TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
April 21, 2025
Special Town Council Meeting
Council Chambers

APPROVED MINUTES

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Black-Burke called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Nuchette Black-Burke, Deputy Mayor Darleen Klase, Councilor Mary Armstrong, Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Ojala Naeem (virtual), Councilor William Pelkey and Councilor Walker

Absent: Councilor Anthony King

2) HEALTH SERVICES

Michael Pepe, Director of Health Services and Jennifer Waldo, Public Health Nurse, gave an overview of the budget. Mr. Pepe stated the overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in over budget by $7,980 or 0.9% due to an increase in available grant funding used for additional Personnel, Supplies and Services costs. The FY 25 General Fund expenditures are expected to be under budget by $12,210 or 1.9% due to the unanticipated increase in grant funds. The overall FY 26 proposed budget reflects a decrease of $27,270 or 3.0% as compared to the FY 25 budget due to a decrease in available grant funding. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of $47,880 or 7.4% due to a decrease in grant funding, as well as an increase in Personnel costs.

Mr. Pepe went over some FY 25 highlights and goals for FY 26.

Councilor Eleveld referenced the personnel requirements on page I-1 and stated that he noticed half of an FTE reduction and asked where that was coming from. Mr. Pepe responded that it was due in part to the expiration of a grant as well as the absence of a sanitarian position.

Councilor Armstrong looked to page I-4 and asked about the User Fees. Mr. Pepe replied that the User Fees for that portion are the repayments they get when they do property maintenance remediation and/or relocation. He explained that when we put a lien on a property and when the property is sold or transferred, the town gets reimbursed for any money that was spent during the process.

Councilor Armstrong looked to the bottom of page I-5, under Institutional Health and Safety and asked about how often an inspection was done. Mr. Pepe replied that those are done once a year prior to opening and if the State asks them to go in for any other reason then they will go in for them.

Councilor Armstrong asked if it was for establishments or residences. Dr. Pepe replied that it was for group homes and residences per their state licensing requirements that they have to sign off on from the Health Department. He added that food establishments, depending on their risk factor, can be inspected anywhere between one and four times a year.

Councilor Armstrong referenced page I-5 on the last bullet point. She asked in what instances do they review, approve and monitor location cases together with social services. Mr. Pepe explained that is when they have a situation where a tenant needs to be relocated due to a condemnation notice whether it be due to a fire or lack of heat. He said it is predicated on a complaint driven process. They work with the Social Services Department and various other departments in town to try to get the apartment(s) corrected as soon as possible so the individuals can move back in.

Mayor Black-Burke asked about the immunization clinics and if there could be any potential cost savings to build upon by partnering with additional neighboring towns like Bloomfield or Hartford. She also asked if we had worked with Hartford Healthcare or Trinity Health to underwrite/co-sponsor some of the health clinics for additional cost savings. Public Health Nurse Waldo responded that we have partnered with another pharmacy to do some other vaccine clinics that we do not have in stock. She said they did a neuro divergent clinic and a COVID-19 clinic with us. She said in terms of partnering with Bloomfield, West Hartford and Bloomfield District do all of their vaccine clinics and that we have continued our partnership with South Windsor based on need.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if there was a pharmacy other than Beacon that we partner with. Ms. Waldo said it was just Beacon and that if there was a need to do other vaccines that they would work with them as well.

Councilor Walker referenced page I-7, the second bullet point under community assessment, and asked about the details of working with the Windsor school residents counselor. Ms. Waldo clarified if he was talking about the school readiness program and Councilor Walker replied yes. Ms. Waldo explained that she sits in on a monthly meeting that is led by Windsor Public Schools and the readiness council where they have discussions on the kind of work that they are doing and if there is anything we can do to support them. She explained that they talk about early childhood education programs like with Windsor Public Schools and First Church.

Councilor Naeem asked about the grant shifts that she is seeing and that it looks like we are reducing almost in half in terms of expected grant contributions for FY 2026. She asked if any of that is in relation to what they are seeing from cuts at the federal level trickling down to the town level. She also asked if there was anything that we should be anticipating getting impacted in terms of programs and services that are proposed in the FY26 budget through grant funding. Ms. Waldo replied that the vaccine grant was awarded for $95,000. Last summer they were told that they would receive additional funds, around $40,000. She said they never had an executed contract and that funding is not going to be awarded to us based on what has happened with federal funds. She said they have an executed contract for the suicide prevention and mental health promotion grant and have been told because it is executed that we will receive all the funds. She reported that those were the two grants that were most likely to be impacted.

Councilor Naeem asked if the vaccine grant was for a specific type of vaccination clinic or if it was broader. Ms. Waldo said that it was for the flu vaccine clinics because those are the clinics that we administer.

Councilor Naeem asked about the grant that had been executed and if that had been a traditionally recurring contract that we can anticipate not receiving for FY 27 or if this was the first time we were receiving it. Ms. Waldo replied that it was a one-time grant and it has concluded and we have received all of the money. Town Manager Souza added that we will continue to do our annual flu clinics and that the grant was to enhance and expand it. He stated that we would continue to partner with senior services.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked for more information regarding the question that Councilor Walker had asked and the school readiness council. Ms. Waldo said that they have used it to promote some of the programs that they have done like the therapy dog visits and mental health promotion suicide prevention. That is the extent of the support provided through the Health Department.

Councilor Pelkey asked what causes them to review and make changes to fees. Dr. Pepe replied that every year they take a regional look at other Health Departments and districts and try to maintain a place somewhere in the middle.

Councilor Armstrong referenced page I-7, bullet point four, and asked about bicycle helmets. Ms. Waldo replied that they do have helmets for sale upstairs in the Health Department. She said they fit them and sell bicycle and ski helmets as well.

Councilor Armstrong asked how the public is made aware of that procedure. Ms. Waldo replied that they spread the word through social media and the website.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the vial of life product that they provide. Ms. Waldo said that it is a vinyl envelope that has a magnet on it with a form that slips inside there that includes health history, medications and physicians. She said first responders know to look for that information when called to a residence and gives them some background before starting care.

Councilor Armstrong stated that she saw a decrease in personnel and services on page I-8, and asked for a reason for that. Dr. Pepe replied that it was a result of a sanitarian who left and that there was a period of time that they did not have someone filling the position. The position has since been filled.

Town Manager Souza added that there is a loss of the immunization grant on page I-8. There is a combination of circumstances and not solely the loss of a full-time staff member.

Councilor Armstrong referenced page I-9, last bullet, and asked what is a neurodivergent friendly vaccine clinic. Ms. Waldo explained that it is a term used for people who do not think like others like those with autism or someone on the spectrum and that the clinic was set up to ensure they were successful in getting the vaccine.

Councilor Armstrong asked if it was still offered. Ms. Waldo replied that we are going to attempt to do it again this fall with Beacon pharmacy.

Councilor Armstrong referenced page I-11 under emergency management, the last bullet, and asked how they would update the volunteer database. Dr. Pepe responded that it has to do with our public health emergency preparedness component and they send out a periodic email to ask individuals if they are still interested in volunteering. He said they also do some advertising to get new volunteers.

Mayor Black-Burke called attention to the FY 2026 goals and looked forward to what comes out of the community health needs assessment. She thanked them for their service and for all that they do.

3) POLICE DEPARTMENT

Donald Melanson, Police Chief; Captain Andy Power; Captain Heather LaRock; and Suzanne Brannack gave an overview of the budget as follows:

Chief Melanson stated the overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in under budget by $186,160 or 1.4% mostly due to savings in Personnel costs for partial year vacancies, workers compensation and disability leave. The FY 25 General Fund budget is expected to come in under budget by $117,440 or 1.0% due to the same reason.

The overall FY 26 proposed budget reflects an increase of $675,750 or 5.3% as compared to the FY 25 budget primarily due to Personnel costs. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget, including Town Support for Education, reflects an increase of $698,930 or 5.9% mostly due to Personnel costs. Increases to the FY 26 General Fund budget have continued to be mitigated in part by the increased use of Other Funds.

Mr. Melanson outlined some FY 25 highlights and the goals for FY 26.

Councilor Pelkey inquired about the significant increase in the Police Private Duty Fund for FY 25 to FY 26, which saw a rise of approximately $60,000 to $70,000. Chief Melanson explained that the increase was related to the need for additional vehicle maintenance costs, radio repairs, and budget adjustments for FY 26. The Department forecasts usage based on historical trends and contracts with utility companies like Eversource and Comcast.

Councilor Naeem asked about the mix of part-time and full-time dispatchers in FY 25. Chief Melanson explained that staffing challenges were a result of retirements, medical leave, and the difficulty of finding full-time dispatchers. Part-time dispatchers, including retired officers, helped fill the gaps. The Department is transitioning to a full-time dispatcher staff, with eight dispatchers nearly fully on boarded and another one about to start.

Councilor Naeem asked about the $200,000 allocated for maintenance under the communications line item. She asked if that was for needed software and phone systems. Chief Melanson confirmed that the funds were designated for the repair and maintenance of the police radio system and associated software.

Councilor Naeem inquired about the hiring of full-time staff and its impact on community engagement, particularly for non-emergency support services. Chief Melanson explained that while some positions were moved to patrol to address staffing shortages, there is still an emphasis on support services and community outreach. He said they do have positions within the support services budget for four dedicated officers, the SRO and two youth engagement officers and their goal is to have two community relations officers as well.

Councilor Naeem asked how many community relations officers do we have now? Chief Melanson replied that we have one filled right now.

Mayor Black-Burke commented that on the bottom of F-8 she read they propose to have 12 individuals for support services and asked if that was correct. Chief Melanson replied yes.

Mayor Black-Burke said that would be the SRO, two community relations officers and asked what others did she miss. Chief Melanson said there would be two youth engagement officers.

Mayor Black-Burke asked if the 5% increase is due to personnel and that they are looking to add one FTE to community relations. Town Manager Souza provided clarification that they are not adding but shifting from administrative services to public relations. Chief Melanson agreed and said that they are not adding but shifting from one function of the department to another function.

Mayor Black-Burke asked who assists if a group wants to march or have a community event. Chief Melanson replied that typically our community officers coordinate that and set that up and it falls under support services.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the increase to Animal Control supplies. Chief Melanson said that it is for veterinary services for some of the animals that we have and that it is very hard to budget.

Councilor Pelkey asked if we track in-kind donations that are non-monetary for Animal Control. Chief Melanson replied that the Friends of Windsor Animal Control is no longer active so any donations that they receive are given back out to the community.

Councilor Armstrong asked what they do with the animals they have. Chief Melanson said that they post on the Department's Animal Control Facebook page when dogs come up for adoption and many dogs are adopted. He said they also work with many other agencies throughout the State that help place dogs that are in the pound.

Councilor Armstrong asked how many Animal Control officers are in the Department. Chief Melanson said that we have one.

Councilor Armstrong asked if it was funded by the General Fund. Chief Melanson replied yes.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked about grants that come through for Animal Control. Chief Melanson explained that there is help with placement and that some of those are in-kind services and that the licensing fees help offset some of those costs.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman congratulated Detective Nicole Alberti who was promoted today to Sergeant.

Councilor Armstrong asked about Part One crimes. Chief Melanson explained that Part One violent crimes is tracked because the FBI publishes national data on that. It allows us to compare where we are to national and State data. He said that Part One crimes include any criminal homicide, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults and human trafficking. He said Windsor has always had relatively low rates and that it is a very safe community.

Councilor Walker thanked the department for all they do for the community. He said they are very professional.

Councilor Eleveld agreed with Councilor Walker and asked if they would be fully staffed for the year. Chief Melanson responded that they are short on officers right now. He said they have one at the academy right now and four that will be onboard for the July academy class. They hope that by September/October that they will be fully staffed.

Councilor Eleveld asked how long it takes from the time a person is hired to the time they can be in the vehicle by themselves. Chief Melanson explained that it is about 11 months, which encompasses training at the academy and field training with the Police Department.

Councilor Eleveld asked about field training. Chief Melanson explained that it is a 14 week program that they have to ride along with another officer and that officer cannot leave their side. So it is really the two are considered one officer.

Councilor Armstrong asked if the officers have to be trained as first responders. Chief Melanson replied yes and that all of their officers are first responders for Windsor and that all of their officers are trained at the medical response level.

Councilor Armstrong asked how old does one have to be to be a police officer? Chief Melanson responded 21 years old.

Councilor Eleveld asked if there were any other requirements other than a clean record needed? Chief Melanson said that they do look for at least two years' worth of college or four years of military background or it can depend on experience and qualifications.

Councilor Pelkey asked how long it would take a new hire that was coming from another department in the State to be trained. Chief Melanson said that he would estimate it would take six to eight weeks if they were a certified officer. He said that a lot of the training is learning Windsor and our policies and procedures.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked them and all of the officers in the Department for all they do.

4) FIRE DEPARTMENT

Steve Bianchi, Fire Chief, Fire & Rescue Services, Daniel Savelli, Assistant Fire Chief and Paul Goldberg, Fire Administrator gave an overview of the budget. The overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in over budget by $69,420 or 5.0% due to Energy & Utility costs. The FY 25 General Fund budget is expected to come in over budget by $68,620 or 5.0% for the same reason. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of $44,220 or 3.2% as compared to the FY 25 budget primarily due to Personnel costs and Energy & Utility costs.

Mr. Bianchi gave the highlights and statistics for FY 25 and goals for FY 26.

Councilor Pelkey commented that he attended a recent service award and that it looked like it grew this year. He was happy to see more people invested and excited to be part of the organization. He asked about the 17 resignations and what it was attributed to. Chief Bianchi replied that more people are getting career jobs now. Some are moving and some are going on to do different things. He said he was not worried as they have such a positive promotion going on with recruitment and retention. He stated that he did lose a lot of individuals due to paid departments.

Councilor Naeem stated that she would like to know more about what we are doing from a recruitment perspective. Chief Bianchi replied that they are doing a lot of advertisement and that most of the time it is by word of mouth. He said they managed to pick up five kids through the high school program over the last few years and that the program is growing by leaps and bounds. He also said they have a recruitment head named Darius Wilmont who has really taken this on. He also stated that the biggest thing is the amount of events they do out in the public, like Touch-a-Truck and Shad Derby.

Councilor Naeem asked if it was a budget challenge to pay for advertising or other channels. Chief Bianchi said that they could throw money at it, but thought they were doing well with the route that they are on now. He said word of mouth has been the most helpful.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked to learn more about the internal review and what they are looking at. Chief Bianchi said they reorganized the Fire Department. Town Manager Souza added that there may be a time in the future where they bring on paid individuals during the day. He said it is not a goal of his or Chief Bianchi's but that we may need to think how they would make that work if they had to as our community ages. He said Chief Bianchi has been a strong proponent of working with other neighboring communities and departments and possibly working with what he terms automatic mutual aid responses where Windsor might get dispatched for a certain type of incident to Windsor Locks or East Granby. He said this is something that Chief Bianchi and his team are examining.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked if they thought they had adequate expertise to do an internal review to understand when we might need paid fire officers, and what that would entail. Chief Bianchi replied that he did. He said that he and Mr. Savelli are in town and that when there is a structure fire, there is a large response from volunteers. He said the problem becomes when one gets overburdened by having fire after fire but that is not the case here in town. He said he would know if they were headed down that road and he would be talking to a few people.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the age range of the members. Chief Bianchi responded that they have a gentleman in his eighties, and he shared that he has 52 years of experience.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the success of the high school program. Chief Bianchi replied that in the last three years they have managed to get five kids. He said that next year, they have a full year with two classes and they have 30 kids signed up.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the requirements if someone wanted to be a firefighter. Chief Bianchi explained that one would need to be at least 18 years old and go through the State's mandated training.

Town Manager Souza asked if they would explain the basic Firefighter One requirement. Mr. Savelli replied that to join the Department you must be 18 years old, pass a physical exam and background test. He said they have an academy that they call Firefighter One and is two full semesters. He said the Department is constantly training but completion of Firefighter One is the benchmark step where they are invested.

Councilor Eleveld asked if there was anything that the Town Council can do to assist in recruiting and retention. Mr. Savelli replied that we have a lot of new people in Windsor that do not know we have a volunteer Fire Department and do not know it is an avenue that they can pursue. He said the recruitment programs and the high school program are just dropping seeds.

Councilor Eleveld asked if women were readily accepted into the Department as well. Mr. Savelli replied absolutely and that they have several wonderful women in the Department.

Councilor Eleveld thanked them for their service and encouraged them to avoid the full-time Department if they can help it.

Councilor Eleveld asked them to expand upon recruiting folks with businesses in town. Chief Bianchi replied that he tries to look for businesses that are pro-Windsor and spoke about a new young person that just came to the Department. He spoke about upcoming events that the Department will be attending.

Councilor Armstrong asked if they have firemen that specialize in different categories. Chief Bianchi replied that they have a lot of people who are specialized and mentioned various members who bring training from their jobs.

Councilor Armstrong asked how many firefighters they have. Mr. Goldberg replied that they have 62 current active firefighters and about 80 on the books. He explained to be an active firefighter one needs to go to a minimum of 10% of the calls annually. He said they do not throw anyone out because while they may not be going to calls, they may be contributing to training or recruitment.

Councilor Armstrong asked how many fire houses are located in Windsor. Chief Bianchi replied that there are four and one satellite house out on Rainbow Road.

Councilor Armstrong asked if they were looking to purchase another ladder. Chief Bianchi replied that they are in the process of putting out specifications right now and hopefully that will be done around September. Town Manager Souza stated that the 2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) has a replacement of a 27 year old ladder that is assigned to Poquonock currently. He said as soon as the Chief and his committee have developed the specifications, they will be coming to Town Council asking for the funding to replace the ladder. He stated that it takes upward of three years to manufacture and deliver.

Councilor Armstrong asked if they have a boat. Chief Bianchi replied that they have a few. He said they use them when there is a problem with a boater or someone is in the water. He said they send out two boats at one time.

Councilor Walker thanked them for their service and said that Windsor is fortunate to have a volunteer team.

Mayor Black-Burke thanked them for their presentation and for all they do.

5) AMBULANCE SERVICES

Dan Moylan, Ambulance Services, stated the overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in on budget. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of $160,000 as compared to the FY 25 adopted budget due to lease payments related to planned ambulance replacements.

Councilor Eleveld asked how many emergency calls do they receive. Mr. Moylan replied approximately 5,000 a year.

Councilor Eleveld said that about 500 of those are being filled by East Windsor. Mr. Moylan said that is correct.

Councilor Eleveld asked if that was because we do not have any equipment or teams available. Mr. Moylan replied correct, and that most of those are due to the timing of the calls. He said typically they are staffing three ambulances during the day and two overnight. He said Windsor is notorious for getting three, four or five calls in a very short period of time. He said that it typically takes them about an hour and 15 minutes from when a call is received to the time the ambulance comes back. He explained that when they receive multiple calls in a short period of time that they run out of resources, and that is usually when you will see the mutual aid such as East Windsor coming into town to provide backup.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the new ambulances would be coming in this fall. Mr. Moylan replied that they are hoping to start taking delivery of the first ones sometime in the late spring, around June. He said there is a total of five that they are expecting to stagger in with the last ones to come in at September/October.

Councilor Eleveld asked if these new ambulances would be smaller. Mr. Moylan explained that the ones they have on order are the smaller van style. He said East Windsor has several of them and the bigger commercial services primarily ran them over the last few years. He said it was due to cost and the time to take delivery of new ambulances.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the smaller size could be ordered faster than the truck style. Mr. Moylan said that’s correct and that originally, they had placed an order for two bigger modular style ambulances and they were expected to be about a three year delivery time and that the smaller transit ones would only take about six months or so to be delivered.

Councilor Armstrong asked if they were a non-profit. Mr. Moylan replied that they are a non-profit organization.

Councilor Armstrong asked if the vehicles would be a contribution. Town Manager Souza replied that the vehicles will be owned by Windsor EMS. He said the town's annual proposed contribution will be approximately $755,000 and $160,000 of that will be allocated to the annual lease payments over the course of the next five years.

Councilor Armstrong asked if that included personnel? Mr. Moylan replied that the staffing is already in place and that they have five ambulances currently. He stated that the average age of them is approaching 12 years and that their average lifespan is about seven years.

Councilor Naeem asked how often Windsor EMS is going to other towns for mutual aid. Mr. Moylan replied that in this fiscal year, they have primarily responded to Bloomfield and Windsor Lock 363 times.

Councilor Naeem asked what else is needed to ensure response times are happening in a timely manner. Mr. Moylan said the biggest hurdles that they will continue to face is the reimbursement rates again with Medicare and Medicaid and not being a hundred percent sure where that is going. He said costs were going up and he gave an example of IV fluid that used to cost $3 and now it is about $11 a bag and there are national shortages of it. He also added that the Hartford traffic is something that can affect a response time and that is out of their control. He said the hospitals are overcrowded and can take their crews 35 minutes just waiting to get their emergency patient through the emergency room doors and get triaged and into a room. He said for what they are able to do and able to control that they are doing much better than most places, not only in the State but nationally.

Councilor Naeem asked if he anticipated any significant changes with Medicare and Medicaid rates. Mr. Moylan said that the Medicaid rates are controlled by the State of Connecticut and that the Medicare rates are federally controlled. He stated that he did not have a great predication but hoped that would stay the same or go up just a little bit.

Councilor Naeem asked if there had been any advocacy for the challenges around Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement with delegations on the state or federal level. Mr. Moylan responded that there is not a true "lobbying" group to advocate for EMS and asked that people talk to their representatives to ensure they know what is going on so they understand that some of these cuts will have an impact on services.

Town Manager Souza added that there have been discussions through the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, as well as the Council of Small Towns, during this general assembly session to increase awareness of the reimbursement rates and the challenges that communities, especially smaller communities, face in terms of trying to provide timely EMS responses.

Councilor Pelkey asked if he could give some sort of average collection rate. Mr. Moylan replied that it very much depends on each individual person's insurance situation. He said with anyone who has Medicare or Medicaid that it is about a 60% cut off of the allowable billable rates that the State sets and with private insurance they usually see a 75-80% reimbursement rate. He said those that do not have health insurance which is very hit or miss overall there is maybe a 50% collection on it.

Councilor Pelkey asked generally how much would it cost for an ambulance. Mr. Moylan said a basic level ambulance with transport to the hospital would be about $920 and if there is a paramedic on the ambulance ride to provide a higher level of care then it is around $1,400.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman commented on the response time to her house was about seven minutes. Mr. Moylan said that their average response time in Windsor is eight minutes.

Councilor Walker asked if they had included people from Windsor town government to be on their Board of Directors. Mr. Moylan responded that they have to figure out if there would be a conflict of interest. He said they have adopted new bylaws this past year, and that they are using current board members to recruit additional board members to keep that moving forward. He hoped that at their annual meeting in June it would bring two new board members, which would bring them up to 6 members.

Town Manager Souza commented that town finance staff, Assistant Town Manager Colby and he meet with Mr. Moylan on at least a quarterly basis to look at their finances with their hired accountant. He said he also meets with Mr. Moylan about once a month mainly around operational aspects. He said while not formally on the Board of Directors, he could say that as our contribution has increased over the last three years that our regular involvement has increased as well.

Deputy Mayor Klase thanked Mr. Moylan.

6) RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES

Paul Norris, Director of Recreation and Leisure Services; Richard Henderson, Recreation; Kurstin Coleman, Youth Services Bureau; Terry Nodine, Northwest Park, and Rebecca Joyce, Senior Services & Transportation Services gave an overview of the budget.

Mr. Norris stated the overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to exceed the budget by $94,270 or 2.5%. This is primarily due to increased program offerings associated with unexpected funding for Senior Services and the Youth Services Bureau. The Senior Services division received state funding to support and enhance engagement at the Senior Center and a General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance allocation to support the senior lunch program. In addition, the Youth Services Bureau was awarded funds for juvenile violence prevention. The FY 25 General Fund expenditures are expected to come in under budget by $34,350 or 1.4%, primarily due to Personnel costs associated with staff vacancies.

The overall FY 26 proposed budget reflects an increase of $247,710 or 6.7% compared to the FY 25 adopted budget primarily due to Personnel costs and increased Supplies to continue the Senior Center's elderly lunch program. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of $210,860 or 8.4% compared to the FY 25 budget for the same reasons.

Mr. Norris gave an outline of FY 25 accomplishments and FY 26 goals.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if the increase to the senior lunch program is due to cost increases from the distributors. Mr. Norris replied that the food organization that they were working with unfortunately lost their funding, so to replace the program they did have to come to Council and request funding to continue the program.

Councilor Naeem asked if we were anticipating maintaining the level of service for the senior lunch program. Mr. Norris replied yes we are, and that they are looking to continue the program five days a week through the entire fiscal year.

Councilor Naeem asked if we were anticipating any other available funds targeting senior programs and services through the State. Mr. Norris said that at this point in time they have not identified any additional funds through the State or Federal Government for senior programs.

Councilor Naeem thanked them and commented that she had heard from many in the community how awesome their staff is at each of the different facilities and programs.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the senior food program and the food vendors they are working with. Mr. Norris stated that one of the vendors that they are working with is CRT and they provide 56 meals per week as part of our free contract but that only covers about two days a week. He said that they do have in their budget to hire a part-time person that would be an administrator in the kitchen. He said the other three days per week, they do contract with another vendor that will provide lunches. He said those are the two groups they are currently working with and will continue for FY 26.

Councilor Eleveld believed CRT was the one that had a higher cost. Mr. Norris replied that was correct. Councilor Eleveld stated that CRT provides some of that food for no cost. Mr. Norris replied exactly.

Ms. Rebecca Joyce commented that they are taking advantage of the CRT program that they still provide us with the certain allotted meals per week but then we did contract with a vendor who does provide us meals for the remainder of the week at a lesser cost per meal.

Councilor Eleveld looked at page G-6 under facilities management and asked why there are no expenses and no personnel listed or if it was somewhere else in the budget. Mr. Norris replied that they do have a contribution to the LP Wilson Fund, which pays for the custodial staff and that is approximately $385,000.

Councilor Eleveld asked if that was a similar situation at 330 Windsor Avenue. Mr. Norris replied that they do have $15,000 in the recreation facility budget that goes towards some expenses at the 330 Windsor Avenue Community Center, which is paid for out of a special revenue account. There is also an additional $33,000 that pays for electricity and propane gas that is attached to the General Fund.

Councilor Eleveld asked if we have solar on 330 Windsor Avenue. Mr. Norris replied that we do.

Councilor Eleveld asked if that is used to offset the electric bill for the entire building? Town Manager Souza said that is correct.

Councilor Eleveld asked about Youth Services and how they are doing. Ms. Kurstin Coleman replied that Youth Services as a whole is doing well and that they are losing a couple of grants.

Councilor Eleveld asked how much money would they be losing? Mr. Norris replied that they are losing $15,000 from the youth violence protection grant, as well as $13,000 from the Juvenile Review Board Enhancement grant.

Councilor Eleveld asked about Northwest Park and if the education and recreational activities is the education part of the program with the Windsor school system. Ms. Terry Nodine responded that they do have a partnership with the Windsor School system in that they provide environmental education programs to every pre-K-5th grade class at least once.

Councilor Eleveld asked if the taking care of the animals was under the facilities and property category? Ms. Nodine replied that the materials and supplies, as well as vet services for the heritage breed farm animals is under the educational budget.

Councilor Eleveld asked for an explanation about heritage breeds. Ms. Nodine said that heritage breeds are those that came over to America primarily from Europe and have not been genetically modified and have a lot of really hardy traits to withstand New England weather conditions, as well as they were known to be very maternal and good work animals. She said these animals are not being preserved because the factories are prioritizing production and that some breeds are going to extinction. She stated that there is a big conservation effort of which we are a part of to keep those breeds going and to keep the educational connection of their importance.

Councilor Armstrong looked to page G-3 and asked about the transfer from Caring Connection that was listed. Ms. Joyce replied that senior transportation provides the transportation for the Caring Connection, so that is what the transfer is for. She said it is for the fuel as well as maintenance and repair of our vehicles.

Councilor Armstrong looked at page G-5, next to last bullet point on the left, 'leisure opportunities'. You provide opportunities for toddler play groups. What does that entail? Mr. Henderson said that yes, we have a toddler play group at the 330 Windsor Avenue Community Center that meets weekly in the morning. They utilize the indoor playscape as well as the gymnasium areas there.

Councilor Armstrong asked if there were trained personnel there to work with the toddlers? Mr. Henderson said yes.

Councilor Armstrong asked about Page G-9, 4th bullet from the bottom on the left hand side, operate a busy medical device lending closet that loans equipment to residents free of charge. What does that entail? Ms. Joyce stated that is located in the Senior Services Department. We take in used medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes and those types of devices. They also maintain all of that equipment and then pass it back to the public.

Councilor Armstrong asked if a resident needed equipment like that, they can come and get it free of charge? Is that correct? How is that publicized? Ms. Joyce replied that they inform residents via their newsletter. They will also post it on their social media. They use their different marketing avenues to notify individuals of the closet.

Councilor Armstrong asked about Page G-11, Transportation. We provide trips to the store and so forth and coming to the facility. They do that by calling in correct? Ms. Joyce said they do via the reservation line and that's how they record the request.

Councilor Armstrong asked if that is done 7 days a week? Ms. Joyce replied they provide transportation Monday – Friday with their normal schedule between the hours of 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM. They do schedule evening and weekend trips as well. But those are special trips to a museums, special events and venues. Councilor Armstrong asked if these are provided to Windsor residents? Ms. Joyce said that was correct. Councilor Armstrong asked if there is a cost? Ms. Joyce explained their annual suggested donation is $35. There's no actual fee, rather it's a suggested donation for the year. Councilor Armstrong said that is not for one trip. Ms. Joyce replied that is for the whole year.

Councilor Armstrong asked if this includes the storage of the vehicles? She recalls there was something with the vehicles at one point. The catalytic converters or something like that. Mr. Norris replied there was an incident this previous year where we had catalytic converters removed from the buses that were stored overnight at LP Wilson. We now move the vehicles over to the Police Department/Public Works complex and they're stored there in the evenings. Councilor Armstrong asked if there was any cost with that? Mr. Norris said there is no cost.

Councilor Armstrong asked about youth. She sees there's a lot of programs provided for them even at the high school and other activities. She is a little disturbed that we don't have the juvenile justice any longer. However, how are the youth recruited? Ms. Coleman explained that there are various ways youth are recruited. They either come through their juvenile review board or through programming like marketing, where she's always outside at different events and just talking to the youth. Youth then talk to their peers and spread the word. Some come in for the summer teen employment program. Many of those kids will stay with them through the school year. Mostly, it's through marketing and word of mouth.

Mr. Norris stated that Ms. Coleman does an outstanding job with her being visible at the high school. She's cultivated relationships with both staff and the youth at the high school and then entices them to get into our programs. She's very in tune with the youth that participate in the recreation programs.

Councilor Armstrong asked if there are any funds provided for youth who want to attend the after school or school out programs? Mr. Norris said yes. Ms. Coleman does offer programs that are free to youth so they can get into programs that way. We also offer discounts and scholarships to youth in need to participate in our school out special programs as well as our summer camp programs. Town Manager Souza asked Mr. Norris what is the dollar amount that is provided from the General Fund? Mr. Norris replied there is $14,000 in the General Fund under the Recreation division that provides scholarships year round. For the most part, it's spent for summer camp programs. Town Manager interjected that they also have a special revenue account. Mr. Norris explained that they do use their special revenue funds and give discounts to the youth for programs from that resource as well.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the 330 Windsor Avenue use of transportation. What is the breakdown of a resident versus a non-resident using those services? Mr. Norris replied that they don't monitor resident versus non-resident usage of facilities. He can, however, get him the information from their recreation software stating the number of residents or non-residents that sign up for a program. He believes that the Senior Center does the same thing when it comes to their programs. Councilor Pelkey asked Mr. Norris to forward that information to him as he is asked that question frequently.

Councilor Pelkey said that when you go down Wilson, you see new bathrooms at the new Wilson park site. Is that part of this budget or is that the Department of Public Works? Who is responsible and where does that fit into? Where's the budget? Town Manager Souza stated it's going to be a combination. There will be water charges that will be reflected through Recreation in Special Revenue accounts. We do have a well there. So the water is going to be relatively low use. It's going to be related to the restrooms and so all the irrigation will be on well water, so we'll be avoiding the MDC charges. The maintenance costs for the grounds component are going to be built within the Public Works department.

Councilor Pelkey asked as far as the facility upkeep and maintenance, how do we get to a point where the Welch tennis courts were in the condition that they are currently in? How do we ensure that we're not having anything deteriorate to the point of not being usable? He's had several people ask him how they got to this point and how did we not realize that? Town Manager Souza said that's part of the challenge with the multi-year capital improvement program. About a dozen years ago, we did do preventative work at Welch, where when the pavement was starting to crack, we went and did some seal cracking and some redoing there. It's all about balance relative to a major project like that which is three quarters of a million dollars or so.

Councilor Pelkey said some things are obvious, but not to anyone just walking by. Town Manager Souza asked Mr. Norris to talk about his spring and fall walks with public works. Mr. Norris stated in the mid spring, usually around now, the first week in May, me, Mr. Henderson, and a couple of public works staff, (usually Jesse English) will tour the outdoor parks and start to work on a list. That list includes what needs to get done for opening day, and then we go down again in late fall, and start to look at another list that we can try to take care of during the warm winter months, so to speak, but on an indoor facility. Rich, and I do it annually. The staff gives us verbal reports weekly as well. An example is that we need in another year or two to resurface the gymnasium at 330 Windsor Avenue. So we already have itemized that and have it in a folder for when we need to submit a decision packet to the Town Manager. Those are the kind of things they try to address.

Councilor Eleveld stated you indicated on Page G-20 the number of recreation programs offered. Are those new offerings in a given year that were not offered in the prior years? Mr. Henderson replied those are current programs. Councilor Eleveld then asked they have 20 recreation programs being offered as an estimate for this coming year? Mr. Henderson retracted his statement and said those are new. He thought the Councilor was referring to the top of the page.

Councilor Eleveld said they had 435 programs this past year. So you're looking at 425 programs. The reason is for lack of interest he presumes? Mr. Henderson stated that they look at some programs far off and depending on the interest there and based on the instructor availability they'll decide if it is viable.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman stated she knows all the things that Recreation does. She appreciates all they do for the camping program through Northwest Park. How many campers do we have enrolled this year? Ms. Nodine said they are at approximately 60% enrolled right now. They have a maximum capacity for the entire summer of approximately 360 participants and the counselors.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked what the qualifications are if you wish to become a counselor? Ms. Nodine said Northwest Park's requirements are slightly different than summer fun camp. For Northwest Park, we are looking for camp teachers who are able to provide pre-written curriculum because it is a specialty environmental education camp. We do require at least one year of college. Interest in the natural world is wonderful, but we do have a mix of those that have a background in natural sciences and those that are classroom teachers. We also pair together those individuals to make successful teachers. They also have a junior counselor program. We have campers who have grown up through our programs and we serve up to the 8th grade. So those that are going into 8th grade and it's their last year of being a camper, then once they are in high school, they can become a junior counselor.

Councilor Armstrong asked if she was correct when she saw we have a dog park in town. Mr. Henderson said yes, we do.

Deputy Mayor Klase asked if the Council would like to have the Board of Education come back for another round before them? It was agreed by the Town Council that they do not need the Board of Education to come back.

7) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Eleveld seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Motion Passed 7-0-0 (Mayor Black-Burke and Councilor King absent)

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Marcavitch
Recording Secretary