

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
April 22, 2019

I. ROLL CALL

Town Council Members present:

Michael G. White, President
Mary E. Meagher, Vice President
Nancy A. Beye
Randall White
William J. Piva, Jr.

Also in attendance:

Andrew E. Nota, Town Administrator
Christina D. Collins, Finance Director
Michael C. Gray, Public Works Director
Edward A. Mello, Police Chief
Lisa W. Bryer, Town Planner
James Bryer, Fire Chief
Andrew J. Wade, Parks and Recreation Director
Christine Brochu, Tax Assessor
Peter D. Ruggiero, Town Solicitor
Cheryl A. Fernstrom, Town Clerk

II. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Town Council President White called the special meeting of the Jamestown Town Council to order at 5:33 p.m. on Monday, April 22, 2019 in the Rosamond A. Tefft Council Chambers of the Jamestown Town Hall at 93 Narragansett Avenue and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. OPEN FORUM

- A) Scheduled Request to Address. None.
- B) Non-scheduled Request to Address. None.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A) Adoption of the FY 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) Town, School, and Capital Budgets; review, discussion and/or potential action and/or vote
Town Administrator Nota gave an overview of the final budget review and adoption opportunity for the Town Council. The cover memorandum was reviewed that reflects adjustments made to the budget including:

- \$50,000 increase in the capital funds to support affordable housing initiatives

- \$25,000 reduction in Town revenue to increase the Golf Course Capital Fund for course improvements
- \$7,500 reduction in Tick Task Force program funding
- Elimination of \$4,000 funding for the Jamestown Prevention Coalition

The adjustments result in a total proposed FY 2019-2020 Budget Program of \$25,494,330 representing an increase of \$1,191,772 or 4.9%. The total actual Tax Levy amount is \$20,653,096, an increase of \$854,288 or 4.31% over the FY 2019 Tax Levy. The FY 2020 Tax Levy is \$20,644,221, an increase of \$631,869 or an actual increase 3.05%, \$189,425 below the 4% Tax Levy Cap. The estimated tax rate is \$8.04, reflecting an increase of 4 cents, which may fluctuate between now and the FTM on June 3, 2019.

Council comments.

Council members asked if more adjustments were needed would it come from surplus funds. Town Administrator Nota reviewed scenarios of potential funding sources if adjustments are needed. Originally there was \$10,000,000 in an appeal reserve and over \$9,500,000 has been utilized. Discussion ensued of the statistical revaluation, the appeal process, growth in the tax roll and what we might see between now and December that may have an impact on the reserve we decide to carry. Finance has been in contact with the State Department of Revenue and they have verified the budget submitted.

Council members asked how many of the 3,700 properties assessed does the \$9,500,000 encompass and how that relates to prior years. Town Administrator Nota stated normally there is \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 in reserve for appeals, but normally we don't have over \$360,000,000 in growth on the tax roll. This is a proportional adjustment based on significant growth and this type of growth has been seen across the State. The new valuations set by Vision Government Solutions averaged a 15% increase and are very close to actual property values. The average increase during the last statistical revaluation was 6%. Jamestown experienced more appeal sessions than other communities. The current tax rate is \$8.85 and will drop to \$8.04. Jamestown has the 3rd lowest real estate and 4th lowest motor vehicle tax rate in the State.

Public comments.

Mary Lou Sanborn of Bay View Drive referenced last week's letter from the Taxpayer's Association of Jamestown to the Town Council. She is here to ask the Town Council to consider vetoing this budget. TAJ did a sampling of citizens in town and everybody's assessments went up. Please take into consideration our citizens on fixed incomes, as many things increase in addition to the tax rate, and want does not equate to need.

President White noted the Council always takes into account what this means to all the people and taxpayers. It is nice to know properties have increased, but you can only take advantage of that when you sell your property. When Council reviews a budget we always take what the Town and Schools needs into account. We perused the budget, tried our best, and we are at where we should be.

A motion was made President White with second by Vice President Meagher that we pass the budget for the Town of Jamestown as follows: Town Budget \$11,063,235; School Budget \$14,431,095; Total Budget \$25,494,330.

Discussion. Council members echoed some of Ms. Sanborn's concerns recognizing the connection to and disconnection from the budget of the overall assessment of properties on the Island. In the last election candidates repeated the mantra of transparency, and there should be a relationship to how a property is assessed, who assesses it, how they come to the numbers, and those subject to taxation should know how it is done and the process. Citizens deserve to know the formula used and it should be reviewed. Government is only as good as the faith in it, and that is being tested. In the past we had the ability to remove items from the budgets, but this year we watched Administration scramble. Things we wanted to do were not done, and things postponed now have to be done. The Town held the line as best we could, and the School Budget reflects that they held the line, and we know how hard the Administrator and Finance Director worked to pare this budget down. As far as need vs. want, department heads go into this process with need not want. A great deal of thought went into this budget and the methodology should be applauded.

Back to the vote on the motion. **President White, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Beye, Aye; Councilor White, Aye; Councilor Piva, Aye.**

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with second by Councilor Piva to adjourn. President White, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Beye, Aye; Councilor White, Aye; Councilor Piva, Aye.

The special meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Attest:

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, CMC, Town Clerk

Copies to: Town Council
 Town Administrator
 Town Solicitor
 Finance Director