

**TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 30, 2022
5:00 P.M.**

I. ROLL CALL

Town Council Members present were as follows: Nancy A. Beye, Mary Meagher, Michael G. White, Erik Brine, and Randy White.

Also, in attendance: Town Administrator Jamie Hainsworth, Director of Finance Christina Collins, and Town Clerk Roberta Fagan

II. CALL TO ORDER

Council President Beye called the Budget Work Session of the Jamestown Town Council to order at 5:00 p.m.

III. TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORK SESSION for FY 2022/ 2023 (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023)

- A) Review, Discussion, and/or Potential Action and/or Vote: Town Administrator's proposed Town, School, and Capital Budgets

Town Administrator Hainsworth gave a brief overview of the recent meeting with the Rhode Island Auditor General to determine if any of the General Operating and/or School Budget line items would qualify as emergency eligibility for a tax levy waiver. The sudden increase in the student tuition was beyond management's control and has impacted FY2021/22 and the upcoming FY 2022/23. The unexpected increase would be the only line item to qualify under the emergency criteria necessary to apply for a waiver. The School Committee met on March 24th and approved reducing the proposed budget by \$108,000. Town Administrator Hainsworth recommended to the Town Council to approve a transfer from the Town's Undesignated Fund Balance for \$159,465 to the School's fund balance to offset the FY2021/22 budget deficit. This would also avoid having to apply for the tax levy waiver.

Vice President Meagher stated the present budget deficit could be attributed to the unexpected tuition increase for high school students as well as the need for additional staff hired in the fall of 2021 to accommodate increased enrollment at the Jamestown schools for the 2021/2022 school year.

Councilor Brine questioned what the eligible amount would be to go forward with the Auditor General's office. Finance Director Collins explained that a qualifying line item needed to be a minimum of \$100,000 increase. The North Kingstown special education line item for \$156,882 would be a qualifying budget item.

Councilor M. White made a clarifying statement that the \$159,465 would be drawn from the Town's Undesignated Fund Balance which is well funded. Finance Director Collins confirmed this and explained that the fund balance would still maintain the GFOA standard of two months of the operating budget. Moody's bond rating for coastal communities such as the Town of Jamestown, requires adequate reserves, which the Town has presently, but the fund balance would need to be increased to maintain the Bond rating in subsequent years.

Dr. Duva confirmed that the \$108,000 cut from the proposed school budget could not be certified if the Town were to move forward with a tax waiver.

Councilor R. White commended the School Committee members and the administration for working collaboratively to find a solution to the budget challenges.

Councilor Brine disagreed and stated disappointment that the \$108,000 was cut from the school budget resulting in programmatic reductions.

Vice President Meagher disagreed with Councilor Brine and explained there was no option to include the \$108,000 in the school budget. The state law requires Town employees to attest to “qualifying emergency” budgetary items.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

Maureen Gladding, Columbia Lane, requested clarification on the process for submitting a Warrant for consideration at the Financial Town Meeting.

More discussion on qualifying budget expenses for the tax waiver.

The Town of Jamestown would need to show consistent budgetary spending with no new spending to attest to the need for a waiver.

President Beye stated with confidence that the Town staff has done the necessary due diligence and the proposed budget is a result of that work.

Councilor M. White commented that the proposed budget and the deliberations are evidence that it is a good budget because everyone comes away “unhappy”. In other words, the proposed budget represents a necessary compromise for all.

Solicitor Ruggiero warned that a Warrant introduced at the Financial Town Meeting could be extremely problematic. More discussion and education would be needed to inform the public about the legal ramifications. Anything that causes Jamestown to exceed the 4% tax levy, would have to qualify under the statute. Administrative problems could also arise if Town Staff would not agree to sign certifications.

Town Administrator also recommended the addition of \$25,000 to support the Jamestown Housing Land Trust program introduced by Vice President Meagher and the Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee. The funds would be taken from revenues and would not add to the tax levy.

In conclusion Town Administrator Hainsworth made the recommendation to the Town Council to adopt the proposed budget at the Town Council meeting on Monday, April 4, 2022.

IV. OPEN FORUM

Comments are not limited to items on this agenda. However, items not on this agenda will only be heard and not acted upon by the Town Council. Note: Section 42-46-6 of the Open Meetings Act and Department of the Attorney General Advisory Opinions relevant to this item on any public body meeting agenda specifically prohibit the Town Council from discussing, considering, or acting on any topic, statement or question presented. The Town Council may, if warranted, refer such matters to an appropriate committee, to another body or official, or post the matter for consideration at a properly-noticed, future meeting.

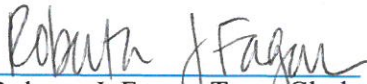
- A) Scheduled request to address
- B) Non-scheduled request to address

No requests to address that Town Council.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with second by Councilor Brine to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, aye; Councilor R. White, Aye.

Attest:


Roberta J. Fagan, Town Clerk