

At a Special meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on April 30, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order at 7:00 P.M. by Councilor S. Arnold, Town Council Vice-President.

II. Roll Call

Members present: Cheryl A. Greathouse ; Jonathan E. Burlingame; Walter M. O. Steere, III; Stephen W. Arnold , Vice President

Member absent: William A. Worthy , Jr. President

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Jane Steere, Interim Finance Director and Tax Collector; Elizabeth Beltram, Sr.Acct./Fin.Analyst and Asst. Interim Finance Director; Chief Joseph Delprete, Police Chief; Gary Treml, Director DPW; John Luszcz, Human Services Director; Robert Shields, Recreation Director (arrived at 7:15PM)

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor S. Arnold asked everyone to please stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. 2024-25 Budget

A. Town Council amendments, additions, changes to proposed budget-Discussion and/or action

Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Town Council held the Public Hearing for the 2024/25 Budget, as advertised, on April 22, 2024. Councilor S. Arnold stated that Council must adopt a budget and ballot questions by May 6, 2024. Councilor S. Arnold stated that this meeting is to give Council the opportunity to discuss and amend the budget after reviewing the budget and hearing public comment at the Public Hearing .

Discussion:

Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Public Hearing was closed at the last meeting and recommended that motions could be made tonight or at the next meeting on Thursday.

Councilor C. Greathouse stated her thanks to all the hard-working people in the town. Councilor Greathouse expressed how hard it is to propose cuts to the budget when she knows the budget was carefully done.

Councilor Greathouse stated the following proposals as to the budget:

Department Heads: 4% increases for all department heads;
DPW: Eliminate the additional foreman position at highway;

Finance staff: When a finance director is hired do so at an amount less than that stated in the budget;
 If the hiring of a finance director is a lateral move, from the Finance Office, there could be a \$ 8000 decrease in salaries in the accounting department

Senior Center: RISE account at the Senior Center be eliminated

Recreation: Councilor Greathouse stated that the Recreation Director graciously offered to give up his salary and she does not feel that should happen. Councilor Greathouse asked that \$2000 be reinstated to the Recreation Department

Councilor J. Burlingame stated his agreement with the 4% for all department heads. Councilor S. Arnold stated that he does not feel the Rec. Director should give up his salary. Councilor J. Burlingame stated the foreman position is in the contract so can't be removed. Councilor S. Arnold asked J. Steere, Interim Finance Director and / or Elizabeth Beltram, Assistant Interim Finance Director, to look into the RISE funds (Senior Center budget) to see if they can be removed as none of that money has been used in the past few years. Councilor W. Steere stated his agreement as to the finance directors' salary savings and that the Rec. Director should not give up his salary. Councilor J. Burlingame stated his agreement as to the Rec. Director.

Councilor J. Burlingame asked G. Treml, DPW Director about the \$7500 landfill soil testing expense. G. Treml stated that the wells at the landfill are routinely tested by DEM and that the expense is for 3-4 year period but that he is trying to get that stretched out. Councilor J. Burlingame asked the prior cost. G. Treml stated it was \$6800.

Councilor S. Arnold asked J. Steere about the \$5000 expense for tax assessor travel and education as only \$509 has been spent in this fiscal year. J. Steere stated that the expense could be reduced to \$3500 as most of the education has been completed she believes.

Councilor W. Steere stated he wanted to set the record straight that most of the budget increase is due to the Regional School budget and not the municipal budget.

Councilor W. Steere stated his proposals as follows:

- Legal: fund legal \$50,000 due to potential lawsuits;
- Assessor: fund \$25,000 for appraiser
- DPW: leave in the \$10,000 from the gas budget for DPW
- Proration: fund \$50,000 for proration
- Animal Control: leave in the proposed increase for the animal control officer .

Councilor W. Steere stated his additional proposals: reduce the finance director salary from that stated in the budget; there may be a potential personnel savings in the police department; a 4% increase across the board for all department heads; keep the accounting position, in Finance, at the current rate; cut \$20,000-30,000 from the \$50,000 grant match item; use ARPA funds for Sansoucy; use ARPA funds for proration; and there may be potential savings in a department head salary. Councilor W. Steere asked J. Steere to check the parade account as to available funds.

Councilor S. Arnold and Councilor J. Burlingame both stated their agreement as to the funding legal and the appraiser expenses.

Councilor S. Arnold stated his difficulty in looking at aid requests and reducing because they do benefit the community but he suggested looking at the amounts approved in past years. Councilor J. Burlingame stated he would not want to touch PBA or GLL.

Councilor S. Arnold asked J. Steere to verify if the Historical Cemeteries has ARPA funds available and the amount.

Councilor S. Arnold asked about the probate expense for restoration. J. Fecteau stated that the expense is for a lateral file cabinet as she is running out of room for probate files. J. Fecteau explained that she is obligated to store these records forever.

Councilor C. Greathouse asked about the expense of payroll. J. Steere stated that the past two budgets have approved \$30,000 to \$35,000 and the actual costs for both years has been closer to \$60,000 each . J. Steere stated that payroll services will be going out to bid.

Councilor W. Steere stated the suggestion of the following: \$50,000 for legal from ARPA; \$10,000 for gas; \$25,000 for the appraiser ; and \$25,000 for the revaluation ; and the possible taking of \$20,000 from the line item grant match.

G. Treml, DPW Director, stated his request for paving funds in addition to those already requested.

J. Fecteau stated that she would review the Board of Canvassers expenses to see if any expenses can be reduced .

Councilor S. Arnold stated that he was hesitant to make any motions tonight and suggested they be made Thursday. Councilor W. Steere stated that the general fund balance is about 14% and he would not want to go any lower as the minimum is 12%. Councilor S. Arnold stated that he would not want to go below 14%.

No Action Taken

V. Unfinished Business

A. Authorization to Sign - Discussion and/or Action

1. M.O.U. Between Town of Gloucester & R.I. Dept. of Business Regulations Building Official assistance

Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Town and the State Building Office of the Dept. of Business Regulations will enter into an agreement if Council signs the stated M.O.U.. Councilor S. Arnold stated that this memorandum will authorize the state to assist with the signing of all documents requiring a certified building official signature. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Trust and our Solicitor have reviewed the M.O.U. and are in agreement with the terms.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to AUTHORIZE the Town Council President to sign the M.O.U. entitled “ Building Official Coverage for the Town of Gloucester between the Department of Business Regulation State Building Office (“Sbo”), and the Town of Gloucester (“Town”) (collectively, the “Parties”); said Town of Gloucester shall reimburse the State for Plan Review, Issuance of Permits, Inspections required by a Building Official& Issuance of CO (or letter of completion) will be reimbursed at a rate of seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) per hour, charged in fifteen (15) minute increments plus \$0.575/mile (gas/travel fee); and is effective until such time as TOWN can administer the building code without the assistance of the SBO; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- J. Burlingame, C.Greathouse , W. Steere, S.Arnold
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VI. New Business

A. Authorization to Sign - Discussion and/or Action

1. Temporary appts. - Assistant Bldg. Officials

Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Town has a pending Certificate of Occupancy needed for a closing the owner hoped to have in the next week. Councilor S. Arnold stated that because the State Building Official assistance may not be set up in time , the North Smithfield Town Administrator has agreed to allow the North Smithfield Building Official to review an application for a Certificate of Occupancy that is time sensitive, at no charge.

Councilor S. Arnold stated that therefore, this agenda item listed is for the Town Council to vote to appoint Leo Cote (NSBO) as an alternate Building Officer to work on the one application for a Certificate of Occupancy that is time sensitive.

Discussion: Councilor J. Burlingame stated he spoke with D. Iglizzi, Town Solicitor, and recognized that this matter was time sensitive.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to AUTHORIZE Leo Cote (NSBO) as an alternate Building Official to inspect and sign a Certificate of Occupancy at a Gloucester address, if all requirements are met, for a time sensitive application pending for a Gloucester resident; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- J. Burlingame, C.Greathouse, W. Steere, S.Arnold
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VII. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to ADJOURN at 7:52 p.m.; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- J. Burlingame, C.Greathouse, W. Steere, S.Arnold
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED