



TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID MEETING – VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON
April 23, 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 (virtual), Deputy Mayor Darleen Klase, Councilor Mary Armstrong, Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Anthony King, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor William Pelkey and Councilor Lenworth Walker

2) DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Todd Sealy, Assistant Town Planner, representing Development Services; Environmental planner, Chloe Thompson; Fire Marshal, Dan Volovski; Building Official, David Langworthy; Town Engineer, Suzanne Choate, and Economic Development Director, Patrick McMahon gave an overview of the budget.

The overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in over budget by \$41,050 or 7.5% mostly due to the use of special revenue funds for the 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development. The FY 25 General Fund expenditures are expected to come in under budget by \$49,950 or 9.1% mostly due to Personnel costs for a partial year vacancy. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects a decrease of \$20,700 or 3.8% as compared to the FY 25 budget primarily due to reduced Personnel costs and is partly offset by increased utilities and service contract costs.

Councilor Pelkey asked for them to explain the ombudsman services role and what that service actually is. Mr. McMahon answered that's his role in Economic Development. That would be anybody who is a business owner or property owner who contacts his office looking for a new space or expansion purposes where they could find some potential financing for their business. He hooks them up with the appropriate resources to make things happen.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the costs on page K-9 for the geographic information system and K-11 information services. What are the differences between those he asked? Chloe Thompson said that the software and licenses themselves cost around \$10,500. These are increasing. We see every year incrementally; they are increasing but that's the total that we paid in FY 25. Town Manager Souza added that it's the allocation of staff time

that's dedicated towards that. So, the percentage of Chloe's time and the Assistant Town Planner's time that's allocated towards maintaining the system, which, as you know as a user has a variety of different layers. They maintain that as well as provide services to other departments, not only development services, but other departments that may be needing to have maps created.

Councilor Armstrong asked about implementing the Transit Oriented Development Plan for Windsor. Mr. McMahon said that between 2012 and 2014, the town did an extensive planning study for the town center. It was a Transit Oriented Development Master Plan. It had a number of recommendations in the plan that we have been furthering, whether that is some sidewalk connections, for instance, along Mechanic Street. In the past, this new Founder's Square development was actually a recommendation of that plan. So, it's taking the recommendations and is continuing to bring them forward.

Councilor Walker asked a follow up question regarding what Councilor Armstrong asked earlier. He asked if the Transit Oriented Development Plan for Windsor Center includes overriding our local Town Planning and Zoning regulations. Particularly when it comes to the number of housing units we can construct in town. Mr. McMahon stated that it is in conjunction with the Plan of Conservation and Development and the town regulations. So, it's just a series of recommendations. But ultimately any development that is proposed does need to meet the current zoning regulations and/or the developer would have to seek amendments to the regulations.

Councilor Walker wanted some clarification on the State of Connecticut having the idea to ban the usage of transit-oriented development. This means the State could come in and override local Town Planning and Zoning regulations, so the town in itself would not have any say in the number of units. For example, high density housing. He asked if this is the same thing that they are discussing? Mr. McMahon said that the State legislature is looking at that very thing that he is mentioning. If you have a transit stop, that is where the State would like to prioritize housing. If you have that area, you would have to potentially create a certain number of housing units within that jurisdiction. Regarding the legislation we don't know ultimately what will come forward at the end of the legislative session. My presumption is, they will lean towards the side of leaving local control or a certain opt-in. So, if you want to benefit yourself for some state funding, you can opt into this sort of transit-oriented activities, but it is a separate issue from our own planning and what our vision has presented to date.

Town Manager Souza added that the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a Windsor Center design guideline, which is specific to what we call an overlay zone for the commercial district here in Town Center. There's a similar concept for the Wilson commercial district as well, but that overlay district sets out an exact process which requires two public hearings for developers or property owners to go through. It sets out the density and the type of construction in terms of housing and/or commercial that can occur within those districts. So, it's primarily at the discretion of the Planning and Zoning commission. The Town Manager has spoken at CCM and to State legislators, saying that

he is opposed to altering State law which would take away the right of the local Zoning Commission relative to transit-oriented development. He truly believes that's a local decision and so that has been voiced to our legislative delegation as well as to folks at CCM.

Councilor Walker thanked the Town Manager for advocating and stated that we need to keep local control over how we develop our Town and our center.

Councilor Naeem asked about a business recruitment perspective in terms of how you're working with different organizations. What does that process look like? Mr. McMahon said that on the recruitment end of things he is in constant communication with folks at AdvancedCT, which is the recruitment arm for the State of Connecticut as well as our regional economic development entity, the Metro Hartford Alliance. The goal is to find out ahead of time what the prospects are. He has to be proactive to reach out to those entities and DECD to see what firms are out there looking and then try to reach out and meet up with them in identifying what their needs are by way of knowing their facility, acreage, and size of the building. Can we accommodate it here in Windsor? Is it a good fit for Windsor? He will also add that he's in constant communication with the commercial realtors and they're the ones who generally are the first to hear about a potential prospect.

Councilor Naeem asked in your conversations what are you hearing? What types of businesses are floating around right now when you look at what the Metro Hartford Alliance, AdvancedCT and the realtors are sharing with you? Mr. McMahon said that there's still a possibility for advanced manufacturing related to aerospace. There are some biomedical type facilities that gravitate closer to universities, but it doesn't necessarily mean that locations in Windsor couldn't be a good fit for them.

Town Manager Souza stated that there is still a significant amount of logistics and distribution and so in terms of looking to find locations within North Central Connecticut, Mr. McMahon does field a number of those requests as well.

Councilor Naeem had a question about the performance measures focused around the percentage of residential permits without final inspection. In 2025 investment seems pretty high. Was there anything done from a software or service perspective? Or is that because of revaluation? What sort of caused that spike? What does that mean for those permits? Mr. Langworthy stated that the percentage of what she's looking at for the FY 25 estimate is final inspections that aren't getting completed. These are usually inspections that the contractor doesn't call in for a final inspection or leaves it to the homeowner to call in. The homeowner then will forget to call it in so that estimate was a little higher. We have our part time Administrator who works daily on contacting these folks that haven't called in for the inspections. It gets them to schedule inspections. So, we get those numbers down as low as we can throughout the year.

Councilor Naeem asked so the goal is to keep it as low as possible? Mr. Langworthy said yes, as low as possible. Councilor Naeem asked are we going to sort of target that 55%

and try to get them to allow us to come in for inspection? Mr. Langworthy answered yes, we target the older permits first. We go oldest out and work our way forward. I think we're caught up to 2024 at this point.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked about the large number of buildings that are vacant but owned. So how do you work with those locations, those owners to help better develop or get their businesses open sooner rather than later. What's the process?

Mr. McMahon said he stays in contact with that particular developer or property owner, trying to understand their needs, their time frames for development or redevelopment. There are certainly some vacancies within the town center, but there is a lot of activity going on right now, so he thinks that residents of Windsor are going to see new businesses opening up in several storefronts. So that's very encouraging. We just have to stay in that constant communication and urge the investment. The owner of many of the properties is making a giant investment in the town center at currently over \$28 million of investment. So, it's not always at the time frame that the residents may want to see, but they're still making the investment and they're improving historic buildings within the town center. So, he thinks we're going to see a lot more happening in the next year and that's going to be a real positive for the community.

Town Manager Souza wanted to add that Mr. McMahon, and other members of this team, worked with a shop that relocated from here in the town center, which she had outgrown and made that connection with her current landlord. This group here took that Ombudsman role and really helped that small business owner work through that process that she had never gone through before. So those connections there with Mr. McMahon and other folks, knowing the landlords and also knowing the needs of other small businesses within town and trying to make those marriages if you will. Now, not all of those work. There's a lot of introductions made and a lot of courting going on, but they don't necessarily always come to fruition. But that's an example of this particular team working together all the way from Mr. McMahon making the introductions to the code folks walking through the building with a property owner and the potential tenant and helping them understand what those requirements would be.

Councilor Gluck-Hoffman stated that she appreciates what Town Manager Souza had said. She also stated that she just wanted the public to know, because she believes a lot of people see empty buildings, and as we all know, they talk. So, it's better to get it out there and really show them what you all do, and how important your roles are here in the community. She thanked them all.

Councilor Eleveld asked what the school to business career connection is about? Mr. McMahon said that's a new initiative between the Windsor public school system and the Chamber of Commerce to make sure that the students are being introduced to all the various careers that are out there from manufacturing to hospitality. Some of the things that they're working on is a Speaker Series. There was a session yesterday at the High School where executives from Amazon presented to high school students. There's going

to be a couple more Speaker Series. They're trying to set up opportunities for the businesses themselves to either have representatives go into the classrooms, or have students go and actually visit the facilities here in Windsor. So, it's that opportunity for the students to see that range of employment in Windsor and hopefully encourage them to potentially stay here in Windsor and work someday. Everybody's not going to go to college. Some people will be looking for manufacturing jobs and those are plenty right now in Windsor, in the State of Connecticut. So, if we can encourage students to look at both the college track, but maybe a trades track as well, it's important.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the pricing guide. He stated that he is a little surprised that some of the pricing elements are 40 years old. Is there a reason we haven't updated them? Are we competitive with other communities? He also stated that 40 years is a long time, with no price change and that he isn't trying to nickel and dime anyone who's trying to do something here in Windsor.

Town Manager Souza stated that similar to all the fees and price guides, those that are not set by the State of Connecticut we review on a regular basis each year. We ask staff to look at benchmark communities to make sure that we are generally within that range of similar sized communities. So, that's why you see some that are rather dated. There are two new proposals and adjustments here, which again are meeting the marketplace in the demands. One particularly is related to the building inspections. You have a little bit of a punitive situation where contractors continue to call for inspections and they aren't ready, then the fire marshal and building safety folks have to continue to go out there when the property isn't really ready for inspection. And so that's a new one for us. We have not had that in years past. Other communities have had that for a good number of years, and you will see there's a proposed increase to building permit fees and again we increased that last year incrementally to make sure we're staying where the marketplace is.

Town Manager Souza added that some of the reason that they are not changed is because the demand is so minimal. They're still there because on occasion we'll get that request.

Councilor Eleveld asked if a business is coming into town, since we're a bit of the cutting edge, that we try to meet with prospective developers or builders. Can someone please explain that process? Mr. Sealy responded that as a development services team, they collaborate quite frequently on any application that goes before Planning and Zoning, and applications that are looking to submit a building permit at whatever stage for a large corporation, regional business or local business. We provide this service and the development team meets every Tuesday where they all get together in a room with the Health Department as well. They hear applicants or prospective applicants and what they're looking to do. We go around the room and try to give them the best feedback that we can and get our comments in writing so they know what the next steps are for their application. Anything that goes before the Planning and Zoning commission usually has one or more meetings with our development services staff. We use that as a service to our community and businesses to make the best possible application.

Councilor Armstrong asked on Page K-7, the second bullet where it says business retention and expansion. You assist existing businesses in securing public or private sector financing. Mr. McMahon stated there are several different private sector or quasi public financing sources that often businesses aren't even aware of. He sees it as his purpose to make sure that a small business knows that they can reach out to the Hartford Economic Development, they can reach out to the Connecticut Community Investment Corporation and community economic development funds. There are resources out there. The challenge is that not everyone knows about them. So, when they contact him, they'll get the full rundown.

Councilor Armstrong asked about Page K-14, development services. It indicates acres of open space preserved. Can you explain that? Mr. Sealy stated through the Planning and Zoning process subdivision, there's provisions for dedication of open space or fees in lieu of open space. The town does retain an open space fund in which we're looking to acquire open spaces if they are contiguous to other open spaces or meet some other town wide goals for the preservation and conservation of sensitive areas. There haven't been any recent preservations. We have a number of 15 in there as a target range. It's not specific to any parcel. It's just the kind of thing that we're always thinking about what might be out there that could possibly be acquired to meet those open space and conservation goals.

Councilor Armstrong inquired if these particular areas are what he is saying they are targeting? Mr. Sealy stated that they aren't specific areas. They use a matrix to determine the best open spaces. There are different goals that we look at with open space, not a particular site or property with the 15 acres that we have listed there.

Councilor Naeem stated she knows there's mention of incubators and Windsor Worx and the Collective. Are there any formal, true incubation service programs happening right now? Have we seen any sort of new businesses come out of these spaces that are looking to land within Windsor? Mr. McMahon stated incubation is a multi-year process. They had the incubation series at Windsor Worx. He can't say that they've opened a storefront, but they've improved their business acumen and hopefully are in the growth mode. We will continue those efforts.

Councilor Naeem said to just follow up on that, she knows that the town provided through the American Rescue Funds, funding for both of these programs. At this point in the current budget, there is no funding for those programs, correct? Mr. McMahon said that is correct.

Councilor Pelkey stated regarding the traffic data collection, are we going to use the speed cameras for any specific area or is this filling the normal services that we would be doing anyways just to monitor throughout town? Ms. Choate said yes to both. It's our typical program that we conduct starting about now until October. We do assist if the Police Department is looking for more data in respect to where placement might be. That would be included.

Councilor Pelkey said that we have a lot of these vacant buildings in town that are not being used at the moment. People are concerned that a vacant building is not watched. What do we do to help ensure that those buildings which seemingly aren't watched or don't have people in them aren't burning down? What do we do? Mr. Volovski, Fire Marshal, stated there are just a couple of tools that can be used throughout the process and things that they've implemented in the office previously. The Connecticut State Fire Prevention code for seasonal and vacant buildings has some provisions as far as providing security for the building, making sure that all the possible accesses, including window openings and doors are fully secured so that buildings can't be broken into or damaged. The possibility of arson is reduced because of that. Security is one of those items along with any of the building fire protection features that are already in place such as automatic sprinklers and fire alarms that either need to be maintained or the building needs to be completely cleared out of anything combustible inside that could burn. These provisions help to reduce the risk of a fire.

Councilor Pelkey stated on K-15, #5 bullet #3. The goal in 2026 is Broad Street traffic calming and pedestrian safety. Town Manager Souza stated that we're going to continue to pursue alternatives relative to meeting the long standing community objective of slowing traffic down to improve public pedestrian safety. About two weeks ago, we had a conversation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to look at how we might be able to revise the scope of the traffic calming that was sent to referendum in March. We'll continue to pursue what those alternatives might be for the Broad Street/town center area.

3) ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Jim Bourke, Finance Director; Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director; Frank Angelillo, IT Director; Jack Goldberg, Risk Manager; Josh Gaston, Town Assessor; Cathy Elliot, Tax Collector; and Amelia Bliss, Human Resources Director (virtual) were present.

Mr. Bourke stated the FY 25 General Fund expenditures for Administrative Services are expected to come in under by approximately \$46,000 or 1.5%. This is mostly due to savings in Personnel costs for a vacancy in the Tax Assessor office. The FY 26 General Fund budget is expected to increase approximately \$132,110 mostly due to Personnel costs including a wage adjustment reserve in the Human Resources budget associated with the recently comprehensive compensation study that was done.

Mr. Bourke gave an overview of some FY 25 highlights and FY 26 goals.

Councilor King said there are very different IT requirements for the Board of Education and the town. Can you tell me the reason why those aren't standardized? He assumes if they were, there would be some sort of savings for the Town. Mr. Angelillo agreed that operations are very different between the Board of Education and the town. The primary application that can maybe be merged is the financial system. We worked on that a few years ago and the vendor basically stated it will be a per user charge. So, there were no

cost savings in that particular environment. We are more departmental where every department has their own suite of applications whereas the Board of Education would have the student systems. The Board of Education has less systems, but a lot more people where we have less users but a lot more systems. It's fair to say that it's been explored.

Councilor Pelkey asked from an IT and Risk Management perspective, if we've ever put in a multi-factor authentication. Mr. Angelillo said multi-factor authentication has been implemented within our systems. Councilor Pelkey asked if employees need to do this. Mr. Angelillo said if someone is trying to get in remotely, yes, they would need to do that.

Councilor Naeem said one of the goals this year is the website transformation. Are we doing that ourselves or is it through a third party? Mr. Angelillo said we are doing it together with a third party. Civic Plus is the hosting platform we have. They also own SeeClickFix and Rec1. In the next couple of weeks, we should see our website design. The next milestone will be to transfer the information from the Town to Civic Plus platform in June. We won't be going live until October or November. The other transition is switching over to the .gov domain.

Councilor Naeem asked if we are hoping to complete the website update by the end of this coming fiscal year? Town Manager Souza said it should be in that October/November time.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said she has a question for Risk Management. How are we looking at premiums this year? Mr. Goldberg stated premiums are usually driven by trend analysis, industry analysis and how many people can actually address your risk. Typically, you're always going to see an influx of premiums. Almost rarely, if not ever, will you see a reduction. You'll always see an increase. His job is to mitigate that increase for the Town of Windsor. He looks at where we deserve a reduction or at least where to mitigate that increase as much as possible. Town Manager Souza added that essentially, it's ranging from 3%-10% depending upon the line item but generally that is where it's at. A lot of the external world is influencing it. Not necessarily our own claim experience.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked how many people pay their taxes online. Ms. Elliot stated there were 13,500 transactions since July 1, 2024 with over \$17 million collected online. It has steadily increased since they first started in 2014. This has helped to make less traffic in the office as well now that people saw how easy it was to pay their taxes online.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked if the goal is to go fully electronic in future years? Town Manager Souza said he feels that is significantly down the road, just given the nature of our population and folks that do have a lot of questions. One of the challenges he sees is the convenience fee which is on a percentage basis which can get to be expensive for some individuals.

Councilor Armstrong asked Ms. Elliot if we still use constables. Ms. Elliot said yes.

Councilor Armstrong questioned the collection of parking ticket fees for the Police Department. Ms. Elliot said yes that they take care of that task. There has been an increase of them this year. The main time is between November 15-April 15 when people cannot park overnight on the street. They also take care of handicap parking violations. Councilor Armstrong asked if there was a fee with that? Town Manager Souza stated there is no other fee than the parking ticket itself.

Councilor Naeem asked regarding information technology when we looked at consolidation previously was that just in terms of the application support or was it broader with web hosting storage, staffing, etc.? Mr. Angelillo stated with the three people that are in the IT Department, they service the departments here. In order for us to service more departments, we're almost at capacity within this particular structure. The Board of Education is just a different environment than ours.

Councilor Naeem asked with what are we looking to go off premise? Mr. Angelillo stated just for the website. Town Manager Souza added that we have other services that are off premise. We've migrated some of our applications which are in the cloud over the last 5-7 years. Mr. Angelillo stated anything with a payment they keep outside, specifically because of the amount of security that's involved and we're a 24-7 operation. Town Manager Souza interjected that both on the Board of Education and town side, staffing levels are slim. Just with our Police Department, Mr. Angelillo is dedicating ½ of an FTE and at other times even more because of all the technology that is new in the field. He would submit that we would gain little efficiencies from a staffing perspective by doing any type of merger with the Board of Education. They did try to merger the financial system with the Board of Education, but there was no cost savings in doing it, so they did not.

Councilor Naeem asked how much would it cost to migrate off premise for as much as we can? We haven't done any further migration except for a couple of years ago onto the cloud. Is that correct? Mr. Angelillo said a couple of years ago you were referring to our backups for storage and we did do that. They implemented that last June. Councilor Naeem said to clarify, we are running many of our technical programs on premise but they are being backed up on the cloud as well as offsite. Correct? Mr. Angelillo said that was right.

Councilor Pelkey asked about payroll. Have we looked at this and are there any cost savings to changing the frequency of payroll? From a savings standpoint, is there anything to truly be gained shifting \$2,000 in keeping people happy at their current pay. Mr. Bourke stated they looked at it a few years ago but going from the way we do it now to a twice a month payment, we didn't determine that it would create a huge amount of savings. Town Manager Souza added we are pretty decentralized so we have one full time payroll clerk for the town side. What it would do is free up some time for the payroll clerk that could do some other quality control, but it would not save any money.

Councilor Pelkey said what's the meaningful level? He knows it's subjective but what's the meaning? Would that cut half the time off of that position? Town Manager Souza said it was perhaps 20.2 (a quarter of an FTE) of that time could be shifted.

Councilor Eleveld said going through the fines and fees he came across an item of a bad check fee of \$25. Aren't banks charging more than \$25 these days for bad checks? Ms. Elliot stated that the Tax Department only charges \$20 for a bad check. The state statutes say \$20 so that is what we charge. She's not sure what the bank charges us. Ms. Collins stated that we don't get directly charged by our bank for non-sufficient funds or checks that don't go through. We have an analysis on the interest that we earn in the bank and our fees are absorbed by that so we don't have any direct cost.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman stated there are no return check fees based on the kind of account the town has with the bank. So, she thinks that is what it is based off of – the kind of account that we have.

4) GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director, gave a brief overview of General Government.

General Government programs provide funds for the activities of the Town's elected officials and appointed boards and commissions as well as the operations of the Town Manager's Office. General Government also includes funding for the Town Attorney, Treasurer, Probate Court, Independent Audit, Intergovernmental Services and Community Services.

The FY 2025 General Fund expenditures are estimated to come in over budget by \$63,000. This is mostly due an increase in the Counsel & Legal Advice budget for workers compensation litigation and Elections for early voting costs.

The Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of \$39,000 as compared to the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. This is mainly due to an increase in Community Services and is offset in part by a reduction in Elections due to two elections in FY 26 versus three larger elections budgeted in FY 25 and is offset in part by an increase for the costs of annual maintenance fees for new voting machines provided by the state.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said you mentioned the machines needed for voting. Do you have an idea of the cost of those? Ms. Collins said the increased cost is going to be \$12,000. Town Manager Souza interjected that is just for licensing and maintenance. The existing tabulators that we have are approaching 18-20 years. He does not have the cost for the tabulators on a per tabulator basis.

Councilor Armstrong stated on Page P-4, products and services. Town Council is the town's legislative and policy making body composed of 9 volunteers elected at large for

terms of two years. She thinks she's been approached many times about this question so she stated it for public knowledge.

Councilor Eleveld said there is \$20,000 set aside for boards and commissions. Do you know what those dollars are used for? Ms. Collins said they are used for materials and supplies, small contractual services, and an annual youth summit. Town Manager Souza added this also supports the Human Relations Commission and their activities. It also provides for training costs that are mandated by the State for Planning and Zoning commissioners, along with the costs for transcription services for the Public Building Commission.

Councilor Naeem asked about Page P-13 under community services, the Caribbean Culture Heritage contribution for \$14,000. Is that an organization or is that a program? Town Manager Souza said this is a group that had received funding seven years ago and the Town Council provided funding for one or two years. They are now asking for funding once again to support their efforts as outlined on Page P-13. It preserves and promotes culture and history through a variety of exhibits and programs. They have been working with the Historical Society and then using the Chaffee House for some displays over the course of the last several years.

Councilor Walker gave an outline of what the Caribbean Culture Heritage was about.

Councilor King asked what is the process for how you collect and receive the grant requests? Ms. Collins stated that annually, they send out an email to the organizations that have received funding in the past. Organizations are aware of it as it is in the budget document. Town Manager Souza stated that we do not do a full blown open call. Town Council established a policy probably about 15 years ago which outlines the submittal process and so that's what puts some general parameters on the requests.

Councilor Pelkey asked how do we notify others that aren't being notified by email who have never applied for the contribution? Town Manager Souza said they do not have a general call. If organizations during the course of the year say we have an unexpected need or a future program we'd like to provide, we inform them that this is an annual submittal in that December timeframe. And so that's how other groups have submitted over the course of the year.

Councilor Pelkey said he thinks the process should be reviewed so more organizations could take advantage of it.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman said most of the organizations asking for funding are connected to the community, so they have a foundation here. She would like people to understand that these organizations are fundamental to our continuing the stewardship of this community and why we're here.

5) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Flavia Rey De Castro, Community Development Specialist, gave an overview of the budget. The overall FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in over budget by \$1,127,780 mostly due to increases in Services, Grants & Contributions and Loans. The increase in Services is associated with the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds to assist with a housing modernization project at the Housing Authority's Shad Run Terrace. Increased expenditures in Grants & Contributions and Loans are associated with allocations of American Rescue Funds (ARF) for the Community and Neighborhood Enhancement Grant Program, the Multi-Family Rehabilitation Program and the Housing Rehabilitation Program. The FY 25 General Fund expenditures are expected to come in on budget. The overall FY 26 proposed budget reflects an increase of \$1,495,250 as compared to the FY 25 budget due to the continuation of the Shad Run Terrace housing modernization project as well as the receipt of a CDBG Small Cities grant. The FY 26 General Fund proposed budget reflects an increase of \$11,200 or 9.8% as compared to the FY 25 adopted budget due to the re-allocation of funding for the expiration of ARF-funded programs, which partially covered Personnel costs in previous years.

Councilor Naeem stated that she's a huge fan of the housing rehab program and she is really glad that they were able to use American Rescue funds this year. Looking at the budget, we don't have any funding sources proposed for it, but you're saying we'll be able to pull from the loans that get paid back from that program? Ms. Rey De Castro answered and said that partially so, there's some program income that we have left but we have been awarded a grant for the 2024 CDBG Grant cycle.

Town Manager Souza added which will be approximately \$400,000, which will provide for approximately \$300,000 to \$350,000 worth of loans.

Councilor Naeem stated that it wasn't reflected on Page L-1, correct? Mr. McMahon said that it is reflected under the Small Cities Funds under funding source. There's \$69,000 there that's the projection of how much of the \$400,000 we feel we would be able to expend this coming fiscal year. There's always a time gap between the time we get awarded. So, by the time we actually have access to those funds, that's how much we think we'll be able to expend out of that grant.

Councilor Naeem asked if that grant is paid in arrears. So, is it something where you get the funding coming in after you've expended the contract or signed off on kind of how you're going to be spending it, or does that money come in when it is awarded? Ms. Rey De Castro answered and said that it was a reimbursement.

Councilor Walker asked about the Housing Authority's Shad Run grant on page on L-1. Is that a grant that you guys already have or is that a loan from the Town? Ms. Rey De Castro

answered and said this is also a part of the CDBG grant from the 2023 Grant cycle, a total of \$2 million.

Councilor Armstrong asked about the Address Quality of Life Issues in Neighborhoods through various initiatives located on page L-4. Can you tell me some of those initiatives? Ms. Rey De Castro said some of the things that we can mention include the work that was done through the Wilson/Deerfield Committee—the community cleanups. We've done beautification initiatives. Then of course indirectly, through the housing rehab program.

Mr. McMahon stated that last year they incorporated a couple of those planters that you've seen in the town center. There's now one in front of the Wilson Library and one in front of 330 Windsor Avenue. So, we're always looking at opportunities to improve the visual quality of the neighborhoods and helping to get information out to the public about the importance of maintaining the housing stock in the community. Ms. Rey De Castro also stated that they don't want to take all the credit for that, because it's a committee member driven initiative, the beautification.

Councilor Walker complimented Ms. Rey De Castro and her staff. He also agreed that Windsor needs that multifamily housing assistance. So many property owners have asked about it. He doesn't know if there's a waiting timeframe to get some loans, but he has personally worked with Ms. Rey De Castro on his home, and it worked out perfectly. He thanked Ms. Rey De Castro for all that she does.

6) GENERAL SERVICES/CAPITAL SPENDING

Jim Bourke, Finance Director stated the FY 25 General Fund expenditures will come in on budget. The FY 26 proposed budget is based on planned FY 25 capital projects to be financed through general obligation bonds as well as short-term borrowing. The FY 26 General Fund portion of debt service, including Town Support for Education, is proposed to increase by \$255,570 or 3.0%. The anticipated use of debt service reserves is estimated at \$215,060.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the error in the calculation on Great Pond last year and asked if they fixed that problem for this year? Town Manager Souza stated this transfer is based upon 28.9 mills. If the mill rate gets changed through the Town Council adjustments or referendum, then we'll need to make further adjustments assuming a downward trend.

Councilor Eleveld stated what's going to end up occurring going forward, will it be based upon the budget. Town Manager Souza stated that will be the same adjustments that we will need to make for the Windsor Center TIF district, because those all are revenues predicated upon the ultimate mill rate.

Councilor Eleveld stated that there are expenditures that you're looking at making out of the Tax Increment Finance district. We're looking at making contributions to the Art Center, First Town Downtown, and about \$200,000 plus for paving parking lot improvements.

Town Manager Souza said yes, that's correct for parking lot improvements. The paving project we're looking at is what we refer to as the commuter parking lot on Mechanic Street on the other side of the railroad tracks. That is in need of repairing. That will depend upon a few different factors, but we're also potentially looking at the roadway in front of CVS to repave that as well. I believe it is referred to as Constitution Plaza, or Broad Street, depending upon how long you've been in town. Those are to be the two paving projects. First Town Downtown that is an increase year over year, and that increase is driven by the cost of liability insurance for all the different events that they provide. There's been a notable increase related to liability for those different events such as the Broad Street Halloween event, the concerts on the green, the Farmers Market, and the torchlight parade. All those are driving that cost up. The recommended appropriation for the Arts Center is aligned with the Town Council's goal of continuing to work to increase the vitality in town center. This provides some sustainable funding hopefully for the Arts Center, so they can either have part-time hours or contractual hours to continue to do the fine program that they've been building up over the years.

Councilor Eleveld stated that we've got an additional expenditure because we're getting more money from Great Pond. He thinks it's important that people understand that the value of the property, when it was owned by Combustion Engineering, it was basically empty space. They paid so much to us for taxes. The agreement with them was if they make improvements to the property, they would need to set up a special taxing district. We would then take the original tax amount subtracted from the total amount that's potentially collected and then split the remainder in half, with them getting half and the Town getting half. That money was to be used, and he believes it is being used, through the Great Pond Improvement District, which has issued bonds for putting in roads and infrastructure.

Town Manager Souza stated that was a fantastic recap. He also stated that to date there's been over 200 million dollars' worth of private economic development activity at Great Pond Village, between the apartment complex and the target facility, as well as a recently opened convenience and gas station, over \$200 million of private investment the Town of Windsor is receiving in taxes. We're receiving a net, \$2.1 million. We're transferring another additional \$2 million—as you said that 50%. So, they're paying over \$4 million in taxes, those property owners within the district and the Town General Fund are receiving \$2.1 million of that. So basically, it's a win-win.

Councilor Eleveld asked how long does this TIF District run? Town Manager Souza answered and said it runs for as long as there's debt issued by the Great Pond Improvement district for the various public infrastructure elements that you mentioned.

Right now, it would look like it would be somewhere in that 25 to 30 range. It depends upon the next phase of infrastructure and when that occurs, and to the terms of that bond issue.

Councilor Eleveld stated that if he remembers correctly, the original plan for that project was 4,000 housing units and 7,000 residents throughout the whole project. He believes there was \$100 million of infrastructure building over time along with some commercial and open space. Unfortunately, the realities of economics have kind of changed that and then, relative to the TIF District in the center, we're also doing the same thing in that we are collecting monies but in the case of the center, we're actually giving up a little bit of the money that we would not otherwise have gotten.

Town Manager Souza asked Councilor Eleveld to rephrase his statement. Councilor Eleveld rephrased his statement and said we're taxing everybody in the district which we've been taxing in the past and we're then taking the differential from what was the tax bill from roughly, three odd years ago, the current tax bill and splitting that increase. The Town gets 75% and the district gets 25%, right? Town Manager Souza said essentially yes, and if there's a separate agreement with any kind of new development or redevelopment, then that's where they have the potential of receiving a partial rebate based upon a separate agreement that the Town Council reviews and would approve in those situations.

Councilor Eleveld stated which is the case with the Founder Square project. They have a separate credit enhancement agreement. Town Manager Souza said correct. Just to put some numbers on it, for FY 26, it's estimated that the Town's General Fund will receive \$124,000 and also from those incremental revenues within the Town Center district, we're also proposing that an additional \$125,000 be dedicated (knowing that this is the second year of revaluation) that will help go towards mitigation or go towards the General Fund. So, there'd be approximately \$250,000 that would go towards the Town's General Fund.

Councilor Pelkey asked about the funds for Windsor Center TIF district that is a transfer to them. Why doesn't that stay with the town? He doesn't understand the behind the scenes of that process. Town Manager Souza gave an example on how it all works.

Councilor Armstrong asked about Page Q-10, Recycling. Is there any way to tie that in with trash removal? Mr. Bourke said this is the curbside recycling pickup for residences.

Town Manager Souza explained further for the people that are in attendance, or viewing this meeting can have an understanding of what is going on. The Town has for about 12 to 14 years provided curbside recycling. Those are the blue bins, and its single stream. The Town contracts with a local vendor that is put out to bid, and which is separate than the trash that is collected in the green bins, which is a private subscription service, where residents contract with a private hauler, which in this case, the predominant hauler is Windsor Sanitation. The private company Windsor Sanitation. So just for clarity on how that works.

Councilor Gluck-Hoffman wanted to circle back to a statement Councilor Pelkey said. She wants people to understand that a lot of those events that fall under First Town Downtown now used to be under the Chamber of Commerce at some point in time. So, folks understand that the reason why it was moved over to First Town Downtown is because of the Economic Development part is to help that. I think a lot of people don't understand why it has changed. So maybe there's a way to explain that just for public knowledge.

Town Manager Souza stated that originally First Town Downtown started as a separate entity in the organization, and they've always maintained their own nonprofit status. For a period of time, they had worked together, or kind of under the umbrella of the Chamber of Commerce, to try to gain some efficiencies. That turned out to be an inherent conflict. The Chamber of Commerce works on a town wide basis and works with businesses of all different scale and scope while First Town Downtown's focus is truly the Town Center. So, several years ago, the Board of Directors made a decision to segregate it back out again, to be able to allow that they could focus on their core missions of each organization.

Councilor Walker asked a question regarding recycling/curbside on page Q.-10. He asked if we're paying \$514,860 for the recycling? Town Manager Souza said yes that's correct. It is every other week collection of the blue recycling bins.

Councilor Walker asked when this went out to bid, did anyone else bid on this? We've done I believe five year contracts. For the first cycle, there were a number of bidders. He wants to say there were three at that time. This second time around when we went out to bid there may have been two but he can't say that for certain.

Councilor Eleveld stated he is doing this from memory but isn't Windsor Sanitation currently doing the recycling? Town Manager said yes, that's correct. Councilor Eleveld asked at one point in the past has a group from Willimantic done that for us? Town Manager Souza said they did it before we went to the automated single stream. They did it for a short period of time, maybe for two years or so.

7) INSURANCE INTERNAL SERVICE FUND

The FY 25 estimate is expected to come in on budget. The overall FY 26 liability insurance budget reflects an increase of \$52,740 or 3.6% as compared to the FY 25 budget due to industry standards and coverage allocations.

The FY 25 employee and retiree general fund benefit costs are expected to come in over budget by \$584,000 or 10.1%. This is due to higher-than-expected claims experience for health, prescription drug, and disability claims costs and increases in the Medicare supplement plans premiums due to changes based on the federal Inflation Reduction Act that went into effect January 1, 2025.

The FY 26 total benefit costs are increasing \$718,010 or 12.4% based on medical, prescription and disability claims trend and expected claims projections. The FY 26 General Fund contribution is increasing \$656,080 or 16.5% as compared to the FY 25 budget after deducting employee and retiree copays, enterprise fund contributions and anticipated prescription drug rebates. Due to the increasing cost of prescription drugs and specialty medications, the town partnered with a pharmacy benefits advisor to negotiate better pricing and rebates with our vendor. This helps mitigate the increases to prescription drug costs.

Liability and Worker's Compensation Insurance

Jim Bourke, Finance Director; Jack Goldberg, Risk Manager and Amelia Bliss, Human Resources Director, gave an overview of the Insurance Internal Service Fund.

Mr. Bourke stated that they are expecting the premiums for the various policies to increase between 3% - 8%. Nationally, carriers are increasing rates to stay ahead of risk trends that include property damage caused by natural and man-made disasters and other events. Auto repair costs continue to climb, and carriers are also monitoring national tariff developments which might impact material costs in the future. Carriers also focus on the replacement cost of buildings and other town assets and include inflationary factors to stay current. Lastly, 3rd party litigation trends have caused higher settlement and jury decisions and a resulting need for liability insurance rate change over the last several years. We have had good claims, experience which should assist our broker with their negotiations on our behalf to limit our premium increases. We are also evaluating the possibility of either raising our deductibles or self funding a portion of certain policies while keeping the same limits for all of our insurance policies. Our excess Workers Compensation policy is projected to have a single digit increase. As a reminder the town self insures for Workers Compensation claims at or below the \$600,000 retention limit for all employee classifications except \$750,000 for public safety, which is our fire, EMS and law enforcement. The funds are also used for 3rd party claims, administrative services, excess insurance policy premiums and costs associated with centralized training and safety.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman stated the Town is ranked in a very good favor for insurance companies. So is there a way you could explain that to the public, so, they know how good a job you guys do. Mr. Goldberg stated that Chris (our insurance broker) handles up to 40 different towns throughout Connecticut and he speaks extremely highly of Windsor as one of his top performers.

Councilor Eleveld stated that we are still dealing with the hardened insurance market. Mr. Bourke said yes.

Councilor Eleveld asked in terms of the Worker's Compensation Insurance Internal Service Fund, something that he noticed is that we split the cost with the Board of Education 50/50, but doesn't the Board of Education have two times the amount of employees? Mr. Bourke said the Board of Education has a lot more employees than we do, but their claims are typically a lesser dollar value.

Councilor Eleveld asked that they give an example of where they're thinking of self insuring? He knows he said Worker's Compensation, but are there any other areas? Mr. Bourke answered they could possibly look at raising a deductible or for auto repairs. Town Manager Souza added that we wouldn't be necessarily getting out of any of these lines, there might be more adjusting, reviewing with those deductibles with USI who is our agent and broker.

Councilor Eleveld stated so by increasing for those, when you increase the deductible, you'll lower the cost because you're willing to accept a larger proportion of the risk.

Councilor Naeem said she just wanted to clarify Councilor Eleveld's question in terms of the Board of Education paying for half. That's actually coming from the Town Support for Education account, so, it's not counted in the Board of Education budget that is presented. Mr. Bourke said that is correct, it's in the General Fund budget that you have before you in the Town Support for Education section. It's identified there because those are coverages that are unique to the Board of Education, but paid for on behalf of the General Fund.

Councilor Naeem asked so that would not be found in the Board of Education budget, correct? Mr. Bourke stated that was correct.

Councilor Pelkey asked if they can give a picture of what the options are if you are a municipal entity and maybe if that costs anything? Mr. Goldberg gave an example and said say, you and I are going to insure a vehicle, insure a home. We have this large pool that we can choose from. People would be throwing this offer at us vice versa. Instead, you're dealing with a municipality. That pool shrinks dramatically. So instead of 20 different carriers we're looking at four that would even look at insuring our municipality. Out of those four, you have to evaluate them extremely effectively, and that goes for everything from services rendered, you know. What can they provide to us for a town? What are we getting for our premiums? And that's extremely important, because what you don't want is you don't want to carry just dealing with touch points where they see municipality. It's consistent rolling money, and they're not going to provide any services. Mr. Goldberg explained further what is needed from an insurance carrier on the Town's end.

Councilor Pelkey summarized it and said that basically we as a Town don't have 20 options. Mr. Goldberg interjected that we'd only have 3 or 4 and we'd have to be extremely selective when looking at them. Town Manager Souza added that we have multiple different types of coverages which narrows it down even more. Councilor Pelkey stated that we can go shop easily and save money every single year, if you will, or not see an increase, but as a Town we're not able to. We don't have the availability. Town Manager Souza said that was correct.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman complimented and thanked them for what they are doing.

Insurance Internal

Amelia Bliss, Human Resources Director, stated she will be discussing the Employee and retiree Benefits section of the Insurance Internal Service Fund. It's found on page R. 6 of your budget. The page reflects an overview of the cost for health, dental life and disability insurance for our active employees and health and dental insurance for retirees.

The FY 25, employee and Retiree General Fund benefit costs are expected to come in over budget by \$584,000 or 10.1%. This is due to higher than expected claims. Experience for health prescription drugs and disability costs and increases in the Medicare supplement plans. The premiums and the premium increases are due to changes based on the Federal Inflation reduction act that went into effect on January 1st of this year.

The FY 26 total benefit costs are increasing \$718,000, or 12.4%. This is based on medical prescription and disability claims trends and expected claims projections. The FY 26 General Fund contribution is increasing \$656,000, or 16.5% as compared to the FY 25. budget after deducting employee and retiree copays, Enterprise Fund contributions and anticipated prescription drug rebates.

Due to the increasing cost of prescription drugs and specialty medications. The town partnered with a pharmacy benefits advisor to negotiate better pricing and rebates with our vendor. This has helped mitigate increases in the cost to prescription drugs.

The town continually seeks ways to deal with increasing costs of employee and retiree benefits. We work closely with our consultant and our benefit providers to control costs and ensure we're up to date on trends and plan changes to maximize, cost, effectiveness.

Councilor Armstrong asked on the line for Life Insurance, is that insurance that the employee takes out and it's only \$55,000. Is that it? Ms. Bliss said that's term life insurance that the town pays the premiums for our employees. Councilor Armstrong asked that's the amount that the town pays? Ms. Bliss confirmed that is correct.

8) TOWN SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

Linda Collins, Assistant Finance Director, stated the FY 25 expenditures are expected to come in over budget by \$10,720 due to aid to private education and police support services. The FY 26 proposed budget reflects an increase of approximately \$499,000 as compared to the FY 25 budget mostly due to an increase in debt service costs.

Councilor Eleveld asked why there is an increase in debt service costs. Mr. Bourke said the simple explanation is, due to the projects that we're going to bond issue this spring, of which some are significant school projects such as O'Brien Field, Clover Street Phase II restroom. The school debt is separate and reflected on this page, and if there's more of it being issued, then you'll see an increase here.



9) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by, Councilor Eleveld seconded by Councilor Pelkey to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Motion Passed 8-0-0 (Mayor Black-Burke absent from vote)

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachel Collins
Recording Secretary