

WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

The following are the minutes from the:

**Agawam City Council Workshop Meeting
FY19 Budget Presentation
Tuesday, May 22, 2018 at 7:00 P.M.
Agawam Public Library
Community Room
750 Cooper Street
Agawam, MA 01001**

The meeting was attended by nine of the City Councilors with Councilors Letellier and Johnson absent. Mayor Sapelli, Laurel Placzek and Cheryl St. John were also in attendance along with the respective Department Heads.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M.

Each department was presented by Mayor Sapelli with questions asked accordingly.

Assessor

Mayor noted that every ten years there is a DOR required appraisal of the power plant as well as cyclical inspections. This created an increase of \$51,500.00. All other increases were contractual.

Veterans

Agawam has the largest percentage of veterans.

Library

Contractual increases with a decrease in longevity. Councilor Calabrese noted that our library is second to none.

Emergency Management

This item only had COL increases.

Health

The differences were contractual as well as the addition of a sanitarian. Health Agent picked up an intense schedule and needs assistance with necessary inspections that may not have been done in the last several years. Dues and Subscriptions also went up for desired licenses/certification that may differ from previous Health Agent. She is also purchasing additional test kits for pools.

Councilor Sandlin asked if the Sanitarian is a new hire. Mayor stated that he is moving the employee from Inspection Services to Health Department and the employee has the ability

to perform the duties of this job. Councilor Mercadante asked when the last time the town had both a Health Agent and Sanitarian to which Mayor responded that the town did have one year ago but unsure of the date. He noted that in the last six months, the current Health Agent is on top of things that have not been done in quite some time. Councilor Mercadante agreed that we are definitely playing catch up however inquired if the town's growth needed this. With no disrespect intended, the Mayor said many of these inspections haven't been done in years and are overdue and will continue to be regular inspections in future so this position is necessary.

Council on Aging

Increases were due to contractual obligations and the consolidation of two part time positions. Also, Meals on Wheels was added here shifting from temporary to permanent. There was also an adjustment in mileage to the anticipated need. Council Vice President Calabrese inquired about the increase of \$2,500.00 in office supplies to which Mike Squindo replied there never was an office supply line item in this department nor at the Town Hall. Councilor Suffriti asked about adding a couple part time positions and the Mayor responded that the seniors have a great need for transportation so they are adding a van driver and part time greeter as well.

Parks & Recreation

There was a reduction due to the closing of Perry Lane and the increases in regular permanent were contractual. The golf cart is no longer needed so that line item was reduced as well.

City Clerk

There were contractual increases and also an increase for voting machine software and services.

Building Maintenance

Increases were due to contractual obligations including an upgrade of the Plumber, the addition of a Plumber's helper along with increases in minimum wage. An existing working foreman was upgraded to the Plumber position. Mayor commended Doug for doing a great job. There was also an increase in Electricity/Heat as the usage last year went up due to the cold winter. Professional Services also increased because there have been some issues with mice and the town is contracting out for that and a 24 hour alarm system.

Councilor Cavallo appreciated the excellent backup by Doug as well as the librarian.

Police

Mayor noted if you were looking for backup, the Chief provides ample backup however he didn't think the Council would want all of it but they are welcome to look at it (lifting large stack of back up information). They are adding three new patrolmen and also have contractual increases and the Chief made adjustments elsewhere to try to make up for the increases. Overtime will decrease due to the new patrolmen. They noted that uniform and firearm were being rolled into longevity per a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2017. The Supervisors' union signed the same in 2013.

Councilor Cavallo mentioned the funds left in accounts like court time. There was \$80,000.00 left in that account. His concern is that there is only one month left to use that money and if not used why continue to budget that much? Mayor stated they are working at reducing those items and already reduced court time by \$30,000.00 and are tweaking wherever they can. Councilor Sandlin asked what a “Special Holiday” was to which the Chief responded it is a member benefit that if an officer works on a holiday then they would get that holiday on another day. Councilor Rossi questioned the uniform allowance rolling into longevity and then uniform allowance line item should be cut. He questioned the wisdom of the former administration to allow this. He stated this was not appropriate and not only unethical but might be illegal. He feels they are trying to circumvent retirement showing pure greed and said it was pure stupidity on whoever negotiated this agreement. Mayor understood and said he “heard” Councilor Rossi however he noted that there were two attorneys in that negotiation room so he would assume that this is indeed legal but might not be ethical. Councilor Rossi continued to say it should not be included in longevity and the Mayor stated it is contractual at this point so he has to fund it. Councilor Rossi stated longevity is based on merit and seniority not uniforms and firearms. If the town is going to start doing this, then they should take the money out of the uniform allowance and again mentioned it was not the current administration’s doing. Mayor again noted that this is contractual. Councilor Mineo asked what this will cost the taxpayers over next 10 to 20 years and said it’s probably astronomical. It reflects on the Council and we had nothing to do with it. Councilor Rossi again stressed that this is all about retirement and doesn’t know if the Council has a legal requirement/right/obligation to fund this knowing we are funding a line item for the wrong purpose. Line Items are supposed to be for their intended purposes and maybe this should go back to negotiations. Councilor Mercadante asked Councilor Rossi if Supervisors had it back in 2013 then how did it go unnoticed. Mayor stated that indeed the Supervisors negotiated it in 2013 as well as the Fire Department. Councilor Sandlin wanted to know if it was fully funded. The Treasurer said by 2035 and Councilor Sandlin asked what would happen by setting this precedence – would all the other unions follow. She thinks it would make more sense to spend the money to renegotiate the contracts. The Treasurer stated all the contracts would expire in June of 2019. Councilor Rossi said he would like to see it done properly. Councilor Mercadante also inquired about the Tahoe versus Explorer choice of vehicles. Mayor stated that there were recalls with the exhaust so switched back and the Treasurer said that at the time the Tahoe was only available in 2 wheel drive. Councilor Sandlin asked what uniform replacement entailed which the Chief replied uniforms are damaged in the course of normal duties and has been this way as long as he’s been here. It isn’t ‘pants don’t fit’, most frequently it is due to blood contamination and it can no longer be sent out for special cleaning.

School Budget

Superintendent of Schools Steve Lemanski presented the budget and was available along with Robert Clickstein to answer any questions. There were no staff reductions, no new fees and contractual increases. Councilor Mercadante asked for some job descriptions and Councilor Sandlin asked for explanation of Charter Schools and the severe impact it could have on our school system. Mr. Lemanski mentioned that the new West Springfield Charter School has earmarked 70 Agawam students which was quite unexpected. It probably costs about \$15,000 per child. Some reimbursement comes back but we may lose most of that money. He heard only 30 students signed up to go. Attached is his presentation.

The workshop was adjourned at 8:20pm

Respectfully submitted,

Cecilia P. Calabrese
City Council Vice President

cc: Full Council, Mayor, Solicitor