

MINUTES
10-Year Strategic Planning Committee
Wednesday, July 22, 2015 – 7:30 PM
Norma Drummer Room, Seymour Town Hall

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 7/23/15
TIME: 10:15 AM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Members Present: Jen Magri, Jeff Dussetschleger, Kathie Vrlik and Rory Burke

Members Absent: Trish Danka and Don Smith

Others Present: First Selectman Kurt Miller, Finance Director Doug Thomas and Director of Operations Tony Caserta

1. Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

4. Approval of Minutes

There was no quorum.

5. Quarterly update from First Selectman, Director of Operations and Finance Director

Kurt: With regards to the surplus, we're up to about \$120,000 and we may potentially see another \$20-30,000. We're up to \$321,000 in the shortfall for worker's comp for the Board of Education. We're going to have discussions shortly as to how to address it, but we'd like to protect the fund balance. We may use some BRRFOC money and we've been told to expect some more. Even taking that money out, we're still looking at a 9% fund balance. S & P likes that we have a goal and a policy. They like our progress. We shorted the revenue account \$120,000 because we were concerned we're not going to get all the money the State earmarked for us. The numbers for debt service came back better than anticipated. There's an increase in FY17, taking into account road bonds. We have a premium of \$182,682 to smooth out the payments so there aren't spikes for the residents. There are still substantial drops in FY 20/21. S & P is aware of this and are okay with it because they know why our numbers are where they are and that we have a plan in place to address it. The numbers came in lower than expected. Roads are at \$200,000 this year and we want to get to \$600,000 in FY 20. The cost for revaluation came in lower than expected. We made the final \$100,000 contribution to the \$300,000 capital fund. Going forward, we can increase it if we want to. This year, we have \$288,000 spoken for and we just spent \$1,300 for life rings for the fish bypass. The policy for healthcare audits is complete and we're shooting for January to shop for insurance. Please let me know if you have input. This is by no means a finished document. Monthly cash flow reports have been accomplished for a while. We put a spending freeze in place at the end of last fiscal year when Doug identified a small deficit. Doug also creates a report for our monthly department head meetings. I'm going to ask that the employee contribution exploratory committee be

pushed out until our next contract negotiations because we went a different route this round. It's definitely worth looking at, but I don't see the unions giving up their pension benefits. Michele created a spreadsheet rather than a letter for employee benefits. I would like to put this out in the budget packets. These numbers are much better after the recent change in insurance. Longevity pay is grandfathered but it will be going away. The clerks and administrators got rid of that in the last round of negotiations. In ten years we should be longevity-free. OPEB liability discussions have begun. It came up during our ratings call. We should have it substantially before 2025. Coming up with a trust is a good thing, but we'll have to tax the residents to do it. Performance measurements are difficult for some departments than others. It is more complex than I had originally thought and I think it's related to a lack of training. Hopefully I'll have more for the third quarter report. We completed the CAFR and won an award for it. GFOA is having a class in the fall and hopefully Lorrie and Doug will be able to attend and Doug keeps up his CPA certification as well. Tax collection has been slowly ramped up and we're at 98.4% and it's a tough number to hit. NVCOG hired a guy who has experience in purchasing with Waterbury who has just started. Particularly being paired with Waterbury now, we should be able to take advantage of economies of scale. Liability insurance is shopped at least every three years. With health insurance, with the exception of the police, is exactly the same so shopping should be much easier. We will probably look at shopping it at least every year and have done well, even with our loss ratios not being the best.

Jen: For clarity, we may use BRRFOC for the deficit?

Kurt: We entered into a consortium for solid waste with about 13 other municipalities. It was taken from the transfer station to Bristol to be burned. Once the facility was paid for, it went to Covanta and the fund balance was distributed to each. It was supposed to be reserved for environmental purposes. I hope to privatize the transfer station to replace that employee to get two more laborers for Public Works. I would prefer it to be transferred from a special revenue account rather than fund balance.

Jen: You're projected a 2% budget increase annually? Do you think this is accurate or do you think there will be fluctuation due to large-scale purchases?

Kurt: I think we could hold off for a drop in debt service for large purchases or use a BAN. The Building Committee is going to focus on the low-hanging fruit and not big ticket items. I would like to do another \$5 million in roads in 2021.

Jeff: Does having the audit done by January give you enough time to have it in the next budget year?

Kurt: I think so, but we can change the date if need be. Lockton is pretty good.

Jen: Item 1 says every other January in the policy, rather than every year.

Doug: It's a generally accepted auditing process for every other year.

Kurt: It will be annually, we can make the change.

Kathie: Is there going to be any kind of explanation on the employee benefit spreadsheet for the public?

Kurt: That would probably be included in the letter. When we changed the budget to a packet format, it became a lot easier for residents to understand. SEND EXCEL SHEET

Doug: Does the Board of Education do this as well?

Jen: We will do the Board of Education. We have new legislation that will allow municipal employees to

join the State plan. I believe \$27,000 is the Cadillac tax limit.

Kurt: We have reopeners in all the contracts.

Jen: It doesn't seem that there was a big adoption for the high-deductible plan.

Kurt: I think we got five. I would expect more in year 2.

Jeff: What are the cut offs?

Kurt: \$2,000/\$4,000. We mirrored the Board of Education plan. Every police officer is high-deductible. Some of the other unions are looking at what the police have and are considering that as well.

Jen: Would it be helpful if we had some ideas on metrics for performance measurement?

Kurt: Yeah, that would be helpful.

Kathie: Are there other municipalities we can benchmark from?

Kurt: The bigger ones, cities, who can afford dedicated staff. Danbury took over 211 so residents can call it and it's an automated line.

Kathie: What sort of savings are you anticipating coming out of NVCOG?

Kurt: Catch basin clean costs us \$27/per catch basin. We sat down with Oxford and Beacon Falls and got it renegotiated for \$19/per. We talked about purchasing salt, sharing equipment. Does it make sense to put 3 Towns together for an engineer?

Kurt: There are a lot of formal meetings with the State delegation and a lot of informal messages frequently. I meet with Rep. DeLauro annually with the other municipal CEOs. I get the most information from CCM and COST, almost daily plus detailed legislative updates. Lobbyists are also constantly feeding me information. I think having Themis Klarides as the minority leader is also helpful because she's very concerned about the Valley. Seymour needs to regionalize and work with surround towns. Having NVCOG is a huge bump, especially with Waterbury and Governor Malloy's good relationship. I try to empower department heads but Doug, Tony and I don't have the time to micromanage. CCM courses get sent out when appropriate and we try to support those who come forward and request to attend other training sessions. I intend to return to the National League of Cities. Job descriptions were updated when I first entered office and are being redefined as employees turn over. We can't do that now because of union restrictions. Non-statutory boards are being reviewed constantly. The Energy Committee and the Technology Committee were removed. We sent out the request for everyone to add public comment and I've worked with those chairpersons who disagreed. I have an open door policy as long as I'm available for residents and I meet with the seniors on a monthly basis. We haven't started an advisory committee because I'm working on the Operations Department. We have an intern in the First Selectman's Office who has been charged with reaching out to the youth. We've tasked her with the Pink Promenade to try and get the youth more involved. We've started looking at communication: social media, Code Red, etc. Code Red has a lot more targeted functionalities. Community Services new website is a good step forward and they're working towards utilizing proactive communication. Doug is working on an infrastructure inventory and maintenance plan. Rob has been working on a comprehensive technology plan but we keep finding more problems as some get addressed. Tony has a basic inventory of buildings that the Permanent Building Committee will likely expand upon. We've been working with Public Works and have a new truck every year to increase dependability as well as other equipment. The Road Program has begun and will continue. We're in the

process of finding a Tree Warden. Rory is pushing electronic record management, which will start with the Building Inspector. We also consolidated Code Enforcement with Blight and Zoning cross-trained in Inland Wetlands. The Building Committee has been established. Community Services, Code Enforcement and IT have been streamlined and we're working to do the same with maintenance. We're working on converting streetlights to LED. Hopefully we can get something by spring, if not fall. We try to use efficient equipment, but we purchase mostly emergency service vehicles but we're trying to be more durable equipment. Having plans in place helps Dee decide on grants to apply for. The change in recycling has been phenomenal, saving about \$120,000 in FY 2015.

Kathie: Is there any consideration being given to employee retention?

Kurt: It's hard in a union environment to encourage that in certain ways. I think we need to consider paying our employees more. I think the overall work environment is pretty positive. Our size also limits the potential motivation – there's not much room for growth. The unions weren't interested in incentive compensation.

Kathie: What is the communications audit?

Kurt: We're thinking about and we've started some things but we could definitely use some help. What's had the biggest impact for us is social media and we're exploring other avenues. We're working on a newsletter and other proactive measures.

Kurt: I also asked Rory to have you guys schedule and interview with the Housing Authority.

Kathie: We'll be discussing marketing for the plan itself as well.

6. Discussion of Town of Seymour Strategic Plan quarterly updates

There was no quorum.

7. Open Discussion

There was no further discussion.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rory Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rory" and last name "Burke" clearly distinguishable.

Rory Burke
Recording Secretary