DPW, Fire, and Police for working diligently to comply with the budget the Mayor has put forward. The community and the voters have to really start calling the State Representatives to accountability for what's going on at Beacon Hill and start supporting the efforts on the state level for local relief.

Councilor Ferguson agreed with Councilor McMilleon by stating she wished she could add to the budget. Her major concerns were the permit coordinator, the library and the schools. She supports the finance committee recommendation for the budget.

Councilor Neale stated the Councils job is to take and create a balance around providing services against the need to raise taxes to provide those services. This is one of the most difficult votes the Council takes because even though this budget is some dollars less than last years budget it is gong to result in somewhere around a four percent increase in the taxes. The State took a lot of money away from us and the reason why that increase is necessary is the only way we can remain with this level of service is to increase taxes. He stated he received many e-mails and telephone calls and nobody told him they wanted services in order to pay less taxes. People understand these are tough economic times but we can't stop educating our kids; we can't stop providing the library services to the people who are on tough times. He will support the Finance Committee recommendation.

Councilor Dunford stated in the last three years the local aide funding has decreased by three percent; that's \$2.3 million just in the last three years. In that same time we have had to increase the amount of money that we give back to the state from eleven percent to fourteen percent while the general government has gone from nine percent to four percent. When the Governor came into office one of his planks was relief to property tax payers, instead it has gone up from sixty-four percent to sixty-nine percent. He encouraged residents to write to the State legislators and the Governor and ask them to do what they said they were going to do.

Councilor Chatigny stated when the Lieutenant Governor was here she asked him the same question, "Why aren't they doing more?" She agrees there are ways to cut in the future and one way is through longevity. She asked the Mayor and Union representatives to keep that in mind during future negotiations and asked that interested residents come to the meetings and let the Councilors hear their concerns.

Councilor Gilday stated going forward, in new negotiations and new hires some things should be changed to make it more tax payer friendly but still get good quality people. He agreed with most all of the comments made before him and asked for more participation from the general public at the meetings held by the Council and committees. He urged residents to talk to the State representatives.

Acting President Lavoie stated the Mayor brought this budget in \$10,000.00 less than what was appropriated last year. Through some cuts that finance committee has recommended this year's budget will probably end up about \$100,000 less than what as appropriated last year. Due to the cuts that the State has made to local aid and other funding to the Town and other revenue losses from excise tax, etc., approximately one million dollars more than last year will need to be raised by taxation. He stated there will be an increase of about four percent in taxes in February because the State hasn't done its part which means it has to come from somewhere if we are going to maintain the services that we enjoy. Eighty percent of the budget is personnel and about twenty percent is for the operating expenses for police cruisers, fire trucks, gasoline, snow & ice, paper, pens, electricity etc. Every possible conceivable savings for non-personnel has been wrung out of the system so that only leaves the cutting to be available in personnel. The Mayor did cut personnel in February to balance the 2009 budget knowing that it would have carry over effects into this budget, which it has. It saves about one million dollars. He reminded the Council if they have any objections to the Finance Committee recommendation to object as soon as it is read by Councilor Neale.

Councilor Neale read the full unquestioned finance committee recommendation:

At the meeting of the Amesbury Municipal Council Finance Committee on Thursday, May 28, 2009, in the Town Hall Auditorium the following recommendations were voted: An Order to vote to adopt an Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2010.

Be it Ordered by the Municipal Council of the Town of Amesbury assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows: that the Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2010 be approved as follows:

Municipal Council	\$ 81,209
Mayor	\$ 206,983
Reserve Funds	\$ 50,000
Administration & Finance	\$ 247,119
Assessor	\$ 211,017
Collector/Treasurer	\$ 188,415
Legal Services	\$ 100,500
Mgmt Information Systems	\$ 258,986
Central Supply	\$ 72,500
Town Clerk	\$ 161,412
Elections	\$ 33,584
Liquor Commission	\$ 1,000
Conservation Commission	\$ 35,369
Community & Economic Development	\$ 244,819
Planning Board	\$ 17,834
Board of Appeals	\$ 5,891
Municipal Buildings	\$ 133,168
Animal Control	\$ 21,000
Police Department	\$ 3,318,236
Fire Department	\$ 2,594,231
Communications	\$ 517,075
Inspections	\$ 246,565

Weights & Measures	\$	4,500
Emergency Management	\$	21,776
Harbormaster	\$	7,500
Department of Public Works	\$	1,155,605
Snow & Ice	\$	225,000
Outdoor Lighting	\$	170,004
Refuse/Recycling	\$	941,177
Health Department	\$	14,420
Council on Aging	\$	81,639
Veterans Services	\$	307,916
Library	\$	594,197
Youth	\$	236,376
Debt Services	\$	2,548,871
Other Assessments	\$	852,143
Employee Benefits	\$	4,463,885
Insurance Expense	\$	278,300
School	\$	24,933,496

For a total appropriation of: \$ 45,583,718

That to fund said appropriation, the Municipal Council approves \$44,865,542 to be raised by taxation and other revenue sources and further that \$ 718,176 be applied from the sources detailed below:

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Sale of Cemetery Lots	\$ 11,800
Ambulance Receipts	450,000
Youth Revolving	236,376
Cemetery Interest	12,500
Waterways Improvement	7,500

Further voted that the Municipal Council approves the following enterprise fund budgets:

Landry Stadium	\$	6,500	Total Landry
Sewer Department	\$	2,659,540	Total Sewer
Water Department	\$	2,787,630	Total Water

Therefore, the Municipal Council hereby appropriates the following:

TOTAL APPROPRIATION \$ 51,037,388

Councilor Lavoie stated there were no questioned items and asked for a motion.

Councilor Neale moved to approve a total appropriation of \$51,037,388 and moved to approve a blanket motion that all the unquestioned recommendations of the finance committee be each and severally adopted; that any and all unquestioned actions which they have recommended to be taken, be each and severally taken; that any and all unquestioned sums which they have recommended be raised and appropriated. Councilor Chatigny seconded.

Councilor Ferguson stated the Council has spent a lot of time discussing this budget and she feels very comfortable supporting the budget as recommended.

Councilor Neale stated the Mayor and staff; particularly the department heads deserve a big round of applause for putting together this budget.

Roll Call Vote 8 – Yes, 1 Not present, Benson (Acting Mayor and unable to participate)

Councilor McMilleon moved to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Councilor Ferguson seconded. Voted Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnijo Kitchin, CMMC
Town Clerk