

At a Special meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on April 19, 2022

I. Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order at 7:00 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Members present: William E. Reichert , President; Walter M. O. Steere, III; Stephen Arnold; William A. Worthy, Jr. and David Laplante

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Adam Muccino, Finance Director; Gary Treml, Director of Public Works; and John Luszcz, Director Human Services.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Public Hearing

A. Proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022/2023

Councilor Reichert stated that this public hearing has been advertised in the Bargain Buyer on April 13, 2022

Councilor Reichert DECLARED the Public Hearing OPEN

Councilor Reichert explained that first we will have a review of the budget under item #1, questions can be asked under item #2, Council can discuss the budget or changes under item #3.

Councilor Reichert stated that after the public hearing is closed Motions can be made to amend the budget for each item Council wishes to amend.

1. Review of proposed budget (as needed)

Councilor Reichert asked A. Muccino, Finance Director, to give a review of the budget, with any proposed changes he would like to recommend.

A. Muccino, Finance Director, gave an overview of the proposed budgets including proposed changes.

2. Public Discussion

Councilor Reichert asked if anyone wished to speak on the proposed budgets. Councilor Reichert stated that when called on, to please come up to the podium and state your name for the record.

Discussion: Councilors Steere and Arnold both thanked the Budget Board for their time and efforts.

1. Bill Brown, Gloucester Heritage Society Historical Cemetery Association, stated that he was requesting \$12,950 in addition to the \$6,000 proposed by the Budget Board to make a total of

\$18,950. B. Brown explained that the monies were needed for the perpetual care of four cemeteries. Councilor Reichert stated that B. Brown and his association do a great job cleaning and caring for the cemeteries. Councilor Steere stated that B. Brown works hard at this labor of love but the Council needs to be mindful that the cemeteries are private ones and not town owned. Councilor Steere informed B. Brown of the possible ARPA funds that he may consider applying for and explained how to do so.

2. D. Steere, resident, asked about multiple line items in both the town and school budgets as well as the amount used to date on other line items. D. Steere suggested some line items that may be considered by the Council as possible savings.

3. J. Fecteau, Town Clerk, thanked the Budget Board for their work. J. Fecteau stated that she is asking for an additional \$2000 for the Board of Canvassers to provide for miscellaneous expenses and costs due to the redistricting by the state which resulted in a new precinct.

4. J. Fecteau proposed an increase in pay for the next town council of \$2000 per year. J. Fecteau stated that she looked back through 2009 and realized that the salary has consistently been \$13,000 per year to divide among the five councilors which results in each councilor receiving \$2600 per year. J. Fecteau proposed by this increase that each councilor would then receive \$3000 per year. There was a consensus of the Council to not include a pay raise.

5. W. Steere, resident, questioned the special appropriation for the future proration as to the Foster / Gloucester Regional Schools and suggested that the Council consider adding \$100,000 from surplus to that fund.

W. Steere suggested using the surplus fund to help offset some of the budgeted items which should help reduce the tax rate and reminded the Council that the capital projects are typically funded by the unrestricted fund. A. Muccino stated that the pilot program with FM global ended which makes revenue look down but that the Tax Assessor's department is working on an assessment to be able to present them with a tax bill. W. Steere also questioned the amount of funding for the skating rink and his opinion that it is a lot of money to spend.

6. D. Steere asked about the balancing in the proposed budget for the special appropriation for future Foster / Gloucester Regional Schools proration in the amount of \$50,000 as to it appears as a revenue to be raised by taxes and he does not see it as a transfer from the unrestricted fund as it historically has been treated.

7. J. Luszczyk, Human Services Director, read a letter he wrote describing the increase in services provided by his department. Councilor Reichert suggested J. Luszczyk put together his concerns and bring them to Council for a discussion. Councilor Steere commented on the original parameters of the department and how the increase in services as described by J. Luszczyk may be outside that original scope. Councilor Steere offered procedural suggestions for J. Luszczyk if he wished expand the department.

3. Council Discussion and/or action

Councilor Reichert asked if anyone on Council had any items to discuss on the budget, or any changes, or questions.

Councilor Reichert DECLARED THE PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED.

Councilor Reichert stated that if changes are proposed that each one can be voted on now.

Councilor Reichert stated that the budget, as amended tonight, as well as the final ballot questions will be adopted to go forward to the Financial Town Referendum at the Council meeting of April 21st. Councilor Reichert added that the all day referendum will be held Tuesday, May 24th, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Gloucester Senior Center.

1. MOTION was made by Councilor Arnold to level fund the Human Services Director salary ; seconded by Councilor Steere

Discussion: Councilors discussed the question of whether or not benefits were to be included as well as a 4% increase.

Councilor Steere withdrew his second and Councilor Arnold withdrew his motion.

2. MOTION was made by Councilor Arnold to level fund the Human Services Director Salary and include a 4% increase as well as to take into consideration benefits as contained in the “We Are Gloucester Handbook” ; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold,Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

3. MOTION was made by Councilor Laplante to reduce the retired personnel medical and dental (OPEB ARC) amount from \$99,701 to \$70,000; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold,Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

4. MOTION was made by Councilor Laplante to add \$12,950 to the Gloucester Heritage Society Cemetery Association; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold,Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

5. MOTION was made by Councilor Steere to include an appropriation of \$100,000 as reserve for student proration at Regional School District to come from the unrestricted fund balance; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold, Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

6. MOTION was made by Councilor Arnold to grant to the Board of Canvassers an additional \$2000; seconded by Councilor Steere

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold, Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

7. MOTION was made by Councilor Steere to fund the balance of FY 23 capital request as presented here in the amount of \$815,653 from the unrestricted fund balance; seconded by Councilor Arnold

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold, Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Discussion: Councilor Steere asked about the proposed budgeted money for the Scarecrow Festival which is not town sponsored but rather a fund-raiser for the private Chepachet Grange. Councilor Steere raised the concern that opening the door for one non town group would open the door for other such requests. Councilor Steere stated his opinion to not fund. M. Robinson, Budget Board member, explained the Budget Board's reasons for including the item in the budget. Councilor Worthy stated his agreement with Councilor Steere to not fund and added that the group had ways to self fund. Councilor Reichert stated his suggestion of an entrance fee. Councilor Arnold stated his opinion to fund the money.

8. MOTION was made by Councilor Steere to remove the proposed \$1300 for the Gloucester Scarecrow Festival from the proposed budget; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Worthy, Steere and Reichert

NAYS- Laplante and Arnold

MOTION PASSED

MOTION was made by Councilor Steere to fund balance of capital requests of \$815,653 from the unrestricted fund balance ; seconded by Councilor Arnold

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold,Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

W. Steere, resident, stated his opinion that the town's department heads are good ; don't spend like crazy and give money back which helps to fund the surplus.

Councilor Reichert thanked the Budget Board and A. Muccino for their hard work .

V. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor Steere to ADJOURN at 9:55 p.m.; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- Laplante, Arnold,Worthy, Steere and Reichert
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Posted: