

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES (AMENDED)  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held the Annual Town Meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 2155 Main Street, with the option for Zoom video conferencing. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

**Roll Call.**

***Council Members***

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman

Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman

Ms. Mary LaChance

Ms. Deborah A. Carroll

Mr. Jacob McChesney

Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh

Mr. Whit C. Osgood {participated via Zoom video conferencing}

Mr. John Cavanna

Ms. Jen Wang

**1. Town Clerk to call Town Meeting to order. *Led by Tom Gullotta***

Mr. Gullotta called the meeting to order, stating that Town Clerk Michelle Krampitz is ill.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance. *Led by Tom Gullotta***

Mr. Gullotta welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting of Glastonbury.

**3. Election of Acting Clerk.**

***Nomination By:*** Mr. Gullotta

***Seconded By:*** Ms. Carroll

Lilly Torosyan for Acting Clerk

Mr. Gullotta called for other nominations, but hearing none, he closed the nominations and called for a vote.

***Result:*** Lilly Torosyan was elected acting clerk by a unanimous vote with no nay votes voiced.

**4. Election of Moderator of Town Meeting.**

*Nomination By:* Ms. Carroll

*Seconded By:* Ms. Karp

Larry Niland as Moderator.

Mr. Gullotta called for other nominations, but hearing none, he closed the nominations and called for a vote.

**Result:** Larry Niland was elected moderator by a unanimous vote, with no nay votes voiced.

Mr. Niland stated that the Town is in great financial shape but will have to make hard choices to combat inflation. He explained that Mr. Johnson will present his final budget tonight. He thanked Mr. Johnson for his 30 years of public service as Town Manager in Glastonbury, which will continue to leave an imprint for generations. He asked everyone to show appreciation for his service.

**5. Opening remarks by Town Council Chair, Thomas Gullotta.**

Chairman Gullotta stated that the community is financially healthy. He complimented the school system for keeping their budget below the rate of inflation. Combined with the Town budget, which is less than a 3% increase over last year's budget, they are doing a responsible job by the taxpayer.

**6. Presentation on Budgets:**

**a. Town Operating and Debt & Transfer Budget and Capital Improvement Program Budget. (Town Manager)**

Mr. Johnson explained that this is a property revaluation year, which influences the budget. The Town operating budget is about a 2.79% increase from last year. A major component of that increase is due to inflation. Other reasons include the pandemic, cyber security, employment market, and service delivery expectations.

About 50% of the Town budget is comprised of salaries. There were reductions in force, contractual services, and job consolidation, but that is becoming harder to maintain in this market. As a result of the pandemic, new IT staff were hired. For years, the Town's health insurance reserve fund was in the red, but it is now in the black. The pension has also been a challenge for years. This year, it moderated and reduced for the first time in 20 years. The

Town's actuary recently confirmed that the Town is in a good position with a 6.25% rate of assumption.

Data processing and technology has increased by about \$160,000. Contractual services also increased by nearly \$100,000. This is because of rising costs in school bus contracts and the park maintenance system's contractual services. Utilities and fuel costs increased significantly due to unit price hikes in the market, and service and repair costs continue to rise. Capital outlay has a modest increase of about \$52,000. All other operating costs have resulted in a \$141,897 increase. Mr. Johnson pointed out that 24 of 40 line items in the operating budget increased by only 0.30%. Debt and transfers increased by about 1.9% increase. Glastonbury is in a favorable position with respect to ongoing debt service cost, which is projected to decline by \$4 million from FY 24-28. The Capital Reserve Fund Transfer is proposed to increase by \$200,000. Had it followed the CPI, it would have been \$1 million higher than it is now.

Intergovernmental revenues and transfers increased by about 3%. While a phased reduction to the ESC grant was approved by the legislature, funding has held steady for the past three years. The state also provided a motor vehicle grant of \$1.8 million and a MRSA grant of \$730,000, which was a non-budgeted revenue. The MRSA grant is subject annually to sales tax revenues, with ESC and motor vehicle grants as greater priorities, which is why Mr. Johnson did not budget it for the coming year either. Investment income is proposed to increase by about \$880,000. Mr. Johnson noted that a \$775,000 reduction is proposed in the Use of Fund Balance to mitigate the effects of the new Pub-2010 mortality tables.

The General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance is in a sound position. However, Glastonbury should revise its fund balance policy to link it to some recognized standard. The Grand List will grow by 1.22%, which is in line with the Town's 9-year average. He then reviewed the tax increase and mill rate. Absent property revaluation, the tax increase will be about 1.55%. He then reviewed the CIP, which has 34 projects this year. The net combined project costs are about \$6.7 million.

Mr. Johnson concluded by thanking his staff for their hard work in putting together this budget, especially Keri Rowley, Director of Finance, and Melissa Durkin, Kathryn Paquette, and Susan Lauzier for their roles in preparing charts and slides. He also thanked all Town department heads.

**b. Education Operating Budget. (Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education Chairman)**

Board of Education Chairman Doug Foyle explained that this year's theme for Glastonbury Public Schools is "Blueprint for the Future." Since 2018, three strategic goals have guided Glastonbury schools: fostering high expectations for all students, maintaining safe and supportive learning environments, and preparing students for their futures. Assistant

Superintendent Cheri Burke explained that their school theme is, “Be Kind, Be Curious, Be Well.” She reviewed the first budget driver, the STEAM initiative, which will result in a 0.23% increase in the budget.

Assistant Superintendent Matthew Dunbar explained the second driver, Salaries and Benefits, which represents a 2.01% increase. Health Benefits and Utilities represent a 0.05% and 0.235% increase respectively. Another budget driver has been inflation, which amounts to a 0.72% increase. Taken together, all five budget drivers mark a 3.24% increase over last year’s education budget. Their proposed increase is the second lowest rate in the Hartford area.

Dr. Foyle provided a snapshot of enrollment and staffing. They are budgeting for a decrease of two elementary sections and a reduction of three teachers at GHS. Glastonbury is in the middle of their peer districts, in terms of per pupil expenditures in DRG B. The per pupil cost for Glastonbury schools is lower than the DRG average and significantly lower than the state average. He then reviewed the various reductions that the BOE made to the superintendent’s proposed budget.

Mr. Dunbar stated that the 2023-24 budget concerns are special education staffing, elementary staffing, utilities, fuel for buses, and student supplies. They will watch those accounts closely. The Glastonbury school district has received several accolades in the past year, such as Niche rankings and CABA Awards. Dr. Foyle noted that every program was unanimously approved by the BOE. He thanked all school administrators and the Town Manager for his many years in working with the Board.

## **7. a. Public Comments.**

Mr. Niland asked all residents present to express their opinion on the proposed budget, which provides guidance to the Town Council in their deliberations.

***Bruce Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive***, clarified that he was not aware of the environmental, health, and safety concerns of artificial turfs prior to the Council’s last meeting. That is why he did not speak at the BOE’s public hearing on the matter of installing an artificial turf field at GHS. He hopes that part of the \$50,000 for the feasibility study would be an environmental analysis because there are serious concerns regarding these fields. Artificial turf fields are also more expensive than natural fields.

***Lisa Eldridge of 108 South Mill Drive***, also was not aware of the artificial turf matter early on but has since presented information to the BOE and the Council. Synthetic fields are a product of the fossil fuel industry. She asked to remember the claims of tobacco companies to deny cancer and fossil fuel companies to deny climate science.

***Theresa Velenzas of 91 Grandview Drive***, also stressed the importance of denying funding for synthetic fields in town. The health and environmental dangers have been overlooked by the BOE. Synthetic turf is not progress. Many communities have suffered for it. If

Glastonbury values sustainability and health, they should welcome this as the beginning of due diligence.

**Lisa Mendum of 45 Candlewood Road**, is also opposed to the CIP project to install artificial turfs. She cited a study which found that many young Americans have anxiety about having children because of climate change. Sustainability became so important to Glastonbury, that in 2018, a sustainability policy was pursued. She noted that a few incorrect statements were made at the CIP meeting. One was that professional athletes support artificial turfs. In fact, it is the opposite. Another comment was made that the \$3 million cost will be the final total. That is not true because there is a maintenance cost, as these fields are not recyclable.

**Richard Kelley of 295 Dayton Road**, has an issue with the rising cost of education. Compared to 20 years ago, Glastonbury is educating 18% fewer students but at 2.5 times the cost. As a retired person, he is trying to keep his costs down, but his standard of living keeps going down. He believes that the education budget can be reduced.

**b. Public vote to express an opinion on the proposed budget for the guidance of the Town Council. (Section 703 of the Town Charter).**

**Motion By:** Mr. Gullotta

**Seconded By:** Ms. Carroll

Mr. Niland asked all residents to vote on whether or not they accept the proposed budget. The yav votes outnumbered the nay votes (17:2).

**8. Adjournment.**

**Motion By:** Mr. Gullotta

**Seconded By:** Ms. Carroll

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Town Council hereby adjourns their Annual Town Meeting of January 24, 2023, at 7:18 pm.

**Result:** Motion passes unanimously {9-0-0}.

Respectfully submitted,

**Lilly Torosyan**

**Lilly Torosyan**

**Recording Clerk**

**Thomas Gullotta**

**Chairman**