

Staff meeting notes 5-4-22

Present: Annemarie Sundgren, John Elsesser, Pam Rochette, Jeff Spadjinske, Lori Tollmann, Rachel Vertefeulle, Amanda Backhaus, Laura Stone, Bill Watkins, Eric Trott, Jim McLoughlin, Lesley Munshower, Steven Prattson, Carrie Zahner

Intro remarks – John Elsesser:

The budget failed at referendum. The Council will now need to make adjustments. Anticipate cuts to funding, the capital budget, and new initiatives. The process is to find out when the Council can get together, call a special budget meeting, another town meeting, another legal notice in the paper, etc. It will be a rush process. We will work out the timing this morning. It will be complicated by a lack of poll workers in late May. Departments may not be able to spend money over the summer. We must respect those that showed up to vote. There was a lot of confusion on social media, regarding library roofs and other things. The community already voted on the library, and the Council decided on the use of ARPA money. The social media chatter seemed very misinformed.

Highlights of 5/2 Town Council meeting – John Elsesser (minutes available at [this link](#)):

- Lifesaving awards presented in Audience of Citizens - Jim will discuss.
- Series of appointments were made - everyone recommended by the Steering Committee was appointed.
- Projects updates were given - see [memo](#) in the agenda packet.
- No big COVID updates. The numbers are getting worse in some ways. We continue to follow State guidance.
- Community project funding grants: We submitted four applications: sewer expansion, a water tower in the Village, Emergency Operations Center at Town Hall, and microgrid. The only one we have heard about is sewers – it looks like we might have a chance of getting that.
- Appointed auditors
- Approved fiscal management policy
- Approved budget transfers
- Approved funding to match grant for summer camp enrichment if needed
- Took action on hiring a new assessor – our recommended appointment was ratified
- Did not take action on the library agreement – they want to discuss further
- Took action on two other ARP arts grants
- Approved a one-year extension on the police union agreement on wages including some adjustments as to how seniority is applied.

Department Updates:

Town Manager's Intern – Pam Rochette:

This is Pam's week. We had the employee recognition ceremony at Dunkin Donuts on Friday. Pam is working to wrap up some other research projects before the end of the week.

Human Services – Annemarie Sundgren:

- Food distribution food is gone from the hallway. We had 32 participants in April drive thru and will do it again on 5/27. That session may be harder because we're still short staffed.
- Sneha has left for her new job. We are recruiting to fill her position.
- People are worried about mask mandates at the senior center with the change in positivity numbers. The rates are currently over 9%. We put back up the Plexiglas that had been removed. Brenda is back from leave. The candidate for the assistant position met there and took a test. We made an offer and she will start on 6/6.

- A couple of day trips scheduled at the senior center, to the New Britain Museum of American Art. We are opening it up to other towns. We would like to have the van full with 8-10 people. We currently have six. We will advertising differently for the June trip.
- We are taking applications for campership, and also getting requests for rental assistance. The State program is no longer taking applications and we have nowhere to refer people.
- We are taking appointments on Tuesdays & Thursdays for Renters Rebate.
- Oil assistance was extended until June.
- There is some new homeowners assistance related to COVID.
- We are working with CREC to schedule a community conversations meeting.
- Annemarie attended the baseball league's opening day. The presented Human Services with a \$500 check for food distribution. Lesley noted there is a new foundation in town called the Blake Foundation. The family lost their son in an accident. The foundation offers scholarships and money for field maintenance.

Building Office – Steven Prattson:

- A permit was approved for the digester project. We are waiting for the sand separation plans.
- Another large home is going in on Silver Street.
- We have been working with Eric for several weeks on prevention of the use of attic apartments at 1105 Main Street. We received another complaint from a tenant about a rental unit that needs repairs.
- The Bunker Hill house that hadn't gotten permits has done so, so work can be wrapped up
- Pool permits spiked during the pandemic. We will put something together for the community on pool safety.
- Monthly averages for permits is about 82. We are on target for that this month.
- The biggest complaint with contractors is still availability and cost.

Parks & Recreation – Lesley Munshower:

- We have the town-wide tag sale this week with 31 homes on the map. We are also providing info about other events happening around town that week including the food truck event.
- We are in the midst of hiring summer staff. We are short on lifeguard applicants.
- There is a kick-off to summer event and safety fair on May 14th from 9 AM -1PM in partnership with Human Services and Coventry Fire/EMS. We are working with DPW to make sure the park is in great shape.
- Summer camp registrations are underway and climbing.
- We are working with the protected spaces stewardship group for work parties.

Fire/EMS/EMD – Jim McLoughlin:

- We selected an EMT of the year and acknowledged 4 field training officers with a presentation ceremony and pizza celebration at the fire station.
- Monday night at the Town Council meeting we presented a civilian award for lifesaving actions in providing CPR until EMS personnel arrived. The EMS personnel were also presented with awards. The presentation was very touching. The patient was present to thank everyone for saving his life. This shows the importance of educating the public in CPR and stop the bleed.
- We are meeting with a clinician at noon today to discuss services for the peer support team.
- We signed off on the school safety plans after review with Ted Opendbrouw.
- We had a radio frequency that we were using, but negotiated its release for \$17k worth of radios, which has improved our ability to communicate with advanced technology.
- Jim attended the CCM Emergency Management Directors' annual conference.
- We are working with Parks & Rec to provide info for their grant and program delivery.

- Jim is working with Amanda on year end budget transfers.
- We are getting ready for the safety day and Memorial Day parade.
- We met with a new staffing firm to see if it might be possible to save on the EMT contract – the answer is no. John Elsesser noted that we are getting great value now. Jim said we continue to investigate ways to increase revenue.
- The new fire truck is expected in September. We await a timeline for the ambulance.
- Department 18 continues with leadership training - last night's topic was motivation.
- Work is being done on the Pelletier cell tower to upgrade for cell services. This affected our radio communications due to an antenna move. All work has been suspended due to the presence of osprey.
- Today is National Firefighters Day. If you see a fire fighter, please thank them for their service.

Tax Office – Carrie Zahner:

- The office mailed out 264 sewer assessment bills for the first installment
- Lien releases: 17 Real Estate, 20 COVRRA/Trash, 2 Sewer
- We are starting work for July billing.
- Our new staff person Susan Tischofer is working out very well.

Finance Office – Amanda Backhaus:

- A new assessor, John Preisner, is joining us in early June.
- We are working on budget, with additional calculations pending due to the failed referendum.
- We sent out budget transfers to certain departments. It is a good time to look to see if any money needs to be spent by the end of the year.
- We are changing our Cobra provider.
- Also looking to change custodial services to bring it in house.

Land Use – Development: Eric Trott:

- Work continues on the affordable housing plan community value statements. It will set the tone for some of the action. We are looking at a public hearing at the end of June for PZC adoption.
- We are working on the Boston Turnpike dental office property for zoning; wetlands was approved.
- We are interview marketing consultants next week for the 4-town econ vitality plan. We are working with UConn to get an intern MPA student – the first one didn't work out, so we're trying to find someone else.
- There is a meeting today with FEMA to talk about a grant to assist with some initiatives.
- We are co-sponsoring a Facebook "Tools for Business" workshop – it starts next week for 5 weeks.
- The acquisition of the So. River Road open space parcel was approved at the Annual Town Meeting. The closing is Friday and we are developing a game plan for public usage.
- Arts on Main is working with Lesley & the Arts Guild to put plans together for the event on Sept. 17.
- We expect a public hearing on Cassidy Hill Winery zoning issues soon.
- The Farmers Market 2022 season begins the first Sunday in June. We are working with Erica to get a part time market master.
- An invasive species management plan is being put together for Eagleville Lake.
- We submitted a request to DEEP to consider the Grace property as a State open space purchase.
- Cannabis regulations continue to be worked on by PZC. There is a July deadline on the retail moratorium.
- We are waiting for State response on a plan for work on the cabins and trees at Creaser Park.

- We are sending out funds for the ARPA cultural arts applicants, including Hayes Sculpture Fields, who is getting golf cart.

Public Works – Bill Watkins:

- We are in full swing with construction work. The top coat of pavement was applied on Hickory. On Juniper we will reclaim and put a binder course in, awaiting manholes to be raised.
- We are starting on Woodbridge with drainage work. We are having a hard time getting pipe, and the price has doubled from last year. We are scheduling cold in place recycling on Woodbridge in June.
- Tenant Tree is in town to work on Mark’s list of tree removals. The Town Council approved a transfer of money from the salt account which will help.
- Mark worked with the girl scouts and Lesley to plant trees in Patriots Park for Arbor Day. Two dogwood trees planted - Mark showed them how. Lesley said there is a video available. The trees were donated by a resident who owns a landscaping business. Bill said that Mark did a great job with this initiative. We will be looking to plant more trees around town. If you want trees let us know. Lesley said she thinks it would be a good tradition to continue around Arbor Day.
- We raised \$46k from the surplus equipment auction. Most of it is gone; we await a few items to be picked up.
- We continue with sweeping – we are done around the lake. We might not get to the whole town this year due to staffing shortages.
- Monica and her crew are working hard on fields to be ready for sports.
- We had Maintainer 1 interviews last week. We will be looking to hire one individual and hoping to fill the remaining summer laborer position from that list of candidates.
- We met with Eric on the Farmers Market at the Homestead and have a list of work to be completed.
- Our staff helped with the Human Services’ food box distribution last week and will continue as needed.

Police Department – Jeff Spadjinske:

- The department is dealing with multiple staffing shortage due to unfilled openings, mandatory training, and military commitments. Is requiring some forced overtime order ins. We are shifting some staff from nights to days to help alleviate the overtime. We are progressing with a candidate and hope to have an officer on board for field training by the end of the month.
- The Animal Control Officer was able to pick up some almost-new animal crates from CRCOG. We are going to retire some of the old ones. We were happy to get these at no cost. The ACO vehicle is out of service. We are getting repairs done by the end of the week.
- We received quite a few applications from very qualified candidates for the Marine Patrol position. We are setting up interviews and hope to have a new person onboard soon.
- We are working on the dock at Patriots Park to determine a new location.
- We are meeting with the program manager from United Services for support services to assist our citizens in crisis.
- We have a peer support meeting today. Our consultant sits down with officers one-on-one on a confidential basis to discuss any issues they might be having. He is retiring and we will be doing a recognition of his service.

Assessor’s Office – Rachel Vertefeuille:

- The income and expense reports are due back – we are sending reminders.
- We still need a few elderly applications and will be calling.

- We are thrilled to have JP starting as our new Assessor.

Town Manager – John Elsesser:

- We were approved to award the contract for the South Street road and sidewalk project.
- We are short-listed for the Daly Road project. This is a \$3.1 project including road improvements and sidewalks. We will know for sure the second week in June. It is a 100% grant except the town must cover engineering costs. We anticipate almost two years of design.
- We got the South Street and Swamp proposals to do design work. Although these grants are great for our town, in the short term we must come up with staff to oversee them, and pay for design work.
- The cost of materials is up on many projects; we have to come up with our share.
- The Library Board, reacting to the budget shortfall, came up with a \$172k emergency contribution from their endowment fund. This represents about a quarter of their funds. They didn't make the decision lightly but felt it was essential to move forward with the renovation project.
- We got over \$7k worth of money from the nip bottle collection. It goes into COVRRRA. We are supposed to use it in certain ways. Part of that can be used for education, picking trash up, etc. We might need to get the Conservation Commission to think about it. They had an Earth Day pick up where a lot of them were collected.
- We have a meeting with Frontier on Friday to learn their plans for fiber installation. They will offer up to 2 gigs. It may be a better option for us. Jim McLoughlin asked if there will be any options for phones in parks that will go to the PD. Annemarie Sundgren noted that Internet is very inconsistent at the senior center.
- John will not be here next Weds-Friday. He is attending the CIRMA RISC conference.