

**Prospect Town Council
Special Virtual Budget Workshop
Unapproved Minutes
March 23, 2021**

Chairman Slapikas called to order the Special Budget Workshop of the Prospect Town Council @ 6:00 p.m. The meeting was a Virtual Meeting by video conference via GoToMeeting as authorized by Executive Orders 7B and 7I. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Organizer of Virtual Meeting Present: J. Slapikas. A roll call for attendance was taken by Chairman Slapikas.

Moment of silence for tragedy in Colorado.

Council Members Present via online: J. Slapikas, R. Blanc, P. Geary, S. Pilat, T. Graveline (6:20 p.m.), L. Fitzgerald, K. O'Leary & M. Patchkofsky, S. Lusas Kolodziej (6:12 p.m.)

Council Members Absent: R. Blanc

Guests: Mayor Chatfield, John Wiehn, Library Director, Sue McKernan, Library Board Chairperson, Tony Muniz, Fire Marshal and Anne Marie Burr, Tax Collector

Discussion on State Zoning and Action:

Mayor Chatfield explained how Prospect's infrastructure doesn't support what the Legislature is looking to do with zoning. They have proposed for each city/town to have multi-family/affordable housing projects. Prospect has no sewer or city water. There are 6 reservoirs and 23 bodies of water as well as hundreds of acres of wetlands. This is not a good fit for this Town. The PRTC are against this and passed a resolution explaining why. They then set it to the Prospect Planning and Zoning who also voted against it. P. Geary agrees with both PRTC and Zoning. She does not support the State zoning mandate. Her opinion is that locally we can and should control our own zoning; Every town is different. She believes the local control is more appropriate. L. Fitzgerald asked if this passes, wouldn't Inland and Wetlands regulations still come in to play as to whether or not you can do it. He asked if it passes what happens with Prospect. J. Slapikas stated that there isn't much information explaining what happens if this mandate does pass. They are trying to make all 169 towns in CT do this so that they are all "equal". J. Slapikas explained that for ex: you can't take a Hartford or a Stamford and say they are the same as Prospect, Bethlehem, Morris etc. H. Slapikas leans with everyone else. This does not fall into the town of Prospect. He also agrees with Zoning in Prospect. L. Fitzgerald is worried that Prospect doesn't have the final say as to whether or not this passes. J. Slapikas feels that we are headed in the right direction. P. Geary agrees that it important the State knows how the individual towns feel about this. A draft resolution was sent out today that needs some changes in the verbiage.

Motion made by P. Geary, seconded by K. O'Leary to approve the resolution, with changes. 1 abstention and 6 in favor. Motion carries.

Mayor's Report

The Mayor briefly mentioned that it's Spring and street sweeping will start April 5th. Also, 3/4 of the Town was without power today as well as parts of Waterbury and parts of Naugatuck.

Budget Discussion:

- **Library-Line Item#7350:** John Wiehn, Library Director stated that in preparing the budget for fiscal year 2021-2022; every line was carefully reviewed. The Library is multi-faceted many things to many people. They have offered curbside pick up service since May 12 2020. Over 520 items per month are checked out. They extended their Wi-Fi to reach all areas of the parking lot. They had holiday crafts pick up for children and a monthly virtual art display. They also increased the number of eBooks. They began light up Prospect holiday contest. The Library has continued its

mission of service to the community. John reviewed each line item. The salary for the Asst. Director, Clerical Staff Salary Asst. director and clerical staff was increased by 2.75% per the union contract. Supplies, books, catalogs and utilities all stayed the same. Contract and maintenance decreased due to a reduction of cost of fire ext. exchange. Capital improvement, audio visual, programs and conference dues, Board Clerk, Technology and eBooks all stayed the same as well. The only increase in the Library budget was the salary increase due to the union contract. Only increase is salary per union contract. The total recommended budget is \$340,700.

P. Geary stated she is a big supporter of the Library and applauds them and the people involved with the programs they have continued to run for the past year. She is thrilled for the people of the Town. P. Geary referred to line item# 7350-02 Clerical Staff. The Town's prepared budget says 9 part time staff and clerks, but the booklet says 8. John explained a maintenance person resigned so there are 5 part time clerks and 3 full time staff for a total of 8. They replaced a single custodian with a cleaning service. P. Geary asked if during this pandemic all staff members were able to work and continue working. John stated that yes, they were all able to continue working. P. Geary stated that their probably won't be extra monies in that line item then if everyone was working. She asked if there will be any extra monies in utilities. John stated that yes, there will be. Sue McKernan, Library Board Chairperson stated their electricity has been cut by at least 1/3. Yes they will. Electricity has at least been cut by 1/3. P. Geary mentioned line item #7350-06 Cont. Maintenance. They transferred \$7400 into that account and yet they are proposing the same as last year. John stated that is correct, at that time they transferred money because their maintenance woman quite mid-year. P. Geary mentioned line item# Capital Improvements. They transferred \$2000. Sue explained they were doing renovations at the time. They are continuing the renovations in hopes of getting everything in good shape while they are closed. They finished two bathrooms, the kitchen off the community room was remodeled. They did not replace the cabinets because it was it was more cost effective to refinish them and the cabinets were better quality. They had to pull out the old shelving, they are painting and then they will be replacing the shelving. J. Slapikas asked for the last day the Library was open. They stated March 12, 2020. J. Slapikas wanted to clarify they have not been open to the public for over a year. P. Geary mentioned line item#7350-13 Technology. She asked if they expect to have any surplus. They have only spent \$1000 as of the budget report. Sue explained that they still have to purchase two computers. They are going to add some money into the Overdrive System because the use of downloadable books went up 22%. P. Geary asked if that will be done before June 30. Sue stated absolutely. L. Fitzgerald stated they should have money leftover in utilities. We should do something with the leftover funds. J. Slapikas stated that for the past 8-9 years the Council has transferred money out of the Library Budget consecutively. If there is any leftover, the Council will take that and commit it back to the Library's Budget. John mentioned they looking to install LED lights as well. P. Geary asked the Council if we are setting aside a certain amount and committing it to the Library for next time, we should still cut something for the next year. J. Slapikas needs to discuss with the accountant. He wants to make sure we commit it the right way. We should stay with what we have knowing that if there is a surplus, we can revisit this before we send it to the Town. T. Graveline stated that if we are truly looking to commit funds from this year to next, perhaps it would be good to have an accounting from each dept that we see surpluses in. Something in writing re: line items we think we are going to pull from making sure we don't pull too much and commit that to next year. J. Slapikas stated there is a timing issue because these budgets need to be finalized before it goes to Town Meeting. J. Slapikas stated we are asking someone for a guess on surplus. This is a difficult way to look at things. He is trying to be careful but trying to be cognoscente that there might be a surplus. We still have 3 ½ months leftover right now. M. Patchkofsky asked the Mayor if he can get the Council a more recent expenditures to date so that they have a more accurate idea of surplus. The Mayor thinks that after the Public Hearing would be the time to do that. J. Slapikas asked the Mayor if he can bring a list of the most expenditures at least to Feb. 1st, 2021 instead of the end of December 2020. The Mayor will try and have it for one of the upcoming budget meetings. P. Geary stated she sees the newest member Galen Lowell on the virtual meeting tonight. She just wanted to welcome him and congratulate him on his appointment to the Library Board. Sue McKernan wanted to mention that their copier is dying and can no longer be repaired. The lowest estimate they received was \$6428 for a new copier. They are hoping if they do have accounts with leftover funds that they might be able to transfer and purchase. They are also looking to have a story walk for children. The posters etc. that go outdoors are very expensive. She would like to use any extra money to ensure those things can happen and be paid for before June 30th.

Motion made by S. Lusas Kolodziej, seconded by M. Patchkofsky to accept budget for Line Item #7350 Library in the amount of \$340,700 for 2021-2022. S. Lusas and M. Patchkofsky amended their motion to add a change for #7350-02 from Staff/ Clerk PT-9 to PT-8. **Unanimous.**

The Council thanked the Library for everything they do for the Town.

- **Fire Marshall-Tony Muniz-** Tony stated he is proposing \$3000 more on the equipment line item#6650-04. He is looking to purchase 3 iPads for inspections so they can do everything electronically. He also wants to purchase a light for investigations and nighttime work. The Uniforms Line Item#6650-05 increase by \$100 to \$500. The Salaries increased by 2.75% due to union contract. Supplies stayed the same. This year there were no in person seminars were held. They did attend some remote classes and webinars. There was an increase in mileage to \$400 for the deputies. The total recommended budget for line item#6650 Fire Marshal is \$64,689.74P. Geary asked why 3 iPads if there are only 2 people in the office. Tony stated there are 3 deputies and himself: 4 total. P. Geary asked if they are sharing the Fire Dept. printer. Tony stated he has his own printer. P. Geary agrees with the need for a new light and new printer. Tony explained the light is 6000-watt, portable battery operated and rechargeable. The cost of the light is \$600. J. Slapikas stated if they are going to have \$700 leftover in seminars. He recommended buying the light now and not putting it in next fiscal year's budget. Then the equipment line item can remain the same as last year. Tony mentioned still wanting to keep iPads in the line item. Chairman Slapikas stated that is fine. It is at his discretion; he would just need to send something to the Mayor and then it will be brought to the Council requesting a transfer from one line item to another. T. Graveline stated she agrees with purchasing the light this year from the surplus. She asked the status of the camera capability when he has to visit scenes and take photos. Tony stated he has one high-tech camera and one pocket camera that are both functioning. J. Slapikas asked to reduce the Equipment line item#6650-04 from \$3000 to \$2500. Tony states that works for him.

Motion made T. Graveline, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to approve the Fire Marshal's Budget line item#6650 for a total amount of \$64,191. **Unanimous.**

P. Geary asked the Mayor for clarification on any increase for elected officials this year. The Mayor stated that he chose not to recommend any increases and the Council can chose on their own whether or not to make an increase.

- **Tax Collector-Anne Marie Burr,** Prospect Tax Collector.

Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by P. Geary to discuss the Tax Collectors line item#5350. Anne Marie stated her salary remains the same. The Assistant Tax Collector's recommended salary increase if from \$30,311 to \$34,320. Salary remains same. Asst. tax collector salary 30,311 to 34,320. She understands this is higher than the 2.75%. She looked last year, when union negotiations were going on to try and get a larger increase. The budget had already passed at that point. She was told to address it during this budget season which is why she is bringing it up now. The current hourly rate for the Asst. Tax Collector Current line item #5350-01 is \$19.43. Anne Marie is looking to increase it to \$22 an hour, which is still below industry standards. She wants to ensure her pay matches her responsibility and job position. Anne Marie mentioned line item# 5350-02, the Tax Clerk. She has one part time tax clerk that was just hired permanently Feb 26th. She is still currently in the 90-day probation period. This line item was increased by 2.75%. She is looking to increase supplied. She referred to the attached info. she submitted to the Council. The increase is based on this past "Covid" year. She went through much more letterhead and envelopes this year. 800-900 letters had to be returned to people due to their checks not being written out correctly. This year conferences and dues were mostly virtual. Certified Tax Collectors need to recertify with CEUs. The virtual classes are not free; they are charging per CEU. It is not a huge cost at this point, but she is looking for an increase because she did cut out a lot on this line item last year. The total budget she is requesting is \$114,705. J. Slapikas asked why the Tax Clerk would get getting the 2.75% increase if this contract was signed before she was a permanent employee. He would like to see this decreased. question is why this clerk would get 2.75% increase if contract was signed before permanently increased. Would like to decrease. He mentioned the Conference and Dues line item#5350-04. Last year they budgeted for \$1500, and nothing has been expended so far. Anne Marie stated money has been expended; dues have still gone out. They have had classes for different things for National Treasury Institute for cashiers. She also signed up the new clerk for the cashier course. Of the \$1500 budgeted for last year, she has about \$500 left. P. Geary mentioned the Asst. Tax Collector increase; she is not fully understanding the roll as far as the union goes. When she was part of a union there were no merit raises. You got raises based on the contract. She would like to know if a person can receive a raise after a union contract has been signed. She is not familiar enough with this union. She would like this to be addressed with Vincent Farisello, the Town Attorney. The Asst. Tax Collector was hired at a certain amount and she feels this is opening a "can of worms". J. Slapikas stated he did have discussion with the Mayor, and he contacted Vin Farisello. The Mayor stated he agrees with P. Geary. They had this same situation re: Asst. Librarian and they only allowed the 2.75%. Anne Marie stated the Council can raise this issue and adjust. The Union discussed this in Feb. The Council does have the right to give the rate. She also mentioned that \$35,007 was adopted for the 2019-2020. Ann Marie also informed the Council the Salary

Review Subcommittee had raised this issue back last year at some point. She had approached the Union, talked to the Mayor and they both said because the budget already went to Town Meeting; to address this year. She asked Vincent Farisello and he contacted the Union Rep. Corey G. She also mentioned a memo. of understanding for this position. Her reason is more so to pay for the position. The job description that was previous was lacking in duties and responsibilities of this position. Because she was in the position that she had to hire a new asst. and new clerk she got very involved with the job descriptions and what is expected. She also does performance reviews. She received a verbal okay saying that if the Town Council approves the budget that we can simply add a memorandum of understanding to the Council for this position for this reason. M. Patchkofsky stated the Salary Review Sub-Committee met yesterday. They spoke at length with Anne Marie. There was a lot of information as to why she wanted to bring this to the Council. This isn't new. The Library has come to them multiple times and the Council did okay an additional increase in the past for Library. She doesn't have problem raising someone's pay if they are excelling at their job. She is in support of this; Pending they get something in writing from the Union that there is no problem with the Council moving forward with this. They need to also clarify if the Tax Clerk gets the 2.75% increase. L. Fitzgerald commented this brings us back to the point when we hire these positions; why wasn't she hired at a higher rate based on her job description. This was because there were no job descriptions. The Assistant should've probably been hired at a higher rate. We should fix these things as we go along. J. Slapikas stated the Asst. Tax Collector has been there over a year. He agrees with L. Fitzgerald; that makes a lot of sense. T. Graveline agrees with all commentary made. Especially getting statement in writing from the Union and the Town Attorney if we have to. She agrees that job descriptions are essential to establish rates of pay according to the level of responsibility. She does not feel comfortable voting on this tonight. She would rather postpone until we have something in writing that gives us the proper direction to go in. J. Slapikas stated that if we don't vote on something, he isn't looking to bring Dept. Heads back to another meeting. T. Graveline thinks Anne Marie did an excellent job in presenting her budget. She provided written and oral explanations of reason for every line item; this is very much appreciated. He reluctance in voting tonight is based on having guidance from the Attorney and Union. atty and union. She doesn't think we should require her to be at another meeting.

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by P. Geary to postpone the vote on the Tax Collector budget line item#5350 until the point in time we have written statements from the Town Attorney and the Union. **Unanimous.**

T. Graveline would just like it done right. J. Slapikas stated he pushes things, so they get done in a timely manner; he does not just push the budget. Anne Marie mentioned that she will have a surplus in the Tax Clerk line item at end of this year because she hired her in October not Sept. She also didn't hire her at the highest rate she originally thought. She will probably have a \$3000 surplus in that line item. However, she will need a transfer into her Asst. line item because she had some overtime when she was being quarantined due to Covid exposure and the Tax Clerk couldn't be left alone. J. Slapikas stated if you need to move an amount from one to another, she just needs to put it on paper bring to the Mayor to bring to the Council and they will discuss at that point. She did a great job as far as everything she has done. T. Graveline reiterated there are two pieces we are looking for. The 2.75% increase for the clerk as well as the ability to raise the Asst. Clerk salary by 13%.

- **Benefits & Insurance-Line item #6200**-The Mayor stated this increased 1.5% in the Union contract. They did change to Anthem CMS Blue Cross. He referred to page 31 of the booklet that explained FMLA. He also mentioned page 32. When we joined the MERS was 3%, then it went up to 4% then 5% then 11% and now it is 16.44%. He is surprised he hasn't gotten anything from CCM or Cost regarding this. P. Geary asked if we review each line item one at a time. The Mayor stated there a total of 20 Town Employees on the Medical Ins. The Mayor explained the cost is depending on single person, a couple, or a family. There was a \$16725. This is through the State ran through the Comptroller's Office. The Mayor referred to page 5 of the budget and page 29 in the booklet. Because we are on state insurance they are raising insurance by counties. There is a 4% increase. The Mayor increased this line item by 3.5% because the employees had a raise. P. Geary asked if the Town has done any kind of comparison shopping with other insurance companies to see if anyone's in the same ballpark at this point. J. Slapikas excused himself at 7:22 p.m. S. Pilat, Vice Chair took over the meeting for the time being. S. Pilat agrees we get a comparison from a few other companies. The Mayor stated it has to be equal or better than the Union. P. Geary stated the fact we are paying so much; We ought to give some other people opportunity to bid. The Mayor stated he will make a few calls. He will call the insurance broker to check with other companies. Nothing can be changed until the next union contract. T. Graveline stated it seems to her since the bid procedure is anything over \$5000 we should to solicit these comparisons. In the Union Contract we can change medical as long as we maintain the level of quality that we currently have. The Council asked about specific insurance coverage; Deductibles etc. The Mayor stated he doesn't know but he will get the numbers. T. Graveline

agrees with P. Geary to do a comparison shop if only to confirm we are getting a good rate and not just assuming that we are. S. Pilat stated he usually gets a number of quotes from different insurance agents. This would have to be looked at fairly closely; this is the job of the insurance broker. The Mayor reviewed further line items. P. Geary asked how many people are on the supplemental insurance for retirees. The Mayor stated 3. Chairman Slapikas re-joined the meeting at 7:33 p.m. The Mayor stated every employee gets dental along with medical. T. Graveline asked. Retirees do not get dental. The Mayor also stated that all 20 employees get life insurance and disability. J. Slapikas stated he agrees with looking into other insurance companies. This needs to happen for next budget season; It isn't going to change now. He agrees with everyone comments. M. Patchkofsky thinks we can start shopping now. She asked if we look into insurance then go to the Union. J. Slapikas agrees right now is time to look into it. T. Graveline this won't go in effect until Dec 1st or Jan 1; open enrollment. If we get a lower quote and we go with a different carrier come Jan 1 we still have 6 months of savings in this current budget year. She agrees now is the time to get an RFP out there. They just need to know what we have and be able to match it. K. O'Leary asked if there is anything that stops us from making a medical coverage change. Can we do it midway through the year? J. Slapikas stated that there is nothing to stop us. K. O'Leary also asked if we have to get union approval to make a change if its equal medical coverage. S. Pilat stated we do not have to as long as it's "equal". T. Graveline stated the new union contract is not on the Town website; the previous one is. The Mayor read union contract briefly, it states the Town may change insurance carriers if the plan is substantially equal. M. Pathkofsky agrees with K. O'Leary but in good faith we should inform Union to keep lines of communication open. S. Pilat agrees; they should look it over before we actually make a change. We wouldn't be get getting union approval. just showing it is "as good". T. Graveline asked about 8 active participants under public works but there are 9 employees. The Mayor stated the Asst. Public Works Director is not on there. There are 4 retired who aren't on the same union contract. They have retiree plans from MERS. They received \$2000 a year for 5 years then they are done with the benefit and get retirement from the State. T. Graveline mentioned page 32. The recent files show 8 active and 4 retired. Why are they getting paid \$130 admin. Cost for all 8 people. The Mayor clarified they do have MERS accounts but the Town has nothing to do with the retiree accounts any longer. T. Graveline asked if there are any Town Employees not covered by social security. The Mayor stated no.

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to approve line item #6200 in the amount of \$791,825. **Unanimous.**

- **Other if Time Warrants**

- The Mayor mentioned line item #6750 Workers Comp decreased. There is a new line-item; Police Liability. The Legislature voted to take away the liability for the police officers. The Towns now pays \$6 per Police Officer per month towards a Police Organization. This goes towards an account in the case that a Police Officer gets sued or goes to court. The insurance for all Town buildings are at "replacement value". They aren't just insured for a certain amount. There was a case 15-18 years ago when there was a fire at the Town Garage and they insurance did cover it at replacement value. T. Graveline asked for clarification on page 38-39. There are no column headings; What do the 3 columns of numbers indicate. The Mayor will get clarification tomorrow and let them know. T. Graveline referred to page 34 of the booklet-Cyber Liability Insurance. The Mayor stated that all towns have this on their insurance; it is not a separate policy-. T. Graveline asked why Workers Comp. went down. He stated there were less injuries in the last year and a half or 2 years. There were a few terrible years. K. O'Leary mentioned the Police Liability. It is for personal misconduct for the officer. We are paying a portion to a police organization. This amount is our premium. He asked if this is in their Union Contract. The Mayor stated yes it is. M. Patchkofsky would like to recommend the Pension and Benefits subcommittee changes their scope to benefits and insurance. The amount of money for insurance makes up a significant portion of our budget. If we were all educated on changes and details throughout the year; at budget time we wouldn't have to take time to figure out how to make sense of it all. P. Geary stated that when this committee began it was called the Pension Board, established by an ordinance then it became the Pension and Benefits Committee, and they did deal with health ins. Then the Chairman at the time informed the Committee it really should just be the Pension Committee. This particular year they have had difficulty with communication with the representative that handles pension. The Pension Committee does need another democratic member. J. Slapikas agrees with what Megan has brought up to the table. We should it back so the Committee can deal with insurance as well. He wants to make sure we are looking for what's best for the people. The Pension Committee should plan a meeting soon and have it resolved.

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to approve line item# 6750 Insurance in the amount of \$350,176 for 2021-2022.

- *Zoning Board of Appeals* line item #5100.
Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to approve line item #5100 Zoning Board of Appeals in the amount of \$2000 for 2021-2022. **Unanimous.**
- *Planning and Zoning* line item 5600.
Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by T. Graveline for discussion and a vote. There was an increase in Meetings and Seminars. Chairman Graveline is anticipating some more costs in supplies. T. Graveline stated that it seems Planning and Zoning is the only board and commission that has a supplies line. Don't all supplies come from Mayor's closet. The Mayor stated most supplies do; but they use some different things. T. Graveline asked what their supplies are. M. Patchkofsky stated we should get more details like we ask for each dept. She would like to keep the budget the same as last year with the option to revisit. J. Slapikas agrees leave it same as last year.
Motion amended by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to keep the Planning & Zoning budget for line item #5600 the same as last year. P. Geary stated why don't we just communicate with them on what supplies are for and what conferences and seminars they are looking to attend.
Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by S. Pilat to approve with a no increase. L. Fitzgerald stated he would like to see \$450 stay in. He thinks they will definitely use it.
M. Patchkofsky rescinded her motion.
Motion unanimous to approve line item #5600 in the amount of \$7150.

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by T. Graveline to eliminate the Supplies line item #5600-02 and approve the budget for Planning and Zoning at \$6950. **Unanimous.**

The Mayor will reach out to people tomorrow for Saturdays Budget Workshop and will let us know who will be attending.

J. Slapikas wants the agenda done tomorrow so we know who we are expecting to be at meeting. He would also like to clean up some stuff at Saturdays meeting.

J. Slapikas reminded the Council Thursdays meeting includes an Executive Session for the charter issues. Anything discussed in Exec. Session stays with the people attending it only.

T. Graveline asked if the Town Atty. is aware of that the agenda states the Exec. Session is for personnel issues. She feels this is not appropriate. J. Slapikas stated the Town Atty. is aware and agrees with how it is written.

Correspondence:

Agenda, Info. from Library, Info. from Mayor for Zoning Regulation with State of CT. SB1024 Info., Addendum that Town will sign.

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to accept the correspondence and place on file. **Unanimous.**

Public Participation: (5 Minute Time Limit) - none

Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. **Unanimous.**

Jeff Slapikas
Chairman

PROSPECT, CONN
 TOWN CLERKS OFFICE
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 Thompson, J. Anderson
 TOWN CLERK