TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

November 16, 2020

A meeting of the Legislative Council was held on Monday, November 16, 2020. This meeting was held electronically, via Zoom, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 7:08 P.M. by the Council President. The Clerk took the roll followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Macdowall Dominique Baez
Mick McGarry Jody Clouse
Valerie Horsley Berita Rowe-Lewis
Justin Farmer Adrian Webber
Austin Cesare Kristin Dolan
Betty Wetmore Marjorie Bonadies
Kathleen Schomaker Athena Gary

MEMBERS ABSENT: (2nd District Vacancy)

PRESIDING: Mick McGarry, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; John Sullivan, Acting Police Chief; Walter Morton, Director of Town and BOE Leg. Affairs; Sue Rubino, Community Services Coordinator

At this time a proclamation was read by Mr. McGarry in memory of Councilman Harry Gagliardi. There were also 17 speakers who spoke about him.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION: 8:00 PM – 8:21 PM recess allowing time for public comments to be viewed.

CORRESPONDENCE: Mr. McGarry stated that they are in receipt of the recommendations from the Fiscal Stability Committee and that he’d like everyone to review it and communicate before their next meeting to figure out the next steps.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT: Mr. McGarry announced they’d be having a special Settlement meeting on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 to get an update from the labor attorney along with 2 other items.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND DEPARTMENTS: (Department reports given can be found attached to the end of the minutes)

REPORTS OF COUNCIL LIAISONS: None

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES: Mr. McGarry requested a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2020 meeting. Moved by Mr. Farmer, seconded by Ms. Schomaker and approved with 1 abstention (Clouse)
REGULAR AGENDA: Mr. McGarry moved a motion to suspend their rules for tonight’s meeting, seconded by Ms. Schomaker and approved with 1 opposed (Farmer). Mr. Macdowall stated this is the last time he’d vote for this, he thinks it’s time to get back to the committee process. Mr. McGarry said he agrees and that things were being looked into for Civil Plus to utilize some of the capabilities it offers.

1. **Refund of property taxes collected prior to July 1, 2020 – (5) totaling $4,488.76**
   -- Ms. Schomaker moved a motion to bundle items #1 and #2. Mr. Farmer said he’d like them divided. Ms. Schomaker withdrew her motion and moved a motion to approve item #1. Seconded by Mr. Macdowall and approved unanimously.

2. **Refund of property taxes collected between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 – (70) totalling $18,663.15**
   -- Moved by Ms. Schomaker, seconded by Ms. Rowe-Lewis. DISCUSSION: Ms. Horsley asked how it is we owe refunds. Mr. Eatman explained how these were over payments and that sometimes it’s the taxpayer and sometimes it’s us, but either way we have to give it back. Mr. Farmer asked for clarification of property assessments (revaluation) in 2 weeks. A vote was taken and the item passed unanimously.

3. **Order authorizing the acceptance and expenditure of funds up to $12,967 from State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families Youth Enhancement Grant**
   -- Moved by Mr. Farmer, seconded by Ms. Wetmore. DISCUSSION: Ms. Rubino explained this grant that is used every year for the Billboard Design Contest. Mr. Farmer expressed his gratitude to the Hamden Youth Services. Ms. Horsley said she commends Ms. Rubino for this program saying she thinks it’s inspirational to display during COVID. Ms. Bonadies thanked her for finding this reoccurring grant. Ms. Clouse said she thinks it’s good anytime they can show science and health through a form of art and said she supports this. Ms. Rowe-Lewis thanked Ms. Rubino for finding this grant and said kudos to work well done. Mr. McGarry said with the levels of stress right now and things being tough he loves this. Ms. Baez also expressed her love for this idea and thanked Ms. Rubino. A vote was taken and the item passed unanimously.

4. **Order authorizing the acceptance and expenditure of funds from the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families Youth Services Bureau Grant in an amount not to exceed $32,477**
   -- Moved by Ms. Wetmore, seconded by Mr. Farmer. DISCUSSION: Ms. Rubino explained that this grant would be used for a part time Program Specialist which will be under 19 hours a week with no benefits. Multiple Council members again expressed their thanks to her for finding this grant. A vote was taken and the item passed unanimously.

5. **Order to accept a donation of a bulletproof vest to K-9 Knight (Hamden Police Dept.)**
   -- Moved by Mr. Cesare, seconded by Ms. Rowe-Lewis. DISCUSSION: Chief Sullivan explained how Hometown donates to local police departments to help serve their communities. Mr. Cesare thanked them for their donation. Mr. Farmer said he would like the movements and developments of how we use our K-9 units at a future date. A vote was taken and the item passed with 1 opposed (Farmer)
6. **Order authorizing the Hamden Police Department to accept and expend funds from the United States Secret Service, New Haven Resident Office CT Financial Crime Task Force** -- Moved by Mr. Cesare, seconded by Ms. Schomaker. **DISCUSSION:** Chief Sullivan explained that this would be used for a new laptop for a detective. A vote was taken and the item passed unanimously.

There being no further business Mr. McGarry requested a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Farmer, seconded by Ms. Horsley and the meeting was adjourned at 9:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta  
Clerk of the Council
Mr. McGarry asked Mr. Morton to provide an update on the status of the Hamden Animal Shelter Plan. Mr. McGarry pointed out that all of the Public Input for this meeting was in regard to the Animal Shelter.

Mr. Morton provided a brief summary as follows:
Hamden has received confirmation from the State of LoCip funding approval. Mr. Morton said this is a significant step. Mr. Morton stated that Mr. Donnelly has reviewed all available town properties to identify potentially suitable locations. He said Mr. Donnelly has also looked at pre-fab structures and estimates of cost and funding. At this time, a possible location to place a structure has been identified in Brooksvale Park. Mr. Morton stressed that this is tentative. He explained some of the reasons why this location might work are: ample parking, utilities in place, distance from residences and no requirement to purchase property since the town owns it. He said next steps are to obtain a rough blueprint from the Engineering Department to be reviewed by the Administration, the Town Attorney, Public Works and the Town Engineer, and also, to contact the State to determine whether there are any easements or restrictions on this location since the town utilized State funding for purchase part of Brooksvale recently. Next would be the soliciting of design work and provision of materials and contractors. Mr. Morton emphasized again that this is all preliminary and in the research phase. If after more research, the chosen parcel at Brooksvale should not turn out to be viable, the concern would be that the town is “back to square zero”. A new location would have to be identified and researched. Mr. Morton said they would continue to provide updates to the Legislative Council and the public.

Mr. McGarry requested that Mr. Morton work with Mr. Donnelly to provide whatever documentation is available on the LoCip funding and a written summary of his presentation to be posted on Hamden.com under the heading of “Hamden Animal Shelter” in order to inform the public of the process. Mr. Morton agreed to provide the info on the LoCip funding and a summary of his presentation by the end of the week.
Mr. Eatman reported that at this time, the Town of Hamden has collected $116.3 million dollars or 47% of Fiscal Year 2021 adopted budget revenue and that $132.6 million dollars remains to be collected. There has been 52% collection of property taxes which is similar to tax collection in 2020.

Mr. Eatman said the members of this Council have been asking about the tax anticipation note that the Town borrowed. He explained that five million dollars of it has been used for Town and BOE payroll. No further money has been utilized and that the Town is paying back principal and interest as scheduled.

Mr. Eatman said that in terms of potential liabilities on the revenue side at this time, the COVID 19 revenue line continues to be a challenge to the Town and the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. He said certain developments at the federal and state level are being watched by the Finance Department and this continues to be of concern moving forward.

Next, Mr. Eatman said that on the expense side, town accounts are projected to be manageable within the adopted budget. He said so far, the town has expended $84.8 million dollars or 34% of the 2021 Fiscal Year adopted budget and that overall, the Town has been keeping spending low and in line with the budget however, expenditures will fluctuate throughout the year due to the timing of payments and their quarterly availability. Mr. Eatman said they have concerns on the expense side due to the 2.5 million dollar line with concessions, efficiencies and town-wide savings. He believes the Legislative Council is expecting an update on the concessions this Wednesday. He said there is concern because Public Safety, specifically, Fire and Public Works and Police, have notified them that certain lines in their accounts are trending to be overspent and they will be needing a transfer within the next couple of months in order to ensure town services are provided. There is also concern because some departmental revenues because some of the
fees for services have been affected by COVID and nay not come in at the projected rate. Mr. Eatman said that overall the Town is doing well, but they are concerned about the revenues and hope the Council will look into some of the recommendations of the Fiscal Stability Committee. Mr. Eatman invited all Council members to contact him with any questions.
Mr. McGarry stated that there seems to be a lot of concern in the community about a recent uptick in crime. He asked Chief Sullivan to speak to this issue and give an update. Chief Sullivan stated that he would like to address the concern of many Hamden residents about recent criminal activity. He explained that there has been an increase in motor vehicle thefts and stolen motor vehicles and an increase in total motor vehicle complaints. In the past few months, nearly 40% of the motor vehicles stolen were left running or unattended in front of commercial establishments such as gas stations or convenience stores, and most of them had keys or fobs left in them. Chief Sullivan stated that since September 1, eight arrests have been made regarding stolen motor vehicles and 6 of these were juveniles. As a result of this increase in motor vehicle crime, the Hamden Police Department has increased patrols on all shifts and in all parts of town. He added that these incidents have occurred at various times of day and in various parts of town. Chief Sullivan said that Hamden Police Department has contacted various media outlets to share the following tips with residents:

- Never leave vehicle running while unattended
- Always lock doors
- Always remove keys from the ignition
- Close all windows including sun roofs
- Park in well-lit areas
- Install anti-theft device or car alarm
- Never leave valuables inside the vehicle especially in plain view
- Do not resist a car-jacking. Your vehicle can be replaced.

Chief Sullivan stated that these types of crimes involving motor vehicles have become a complex issue for law enforcement to address in the past few years. He said this is mostly attributable to changes in juvenile laws and to the closing of many juvenile detention facilities and stated that there are many repeat offenders. There are also changes in pursuit policy regarding stolen motor vehicles.
Chief Sullivan stated that as head of the Hamden Police Department, he believes in transparency. He said they try to get as much information as possible out to the public to keep the residents informed and safe. He stated that many of the violent crime statistics for 2020 are at the same level as 2018/2019, with a decrease in some areas such as aggravated assault and burglaries. There has been an increase in motor vehicle thefts and stolen motor vehicle complaints is problem being experienced statewide.

The Hamden Police Department will continue to combat these crimes plaguing our communities. They will conduct deterrent and proactive patrols of parking areas. They will be using high visibility patrols along with unmarked car patrols. Chief Sullivan stated that the eyes and ears of the public are crucial to this investigation and he asked residents to report any suspicious activity. He reported that a search warrant was executed at a residence that morning, (Monday), regarding the ongoing robberies and motor vehicle complaints. He said he is limited in some of the evidence he can provide because many of the suspects in these complaints are juveniles. However, he feels it is important to know that the evidence seized included a firearm and a facsimile firearm along with numerous other pieces of evidence. Chief Sullivan said that the Hamden Police Department is working with several surrounding agencies and these investigations are ongoing and remain open. He said he expects arrests to be made as a result of the execution of the search warrant that morning.