

MONROE TOWN COUNCIL AND BOARD OF FINANCE
Monroe, Connecticut

Budget Workshop Session
Friday
February 26, 2016
6:00 PM
Monroe Town Hall
Council Chambers

A Budget Workshop Session was held on Friday, February 26, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Monroe Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Frank Lieto
Councilmember Nicholas Kapoor
Councilmember Phyllis Kansky
Councilmember Kenneth Kellogg
Councilmember Dee Dee Martin
Councilmember Sean O'Rourke
Councilmember Kevin Reid
Councilmember Terry Rooney

Absent: Vice-Chairman Enid Lipeles

Not Present: First Selectman Stephen J. Vavrek

BOARD OF FINANCE PRESENT: Ron Bunovsky, Director of Finance, Heidi Meade, Deputy Director of Finance

Chairman Lieto called the Joint Budget Workshop Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Participation – None

Called for recess at 6:01 p.m.

Budget Workshop Session resumed at 6:33 p.m.

Chairman Lieto gave a special thanks to the Finance Department for having everything in order tonight.

Ron Bunovsky stated the total Town Council cut is \$290,279.00. The increase to the overall budget is 1.58%. The town side increase is now 2.49%.

Chairman Lieto asked if any Council members had any more adjustments to consider and the reply was no.

Motion: (S. O'Rourke)

To approve the 2016-2017 budget as proposed by Town Council and forward to the Board of Finance pursuant to Chapter 8, section 4 of the Town Charter. This budget appropriates \$85,382,375 for total expenditures from the town's general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017 which represents an increase of 1.58% over the approved 2015-2016 town budget.

Second: (K. Reid)

Discussion: Chairman Lieto stated Ron Bunovsky noted in the adjustments voted on represent the reduction of \$290,279.00 from the municipal side of the budget.

Councilmember Kapoor stated over the past several months, the Town Council has accomplished many good things for Monroe on a bipartisan basis and he hopes it continues into the future. He noted that trend was put on pause Wednesday night when the Council voted on adjustments to Monroe's FY 17 budget. Out of 36 votes, 24 fell on party lines on very important issues to the town. Councilmember Kapoor stated the First Selectman has an enormous amount of duties but to take on the role of Economic Development Director does not allow adequate time to be spent on the job. He noted we need a centralized person in Town Hall to work with businesses coming to town and retain businesses that are here. He also noted he was disappointed in the majority that there was no comment on this matter which was voted down on Wednesday night.

Councilmember Kapoor also gave a statement on the Food Pantry generator. He believes this is a public safety and public health issue. The fact that volunteers, in times of natural disaster or crisis, have to go to the food pantry and bring food up to Masuk to be stored, or sometimes even bringing food to their own homes to store, is absurd. He feels by moving around some monies in social services' other line items and adding a bit more to the budget, we could have had a generator for the food pantry. He stated even though there is a STEAP grant for the food pantry into the state, he is sure this generator could have found a home at another town building should the grant come through. Councilmember Kapoor concluded by stated the most disappointing, was the discussion and votes on part-time salary increases and non-union salary increases. The employees of the Town of Monroe deserve to be paid for what they are worth, noting we have high turnover rates here in Monroe. He feels we need to pay the employees of the town good wages and \$12.50 per hour for a reference librarian is not a good wage. He stated we need to retain people who are dedicated to our town. Councilmember Kapoor noted what happened on Wednesday night was an affront to all of those part-time workers who work for the town of Monroe, and for these reasons, he cannot support this budget tonight.

Councilmember Martin noted she is very passionate about having an Economic Development Coordinator, the part time increases, the generator for the Food Pantry, and stated these are all deal breakers for her.

Councilmember Kansky stated she was always in support of the Economic Development Coordinator/Grants writer. She noted as far as the generator, the Town of Bethel received a grant for a generator and feels if we had a grant writer this may be possible to get one for the food pantry. She feels we missed these opportunities. She also noted about the part time wages,

stating a cost of living increase would have been appropriate, as some of the employees have not received an increase in a long time. Councilmember Kansky stated for these reasons she will be voting no on this budget.

Councilmember Reid noted we had three referendums last year, and the people in town made it very clear not to come back with a budget like last year or another vote will be made until money is “knocked out of the budget”. He did not disagree with some of the comments, but noted if the first referendum goes down, he questioned what do we take out.

Councilmember Kansky stated to let the people decide as having an Economic Development Coordinator will be good for the town.

Councilmember Kapoor noted if the budget is sold to the people you can get it passed but noted there are ways to go back to the budget and trim around the edges.

Councilmember O’Rourke stated if he remembered correctly, the last year referendum cut was approximately \$250,000 which is very close to the \$290,000 we have now, and are very similarly close.

Councilmember Kellogg noted the budget put before us required a lot of work and feels it is a more responsible budget; however it is Council’s job to be fiscally responsible. He did note taking out the increase in part time help is definitely not about the individual but about the process.

Chairman Lieto stated the budget process has vastly improved each year, and gave special thanks to Ron Bunovsky and Heidi Meade and hopes it continues this way in the future. He noted it is unfortunate about the part-time wage increases, but noted he did not hear any compelling statements from the Department Heads. He also noted the generator for the food pantry could be something to look at as a capital project.

Chairman Lieto concluded by stating he wants the Board of Finance to look at the Fire Departments and see if any adjustments need to be made and a comment was made to look at the Board of Education budget, billing department revenue, and the Board of Finance to set up general funds for EMS and the Health Department.

Motion passed 5-3 (*opposed Kapoor, Kansky, Martin*)

Motion: (K. Kellogg)

To adjourn meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Second: K. Reid)

Motion passed 8-0

This meeting meets accessibility requirements for the disabled. Those persons requiring special accommodations should contact the First Selectman's Office as soon as possible at 452-2821.