

**Prospect Town Council
Special Virtual Budget Workshop
Unapproved Minutes
March 31, 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.

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, Bill Lauber, Fire Chief, Mike Guastaferrri, Asst. Chief & Kyle Tournas, Fire Dept. Treasurer.

Mayor's Statement

- Mayor Robert Chatfield read a statement he wrote to the Council. It will be placed on file. In summary he mentioned the check writing that was done by someone other than the Town Treasurer. He assured Prospect Residents that all financial transactions have been conducted with proper authority. He thanked Kristine Carasone and stated that at no time has she engaged in any improper conduct. He is proud of her service. He explains that there was confusion over her duties. She was appointed Deputy Treasurer by the Treasurer Jan. 8, 2021. She was also asked to serve as Assistant to the Treasurer. She was authorized to carry out all duties of the Town Treasurer including check writing. The Mayor stated that he did not convey her appointment to the Council. She has since resigned her position as Deputy and Assistant to the Treasurer. The Republican Town Committee will appoint a Treasurer very soon. The Mayor also explained that all checks have been counter signed by him in accordance with the Town Charter. He apologized for any confusion.
- The Mayor requested the Council move "transfers" to after the budget discussion.

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by M. Patchkofsky to move transfers to after the budget discussion. **Unanimous.**

Mayor's Report

Budget Discussion:

- **Fire Department-line item#6600**

Chief Lauber referred to the letter he submitted to the Council. He stated their budget is straight forward. They implemented QuickBooks. He stated the lease purchase program on SCBA was paid off last July. The salaries increase is 2.75%. There was an increase in some EMS expenses. Prices have at least doubled due to Covid for supplies like gloves etc. They did receive some donations from FEMA and mass distribution. The fleet is aging. They have had a truck out for repair for about 2 weeks; their remaining apparatus budget will be spent. The truck has frame rust and fuel tank rust. The rescue truck is almost 30 years old. The total recommended budget has been decreased by \$2247; from \$470,058 to \$467,811.

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by R. Blanc to discuss, and possibly take action on line item #6600 Fire Protection.

P. Geary complimented the whole Fire Dept. She has been totally impressed by the job they have done during this time of Covid. She is particularly impressed with their response to the medicals. She is very grateful and very impressed for their service. She asked what is involved in the administrative office. B. Lauber explained that most of that is Debbie's salary; the rest covers some association fees. They are part of a few group organizations. This opens them up to other routes, access to training info. etc. This line item also includes a \$2000 petty cash account. He uses that money for supplies and drill refreshments; approximately \$100 a week. P. Geary asked how many hours Debbie works in the office. B. Lauber stated 20 hours/week. P. Geary asked what the Quarter Master Dept. is. Bill explained that in the past it was listed as gear and equipment. That is their "turnout gear"; helmets, gloves, boots, Class-A dress uniform. They also started issuing EMS Class-B uniforms. P. Geary stated that the SCBA budget went down quite a bit. She asked how much each air pack costs. Bill stated between \$5,000-\$6,000. They try to buy 4 or so per year. The rest of that budget covers batteries, repairs, flow tests, bottle tests and maintenance. P. Geary congratulated and welcomed the new officers. R. Blanc questioned \$5200 a year on refreshments on Thursday nights. Chief Lauber explained they have 40-50 people in attendance on Thursday nights. R. Blanc asked why they have to feed everyone. B. Lauber explained these people are volunteer. R. Blanc also asked about the \$10,000 for building improvements. B. Lauber stated they are looking to repair the floor soon. R. Blanc asked if they will need more than \$10,000. B. Lauber explained they just spent the 2020-2021 portion. He will have another project to do before July of 2022. L. Fitzgerald mentioned just transferring \$3000 into this line item. He asked if he is sure \$10,000 is enough. Chief Lauber stated he thinks \$10,000 is a good amount. Next year might be a different story. They are forming a truck committee to spend 8-9 months or so doing some research into replacing another truck. Next March they will probably be looking to replace one of their trucks. Squad is 20 years old, and the rescue truck is 30 years old. L Fitzgerald appreciates what he has done including implementing QuickBooks. He stated they do a great job, and they are going to need the

equipment and replacement trucks. T. Graveline echoes P. Geary sentiments. She stated the Council truly appreciates all they do. The letter Chief Lauber wrote to go with their packet was well done. She mentioned \$18,000 for building/property repairs and maintenance. What else is needed other than the bunkroom? B. Lauber stated this also includes maintaining the property at 2 Center Street where the old firehouse was: Monument and property upkeep. This amount also includes cleaning supplies for washing the apparatus floor. They also try to replace a piece of furniture here and there. Ex: a couch or chair. This includes their garbage bill as well. He also had mentioned to the Council when the bunkroom was discussed; they are looking to replace the lockers to make sure everyone gets one. The next project needed is redoing the apparatus floor. The concrete/epoxy is starting to chip; it needs a refresh. T. Graveline asked when the current building was completed. Chief Lauber stated 1998.

Motion to approve line item#6600 Fire Protection in the amount of \$467,811 **unanimous**.

- **Commission on Aging-line item#7650 \$309,795.**

Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by K. O'Leary to discuss and possibly take action on line item#7650 Commission on Aging. Lucy Smegielski, Senior Center Director stated the budget is straight forward. Most of the increase is in salaries. There was a decrease in the elderly nutrition program. They cut nutrition meals that came into the Senior Center. People seemed to like the meals prepared by the girls in the kitchen. The prepared meals they order weren't worth the money for the number of people coming in. There are 2 girls in the kitchen that make the meals. P. Geary complimented the way Lucy has kept connected with the seniors in all different forms; Phone calls, letters of encouragement and positivity, meals to seniors who have been stuck in their homes. P. Geary compliments her and the staff. P. Geary asked where in the budget the money for providing meals comes from. Lucy stated the meals come out of the activity fund. The Mayor stated people are donating items for meals. Lucy stated they had money donations more towards the beginning of the pandemic; They still get food donations. People either donate to the food bank or to the food being prepared for seniors. P. Geary asked about the mini-bus driver line item #7650-09; there is no 2.75% increase recommended. Lucy stated this must be an error. \$26 needs to be added to this line item. P. Geary asked if Lucy is the "Municipal Agent". Lucy stated yes she is. They meet twice a year and she has not put a bill in yet. They usually meet 4 times per year; nothing is being held on the State level. P. Geary asked if Lucy is still doing the cleaning. Lucy stated she does still do the cleaning. She will have one of the girls help her do some things to keep them busy. They have been cleaning things that she never had the time to do. Example: vents, downstairs. P. Geary asked if she knows when they will be opening for activities. Lucy is planning for April 13th to open for Bocci which takes place outside. She also wants to start up the exercise classes outside; She gets a lot of calls asking her when she is opening. She will be opening as much as she could outside. She stated the problem is they still require 6 feet between people not tables. So, if she started up cards again, inside, each player would have to be 6 feet apart. They also still must wear masks. The CDC did say if they are vaccinated they do not need to wear masks or be 6 feet apart, but this is for private settings only. They can handle the cleaning and disinfecting. T. Graveline agrees with P. Geary. Lucy has done a great job supporting the elder populations. She has heard nothing but compliments. T. Graveline mentioned \$48,000 in the activity account #7650-04. As of Dec 31, 2020, about \$7000 was spent. She asked Lucy what she is anticipating as an amount that will go unspent in the activity account. Lucy stated she uses this fund for the meals they provide. Also, venues are starting to book events, shows, trips etc. All these venues required deposits ahead of time. She has already talked to places that they usually go to. The deposits are refundable if the venue doesn't open. She spoke with Seven Angels, the Bushnell and Ridgefield Playhouse. T. Graveline stated she estimates there will be a \$20,000 surplus. She explained the Council is looking to use the surplus from this year to offset what they may need next year. Lucy explained that once she opens, she will need to restock on everything. She can get the Council a list of what she will need when she does open up. The Mayor stated it would better to look at this after the public hearing. Lucy stated she will have the numbers for the Mayor by April 19th. She will sit down and figure out exactly what she will need from this year's budget and what if any surplus she will have. J. Slapikas reiterated on what the Council is trying to do. They are asking each department with a surplus to commit those funds to their next year's budget.

Motion amended by M. Patchkofsky & K. O'Leary to approve Commission on Aging line item# 7650 with a new amount of \$309,821 due to the \$26 increase on line item#7650-09. **Unanimous**.

- **Animal Control-line item#7700**

Motion made by R. Blanc, seconded by K. O'Leary to discuss and possibly take action on line item #7700 in the amount of \$17,882. The Mayor stated the salary increased by 2.75%. He did decrease call outs by \$250 because call outs have dropped. He also decreased equipment and community outreach. He mentioned the adoption rate is very good. P. Geary asked if there are 2 Animal Control Officers. The Mayor stated there is one and then one backup. The primary officer is on duty 15 hours per week. He is doing patrols during that time. The Mayor stated they aren't getting as many phone calls than when they were in with the region. The Animal Control Officer is a retired Police Officer. P. Geary asked where equipment is kept. The Mayor stated it is kept in the back of the car or in the Police Station. He mentioned rabies immunization clinics. They have worked with Prospect Vet. Dr. Gruszka in the past. He isn't sure when the last one was held; he will look into it. The mandated dog impoundment notices in the newspaper are included in the Advertising and Printing budget. There hasn't been a dog impounded in quite a while. K. O'Leary asked for clarification. Where are the animals boarded if impounded? The Mayor stated we use the Prospect Vet. This is a lot easier and less expensive.

Motion to approve line item #7700 Animal Control in the amount of \$17,882 **unanimous**.

- **Town Buildings-Line Item #6100**

Motion made by L. Fitzgerald, seconded by R. Blanc to discuss and possibly take action on line item #6100 Town Buildings in the amount of \$631,493.

The Mayor explained that this line item includes all town buildings except the Library. He referred to the information booklet which explains everything that is included in this line item. It includes all the maintenance, repairs etc. This line item now includes the Community Center. There are 25 electric meters in town and 3 traffic lights. Phones and electricity are on a State bid price. This includes heating on all buildings, maintenance and oil as well as the generators. There is an increase in salaries. They try and get as many grants as they can. They installed LED lights as well as automatic lights. This was a big savings for the Town Garage. The Mayor stated he tries to save everywhere they can. J. Slapikas asked the Mayor if he can submit any signed contracts to the Council in the future. L. Fitzgerald mentioned that only \$30,000 has been spent for electricity as of Dec. L. Fitzgerald stated there will probably be some money leftover in that line item due to the closures. Mayor Chatfield stated that all outdoor activities are starting up soon. P. Geary thinks L. Fitzgerald is on the right track. The outside courts and fields weren't lit for a year. There should be an expected savings in that account. T. Graveline stated the Council has alluded to all of these savings in different line items. We are looking to quantify at some point. They need to make a list of committed funds. The Council is trying to keep money down for the taxpayers. J. Slapikas stated his thought is they finish the budget in the next week. They will need more accurate numbers on all the surplus line items. The Governor has stated public hearings and town meetings do not have to take place. The Council still needs to get a better grip on line items for every dept. T. Graveline agrees. It can be partially done before the Public Hearing; the sooner the better. M. Patchkofsky agrees we need to have what the Council feels is the final number before it's presented to the public. They are trying to take advantage of not being open. They are not planning to cut anything; they are simply moving money from this year and committing it to next year. T. Graveline concurs. By public hearing time there should be a very good understanding of what will be used from this current budget into next year's budget. She does believe the public needs to hear that. P. Geary agrees. For example: the Senior Center didn't require the amount of cleaning as usual since no one has been there.

Motion to approve line item #6100 Town Buildings in the amount of \$631,493 **unanimous**.

The Mayor stated the last line items are Building Inspector, Town Clerk, Treasurer and The Mayor's Office. Chairman Slapikas mentioned trying to complete these last 4-line items at Tuesdays meeting; possibly starting the meeting earlier. M. Patchkofsky mentioned including recaps on other line items if they are discussed on a night that it is listed on the agenda.

- **Treasurer- line item #5400 \$13,800.**

Motion made by M. Patchkofsky, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to discuss and possibly take action on line item #5400 Treasurer in the amount of \$13,800.

The Mayor stated at this point he would recommend dropping the Assistant to the Treasurer line item. M. Patchkofsky mentioned the Salary Review Committee has met to discuss this. She agrees with the Mayor. They were looking to present a proposed draft job description for Treasurer. The Treasurer's job is more a financial overview of all financial responsibilities for the Town. They were going to suggest and recommend a decrease. There are other positions in town that take care of tasks that were originally supposed to be done by the Treasurer. They are going to propose a range of \$5000-\$7500. This would be more of a stipend position as opposed to a salary. L. Fitzgerald asked about the duties that are no longer the Treasurers responsibility. Are we talking about the Accounting Asst. in the Mayor's office? If so, those duties would have to be added to that positions job description. M Fitzgerald mentioned that the Municipal Accounting Agent has a significant role in the financial aspect. The compensation needs to be there. R. Blanc thinks we should discuss this line item at a later date until they get all the information from the Salary Review Committee. J. Slapikas feels this is the most important committee we have at the moment besides pension and benefits. They have met a tremendous amount of time. He has listened to their meetings and they come up with great ideas. R. Blanc asked to table this line item.

Motion made by R. Blanc, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to table line item #5400 Treasurer. The Salary Review Committee is meeting again on Monday. T. Graveline would like to have, in advance, the accounting she has asked for a few times from the Town Clerk's office. She is looking for staffing and elections expenditures. They do not appear as a line item in the Town Clerk's budget. She would like to know what was spent, specifically for the Nov. 2020 election as well as a breakdown for the salaries for that office and from which line items they were paid from. We received reimbursement of \$7600 from federal for the election. She would like to know how this money was spent. L. Fitzgerald asked if the Town Clerk will be available to answer questions at Tuesday's meeting. The Mayor stated yes on the phone not video/computer. T. Graveline discussed scheduling another budget workshop. S. Lusas Kolodziej stated she can't attend Wed. of next week.

- J. Slapikas called on a Special Meeting Tues. night starting at 5 p.m. for a Budget Workshop. M. Patchkofsky stated that "commitment of funds" needs to be on the agenda so we can list out what everyone is thinking. This will give the Council enough time to inform the Dept. Heads of what they are going to take from the budget this year and commit to next year. R. Blanc cannot attend April 6th at 5 p.m.; 6 is better for him. J. Slapikas stated it isn't easy to balance the schedule of 9-10 people. He has been trying to submit the agenda 48-72 hours before a meeting in case there is an error. M. Patchkofsky asked if "extra budget discussion" can be added to the agenda so the public can voice their opinion. The Mayor stated this has always been done in the past. M. Patchkofsky stated she wants to make sure

the public knows what's going on. T. Graveline agrees with M. Patchkofsky, the more info. on the agenda the better. There should be a list of items to discuss. Every dept. has possible expenditure leftover that we want to commit.

- T. Graveline referred to page 11- She asked if Youth Summer Activities, Program Expense and Summer Concerts are all overseen by the Recreation Dept. The Mayor stated that summer concerts is the band for the car show. This does not include the regular weekly Wed. summer concerts. T. Graveline also mentioned Directors and Counselors. If these line items are in conjunction with the Board of Rec., she suggests moving them to their budget. This makes it more organized. She clarified that this doesn't change the numbers. She also recommended renaming Holiday Observances to Special Activities or something similar.

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by S. Lusas Kolodziej to move line item #7500-02 "Fun Week" in the amount of \$6000 to a new line item #7450-04 and rename it "Summer Week". Also move line item #7500-03 "Summer Concerts" in the amount of \$3000 to a new line item # 7450-05 and rename that "Summer Car Show". **Unanimous.**

Motion made by T. Graveline, seconded by L. Fitzgerald to approve line item #7500 "Youth Summer Activities" with a new total of \$25,000. **Unanimous.**

Motion made by S. Lusas Kolodziej, seconded by T. Graveline to rename line item #7450 "Holiday Observances" to "Special Events". S. Lusas Kolodziej and T. Graveline amended their motion to rename #7450 to "Town Wide Events". **Unanimous.**

J. Slapikas mentioned committing the unused funds from the Pumpkin Festival from this fiscal year to next. M. Patchkofsky asked about the Memorial Day Parade. The Mayor requested scheduling a Budget Workshop on April 19th to discuss commitment of funds. J. Slapikas mentioned that at the April 12th meeting the Council can discuss commitment of funds.

Transfers #03-31-2021-1 Total: \$26,500

- Auditor #5200 \$3500
- Legal Fees #5450 \$20,000
- Ice & Snow Contractors #7050-04 \$3000

Mayor Chatfield withdrew the transfer from tonight's meeting. The Council members did not receive a copy in advance.

Public Participation: none

Acceptance of Correspondence: Agenda, the Mayor's Statement and Chairman Slapikas' Statement from last meeting.

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

The Mayor wished everyone Happy Easter. The Easter Egg Hunt at Hotchkiss Field is Saturday at 11 a.m. He asked people to leave immediately afterwards as requested by Chesprocott.

Adjournment

Motion made by S. Lusas Kolodziej, seconded by R. Blanc to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. **Unanimous.**

Jeff Slapikas
Chairman

PROSPECT, CONN
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED FOR RECORD
2021 APR -5 PM 4:02
Margaret L. Anderson
TOWN CLERK