

Approved: February 25, 2016

Posted: March 1, 2016



Town Council Meeting Minutes

Monday January 25, 2016, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Harrington called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Mahon, Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Vaillancourt, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

Regular meetings of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday, January 28th, February 11th, and February 25th at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room. During the February 11th meeting, the Town Council will conduct a Public Hearing on the proposed FY17 Budget, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), proposed issuance of debt, Petition Bond, and other petition Warrant Articles.

Tuesday, February 9, 2016 is the last day to file Petition Bonds governed by RSA 33:8-a and RSA 40:13 II-b (b). February 9th is the Presidential Primary. Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Merrimack High School located at 36 McElwain Street.

If necessary, a special meeting of the Town Council for ratification of any outstanding union contracts will be scheduled for February 9, 2016. If necessary, notice of the special meeting will be posted.

February 29, 2016 is the deadline for posting of the Warrant and FY17 Budget. February 24th through March 4th is the filing period for candidates running for Town Offices. March 10th is the Town Deliberative Session.

Public Comment - None

Proposed FY17 Budget

Yvette Couser, Director, Merrimack Public Library, spoke of questions raised during the Council's review of the department's proposed budget. With regard to the formula used for determining the amount of dues to be paid to the Greater Manchester Integrated Library Cooperative System, Inc. (GMILCS), she stated there to be four factors; number of patrons, number of titles, number of workstations (access to catalogue), and circulation. Each of the factors are weighted equally (25%) and an average of the percentages taken. That percentage is applied to the total GMILCS budget to calculate the dues. Director Couser stated her understanding, from the Dues Formula Committee, is that this is a very stable formula. Any time one of our pieces of the formula increases or decreases, it impacts the percentage.

Director Couser commented it is a challenge as they want to increase the number of patrons, have more residents applying for cards and enjoying the library, but that will increase the percentage in the dues formula. A few things being discussed with regard to implementation are adding titles from a

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database. The Bedford Public Library turned on something called Auto Renewal, which means when your item is overdue it will automatically renew for you. That means rather than sending out a notice, the library is sending an email simply stating your item has been automatically renewed, but they are also not collecting fines. They have reviewed the information that has been generated in the first quarter of this trial, and their circulation jumped drastically. It is projected they will pay a \$12,000 increase in dues just because they are trying to add a feature that makes it convenient for a patron. When mentioned to the Library Board of Trustees their response is they would never turn that feature on because the cost is too great.

This was discussed at the GMILCS board level as it means we have to figure out when is the best time to implement something that might be kind of innovative. There is the desire to let the patrons know what the digital titles are, but if we add them too quickly in one shot to the catalogue that will change our formula. If we add a convenience like auto renewal for our patrons that will drastically change our formula. At the board level, everyone is kind of taking a step back and trying to plan. Director Couser noted the initial proposal was that Line Item 01-15-8353-0; Computer Services, be funded at \$41,000. It is now believed they can be more conservative and return to the current level of funding (\$37,000), and still be able to manage an increase in those rates. They would also need to absorb any changes that might occur with the van delivery system.

Jennifer Jobin, Chairman, Library Board of Trustees, commented on having previously mentioned the Library was looking into the health insurance plan. At the recent business meeting, the Library Board of Trustees voted to move forward with that change; switching to an SOS deductible plan will result in a cost savings of approximately \$14,000. It is the intent of the Board to put that towards a 2.5% cost of living increase for staff. They expect to be short by a small amount. Having recently had a few resignations, they believe they can make up for any shortfall through cost savings.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented it seems the allocation system with GMILCS is cumbersome, and appears to not really encourage the Library to do the things it wishes to do to increase patronage. He suggested the GMILCS board may need to reconsider how those dues are determined. Director Couser remarked that was exactly what one of the other Directors said, e.g., why should we be penalized if trying to do something innovative. The problem was sent back down to the Dues Formula Committee to review, and return to the Board with options for consideration.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented organizations go through this all the time; constant tinkering and reassessment of what makes it fair and still obtains the major goals of the organization in terms of customer service. Right now it doesn't work very well. Chairman Harrington commented on the benefits to be gained by all participants when one of the members pilots a new feature, etc. One would imagine there would be incentives in place for doing so.

With regard to streaming video, Director Couser commented they feel it would be a nice compliment to the hard copy DVDs and Blue Rays. They are already offering electronic books, magazines, and music. Streaming video would round that out, and make the library offerings more modern.

Town Manager Cabanel noted the Council was provided with a document with the heading "Town Council Budget Adjustments". The document listed areas within the budget where potential adjustments could be made based on discussions that took place during the departmental reviews. Identified was a reduction from the General Fund of \$13,532 for natural gas and \$15,571 for gasoline and diesel fuel. Those proposed reductions are the result of favorable prices being received in those

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areas. The amounts represent the total reduction, which is accounted for in various departments throughout the budget.

Within the Police Department, there were several retirements resulting in movement within the department and new hires. Based on that, a recommendation is made for a reduction of \$50,000. There are \$79,141 worth of appropriations the Council can use to reduce the proposed general fund budget. A reduction can be made to the Sewer Fund for natural gas in the amount of \$10,610 and gasoline and diesel in the amount of \$2,730. There is also a matching revenue reduction as the fund is self-balancing. There is an increase of \$100,000 in motor vehicle permit revenue. The result of those changes in the general fund is a proposed \$0.18 increase (\$0.24 increase prior to the proposed changes).

Councilor Dwyer thanked the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director for their efforts. He commented when initially proposed with a \$0.24 increase, he believed the Council wished to identify means of reducing the overall budget. He thanked them for accomplishing that.

MOTION made by Councilor Dwyer and seconded by Councilor Boyd to utilize Two Hundred Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$225,000) from the Unreserved Fund Balance to offset costs associated with the 53rd week of payroll

ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman Mahon noted the Unreserved Fund Balance (UFB) is revenue, not an appropriation.

Councilor Dwyer commented the quick discussion of this idea was around the fact this is one of the things the UFB is for. Chairman Harrington stated her understanding finalizing the revenues for the fund balance would be before the Council in September. Town Manager Cabanel noted that also applies to the \$100,000 in revenue from vehicle registrations. She remarked the intent of the Council could be made at this time.

Councilor Koenig commented although not a binding number, it is a number necessary for the Council to be able to guesstimate what the potential tax increase would be.

Councilor Dwyer reiterated the 53rd week of payroll is a scenario that only comes around every 5-7 years.

Councilor Vaillancourt stated her support of the proposed use of the UFB. She is in favor of maintaining a healthy fund balance as she believes it necessary to plan for the unexpected. She stated her opinion the UFB is at a healthy percentage right now, and the allocation of \$225,000 is reasonable and appropriate.

Councilor Boyd commented one of the things the Town Manager has shared with the Council during her tenure, is a healthy percentage is anywhere from 4-8%, and currently the balance is at 6%. He stated his opinion the proposed allocation is an appropriate use of those funds.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

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Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali requested the Council express a determination one way or the other with regard to the cuts the Town Manager has proposed as well as the additional revenue for motor vehicle registration.

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Koenig to approve the reduction of Thirteen Thousand Five Hundred and Thirty Two Dollars (\$13,532) in the General Fund budget for natural gas. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Boyd to approve the reduction of Fifteen Thousand Five Hundred and Seventy One Dollars (\$15,571) in the General Fund budget for gasoline and diesel fuel. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Koenig to approve the reduction of Fifty Thousand Thirty Eight Dollars (\$50,038) in various payroll lines in the Police Department budget. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Boyd to reduce the natural gas appropriation in the Wastewater budget by Ten Thousand Six Hundred and Ten Dollars (\$10,610). MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Boyd to approve the reduction of Two Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Dollars (\$2,730) for gasoline and diesel fuels in the Wastewater budget. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Dwyer to approve an increase of One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000) to the revenue from motor vehicle registrations

ON THE QUESTION

Councilor Koenig commented he believes the revenue numbers to be conservative, and have been for multiple years. The Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director have recommended an additional \$100,000 in revenue. However, he is of the opinion \$150,000 would provide additional relief, and still result in plenty of expected income from that revenue source.

Vice Chairman Mahon questioned if he was taking into account we are looking 18 months out. Councilor Koenig stated he was, and remarked over the past several years that revenue line has had significant amounts of overages. Vice Chairman Mahon commented as long as money stays cheap, automobile dealers will be able to offer the incentives to purchase.

Councilor Vaillancourt questioned what the historical overages have been. Councilor Koenig stated the actual for FY15 was \$4.4 million and the estimated for the current budget year is \$3.97 million. They went up to \$4.15 million. If adding \$100,000 that would increase to 4.25 million and 4.3 million if adding \$150,000. It looks like FY14 came in at \$4.256 million. If looking back even further it has been steadily increasing since FY11.

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When asked, Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief the proposed increase is a reasonable thing to do. She commented they have been ultra conservative.

Councilor Boyd stated last year's budget was \$3.975 million in revenue. He questioned if the second quarter revenues were known. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali responded it is tracking at around \$4.3 or \$4.4 million. He commented last year the auto industry broke sales records, and remarked he does not have heartburn over increasing the revenue amount in the proposed FY17 budget to \$4.3 million.

Councilor Boyd stated the projection is \$3.975 million, and the belief is there will be \$4.4 million. If that is correct the proposal would put it at half a million above that. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated when the projection was made initially it was believed the total would be in the area of \$4.2 million. Every year the percentage gets less and less. When looking at the \$4.2 million it was believed there would be a drop because it would be the 2nd or 3rd year of a new car. People are not buying brand new, they are buying used. Used cars of today are holding their values.

Councilor Boyd commented if projecting \$4.4 million and with a proposal of \$4.3 million the revenue amount would be within that margin of error.

Vice Chairman Mahon commented the amount of budget lapses over the last couple of years have been fairly large. In that regard, he does not believe \$50,000 to be that large in the scheme of things.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Dwyer to reduce the Wastewater revenue expectations by Thirteen Thousand Three Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$13,340) to account for the reduction in the appropriations of Thirteen Thousand Three Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$13,340). MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

Town Manager Cabanel stated the projected tax rate would be \$5.58, which represents a \$0.09 increase over FY16.

Councilor Vaillancourt proposed and Councilor Dwyer supported the request that the Town Council approve the purchase of a Reader Board for the Solid Waste Department for use with Transfer Station purposes only

Councilor Vaillancourt stated she has been advised there is already funding in the current budget that would cover the cost. She stated she was prepared to request an additional \$15,000 be added to the proposed FY17 budget, and was informed by the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director that would not be necessary. She commented after the discussions that occurred during the departmental review, it appeared to her this item would be very useful and would pay for itself with the potential increase in recycling it would encourage.

Councilor Koenig questioned why the Council would entertain motions relative to the current budget during deliberation of the proposed FY17 budget.

Town Manager Cabanel responded Councilor Vaillancourt had contacted her earlier in the day with a request to add the item to the current budget. Since it was brought up as part of the budget, she felt it

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important that it be brought up tonight so that the Council is aware that Councilor Vaillancourt and staff were heard with regard to this request. The desire was to gain a consensus of the Council at this time.

Councilor Koenig questioned if a formal vote was appropriate, and was informed, if there is a consensus of the Council it would allow the Town Manager to begin work on a proposal to bring before the Council.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned if what was being discussed was the \$35,000 reader board, and was informed the proposal was for an electronic sign board similar to the smaller electronic sign that runs the message underneath the larger sign at the Police Department.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with a proposal.

Councilor Boyd stated a desire to add money into the line item for the Griffin Street boat ramp access. After conferring with the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, it is his desire for the Council to task the Town Manager to begin the process of an engineering study for the Griffin Street boat ramp access road improvements from Railroad Bridge to the boat ramp utilizing existing funds in the current year budget.

Councilor Boyd spoke of an email trail that has gone on between the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, Kyle Fox, Deputy Director of Public Works, Councilor Rothhaus, and him. He remarked it is not something that could be done in one fell swoop. Deputy Director Fox has expressed an opinion it could be done in three different phases.

Chairman Harrington requested additional clarification be provided with regard to the email trail. Councilor Boyd stated he had inquired with New Hampshire Fish & Game with regard to whether State funding is available for construction of a ramp. In short, there is a fund, which is funded through Federal and State dollars. There are three communities ahead of us, and if Merrimack were to entertain participating with the State, the timeline would be 2020 before work could begin. He felt that to be too lengthy of a timeframe for the project. Funding has been identified in the current year's budget to begin the process, and he is of the belief it is an appropriate time to start.

When asked, Town Manager Cabanel indicated she believes the request to be reasonable.

Councilor Koenig stated he would not consent to that stating his opinion the boat ramp does not reach the level of requirement for the Town of Merrimack that for example the sign to increase recycling does. He stated he has been hearing about the boat ramp since he was a member of the Board of Selectmen. He does not feel it appropriate to suddenly start spending money on that proposal given the difficulties with Griffin Street, the size of the bridge under the railroad tracks, and the other complications in the area. The only justification he has heard so far about looking at it now is that if the Town of Merrimack doesn't have access to the Merrimack River it seems inappropriate. He stated tying the name of the Town and the name of the river together through a boat ramp is not an appropriate way for the Council to be spending the Town's money at this point.

Vice Chairman Mahon noted he, Chairman Harrington, the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, and Deputy Director Fox discussed this issue earlier in the day. Deputy Director Fox provided the schematic on the project, and was very up front in stating the project would not be easy. An engineering study would either demonstrate that it is not easy, that we need to do

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something different, or that it can be done in a certain way. It could potentially answer both questions; either indicate it would be a waste of time or that it could be done but it would have to be done in a certain way. Councilor Koenig thanked him for the information, however noted that does not change his viewpoint.

Councilor Vaillancourt remarked she does not necessarily have an issue with the engineering study. Her concern is with the future budgetary implications. The ballpark figures that were tossed around were in the area of \$200,000. She stated concern if they were to move forward with the engineering study, and did not intend to fund any of the construction in a future budget that is kind of a disingenuous action by the Council. Personally, while she understands the quality of life issues, and is aware many have been asking for this for some time, she believes there to be other things coming down the pike in the next year or two that would warrant an expenditure of this size. She stated she would not consent to it based on the additional work that would go beyond the engineering study.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned why the Council would not put the matter on a future agenda to allow for the full discussion. He stated his opinion it is a quality of life issue, and would be a nice addition to the Town. He suggested the Council needs to hash out the impacts Councilor Vaillancourt alluded to. He reiterated he would rather have the item on a future agenda to continue the discussion. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the item could be placed on an agenda. Councilor Rothhaus commented the Council has discussed monies that have been put aside, and there is the need, as a Council, to determine if it is an appropriate time to move forward. Chairman Harrington questioned the will of the Council. The consensus was that the item be placed on a future agenda (March 24, 2016).

Councilor Rothhaus spoke of the allocation for the completion of the GIS project, and stated his understanding the aerial photography is used for enforcement of Town Ordinances, which is something he has difficulty with. He stated a desire to be provided assurance that is not the intended use of that component of the GIS project. Town Manager Cabanel remarked aerial photography is what it is. If someone comes in to complain having looked at the GIS data and seen something that should not be there, they can use that information. The Town is not viewing the data with an eye towards enforcement. However, the facts are the facts, and if someone sees something on there that is factual and brings it to the Town's attention, then it needs to be followed up on.

Councilor Rothhaus questioned if he should be removing \$65,000 from the current proposal. When asked for clarification, he remarked it would eliminate the funding for that, which would complete that part of the project. He reiterated he is uncomfortable with it. Vice Chairman Mahon commented one can do the same with Google Maps that can be done with aerial photography. Councilor Rothhaus responded if that is accurate then there is no need to spend \$135,000 on that proposal.

Tim Thompson, Director, Community Development Division, stated the proposed expenditure for the GIS project is for the development of new base mapping for the community. That is done from the digital orthophotography, which is done to a specific scale so that it is accurate for the mapping purpose for which we use it. That mapping will then be used not only for the aerial photography itself, but topography, pavement, structures, etc., it is all of the different data layers that the Town utilizes.

He stated his understanding of the concern regarding enforcement, but reiterated in his department, enforcement is not something they go out of their way to go after, they simply respond to service

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requests that come in from members of the public. Even if they drive by and see something, it is not something they actively go after because they do not have the staff or the resources to deal with enforcement type issues on a full-time basis. He stated given the age of the existing aerial photography in the system we are woefully out of date in terms of the type and accuracy of information we are able to give to the public as well as the other departments that utilize that data. It is a very important part of making sure the GIS is current, up to date, and it also allows us to do in-house a lot of what we have to now either contract out through the Nashua Regional Planning Commission or other private consultants because the information we have dates back to 2007.

Councilor Dwyer questioned if Director Thompson's remarks eased some of the concerns expressed. Councilor Rothhaus responded he understands the need for the data. He understands that information cannot be obtained through Google Maps, and commented he is all set. Councilor Vaillancourt noted the Conservation Commission relies heavily on GIS mapping. Councilor Koenig remarked he agrees with the premise of what Councilor Rothhaus stated. However, it becomes one of those bad situations where you have to outweigh the bad with the good. When they first talked about putting the assessing database online people were worried that others could look up information on their house and see what the size of their den is, etc. Having the GIS system with all of the overlays, e.g., sewers, roads, powerlines, etc., provides a tremendous asset to the community both residential and commercial. He stated his belief the GIS system outweighs the potential harm individuals could create from it based on the value to the community.

Vice Chairman Mahon questioned if the total appropriation, at this point, was \$34,273,625, and was told that was correct.

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Koenig to recommend an FY17 budget in the amount of Thirty Four Million Two Hundred Seventy Three Thousand Six Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (\$34,273,625), and move it to the Public Hearing. MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

Chairman Harrington stated the estimated tax rate to be \$5.58, which reflects a \$0.09 increase.

Chairman Harrington requested the Fire Department be tasked with continuing its efforts with regard to tracking of data to be utilized during discussions of the FY18 budget. She requested information be tracked with regard to use of overtime; which position had to be covered, e.g., officer or rank and file, # of instances when a single individual was brought in versus two individuals, and whether the coverage was necessitated by vacation time, sick time, etc.

Chairman Harrington spoke of discussions around safety, and stated her concern with the current situation. She is unaware of the amount of overtime available versus what will be needed from now until June. Having heard the discussion around going down to staffing at 7 being dangerous, she would like to see that addressed. Although she is unsure what could be done, if there is an opportunity to be able to address that between now and the end of June, she would like those discussions to take place.

Councilor Dwyer commented he has not heard anything from any member of the Council to indicate 7 was ever acceptable. It seems to always have been staffing to 8, which is what the Council has been told to be the proper number to man the two engines (3 per engine) and to have 2 on an ambulance.

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Chairman Harrington stated the Council is aware the department has had to staff to 7 this year. She would like to make an attempt to keep that from happening. It has been identified as a safety issue, and if there is a method by which the Council could keep that at 8, then it should be addressed.

Councilor Dwyer remarked he has stated previously, he believes half a million dollars is much too high for overtime. The data is clear. We have a professional disagreement with how they decipher. Eight men doesn't really mean 8. The department wants 8, and whether it be 30% of the time or 50% of the time that they don't get 8 they are on the phone calling someone in on overtime. If it were \$150,000 in overtime he does not believe any members of the Council would have heartburn. It is half a million with no end in sight if you don't improve on the 8. We asked for the data and we got it, but his brain puts in 36 men; 12 supervisors, 24 guys. Thirty six times 3 weeks' vacation, which does not take into account any other reasons for an absence, his brain says that is over 100 weeks gone, which equates to 1 to 2 men are not there every week. He is unsure how you ever get to 8 other than overtime.

He stated his belief it would be prudent to put a request for four additional firefighters on the ballot not only in an attempt to reduce overtime, but it seems to be the most prudent thing to do when we talk about the growth the Town is experiencing, and the number of new Firefighters in the department. It will take 6 months to a year to get new men on board. If it is not asked for this year it will be the following year and the following year. He remarked if the public is asked and they say no then the Council will never hear him complain about overtime again.

Chairman Harrington responded there was a demonstration by the department that this is what they wanted. That is the reason why she has requested additional data; to be able to make that determination. During the coming year there will be new construction in Town that will also help justify additional positions. She commented with the number of items before the voters already, adding this to the mix may be difficult. Councilor Dwyer responded that is a question he doesn't like to entertain as he does not feel it important whether there are 3 or 10 questions put before the voters. He used the example of another year going by without asking for replacement of the Highway garage, or asking the School District not to bring forward their building plan again, etc. Putting it off is like kicking the can down the road. This year the Council did make a conscious decision not to bring the Highway Garage project forward. Nothing has changed down there; the bathrooms are still inadequate, it is still; an unsafe environment in many ways, and as was said before if it wasn't a municipal building, OSHA would have shut it down a long time ago. If not this year, next year. We will be back to saying again what don't we ask the public next year.

Chairman Harrington remarked what she was responding to is that to her being provided additional data would help make a decision. Councilor Dwyer stated he personally does not need any more data; he has heard the number 7 far too often, and as he has said from the beginning half a million dollars is far too much to spend on overtime. There needs to be a different formula to correct that.

Councilor Boyd stated agreement with Councilor Dwyer. He remarked he sat listening to the Chief and both Assistant Chiefs talk about the loss of institutional knowledge that has impacted the Fire Department. He looked back to the data in 2010-2011 when the Town had more firefighters. Some were lost through attrition and the positions not filled. Last year 65% of our service calls were for either basic life support or advanced life support. Sixty five percent of the time our Fire Department is running to the area hospitals. Ideally, the department would like 3 Paramedics per shift. When you sat and did the math it justified the addition of 4 Firefighters. The Fire Department wants to be able to train their own Firefighters. We only allocate \$10,000 a year for one person to be selected to go

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through Paramedic training, and if we are able to hold onto that individual, we're very lucky. It is not just adding four Firefighters to our staffing, it is the bigger picture of making the commitment to ensuring our salaries for Paramedics are competitive with area communities, and that we are not limiting training to one per year, but perhaps 2 a year.

Councilor Boyd commented we're a growing community, but it is not just saving lives and suppressing fires, the majority of the calls are transporting to a hospital. He does not anticipate that percentage will drop any time soon. The point of overtime is well taken. The Council should be looking at addressing this issue at the start of the new term. There needs to be a sense of urgency associated with this matter.

He commented what Councilor Dwyer is requesting is not unreasonable considering the track record regarding ballot initiatives in this community. If we do it we need to approach it in a thoughtful and strategic way as opposed to trying to make it a line item in the budget.

Chairman Harrington stated how it was done would be for consideration by the Council.

Councilor Vaillancourt spoke of the concern around the time period from now until June, and stated her impression to be the reason the department is faced with staffing to 7 now is because there is not enough money in the overtime budget to add the 8th Firefighter. That is how they come up with the 7 not because the 7 is some number they think the Council has told them they can't go over, it's because they are bound by budget constraints. She stated agreement with Councilor Dwyer with regard to allowing the voters to vote on the issues regardless of the number of ballot items. She commented if a Warrant Article were put out the onus would be on the Council to ensure the citizenry understands the issue and potential budgetary impact. Prior to the past meeting, she could not understand how adding 4 Firefighters to staff wouldn't reduce the overtime budget. After listening to the presentation, talking to the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director several times about it she understands now it has to do more with staffing, shifts, and scheduling. If 4 Firefighters were to be added to the budget she would want to be confident the citizenry understands that would be at a cost of about \$370,000, and doing so would only reduce the overtime amount \$40,000 - \$60,000. That would be an increase of upwards of \$300,000 to the budget the Council just approved to move forward.

Councilor Vaillancourt commented some of the things Councilor Dwyer has expressed a desire to change that would have more of an impact on that are not issues the Council can tackle through the budget process. It is her impression he wishes to change things that might have to do with contractual obligations and negotiations. If that is something he feels strongly about doing then that is the place to do it. She understands his frustration because it does seem absurd to have that amount of overtime, but it is not something that can be changed with this budget process. She stated she does not support, at this point in time, adding 4 Firefighters, but she does believe that the time is going to come very soon that we will have to add to staff.

Councilor Rothhaus stated agreement with Councilor Vaillancourt's comments. He remarked the overtime budget for the current year is approximately \$460,000. The proposal added \$95,000 to it. If we add to staff it is the \$375,000 or so, and even if we reduce the current overtime by as much as \$100,000 we are still deeply into added expense to the community. As everyone seems to recognize half a million dollars is a ton of money for overtime, but he gets it and believes it is the toll we have to work with right now, and that it is appropriate, working under the Council's own parameters and how it is trying to focus on the ultimate tax rate in the end.

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Councilor Boyd commented the discussion has been around 8 and 7, but in his eyes requesting 8 is actually 7, requesting 9 is actually 8. If 8 is the ideal number that the Fire Department sees necessary to adequately staff every shift, then the rule of thumb should be allocating 9 Firefighters because based on Councilor's Dwyer's arithmetic at the now 36 employees with 3 weeks of vacation, that is 2 years' worth of employees that are not going to be down at the fire house. Even the Fire Chiefs when they can't fill some of the overtime and they have 7, have used the terminology of rolling the dice on that particular shift as it relates to being a man down. That is the concern that he has. He remarked people need to be prepared if we do ask for 4 Firefighters, were not asking for them for the sake of putting 4 Firefighters on, we're asking for it because there is a need and we need to train them so that when Paramedics do get called out, they are doing what they need to do to get a person to a hospital. That is the bottom line.

Councilor Dwyer remarked overtime isn't the end all either. There are plenty of people who don't want the overtime; they are coming in for their fellow brothers, they are going in begrudgingly. They don't want to go in; whether they have a second job or want to go out with their wives, maybe want to coach their kids in a soccer game, they can't because they are always working. Not everybody is gung ho on overtime.

Adjourn

MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Mahon to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

The January 25, 2016 Work Session of the Town Council was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan