

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Special Meeting at 6:00 P.M. via Zoom video conferencing. Also in attendance were members of the Board of Finance and Board of Education, as well as department heads of town and education staff. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

1. Roll Call.

Council Members

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh
Mr. John Cavanna
Ms. Mary LaChance
Mr. Jacob McChesney
Mr. Whit Osgood {excused}
Ms. Jennifer Wang

a. Pledge of Allegiance *Led by Susan Karp*

2. Public Comment and Petitions pertaining to the Call.

Ms. Carroll read the written comment received, as listed on the Town website:

Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way West, urged approval of the renovation of Naubuc School, where her daughter participated in the open school system 36 years ago. Multiple generations have complained about the open classroom learning environment, which the school has dismissed as too expensive to address. It is time to end this educational experiment.

There were no comments via Zoom.

3. Special Business as contained in the Call.

a. Annual Capital Improvement Program Budget presentation and discussion.

Mr. Johnson began by noting that several projects which will be presented tonight have been discussed before at prior Town meetings. He provided an overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which is new this year. Glastonbury will receive \$10.2 million in two lifts: \$5.1

million was received in May 2021 and \$5.1 million will be received in May 2022. Allocation of the funds must be determined by December 31, 2024, and the monies must be spent by December 31, 2026. The US Treasury has issued their final rule, with a significant change that provides much greater flexibility for towns. They will offer an up to \$10 million revenue loss to use for governmental services (e.g., capital infrastructure and equipment) with streamlined reporting requirements.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the five-year history of the Capital Reserve Fund Transfer. In the past two years, the funding level has gone down while the cost of projects has gone up. In Fiscal Year 2023, which starts in July 2022, there is a projected \$8.04 million gap in funding. By the end of Fiscal Year 2027, that number is expected to total \$24.99 million. Factoring in \$8 million of ARPA funding, that would still leave the Town with a \$17 million shortfall.

Mr. Johnson explained that there are a total of 33 projects proposed to be funded by the Capital Reserve Fund and ARPA. This year, new projects are a larger portion than in previous years. He does not find it appropriate to use ARPA funding for design projects. Instead, his recommendation is to use those funds for projects pertaining to brick and mortar and capital improvements. He also tried to limit ARPA funds to projects that would be completed in one or two years, as well as those that fit the Treasury's description of allowable projects.

Within Infrastructure and Major Equipment Care and Maintenance, a total of 24 projects are proposed, with a total cost of almost \$6.5 million. About \$5 million of it would be funded by the Capital Reserve Fund and the rest by ARPA. Projects in this category include renovations and security improvements to the Town Hall/Academy and a system-wide roof replacement on municipal buildings. Ongoing public safety communications efforts will continue with a proposed \$380,000 this year.

Mr. Johnson noted that there is a new project to allocate funding for police site renovations. Chief of Police Marshall Porter presented a preliminary master plan to install fencing around the police department, to make the area safer for pedestrians who use it as a cut-through, while also protecting police equipment. Mr. Johnson clarified that this is an effort to come up with a concept plan that would be supported by the community. The plan would be presented to the Council to vote on at a future date.

Ms. Wang noted that \$40,000 is allocated towards this project for FY 2023, but nothing beyond that. She asked for a projected cost estimate for future years. Mr. Johnson explained that costs are difficult to predict now, but preliminary fencing estimates fall in the \$150-175,000 range. Mr. McChesney appreciates how this plan addresses pedestrian access for Main Street. He asked what the \$40,000 will be spent on. Mr. Johnson stated that master concept plans use broad stroke budgets based on experience. Nothing compels them to spend that full amount. Mr. Cavanna asked if the policed area will be off limits to the public when this project is completed. Chief Porter explained that the southeast portion of the building will be fenced in, but the north block and front facade facing Main Street will be accessible to the public.

Mr. Johnson reviewed a basic concept plan to replace the Animal Control Shelter. The project is proposed to be funded by \$50,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund and \$800,000 from ARPA

monies. Chief Porter stated that the building is not in compliance with statutes, so it needs to be replaced. They have tried to come up with as simple of a design as possible to keep costs down. Mr. Niland noted that the project cost is listed as \$500,000. Mr. Johnson explained that that was the initial estimate, but in consulting with architects, the projected cost was amended to a little over \$900,000. However, with some in-house funding, Mr. Johnson found that the number could be reduced a little. Mr. LaChance asked why this project was not on the radar last year. Chief Porter stated that the facility has needed repair for some time, but a recurrent drain problem has exacerbated the situation.

Mr. Cavanaugh will support this project. He asked if this will be placed in the same location as the current building. Mr. Johnson stated that it will be close to the existing building. They will have to seek out other facilities to use in the interim during construction. Ms. Susan Karp of the BOF asked if this is the best location for the shelter. Chief Porter stated that they have not looked at other locations. Mr. Johnson added that the shelter has been there since 1969, but they could identify other sites elsewhere. Mr. Cavanaugh suggested making the site larger to accommodate more dogs in the future.

Fire Chief Mike Thurz reviewed the continuing work on fire station renovations. Work remains to make all stations ADA compliant, as well as adding security cameras to facilities, and other maintenance work. The cost total of \$475,000 is proposed to be funded through ARPA. Ms. LaChance asked why last year's CIP budget did not project this high of a funding need. Chief Thurz explained that it is because of sticker shock. They hoped that the initial appropriation of \$475,000 would be enough, but it was not. The total final cost for updates and maintenance work will run close to \$900,000. Chief Thurz also noted that they will soon receive a FEMA grant to remove carcinogens in diesel exhaust from all four fire stations.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the road overlay program, which is consistent with previous years. This year's proposal is for \$1.8 million. Another project which will soon be subject to a public information hearing is the Main Street reconstruction project. A grant will fully fund the initiative, but \$216,000 is requested to match the budget with the grant, which is just shy of \$1.2 million. It is cost neutral to the Capital Reserve Fund. Other projects are \$40,000 to renovate and restore the Slocomb Dam and \$450,000 to upgrade four traffic signals throughout town. Town Engineer Dan Pennington explained that there needs to be a longer-term solution to resolve problems created by the dam. The other proposal is to replace the antiquated signal equipment on New London Turnpike in its entirety to enhance safety and increase pedestrian access.

Mr. Niland asked about the video detection equipment. Mr. Pennington stated that it is strictly for monitoring traffic flow, not recording activity. Ms. LaChance asked again about the discrepancy between estimates for last year versus this year. Mr. Pennington explained that construction costs have gone up significantly, and there are a limited number of contractors who do this work. Mr. Cavanaugh asked what other traffic signals are on the horizon for updates. Mr. Pennington replied that most of the other signals are in relatively good shape. Mr. Zeller asked if the intersection could be reconfigured slightly to ease the difficulties caused by the left turn. Mr. Pennington stated that all factors will be considered.

Mr. Johnson explained that two projects will be continued in the coming year: replacing heavy equipment (\$155,000) and sidewalk repair and maintenance (\$255,000), which is distinguished from new sidewalk construction. Ms. LaChance noted that used cars have gone up dramatically in price. She asked if the same has been true for construction vehicles. Mr. Johnson stated yes, there have been significant fluctuations. However, he believes that the price must go down, so he reduced the request in the operating budget. Two other projects which continue from prior years are the ongoing pavement restoration and overlay for both Town and school facilities, with a focus this year on Glastonbury High School and Smith Middle School (\$250,000), and an ongoing allocation for storm drainage improvement (\$100,000).

Mr. Johnson explained that \$100,000 is proposed for ongoing tree management to reduce liability from falling trees and tree limbs. This is the third year that the Town has funded this program. Ms. LaChance stated that the estimate has gone down from \$125,000 last year and a \$125,000 estimate for this year. Mr. Johnson explained that the annual allocation is moderated based on the work they can complete. He then noted that \$80,000 is proposed for public parks - largely for work on the pool at Addison Park - and \$150,000 is proposed through ARPA to support the Age-Friendly Glastonbury Initiative. Mr. Gullotta and Ms. Carroll would like to ensure that Welles Park is made a priority for improvements. Mr. Johnson stated that they are very mindful of that, and there is a plan to address it. Mr. Cavanna asked if there is a playground at Gideon Welles School. Superintendent Alan Bookman replied that a playground is in the works and is expected to be in place for next year.

Mr. Johnson explained that \$150,000 is proposed for continued improvements at Minnechaug Golf Course, particularly to the irrigation system. Ms. LaChance expressed concern at the jump in last year's line item from \$200,000 to this year's over \$1 million for funding over four years. Director of Parks and Recreation Lisa Zerio explained that, since last year, they have received numbers from the analysis which was conducted by the consultant. Ms. Karp asked about the annual revenue of the golf course. Mr. Johnson stated that it is about \$36,000, which will offset some of the ongoing maintenance costs. Mr. Gullotta is not fond of bonding but thinks that it might be a good idea for this project.

Mr. Johnson explained that the Town-owned Winter Hill Farm is experiencing deterioration. While there is a positive lease revenue and bids are being evaluated, current funding is not adequate to make repairs to the foundation. An additional allocation of \$175,000 is needed. BOE member Jenn Jennings asked to find out which year the farm was constructed because it may qualify for state funding. Mr. Johnson stated that they will investigate that.

Mr. Johnson explained that significant repairs have been made to Grange Pool in recent years, but the pool filter building needs to be replaced and accessibility needs to be expanded. \$145,000 is proposed for the building master plan and the handicapped accessibility upgrades. Mr. Cavanaugh asked what the extended life turned out to be when renovations were made. Ms. Zerio stated at least 15 years. Mr. Johnson explained that \$100,000 is proposed for renovations of the fountain and electrical repairs at Center Green. Mr. Cavanaugh asked who would construct the master plans at the Center Green. Mr. Johnson stated that it would likely be a landscape architect to help make the area more of an activity center.

Mr. Johnson explained that the former American Legion building at 1361 Main Street needs improvements for conversion to becoming town property. The cost estimate to upgrade the building is \$40,000. Additional fire protection and suppression work is needed at the Boathouse and Riverfront Park (\$150,000). Education will assist with funding. Mr. Cavanna asked if the Town has secured the roof of the boathouse. Mr. Johnson stated that they have had a hard time. While they have solutions to address it, they have not been able to acquire a contractor who can follow through on the work. Mr. Cavanaugh remarked that, last year, there was a preliminary plan for where the fire and police boats are. Mr. Johnson stated that he needs to review that plan again.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the Bulky Waste Closure Fund, which will continue this year with a \$50,000 allocation. Other ongoing projects include property revaluation (\$130,000) and Energy Efficiency and Sustainability, which will be funded \$80,000 from ARPA and \$75,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Gullotta asked how much electrical charging stations cost to install. Mr. Pennington stated around \$6000 per unit. Mr. Johnson reviewed other ongoing projects, such as Disaster and Emergency Readiness, which is suggested for \$200,000 through ARPA. He also noted that Phase 3 of the Main Street sidewalk repair will be coming to the Council in the next few weeks. \$150,000 is proposed for that, but there is potential for 100% grant funding.

Mr. Johnson explained that \$73,100 is in place for pedestrian and bicycle improvements at the Gateway Corporate Park. Ms. Wang asked why there were no estimates in the bicycle pedestrian improvements and sidewalk construction categories for the coming fiscal year, even though they were intended to be annual contributions. Mr. Johnson explained that several sidewalk projects are approved to go forward in the summer, so he did not think that they could design and add another project for 2022. Regarding bicycle pedestrian improvements, there is a sizable allocation available now from prior appropriations.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the approved site plan to construct four pickleball courts. Costs have gone up significantly since initially anticipated due to inflation and the pandemic. The proposal is for \$145,000 from ARPA monies to respond to the current bidding market, where the cost is now estimated at \$225,000. Mr. McChesney and Ms. LaChance are concerned that this project has ballooned from its initial purpose. Ms. Wang agreed and asked if there is a way to combine indoor and outdoor courts to save money. Mr. Johnson stated that there are no other single use pickleball courts in Glastonbury. Mr. Gullotta and Mr. Cavanna find the cost too expensive. Mr. McChesney asked to evaluate the demand for pickleball versus tennis in town. Ms. Zerio will report back with that information. Ms. Carroll also finds the escalating cost concerning, but she wants to be mindful of how this project and its placement near the Senior Center serves an important balance to the many activities that are funded for young residents in town.

Mr. Johnson then presented three new projects, with the caveat that there is no bright line between new and old projects. The first is the Williams Memorial wing of the Academy complex. The pandemic spurred a concern for greater Town meeting space, and this building could serve that purpose. There is a preliminary cost estimate of \$2.4 million, which could be funded through the following: \$150,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the final design and specifications and \$1.25 million from ARPA, with \$1 million funded in a second phase from either ARPA or in combination with the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Gullotta finds the room to be

a very important part of Glastonbury's history. While the building is not easily accessible and the price tag is high, he worries that if this project is not done now, then it never will be.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the Naubuc School classrooms project, which the BOE has proposed at \$3.2 million. Since ventilation is typically called out in ARPA money, he proposed that \$700,000 be funded from ARPA and the rest be funded by the Capital Reserve Fund. While the project would be eligible for 33% state funding, the ARPA funding may diminish that amount. Mr. Niland thinks that it makes more sense to fund this out of CIP because of the possibility of loss of revenue, should ARPA funds be used. Mr. Zeller asked if this project could be paid for entirely out of ARPA. Mr. Johnson stated yes, it is eligible. However, if the state indicates that they cannot get reimbursement for ARPA money, then they could be penalizing other projects that would have qualified instead.

BOE Chairman Doug Foyle explained that this project has been a priority for the BOE since 2009. The design specification was approved by the Board at the end of the summer. Should the project end up costing more than \$3.2 million, the BOE will not return to the Council to ask for more funding. He also stated that the project scope will not be reduced. Ms. Jennings fears that the BOE does not have a stream of income coming in to make up the difference, if the project cost goes up, which is a very real possibility, given the rising costs as of late. Superintendent Bookman is confident that they have the funds, even if costs rise. Al Costa, Director of Operations, stated that a very comprehensive study of the building was conducted, and the architects are confident that the \$3.2 million budget is accurate and sound.

Mr. Cavanaugh thinks that the cost will end up being more than \$3.2 million, so the BOE will have to come up with the money somehow. He also believes that this type of project needs to be bonded. He asked if the boiler or roof will need to be changed at some point soon. Mr. Costa replied, not at this time, but eventually. Mr. Cavanaugh does not object to the project, but he takes issue with the proposed financing. Alison Couture of the BOE stated that this project has been on the list for a long time, so she would like to see a way to get this done soon.

Mr. Johnson reviewed a project for creating additional outdoor cover space for seniors. The general area would be at or near the Riverfront Community Center to complement the Senior Center. Proposed funding of \$80,000 will come from ARPA. Mr. Gullotta prefers the location to be near the boathouse instead. Ms. Carroll likes the location near the Senior Center because there is an existing pavilion at the boathouse.

Mr. Johnson summarized by stating that the net estimated project funding totals \$6.6 million from the Capital Reserve Fund and \$3.88 million from ARPA, for a net combined funding of about \$10.4 million. Of the \$10.2 allocation that Glastonbury will receive in ARPA monies, \$3.88 million will be allocated to the Capital Program and \$1 million to the Williams Memorial facility, which leaves \$5.32 million. The remaining funds can be used towards capital infrastructure, affordable housing opportunities, broadband connections, public parks, or other uses.

Mr. Johnson noted that, each year, projects are funded through the Sewer Sinking Fund, which includes the Water Pollution Control Reroofing of Buildings and the Parker Terrace Station and

Force Main Replacement. Additionally, Town Aid Road supplements the \$1.8 million through the Capital Reserve Fund for the annual road paving program.

Mr. Johnson explained that there is a significant gap in funding availability in the Capital Reserve Fund Balance Reserves. Some funding considerations include increasing capital transfer, transferring funds from the General Fund to the Capital Reserve Fund, ARPA monies, and bond issues. Regarding future debt service, Glastonbury is in a very favorable position, with annual debt service cost declining significantly from FY 2025 and 2026. Mr. Johnson then presented an illustrative scenario of a list of projects that could be potential referenda. He picked items that should go forward which are generally large scale and high cost.

Ms. LaChance asked if these are the types of items that historically would have been bonded. Mr. Johnson explained that, historically, Glastonbury has funded items on a cash basis with grant opportunities. This type of referendum has not been executed previously. Ms. LaChance stated that the Town has always paid on a cash basis; it would be unfair to accept the sacrifices of previous generations and push this onto future generations, taking from both ends. Mr. Gullotta pointed out that the Town will benefit significantly from federal funding over the next two years. That funding could apply savings to CIP so that the Town could continue to use cash. Mr. Cavanaugh asked if the remaining \$5.2 million of the ARPA monies could be allocated to the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Johnson stated that it must be allocated to a specific project with a specific use.

4. Adjournment.

Chairman Gullotta thanked all for a lively discussion and closed the meeting at 9:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan

Lilly Torosyan

Recording Clerk

Thomas Gullotta

Chairman