

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Special Meeting at 6:00 P.M. in the Conference Room of the Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles Street. 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 {participated via Zoom video conferencing}
Mr. Whit Osgood
Ms. Jennifer Wang

a. Pledge of Allegiance *Led by Tom Gullotta*

2. Public Comment and Petitions pertaining to the Call. *None*

3. Special Business as contained in the Call.

a. Annual Capital Improvement Program Budget presentation and discussion.

Mr. Johnson explained that a total of 34 projects are proposed. All will be funded by the Capital Reserve Fund except one, which will be funded by ARPA. A total of 25 infrastructure projects are proposed, with a cost of \$6.755 million, which exceeds the Capital Transfer by about \$1 million. 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. \$100,000 is proposed for fire extrication tools, which Chief Thurz explained, are at the end of their life expectancy and need to be replaced. There is also a \$350,000 proposal for a Fire Training Facility. Mr. Osgood asked if the building is leased out. Chief Thurz replied no, that is not allowed. Mr. Cavanaugh asked if they conduct their own training. Chief Thurz stated yes, he and about 17 others do so. Police Chief Porter noted that, in 2020, he presented a plan to increase pedestrian safety while protecting police equipment. This year, the proposal is to create that pedestrian walkway (\$75,000).

Mr. Johnson reviewed the road overlay program, which given inflationary pressures, is forecasting a 10% increase in unit prices. This year's proposal is for \$2 million. Another project is to renovate and restore the Slocomb Dam. Mr. Pennington explained that the wall does not have a footing, so they are looking at alternatives to stabilize the situation. Mr. Johnson explained that two projects will be continued in the coming year: replacing heavy equipment (\$550,000) and sidewalk repair and maintenance (\$250,000), which is distinguished from new sidewalk construction. Another project which continues from prior years is the ongoing pavement restoration and overlay for both Town and school facilities (\$100,000).

Mr. Johnson explained that salt deteriorates the structure of bridges, so \$250,000 is proposed to repair pedestrian bridges. Mr. Niland asked if the Mill Street bridge project were moving forward. Mr. Pennington stated that it was approved under the Federal Local Bridge Program, but upon more structural evaluation, they found that it was not necessary to rehabilitate. Thus, it has been removed from the program. Mr. Johnson explained that \$100,000 is proposed to fund a pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Red Hill, Chestnut Hill, and Main Street. Subject to grant approval, it should be fully refunded.

Mr. Johnson stated that \$175,000 is proposed for ongoing maintenance of Addison Park, which has been a big destination this year. Director of Parks and Recreation Lisa Zerio explained that this has been a phased approach, with the tennis courts completed and the basketball courts up next on the roster. Chief Thurz explained the difficulties with getting the boat out of the deposited sediment at the Riverfront Park and Boathouse. \$50,000 is proposed for the analysis. Mr. Johnson explained that the Town-owned Winter Hill Farm requires a small apartment for the caretaker. Mr. Osgood asked how much the Town has spent on the property to date. Mr. Johnson replied \$375,000, which is just over the \$355,000 it has generated thus far in lease revenue. Mr. Osgood asked when the current lease expires. Ms. Zerio stated that it has just been renewed for five years. Mr. Johnson clarified that the Council has not yet executed it.

Mr. Johnson explained that the tree roots at the Center Green are strangling the irrigation system, so \$35,000 is proposed to develop a master plan for long-term options. Mr. McChesney asked who would do the plan. Mr. Johnson replied, landscape architects. Mr. Johnson explained that \$125,000 was received from a STEAP grant for ongoing tree management to reduce liability from falling trees and tree limbs. The grant was supplemented with \$100,000 in the current year. The proposal is to return to that \$125,000 of prior years. Mr. Johnson explained that \$275,000 is proposed for continued improvements at the Minnechaug Golf Course, particularly to the irrigation system. Mr. Niland asked when the lease expires. Ms. Zerio replied, May 2024. At which point, there will be an opportunity to increase the green fees.

Mr. Johnson stated that significant repairs have been made to the Grange Pool in recent years, but the pool filter building needs to be replaced and accessibility needs to be expanded. There are funds available to conduct a feasibility study (\$45,000) and improvements to ADA accessibility and new filters (\$100,000). Mr. Johnson explained that the boilers at the Gideon Welles School need to be replaced before they break (\$800,000). The steaming system will be converted into a hot water system which is more energy efficient and economical. Another project is the GWS

Air Handling and Exhaust (\$500,000), for which they await grant funding. Mr. Johnson reviewed the Bulky Waste Closure Fund, which will continue this year with a \$50,000 allocation.

There are six other projects, totaling \$1.365 million. These include Land Acquisition and Preservation and Property Revaluation, both at \$100,000. Energy Efficiency and Sustainability will be funded at \$80,000. Mr. Johnson noted that about 30-35% of expenditures to date have been offset by grants and rebates. Ms. Couture asked if there has been any effort to expand sustainability into a food waste program. Mr. Johnson commented that there has been food waste collection at the transfer station for a long time. Sanitation Director Mike Manfre explained that they are waiting on DEEP for a new permit for a satellite food waste collection program.

Mr. Johnson then presented 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. Mr. McChesney asked how much has been spent to date. Mr. Johnson stated that the preliminary analysis is \$50,000, and the preliminary estimate for the total project is around \$2.4 million. The analysis will show a better scope. This is the only CIP project proposed to be funded by ARPA (\$1 million). Mr. Johnson explained that a few years ago, \$100,000 was allocated for traffic calming measures. An additional \$50,000 is proposed this year. Mr. Johnson also explained that \$35,000 is in place for pedestrian and bicycle improvements at the Gateway Corporate Park.

Mr. Johnson then reviewed three new projects, which total \$765,000. The first is installing EV charging stations (\$215,000) at various locations throughout town. This would be offset by 90% grant funding. The second project is a \$500,000 appropriation for Livable Communities, which will be fully reimbursed by a STEAP grant. Another new project is to install Synthetic Turf Fields at GHS. Assistant Superintendent Matthew Dunbar explained that the proposal came out of the BOE's five-year plan, which included several meetings and a public hearing. A site analysis was conducted and determined that organic material must come out. Mr. Johnson explained that the \$50,000 funding request is for a project design study. Mr. Zeller asked if artificial turf and natural grass have the same cost. Mr. Dunbar replied no, there is a higher maintenance cost for natural turf that more than offsets the onset cost of a synthetic field.

Mr. McChesney noted that the Council received a great deal of commentary from the public on this. He is frustrated that their concerns were not shared with the BOE, earlier in the process. He stressed the need to conduct due diligence by exploring the matter before deciding either way. Doug Foyle, Chairman of the BOE, noted that the public concerns came up after the BOE acted. He asked to direct specific questions to either himself or to Dr. Bookman. Ms. Wang appreciates the BOE's work to date but would like to understand the broader environmental and health impacts of this proposed turf, especially in the context of Glastonbury's sustainability policy.

Mr. Johnson then reviewed the proposed Weight Training Facility at the high school (\$1.2 million). Mr. Dunbar explained that this is the BOE's highest priority right now. The current facility is rented at \$48,000 per year. After two years, that facility will not be available. It will take 18 months to design and construct a facility, so if the Council pursues this option, they should move quickly. Athletic Director, Trish Witkin, explained that this proposal will not only save the Town money in the long run by not renting, it will also allow for greater student

accessibility and offer more programs such as running outdoors. Dr. Foyle stated that the choice here is either to rent at a cost between \$50-100,000 per year or to own a facility that will pay itself off after a few decades. The design work would cost about \$50-60,000. Mr. Zeller asked about placing the facility in front of the field house, which would allow all students to use it. Additionally, he suggested opening it up for community use, rather than just for student athletes. Mr. Dunbar questioned the feasibility of that, as teams use the site constantly, including at night and on some Saturdays. Mr. Gorman noted that turning it into a public facility is an idea that the BOE had not considered, so they will think about it.

Mr. Cavanaugh asked if there was no weight room program in the past. Ms. Witkin explained that, for about two years, there was no program. Dr. Foyle added that, in 2016, the program expanded beyond the football team, so there has been an increased demand for weight rooms for all sports. Mr. Cavanaugh asked why the weight room project was not included in the field house. Mr. Peniston stated that it was originally, but when the Council saw the cost, they took it off. Ms. Karp added that it became a question about priorities. Then, the field house was the BOE's priority. Now, it is the weight room.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the Capital Reserve Funding numbers, both with and without the weight training facility. The net combined projects (excluding the facility) total \$6.66 million; with it, \$6.86 million. Mr. Johnson then explained the five-year CIP pro-forma projections. There is a \$4.34 million gap in funding for FY2024, and over the next five years, the projected gap will total \$20.72 million. Purchasing power has reduced massively due to inflation, and this will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Glastonbury is in a very favorable position for debt service, which will decline almost \$4 million by June 2028. That money can be reprogrammed.

Mr. Johnson then explained another project consideration, which is the New London Turnpike - DOT intersection realignment. The DOT has preliminarily estimated the signalized intersection option at about \$1.7 million and the roundabout option at about \$3.4 million. Even though the DOT has acknowledged that the roundabout is the better choice, they would like the Town to pay 20% of the difference, which is projected to total \$320,000. Mr. Johnson noted that \$200,000 is available in the Capital Program for potential reconfiguration in this area. He then reviewed other project considerations, such as bridge funding, new sidewalks, the Academy Gymnasium, and audio at the RCC.

Ms. Wang became aware of a federal grant called Safe Streets and Roads for All, which the Town should flag for consideration. She also asked to replace the offending structures at Welles Park with a nicer amenity for the community. Ms. Zerio stated that Neil Griffin of the Housing Authority will send out a survey to his residents to assess the accessibility of that playground. They are also gathering figures to replace the swings and provide climbing units. Ms. Wang noted that last year's CIP pro forma included nearly \$500,000 for ground safety improvements, which was not included this year. Ms. Zerio explained that they decided to move away from installing fortified surfaces because when replacing equipment, the surface needs to be torn up. They are using a different system now. Mr. Osgood asked if the Naubuc School project is out for bid. Dr. Foyle responded yes, but they have not seen the numbers yet.

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