

May 16, 2018

BOARD OF FINANCE
TOWN OF SOUTHLINGTON
MAY 16, 2018

The Board of Finance of the Town of Southington held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, May 16, 2018 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 75 Main Street, Southington, CT. John Leary, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 o'clock, p.m.

Appropriations from Contingency Account:
Approved to date (General Contingency).....\$ 448,931
Approved to date (Fire Overtime).....499,950
Approved to date (\$3m Contingency).....2,150,000

Approved this meeting (General Contingency).....104,960
Approved this meeting (Fire Overtime).....0
Approved this meeting (\$3 M Contingency).....0
Total Appropriations.....\$3,203,841

Appropriations with Revenue Offsets:
Approved to date.....\$3,193,994
Approved this meeting.....31,063
Total Appropriations.....\$3,225,057

The following board members were present:

John Leary, Edward Pocock, Jr., Kevin Beaudoin, Tony Morrison & Susan Zoni

Staff: Mark Sciota, Town Manager
Emilia Portelinha, Director of Finance

Absent: Joseph Labieniec, Board Member

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited by everyone in attendance.

III. Public Hearing Items

None.

Set the Mill Rate for the FY 2018-2018 Adopted Budget

May 16, 2018

The Chair explained the procedure for setting the mill rate. Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve the mill rate at 30.48. Mrs. Zoni seconded.

Mr. Beaudoin thanked the town council for taking our budget and reducing the mill rate to no tax increase and refunding some of the BOE education budget.

Chair Leary explained the State of Connecticut revised their revenue number to us. Something we did not know at the time of the recommendation. They increased our grants by \$2,452,316. That allowed town council to avoid about a half a mill increase and then restore some additional funds to the BOE. That is how we achieved a zero percent mill rate increase.

Mr. Morrison pointed out next year is going to be an interesting year. What they give with one hand, they'll take away with the other. We didn't solve any problems at the state. Good for them that they restored money in spending but it did not solve the budget issue. Still the highest debt of any state. Still have real structural issues. The office of fiscal analysis says that next year when the budget is done again, the first year we'll be \$2 billion in deficit, the second year \$2.5 billion in deficit.

When they did the budget and put us in a bit of a problem this year, the deficit was \$3.5 billion. We'll now have \$4.5 billion --- even worse problem.

I don't want the town to get carried away and think it's problems are solved. The problems are only going to get worse. I hope everybody is prepared to do what is necessary to keep our costs under control.

Motion passed 5 to 0 on a roll call vote.

The Chair gave a quick explanation of the mill rate and how it is achieved.

IV. Old Business

1. Approval of Minutes of the April 11, 2018 meeting

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 11th meeting. Mr. Morrison seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the May 9, 2018 meeting

May 16, 2018

Mr. Morrison made a motion to approve the Minutes of the May 9th meeting. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed on a majority voice vote with Chair Leary abstaining.

VI. Assess current financial state of the town

1. Discuss and select Auditor for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018 audit.

Ms. Portelinha explained we are currently in year three of a contract with Blum Shapiro. I am giving the board the opportunity to review it and accept it as we have procedurally done annually. The rate will be going up \$1,000 from \$56,900 to \$57,9000. When they put together the three-year proposed, basically it would be increasing by \$1,000 a year.

They've done a phenomenal job. There are one of the largest firms who audit municipalities. They have kept our rates relatively low compared to surrounding towns.

The Chair noted they change partners to change the perspective, to change the scope and have a different set of eyes. When will that happen? Ms. Portelinha said we could propose that to them with the next three-year cycle. It's up to this board but chances are we will go out to bid to see what is out there. It's your decision.

This year is the final year of the contract so we have a little time to decide. Mr. Sciota added the board rolled this over and this is really six years so it would be appropriate to go out to bid to see what is out there.

Mrs. Zoni made a motion to approve the contract with Blum Shapiro. Mr. Beaudoin seconded.

Mr. Beaudoin echoed the comments they've done a very good job over the last few years. They're very qualified and they do a lot of municipal work in Connecticut. I've heard good things about them. Happy with their work.

Ms. Portelinha added they are very accessible and when more information is needed on items, they are more than happy to help us.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

2. Review revenues vs budget

May 16, 2018

Ms. Portelinha reported through April 30th. Prior years taxes at about \$150,000 above budget, interest on taxes, \$65,000 above budget, building permit and fees, \$65,000 above budget. Interest on investments if \$450,000 above budget. Town Clerk fees are \$180,000 above budget. The other items haven't changed from prior months. They're basically reductions from the state and a couple of increases and the CIRMA Equity we've gotten that we weren't certain we would be getting. That's a net positive of \$200,000.

The elderly circuit breaker, \$360,000, we did not get from the state. The renter's rebate, \$110,000, we did not get from the state. Sales Tax Sharing, \$460,000, we did not get.

Ms. Portelinha explained the Town paid and there was no reimbursement from the state. We made up the difference and normal recipients were not affected.

Mr. Morrison pointed out if we are still ahead at the end of June, that money gets rolled into the Rainy-Day Fund. Is there any mechanism at all in the town instead of rolling into our Rainy-Day Fund, which is seriously healthy, there is a rebate to the taxpayer? Mr. Sciota said there is no mechanism in the town mainly because with that it goes into the undesignated fund balance. The mechanism to return tax money to the taxpayers is a monumental feat and would cost us more than it was worth. There is always a mechanism and statute allows that. We use the money to pay down debt that the taxpayer is responsible for.

Discussion.

3. Review expenses vs budget

Ms. Portelinha reported upon review of the expenditures with department heads and at this point we have the accumulated payout and the fire department overtime which are both before. There are a few items in highway, but they are all transfers. Otherwise, things seem to be coming in pretty normal.

4. Review Capital Projects in Budget (Quarterly)

To be discussed at year end per request of Ms. Portelinha.

Mr. Sciota explained in December he froze two capital projects waiting for the budget cycle to end. The fire engine for \$600-odd and also the truck for the highway division for \$210,000 to \$220,000. Those I have taken the freeze off of. They were not needed for my deficit mitigation plan. Those are going be unfrozen. Ms. Portelinha added the parks, too.

May 16, 2018

5. Town Council Sub Committee Reports (Emphasis on financial aspects)

A. Sewer Committee (Tony Morrison)

Mr. Morrison the plant upgrade is waiting for authorization from DEEP. The report from Tighe & Bond with the plans to remediate some pollution. The plan has to be in place.

Secondly, DEEP told us we are fourth in priority on their project list. As soon as we get authorized, we can bid the project.

The reserve fund for the sewer committee is very, very healthy. That's great because when you do large capitol projects it might well be needed. After that point in time, there might be a time we can actually do something about the sewer rates. What we don't spend goes into the reserve at the end of the year. That might be a couple of years down the road.

The new plant should run more efficiently and we'll have more revenue and we'll have to adjust the sewer rates added Chair Leary.

B. Public Works Committee (Ed Pocock & Susan Zoni)

Mr. Pocock reported the bulky waste stickers have to be gotten at the Town Clerk's Office from now on.

The highway department is doing curbs and there's plenty of them out there. Doing a great job with that. The sweeping has started. Catch basins they're working on and doing inspections.

The parks are doing upgrades anywhere they can. The splash pad is in.

The big one is the highway garage fuel island and that should be good to go. It needs to be done to meet DEEP requirements, et cetera. The council approved it on Monday with the contract being signed later this week added Mr. Sciota.

The downtown pavers are improved and they're continuing to work on that. Mrs. Zoni noted the project is coming in under budget and ahead of schedule.

Mr. Sciota advised that thanks to this board and the town council, we were able to put extra money in the road projects based upon the money received. On the website is the new list of roads.

May 16, 2018

Three roads are going to be milled & paved. The rest of them will be using the new system. Several roads will have the crack/seal as we do every year. All on the website.

C. Calendar House Building Committee (Mark Sciota)

The building is getting rave reviews noted Mr. Sciota. We are now in the process of demolition. Approximately two thirds of the building is done. Then we will be moving quickly into doing the site work and it is scheduled for completion is August and it is still on target.

D. Open Space Committee (Ed Pocock)

Mr. Pocock had nothing to report. There is a meeting next week.

E. Self Insurance Committee (Joe Labieniec & Kevin Beaudoin)

Mr. Beaudoin had nothing to report since the last BOF meeting. We have not had another meeting since then.

F. Committee of the Chairs (John Leary)

The Chair advised he continues to participate. They seem to be very productive meetings. We talk about issues and it gives us a heads up as to what is going on on the other boards. The meetings are public with Minutes. From this board, while I represent the board there, I never offer the opinion of the board as I am only one member.

6. Board of Finance Sub Committees and Liaison Reports
(Emphasis on financial aspects)

A. Investment Committee (Kevin Beaudoin)

Mr. Beaudoin noted the report is done quarterly.

B. Liaisons to Board of Fire Commissioners (Ed Pocock & Kevin Beaudoin)

(The Minutes are prepared summary style and you may refer to the video on line to hear the full discussion on this item.)

May 16, 2018

(Also, please refer to the attached verbatim transcription of this item.)

Mr. Beaudoin noted Commissioner Moise is here tonight if we have questions. At the Agenda of the upcoming fire commission they are going to be talking about the SAFER Grant which is a federal grant they are in the process of applying for. That's to hire four firefighters and the grant would pay for the firefighters for the first three years based on a certain percentage.

Mr. Moise and Chair Bunko approached the podium to discuss the Grant. Mr. Moise explained they have looked at different areas of the department to figure out how to reduce overtime. It's very difficult. One way was through the SAFER Grant, which has stipulations to it, one of the stipulations wouldn't be call backs. We've narrowed times down during the day from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm where we have less activity from the volunteers as they are working. We figured the callbacks would be reduced by about 50%, which is a significant amount of money in the first year and it would increase as the years go on.

In addition, it would be 75%, 75% and 35% over the three years and there is savings in other areas to have no impact on the budget. A lot of data that we can share. We'll meet tomorrow night to talk about this specifically.

The main thing is the operational efficiencies, again, reduction in call backs and response to calls. The town has grown significantly and the last time a person was added was over ten years ago. With economic development being what it is, and the housing that goes up every year, there is only so much we can do.

It is an application, only. No guarantee. It is time sensitive. Mr. Moise explained the procedure noting if this board supports it, if you could send that to the council that'd be great. It's just a recommendation.

The Chair asked for a motion to make a recommendation to the town council.

It was noted as this is a special meeting, nothing can be added to the agenda.

Discussion.

Mr. Moise said the Minutes would reflect the discussion.

Discussion on how often the Grant is available to be applied for.

May 16, 2018

Fire Commissioner Bunko reiterated this is just a Grant and there is no guarantee. It is time sensitive and we want to move as quickly as we can. A concern raised by members of the community is why are you not waiting for a new Fire Chief to make that decision?

The reality is we are moving forward with the hiring of a Fire Chief. Our final interviews are scheduled for June 11th and we hope to have somebody in place shortly thereafter. I can't imagine, given the current climate with firefighters, that anybody would say we can't use four additional people. It's incumbent upon us to bring this forward and continue to state the need for additional manpower.

Further discussion about the benefits of the Grant and why it wasn't noted during the budget process.

Cost savings for now and operational costs in the future for the fire department were discussed with the four new firefighters.

The Chair brought up the number of calls on I-691 and I-84. To us, there seemed to be a high amount of calls on two very well built nice stretches of highway. We talked about contacting the state to get insight as to why or what they can do. Discussion about the raising of the speed limit to 65 mph causing accidents again.

Discussion of the different types of accidents what really needs to be going to the highway on any given call. We need to curtail the number of responses on the highway. The town is working on that. The state responded their situation is sometimes the state dispatcher will call local and other times it is a person calling from their cell phone and it goes to 9-1-1 in Southington and they go out and they're waiting for the state police sometimes. It is question of gathering all of the information. Looking at the different categories of accidents, Mr. Sciota, explained when the new Chief come onboard, his request is the Chief look at the protocols and look at the protocols of the other towns that border the highways --- we do not have the same protocols as our neighboring towns. I'd like to see when our assets are displayed to the state highways. That person would then give their recommendation to the fire commission as to what the protocols should be. It's not an easy solution, but it has to be looked at very quickly. Hopefully, a protocol will be put in place that will satisfy the needs of the citizens and also protects the assts and the taxpayers.

Discussion.

C. Other Committees

Nothing reported.

May 16, 2018

7. Board Communications

Nothing reported.

VI. Public Communications (Excluding Public Hearing Items)

None.

VII. Review Long Range Plan and Priorities

1. Review status of LRP items in current fiscal year budget
 - A. Status / Reprioritizations
2. Strategy Discussion

Mr. Sciota said during the budget cycle we will need several sessions. As we move on, there are going to be several changes after November. We'll have to have serious strategy session between me, the finance director and this board to figure out where we are moving into the budget process. After the election we will see what the sense is up in Hartford and that'll give me time to sit down with you before I meet with my department heads and move on.

You'll want to meet with Mr. Connellan and the Administration at the BOE.

Mr. Pocock agreed. He stated he brought out some ideas at the BOE that went the opposite way. As far as I am concerned, we definitely need to start real early.

As to the BOE Financial meetings, we are invited, not to engage, but to listen. Anybody can attend from the public or the board.

VIII. Conduct Administrative Business

1. Consent Agenda

A.	Appropriation	2,500 *	Barnes - Property Maint-
	Loss/Damage (Spec Rev)		
B.	Appropriation	585 *	Youth Svcs - Outside Programs
	(Spec Rev)		
C.	Appropriation	31,063 *	Board of Education - Operations
D.	Appropriation	10,127 *	Highway - Property Maint -
	Loss/Damage (Spec Rev)		

May 16, 2018

E. Appropriation 3,985 * Recreation - Recreational Improvements (Spec Rev)
F. Appropriation 560 * Animal Control - Program Supplies (Spec Rev)
G. Appropriation 971 * Recreation - Program Supplies _ Pavilion Upgrades (Spec Rev)

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as written. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

2. Manager's memos

1. Transfers \$10,000 Calendar House - Utilities

Ms. Zoni made a motion to approve the transfer. Mr. Beaudoin seconded. Motion passed on a majority voice with Mr. Pocock abstaining.

2. Transfer 19,500 Police Dept - Program Supplies

Mr. Morrison made a motion to approve. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

3. Transfer 2,500 Police Dept - Vehicle Maintenance

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve the \$2,500 transfer to vehicle maintenance. Mr. Beaudoin seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

4. Transfer 2,600 Police Dept - Building Maintenance

Mr. Morrison made a motion to approve the transfer. Mr. Pocock seconded.

Mr. Morrison commented he liked the way the police department write their letters. They've very clear.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

May 16, 2018

5. Transfer 5,000 Police Dept - Special Response Team Equipment

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to transfer the \$5,000. Mrs. Zoni seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

6. Transfer 10,000 Police Dept - Camera Equipment

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve the transfer of \$10,000 to the police department camera equipment account. Mr. Morrison seconded.

Mr. Beaudoin stated the transfers are coming from the regular wages line item.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

7. Transfer 9,000 Police Dept - Camera Equipment

Mrs. Zoni so moved the motion to approve. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

8. Transfer 2,252 Central Dispatch - Overtime

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve the \$2,252 to central dispatch overtime account. Mr. Morrison seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

9. Transfer 1,300 Animal Control Fund - Building Maintenance

Mrs. Zoni so moved the motion to approve. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

10. Transfer 1,800 Animal Control Fund - Veterinary Services

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve the \$1,800 to veterinary services. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

May 16, 2018

11.	Transfer	17,500	Parks - Regular Wages
	Transfer	20,000	Highway - Vehicle Maintenance
	Transfer	3,000	Highway - Uniform Cleaning
	Transfer	13,000	Parks - Ground Maintenance
	Transfer	3,895	Parks - Program Supplies
	Transfer	200	Parks - On Call

Mrs. Zoni made a motion to approve the transfers. Mr. Pocock seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

12. Appropriation 28,850 Fire Dept - Volunteer Firefighters

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve. Mr. Pocock seconded.

Mr. Moise pointed out this is one of those things where we are using the volunteer forces as much as possible, when available, to get them more involved, which we've done over the past year. On the flip side is they get paid for the calls they go out on. This is the projection through June 16th for payment.

Chairman Bunko added we are currently calling out everybody for each and every call that comes in as it is necessary at this point.

This comes out of the town's contingency fund.

(Pause, pause)

Mr. Pocock noted we escaped the wrath of the storm last night, but unfortunately a lot of towns did not. I heard fire departments up in the western part of Connecticut could not get people to do what had to be done. Cheshire and Wallingford with a paid fire department couldn't get it done. Durham was in trouble and down the line.

Volunteers are a valuable asset to this town and I have no problem approving this. It's part of what we have to do. We have to try and keep them onboard.

Discussion of the pay timing.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

May 16, 2018

13. Appropriation 13,300 Fire Dept - Vehicle Maintenance

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve. Mr. Morrison seconded.
Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

14. Transfers 30,000 Fire Dept - Overtime

Appropriation 92,810 Fire Dept - Overtime

Mr. Beaudoin was under the impression the overtime per pay period was between \$25,000 and \$30,000. And this is for three months.

Mr. Moise explained what's happened. He explained the pay periods from 12/17 to 4/7/2018 were averaging between \$25,000 and \$29,000. The freak Sunday snowstorm a few weeks ago messed up the roads and all hell broke loose. We had 131 hours of callback that week and most is attributed to this event.

The sick time for the pay periods of 4/8/2018 to 5/15/2018 was the result of a stomach bug that went through the department. Used quite a few hours of sick time: 243 the first week and 288 the second. Coupled with the fact a firefighter was injured in an accident and he's out on medical leave and we have to replace that through sick replacement. That's 42 hours each week. And, we had one person out on maternity leave for three weeks. It adds up quickly.

Discussion.

Training, we used 200 hours in the week of 4/21. We had a mutual aid training event with Wolcott, Bristol and Plainville at ESPN. Those are for major catastrophes. That's a yearly event.

They had a large exercise for extrication, as well, which drives up the training.

One person is in the academy and he'll be done the 23rd, so the training should go down quite a bit.

It seems to be coming into a better place now. We still have some vacation.

Discussion.

Mr. Beaudoin asked, the \$122,00, you are projecting almost \$40,000 for three pay periods? Mr. Moise said that is what the project is.

Discussion.

May 16, 2018

Mr. Morrison stated it is the underlying (inaudible) that concerns me. Please refer to my previous comments as I've spoken about it before. My point is at the moment it looks like you are spending over \$1 million in labor if you take the volunteer and regular firefighters together. It's \$1.1 million, roughly.

The number you are given for this next year is \$846,000 in the budget. That is considerably less than the \$1.1 million.

It is difficult to cut overtime, but you are in a position where you have to cut overtime next year. That number is what we paid out in labor for 2015.

Chairman Bunko explained there were a number of issues that department faced this year that caused the overtime to go out of control. One of which is the fact we have been without a Fire Chief for 15 months. That's a shame, but it is what it is.

We had four firefighters retire during the year that wasn't budgeted for. Next year we have budgeted for one retirement. We expect more than one, certainly.

Just the recruits in the academy, it is has been a tough year for us without a doubt.

With the hiring of a new Chief we will look at different patterns and ways of doing things. It's hard to say if things will substantially change but I would expect the overtime be much more manageable next year than it was this year.

Discussion.

Mr. Moise stated at this point in time, we're looking at \$92,000 for an appropriation which could've been a lot worse. The transfers we make are through the salary and other lines. In some cases, it may take away from something that may be wanted or needed, but we can hold off on. It's difficult. I'm proud of the fact we have come this far and this is what we're looking for.

Discussion.

Communication will continue with the Board of Finance if an issue arises with next year's budget.

Discussion.

(1) Transfers \$30,000 Fire Dept - Overtime

Mr. Beaudoin made a motion to approve the \$30,000 transfer. Mr. Morrison seconded.

May 16, 2018

Mr. Pocock said when this comes down, a lot of this overtime is related to 9-1-1 calls. They don't always come into the troop where they belong. It adds to all of this and this is something we have to continue to work on as the town manager said. Hopefully, this will help us out there, too. The fire commission has done a great job of trying to get this thing in-line. It's not always humanly possible. Every day, anything could happen.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(2) Appropriation \$92,810 Fire Dept - Overtime

Mrs. Zoni suggested reducing the number to \$62,810 so that we cover three pay periods. By that time, we will be meeting again and then we can look at what the actual cost is rather than the projected overtime. Mr. Beaudoin seconded.

Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

15. Transfers 128,772 Misc - Accumulated Payout

Mr. Pocock made a motion to approve the transfer of \$128,772 for accumulated payout. Mr. Morrison seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

IX. Meeting Adjournment

Mr. Morrison made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Beaudoin seconded. Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 o'clock, p.m.)

* Represents funds received or to be received that were not budgeted, therefore no effect on Contingency.

REQUESTED VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION

B. Liaisons to Board of Fire Commissioners (Ed Pocock & Kevin Beaudoin)

THE CHAIR: Any thoughts on that, Mr. Pocock, Mr. Beaudoin?

MR. BEAUDOIN: The only thing is, we have Commissioners here if we have questions. The agenda ---

THE CHAIR: We have Commissioner Moise and Chairman Bunko here.

MR. BEAUDOIN: -- for the fire commission, they are going to be talking about the SAFER Grant which is a federal grant which they applied for, already. Right? Is that correct?

MR. MOISE: We are in the process.

MR. BEAUDOIN: The process. All right. And, that's to hire four firefighters and the grant would pay for the firefighters for the first three years based on a certain percentage. So, it's ---

CHAIR LEARY: Would you like to address that now, Chairman Bunko, or do you want to do it later in the meeting?

MR. MOISE: We can do it now or later. Whatever you want to do.

CHAIR LEARY: Because I know we've got two items: the overtime and that item. Do them ---

MR. MOISE: Do them now or after?

CHAIR LEARY: We'll talk about the SAFER Grant now.

And, thank you, Chairman Bunko and Commissioner Moise for being here.

MR. MOISE: Basically, we've looked at different areas of our department to try to figure out how to reduce overtime and it's very difficult. One of the ways we came up with was through the SAFER Grant because there are stipulations to it, obviously. But one of the stipulations would be call backs. Where we've narrowed times down during the day, from seven to three, where we have less activity from the volunteers because they are working at their other jobs and such. So, it is very difficult to have the manpower during the course of the day. And, there is a lot of call backs due to that. So, we figured that would be reduced by somewhere around fifty percent on the call backs which is a significant amount of money in the first year. And, then increase as the years go on.

In addition, it would be seventy-five percent, seventy-five percent and thirty-five percent over the three years.

And, there is savings in other areas to have no impact on the budget. So, it would be still, what we asked for this year, we'd get the same next year and the same next year, all things being equal.

So, there is a lot of data that we can share. We are going to be having our meeting tomorrow night, talking about this specifically, to go over things.

The main thing is the operational efficiencies, again, reduction in call backs and response to call. This town has grown significantly in the last twelve years. I think the last time they added even one person was maybe 2012 or 2006.

CHAIRMAN BUNKO: Over ten years ago.

MR. MOISE: Over ten years ago? And, with economic development being what it is and you go up on West Street and you see that development or Meriden Waterbury or Queen Street, not to mention the amount of housing that comes up every year. Just last week they had another forty condominiums were approved by planning & zoning.

So, there is only so much you can go with a rubber band. Sooner or later it is going to break. So, that's where we are at right now.

It is an application, only. There is no guarantee.

MR. BEAUDOIN: No guarantee, right.

MR. MOISE: Absolutely no guarantee. So ---

CHAIR BUNKO: It is time sensitive.

MR. BEAUDOIN: When is the application due?

MR. MOISE: Uh, its --

CHAIR BUNKO: It's due ---

MR. MOISE: What happens is it has to go through ---

CHAIR BUNKO: It rolls.

MR. BEAUDOIN: It rolls? Okay.

CHAIR BUNKO: Yah, yah.

MR. MOISE: Through the council, they have to approve it, so we have to go to them. But what we'd ask for is if you had support for that, send that to the council, that'd be great. I know it's not a vote. It is just a recommendation.

CHAIR LEARY: Well, we could have it in a vote in the form of a recommendation. Would anyone like to make a motion to make a recommendation that we proceed ----

MR. SCIOTA: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I apologize, but this is a special meeting.

CHAIR LEARY: Okay. We can't add anything.

MR. SCIOTA: You can't add anything to the agenda. I hate to play town attorney on you, but --

CHAIR LEARY: All right. Special Meeting. So special, we can't make a motion.

MR. MOISE: So, last meeting was a special meeting, as well?

CHAIR LEARY: Yah.

MR. MOISE: So, you had two special meetings?

MR. SCIOTA: Well, I'm not going to --- there was a request to have a meeting last week. We originally had the meetings changed a little bit. There was a special request for the meeting, so these actually became two special meetings. Because we moved this one to accommodate the town council's vote on the budget to set the mill rate. But we were asked specifically to have a meeting last Wednesday, too. The Chairman accommodated that.

MR. MOISE: I think the Minutes will reflect it with the town council, regardless. So ---

CHAIR LEARY: The Minutes will reflect we had a discussion.

MR. MOISE: Yes.

Do you have any questions on that?

MRS. ZONI: How often can this grant be applied for?

MR. MOISE: It changes. The last time was eighteen months ago. Previous to that, it was a year. At one point it was one hundred percent funding for two years and now it is seventy-five percent.

When you are looking at this from a point of view of timeline, it takes about six months to go through the whole process so you wouldn't have that --- the yes or no until December. Then it takes another four months for the --- if it was passed, the new firefighters to go through the academy. So, they wouldn't be starting until actually May of next year. We couldn't get them in until February because the academy goes from February to May and then August. It goes through the summer, too. Only two times a year that the academy goes. So that's where the time constraints are.

It is more of a looking forward to thinking about, okay, we know we don't have a Chief, but we have to still go forward with what we have to do as a commission.

MRS. ZONI: Thank you.

CHAIR LEARY: Commissioners, can I --- oh, please.

CHAIR BUNKO: One of the concerns that we've heard as we begin to speak amongst our constituencies in respect to this particular grant, again, it's just a grant. It's just an application. No guarantee. It is time sensitive and that's why we want to move on this as quickly as we can.

One of the concerns that has been raised by some members of the community is why are you not waiting for your fire chief to make that decision for you? Well, the reality is we are moving with the hiring of a fire chief. Our final interviews are scheduled for June 11th. We hope to have somebody in place shortly thereafter, assuming all goes well, and I have every reason to believe it will.

But I can't imagine given the current climate with what we are hearing with shortages of firefighters across the country that anybody coming into this community wouldn't say, we can't use four additional people. So, it is incumbent upon us to bring that forward to make the need and continue to state the need as we have in every budget cycle since I've been on the board, that we need additional manpower. Bottomline.

Thank you.

MR. BEAUDOIN: I have a question: Can you still file for the application without the recommendation of the town council or do you need them?

CHAIR BUNKO: No. We will need that.

MR. BEAUDOIN: You will need it?

MR. SCIOTA: That's the policy of the Town of Southington. I wouldn't sign an application without approval by the council.

MR. BEAUDOIN: I just wanted to make sure.

MR. MOISE: That's a fact. The thing is that we look at many towns that have used the SAFER Grant, Branford, Milford, City of Bridgeport, and it helps a lot. I mean, this is one way to solve a problem. The reason, and we talked about this amongst ourselves as far as, okay, do we put it in the budget or not? We put it in the initial budget, explanations to the town manager, but we knew it was a Catch-22. If you put it in the budget, and then they look at that and say, well, you have the money already so we're not going to give it to you.

We waited until after the budget process to go forward with this. Because everybody is --- we didn't know where we were going with the budget and it seems to be that we ended up pretty well. So that is why it wasn't during the budget process because it would've just muddied the waters for the Grant, if we were able to go through with it. That's the explanation.

MR. MORRISON: Yah. The asks for the town, the town council, is for operational reason. It's not for cost savings reasons. There may be some cost savings the Grant provides in the first couple of years, then after that, we have four firefighters we have to pay for. So, it will be an operational, it's nice to have some cost savings in operational sort of justification for them.

MR. MOISE: We've thought, you know, again, there are stipulations on the Grant. After that, after three years there are no stipulations. So, there is vacations, call backs. We'll make sure that that goes into the fourth year, fifth year, sixth year, where you are saving the money not just on call backs, but the recalls for vacation and sick and personal time. As you can see by the overtime, that is a significant number.

CHAIR LEARY: I have one question and we could put it in this category or save it for the overtime category. But we talked about the number of calls we get on 691 and 84. The two highways. We've had discussions here that there seemed to be to us and we didn't have all the data, but there seemed to be a high amount of calls on two very well built, nice stretches of highway.

I-84 running through here and 691 appear to be, to me as a layman, appear to be well-built, straight. Sometimes it's hard to believe we have the accidents we do up there. To me. The people having them may have a different opinion. That's okay.

But when we talked, we talked about contacting the state to see if they had any insight into why, what they could do. And, during that time the speed limit got raised to 65.

MR. MOISE: Wasn't that nice of them? Which --- you know what? We had a nice lull there for about two months of the accidents on the highway, 84. There were some, but not as much as it was going back in February. And, then March and April it kind of dissipated. And, when it hit 65 again --- it

went up. Now they're not going 65, they're going 85 to 90 and they're causing all sort of, you know, kind of wrecks.

Now there are different accidents that happen and that's an issue where we are looking at that internally to say, what really needs to go up to that highway on any given call? There are some calls, remember, they're going blind because they're getting information from the dispatcher who is getting information from somebody who is calling. Sometimes they are on the westbound side and they are on the eastbound side. So, by the time you get to that accident, if you have to extricate somebody from the car --- but there are other accidents, two cars on the side of the road, the state police are there --- no injuries. That's the kind of stuff we need to look at to curtail the number of responses on the highway.

CHAIR LEARY: So, you are working on it. Did the state ever come back and say, we do have a lot of high propensity of calls, or we don't?

MR. MOISE: They do, but their situation is they call ---sometimes the dispatch will call local. And, other times it is just a person calling from their phone. The way the cells go, it goes to the 9-1-1 in Southington and they send them out and they will be waiting for the state police, sometimes.

Again, it is a question of gathering all the information of injuries and such. But we are looking at that and I will tell you, looking at the different categories of the accidents. I've been talking to the town manager about that and we've talked about that as the commission.

MR. SCIOTA: What I've asked the Chairman and I talked to Mr. Moise on this is that when the new chief comes onboard, my question is that the new chief look at the protocols and look at what the other towns that border the highways protocols are because if you look at it, we do not have the same protocols as our neighboring towns. Not that they are right, wrong or indifferent.

But I would like to see the new chief look at the protocols and see when our assets are displayed to the state highways. And, that particular person would then give their recommendation to the fire commission as to what the protocols should be. It is not an easy solution but it is something that has to be looked at very quickly because, as you see, Mr. Chairman, anyone who monitors on their scanners know that we're getting more and more calls through 84, whether it be a single car spin out in the median versus a car that's on fire or leaking fluid or injuries.

So, I've asked both of these fine gentlemen, and they will do that and when we interview the chief that'll be some of the questions we'll talk about. So hopefully, a protocol will be put in place that satisfies the needs of the citizens and also protects the assets and the taxpayers.

CHAIR LEARY: Thank you for our discussion.