

**Prospect Town Council
Special Virtual Budget Workshop
Unapproved Minutes
March 29, 2021**

Chairman Slapikas called to order the Special Budget Workshop of the Prospect Town Council @ 6:01 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.

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

Council Members Absent: none

Guests: Mayor Chatfield, Marianne Byrne-Registrar of Voters & Katie Blinstrubas Registrar of Voters

The Mayor stated that he will have a statement to read on Wednesday 3/31/21 meeting. He also requested a transfer placed on that agenda as well.

Statement from Council Chairman:

- Chairman Slapikas stated that their time is valuable; when something is scheduled, he is not very happy when it doesn't happen, last minute. (Fire Dept. & Comm. on Aging)
- The Chairman also read a letter that will be placed into correspondence at the next meeting once all Council Members have a copy. On March 26, 2021 at 4:56 a.m. misinformation was posted stating the Mayor and the Republican Town Council Chair failed to follow Charter rules for signing of checks. The statement on social media is misleading and incorrect. He is bipartisan and works well with all Council members for the best interests of the taxpayers. He thanked the Council, the Mayor and the taxpayers and asked them to consider the facts pertaining to this issue.

The Chairman opened Public Participation: none (He will revisit before adjourning)

Budget Discussion:

- **Fire Department-rescheduled**
- **Election and Registrars-line item #5150:** *Marianne Byrne & Katie Blinstrubas-Registrar of Voters.*

The Mayor commended them on how the last election was handled. The salaries line item stayed the same. Election Workers and Deputies decreased by \$11,500. They are not anticipating a primary and there will not be a Presidential election. Supplies increased by \$4000. They have maxed out on the space for their filing system. They need fireproof locked filing cabinets. They have 3 of these, however only 1 of the 3 can lock. They have had a locksmith out to look at them and they cannot be repaired. Tabulators and Programming decreased because there is no Presidential election so there aren't as many expenses. Food for Elections increased. During last year they did not feed people due to Covid. Conf. and Training increases. Last year they did not attend any in person conferences and no one went to any training. Their line item has a total decrease of \$10,000. Katie asked the Council to remove Election Printing (for official ballots/EDR) from Adv. & Printing in the Mayor's budget and put into the Election and Registrars budget. Then put a line item for absentee ballots into the Town Clerk's budget.

Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by R. Blanc to discuss and possibly take action on line item #approve.

M. Patchkofsky asked how they differentiate the line item #5150. Katie clarified that the entire \$3000 is for official ballots and EDR (election day registration) ballots. This does not include any monies for absentee ballots. Katie estimates a total of \$6600 needed for absentee ballots. The Town Clerk should be the person that verifies the amount needed. Due to Covid they needed to order 100% ballots.

P. Geary questioned the cost of the bio-proof cabinets. Katie stated, they are extremely expensive; approx. \$4000. P. Geary asked the Mayor if the State has a program where they have used equipment for sale at a discount. The Mayor stated he is not aware of any. There are furniture companies in the area that do. P. Geary asked what else is included in supplies. Katie stated standard office supplies, ink, envelopes etc. P. Geary asked if each dept. is buying their own supplies. The Mayor stated he has cartridges for printers in his cabinet. They are trying to standardize everything. They do use the Mayor's printing paper. Stamps are also not in their budget. T. Graveline mentioned Adv. and Printing #5700-00. Is there any legal notice that is published by the Registrar of Voters? Katie stated not anymore. M. Patchkofsky stated it's nice to see a significant decrease in this line item. If things are going down, is there room for other things to go down? If we aren't expecting primaries, wouldn't printing material etc. decrease? Katie clarified the \$9600 is not what they proposed; they proposed \$3000. That line item fluctuates based on the Presidential election schedule. Chairman Slapikas asked if all their bills have been paid from this election. Katie stated yes, they have. R. Blanc asked if the existing cabinets are in good shape. If so and they don't lock can a padlock be installed? J. Slapikas stated he is not sure; however, any drilling into the cabinets may affect the fire proofing. T. Graveline clarified, the filing cabinets are fireproof, but they do not lock correctly. Katie stated that two others do not work. They use one of them for

storing extra supplies etc. The cards by law, must be under fireproof lock. T. Graveline stated she agrees they need at least 2 more locking fireproof cabinets to get through the next several years. Katie stated they can't throw out cards unless someone has been off for 5 years or more. J. Slapikas stated he has no problem with getting new filing cabinets; used or new. T. Graveline would like to have all the Adv. & Printing in one separate category. She suggests adding category 5700-01 Election Reg. of voters then add 5700-02 Absentee ballots for Town Clerk. She would like to leave it all in one section of the budget. Originally, the Registrar of Voters wanted this line item taken out of their budget. M. Patchkofsky does not think they should go without new filing cabinets until July 1st. She recommends the Registrars working with the Mayor to see if there is room to buy one. Katie stated they had already talked about something along those lines. Katie clarified they are asking for only 1 fireproof cabinet, not 2. M. Patchkofsky asked if we can keep food for elections the same. Katie reiterated that they did not feed the election workers like they normally do this past year. It is hard to get election workers and they try and treat them well. J. Slapikas stated they will have about \$700 surplus plus \$2600 in Election Material. He recommends asking for a transfer in those line items to purchase a cabinet. T. Graveline asked if there have more expenditures since Dec. They have only spent \$45,000 out of \$77,000 budget. Katie stated salaries will come from that line item as well as the canvas and the virtual conference in May. They will have some money left; but the majority will be paid out in payroll. T. Graveline asked her to quantify what they have left right now and anticipated expenditures going forward. She wants to make sure they have what they need to do their jobs properly. J. Slapikas asked if election workers and deputies get paid. Katie stated yes they do. He questioned why we are feeding them if they are getting paid. Also, we get donations from Oliver's/Labonnes. Katie explained they work at a minimum 15-16-hour days. We ask that people stay on premise and feeding them is an incentive. Some get paid minimum wage, some a little more. It is a very long day and we want to keep the poll workers in the polls. She also mentioned she has been doing this since 1997 and food has never been donated. The Mayor stated this has been discussed at every budget session for decades and the line item is still there. P. Geary likes the idea of adding a line item to #5700 Adv. & Printing account rather than establishing a new line item under the Registrars and Town Clerks budget. L. Fitzgerald mentioned that Adv. & Printing for the Registrars is already there; so the line item being added would be for the Town Clerk for absentee ballots. R. Blanc stated J. Slapikas made a good point; \$1500 is a lot of money to pay for food during the elections. Katie stated they usually offer a buffet style hot meal for lunch and sandwiches in the evening. They usually have about 40 people working.

Motion unanimous to approve line item #5150 Elections & Registrars in the amount of \$66,206. J. Slapikas thanked Katie and Marianne for their time.

- **Commission on Aging-rescheduled**

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to add line item #5700-02 *Absentee Ballot/Town Clerk* for \$4000 and amend line item #5700-01 to read *Election Material/ROV* and keep that at \$3000. This would make line item #5700 total budget \$24,000. **Unanimous.**

Legal Fees-line item #5450 page 2

Motion made by S. Lusas Kolodziej, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to discuss and possibly take action on line item #5450 Legal Fees in the amount of \$100,000. L. Fitzgerald asked if \$100,000 is enough because we have gone over the last few years. We have already spent \$61,000 as of Dec. The Mayor stated he is probably right. There are going to be 4 union negotiations. They did get rid of a very large case that cost about \$45,000. He is not sure what will come of the Zoning item being discussed by the State. L. Fitzgerald was thinking conservatively \$120,000. J. Slapikas asked if this item needs to go out to bid. The Mayor stated no, the attorney is his appointment. J. Slapikas agrees with L. Fitzgerald. He would recommend \$120,000-\$125,000. They have FOIA etc. The attorneys seem to be getting involved more and more. K. O'Leary stated that all the past years are higher than 100,000 the reality is the union contracts are going to take place and a big case could come up. He agrees with \$120-\$125,000. This still may not be enough. T. Graveline agrees that we need to increase this line item. She can't remember a time they didn't go over it. K. O'Leary asked if they can potentially overbill because its there to spend. J. Slapikas stated he doesn't think that would be the case. T. Graveline clarified that there is an hourly rate for the attorney and not a stipend. The Mayor stated that the attorney is paid hourly. There is a contracted wage every year.

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by T. Graveline change line item #5450 Legal Fees to \$125,000. **Unanimous.**

Correspondence: place on file

- Agenda
- Reg. of Voters Budget Proposal

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by P. Geary to accept the correspondence and place on file. **Unanimous.**

Public Participation: (5 Minute Time Limit) – none

Motion made by S. Lusas Kolodziej, seconded by R. Blanc to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. **Unanimous.**

Jeff Slapikas
Chairman

Prospect, Conn
Town Clerks Office
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2021 MAR 31 AM 8:56
Mayor & Clerk
TOWN CLERK