

**LOWELL TOWN COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
2016 BUDGET
JULY 30, 2015**

A work session of the Lowell Town Council was called to order on Thursday, July 30, 2015 at 4:30 P.M. by President Christopher Salatas. Members present were Craig Earley, LeAnn Angerman, Donald Parker, Christopher Salatas, and Edgar Corns. Also present were Clerk-Treasurer Judith Walters, Town Building Administrator Tom Trulley, Public Works Director Greg Shook, Police Chief Erik Matson, and one member of the media.

President Salatas stated he would like to finish prioritizing what the Council would like to see in the 2016 budget and that his personal "wish list" was a Town Manager, ½ of the increase that the Police requested for their Police Pension Fund, and to hire a police officer half-way through 2016. Councilwoman Angerman and Councilman Corns agreed that those were good priorities.

Councilman Earley stated after doing some research and being on the side of not wanting a Town Manager, the Council has overlooked an opportunity. Councilman Earley explained that Public Works Director Greg Shook has shown interest in the position of Town Manager, and has already had some duties that are similar to a Town Manager. He stated he believed Director Shook would do a great job if given the opportunity, and that it would come at a much less cost to the community. Councilman Earley stated he was not entirely clear on the Police Pension raise, but was more interested in giving across the board raises. He also expressed his concern with the Fire Department's needs that have not been brought forth, other than maintenance on the building that the Town owns, and the cost of the future replacement and re-programing of the new 911 equipment that we will be switching to. Councilman Earley stated he believed they were not done with the Fire Department and the need for more firemen or servicemen in general.

Councilman Parker stated he liked the three priorities, and that the Council needed to leave tonight letting Clerk-Treasurer Walters know where they stand on priorities. He agreed that there were some advantages about looking inside for the Town Manager position, but that there were also some concerns. Councilman Parker stated he would like to have an executive meeting with that employee to discuss the advantages and concerns, but that he did not see a huge cost savings. "We need a Town Manager, not a Town Manager slash something else. We, the Town Council, need to identify what the needs are and what we want done, and let him know." Councilman Parker agreed that they needed to hear what the particular employee had to say about the position. If an internal promotion was made, you would need to fill that spot, and at some point you will still have to hire an employee. There would be a cost savings, and when we are all done with this, there may be money there for a 2% or 3% pay raise if we stay internal, but unfortunately tonight we need to make a decision on what we want to do. Councilman Parker brought forth some concerns he had regarding the funding of the Town Court, and the Fire Department's need for more firemen. He stated he has been in favor of a Town Manager for the past three years. A discussion followed regarding salaries that have been put back in to the budget, or spread to other departments throughout the past couple of years, and the need to look in to those numbers, and others, in order to find the money for a Town Manager, the Police Pension raise, and a police officer. The Town Court budget was discussed. Clerk-Treasurer Walters explained that she has to have a budget for County Council review by September 1st, and that she has a budget hearing with the County on August 12th. Discussion followed regarding setting an executive session before Mr. Guerretaz comes back to help finalize the budget on August 10th.

Councilman Earley asked if anyone on the Council was interested in an employee raise across the board. Councilman Parker stated he believed the priorities stated were more important at this time. There may be room for a 2% raise if we are able to move positions internally. President Salatas stated an employee raise was his number four priority. Discussion followed,

Councilman Parker asked why the building permit fees would be raised, and what was in mind for that revenue. Building Administrator Tom Trulley stated at the meeting with Mr. Guerretaz, he was told that

his department is running, on average, \$30,000 in the red every year. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated it is not running in the red, it is the fact that tax dollars are subsidizing your budget. Building Administrator Trulley stated he has created a fee schedule for the Council, whenever they would like to see it. Discussion followed.

Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated she would like to discuss the Police Pension increase because if we increase their pension, their rate of 6% that comes out of their paycheck will increase as well, leaving them taking home less money. We need to make sure that if there are no employee raises, they are okay with taking home less. Police Chief Erik Matson stated he has not gone to each individual officer, but in speaking with the “higher-ups”, we are all in favor of it paying off in the long run. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated a 1st Class Patrolman currently has \$136.90 coming out of their paycheck, if we increase the pension to \$75,000, they will have \$173.07 coming out of their paycheck with no raise, and the health insurance may go up. Councilman Earley stated he is not going to say that a Town Manager is not for him if someone is moved up within, but he is more interested in hiring a full-time police officer rather than raising the pension, and a 3% pay increase across the board. Discussion followed regarding moving money around from professional services to go towards a Town Manager salary, budgeting for a police officer six months in to the year, and where the Town Court budget and office stands. Clerk-Treasurer Walters will prepare a budget with the Town Administrator line item adjusted for a Town Manager, adjusting the part-time employee line item in Town Council budget for Special Events Coordinator and Planning budget for Code Enforcement, the pension increase based on \$65,000 not \$75,000, a six month police officer salary to begin June 1st and a 3% salary increase that will not be given if funds are not available. Councilman Corns left the meeting at 5:10 P.M.

Councilman Earley asked for \$10,000 to be re-appropriated to the same line item in the Park Capital Improvement Fund that the LP3 Committee was able to use last year for improvements. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated there has not been anything spent out of it this year. The Council agreed that it should be re-appropriated. Councilwoman Angerman reaffirmed the three capital needs of the Fire Department that will come out of this year’s budget. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated those would be taken out of the current CCD Fund. Discussion followed regarding the CEDIT Fund and how it should be budgeted in 2016 for the new Town Garage and rail payment. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated she did want to let the Council know that she called PERF, and the Town is not able to make any more contributions. After some discussion, the Council set an Executive Session for 4:30 P.M. and a Work Session for 5:30 P.M. on Thursday, August 6th.

Councilman Earley asked if anyone was concerned about the Parks Department and having a plan in place. Councilman Parker stated the Plan Commission is calling a special meeting regarding a few Ordinances, one having to do with requirements of developers and the other regarding a possible Park Impact Fee. Discussion followed. President Salatas agreed that the Town needed to plan for something, but stated that there are other things that the Council needs to move forward on right now.

With no further questions or comments, President Salatas adjourned the meeting at 5:20 PM.

Christopher Salatas, President

Attest:

Judith Walters, Clerk-Treasurer