

At a Special meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on April 22, 2021:

PURSUANT TO R.I. EXECUTIVE ORDERS EXECUTED & CONTINUED BY THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, THIS MEETING WILL BE TELECONFERENCED VIA ZOOM:

I. Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order at 7:31 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Members present: Julian (Jay) Forgue, President; William E. Reichert Vice President; Walter M.O. Steere III; Stephen Arnold; and William Worthy , Jr.

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; David Igliazzi, Town Solicitor; Joseph DelPrete, Chief of Police; Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Gerry Mosca, EMA Director; Adam Muccino, Finance Director; Gary Trembl, Director of Public Works, Robert Shields, Recreation Director

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Councilor Arnold reminded the Council that there may be some people joining this meeting by telephone or without video capability, therefore, Council members should identify themselves when speaking, particularly when making or seconding a motion.

Councilor Arnold went on to explain the procedure for the zoom meeting, how participants can be recognized when requesting to speak, and further stated that participants expressing inappropriate behavior or being disruptive may be removed from the meeting by the Council.

IV. Open Forum - For Agenda Items

Councilor Forgue stated that those wishing to speak on agenda items should raise their hand and Christine Mathieu will recognize those that wish to speak.

None

IV. Public Hearing

A. Proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021/2022

Councilor Forgue stated that this is a public hearing to review the proposed budget for FY 2021-2022. Councilor Forgue stated that this public hearing has been advertised in the Valley Breeze Observer on April 8th, & 15th, and in the Bargain Buyer on April 14, 2021.

Councilor Forgue DECLARED the Public Hearing Open.

1. Review of proposed budget (as needed)

Councilor Forgue stated that the Finance Director will give an overview of the budget.

A. Muccino, Finance Director, stated that he would give an overview of the budget as well as explaining some additional proposals for council's consideration. A. Muccino thanked the Budget Board and all departments for their hard work to assist with the preparation of this budget.. A. Muccino stated the following points:

- the operating budget included most departments requesting funding at the same level as FY 21;
- salary increases were included as per their collective bargaining agreements;
- a 3% increase was included for all other personnel with an explanation as to how calculated;
- 2 clerk reclassifications in the finance department were included, Senior Clerks to Financial Clerks
- a reserve for salary negotiations with the Department of Public Works was included in Other Operational Expense
- A. Muccino stated that the health benefits for the town would see an increase of 4% but that town dental would not increase. A. Muccino stated that the Gloucester School district would be joining the town health and dental plan which would result in savings from the plan they had in the past. A. Muccino stated he appreciated the cooperation of the Gloucester School Committee.
- A. Muccino stated that increases were approved by the Budget Board as to:
 - Economic Development Commission for a \$2,500 increase,
 - Information Technology increases for software and licensing,
 - Personnel for the Department of Public Works (1 additional laborer),
 - Recreation Department - cuts last year due to Covid and the elimination of programs and the proposed budget reflects a hopeful return to normal operations.
 - Police - one civilian employee and one candidate to the police academy
 - Emergency Management - reflects an increased scope of work performed by EMA Director

A. Muccino summarized the proposed Capital Budget of \$833K to include funds for vehicles for the Police, Med Pod storage for EMA, wifi upgrades, town hall network switching, replacing the town telephone system, vehicles for Public Works, and paving/crushing for Public Works.

A. Muccino explained the unassigned fund balance is in very good shape over the Town Charter requirement of 12% being at 21% without expected revenue. A. Muccino stated that with the expected revenue the estimated fund balance would be at 31%. A. Muccino stated these numbers put the town in a good position financially.

A. Muccino stated that the proposed changes would include reductions:

- of the Gloucester School Department due to the District joining the Towns provider for health and dental;

- removing a van driver from Human Services Dept.,
- removing the 3% increase to the Tax Assessor position.

A. Muccino stated that there would be an increase in the Recreation Committee due to an increase in the minimum wage for seasonal employees. A. Muccino stated that there would also be a reduction in the DPW's operating storm account from \$230,000 to \$150,000 and thanked the Director of Public Works for working with him on that reduction. A. Muccino explained the \$150,000 coupled with the proposed set aside will be sufficient.

A. Muccino summarized the proposed special appropriations budget with funding from the fund balance. A. Muccino stated he felt the following should be funded: \$68K to the storm fund; and \$100K each to the F/G Regional proration, future operations of the Gloucester School Department, and a reserve for loss of state aid to the Gloucester School Department.

A. Muccino stated there is a proposed reduction in Abatements/allowances for Uncollected Taxes of \$20K making that number \$120k and to increase the Transfer from surplus for Operations by \$280K to \$780K. total.

A. Muccino stated that another proposed change to the FY 22 capital budget was to increase the paving budget by \$220K by funding it from the fund balance. A. Muccino stated in order to do this we would need to increase the Transfer of Surplus from Capital from \$300k to \$458,084.

A. Muccino stated that all proposed changes would result in a 1.4% increase over FY 21 in terms of expenses. A. Muccino stated the Fund Balance could stand to be at the end of FY 2021 5.3 million and with expenses we could still be at 17% which is still greater than the 12% charter amount required.

A. Muccino expressed his thanks and appreciation to all staff, department heads and the budget board. Councilor Forgue expressed his thanks to A. Muccino and complemented him as a team player.

2. Public Discussion

Councilor Forgue stated that at this time is there anyone from the public that would like to ask questions regarding the budget and if so to raise your hand, unmute yourself when you are asked and please identify yourself for the record. Councilor Forgue stated that all questions should be directed to the Council.

Discussion:

M. Robinson, Budget Board, asked if the decrease in the storm budget was due to good weather. A. Muccino stated that even though we had good weather when storms hit we had to hire a sub because of manpower shortage and that coupled with salt, sand, and the timing of the storms caused our budget to go over slightly. A. Muccino stated after review of past budgets he felt confident we can reduce the operating budget and increase the "savings" budget if it is needed. A. Muccino thanked Gary Trembl for his assistance with the budget.

Councilor Forgue thanked the Budget Board for their hard work.

3. Council Discussion and/or Action

a. Consideration of Special Appropriation - Public Safety Infrastructure - Future Purchase of Land for Replacement or improvements

Councilor Forgue stated that past Councils and the Chief have been analyzing and discussing the condition of our current police department for some time. Councilor Forgue stated that back in 2019 we did a complete needs assessment and many deficiencies and building failures were determined. Councilor Forgue stated we have been able to fix some of the infrastructure failures in order to maintain the use of the building but we have only addressed the tip of the iceberg. Councilor Forgue stated that in addition to the needs assessment a complete analysis was done of the building and site and the report confirmed that the needs of our public safety division, for now and especially in the future, can not be met in the the existing building without additional space.

Councilor Forgue stated the question comes down to spending funds to attempt to transform our existing structure into one that will meet our needs going forward or spending funds that will build a new structure that will absolutely meet our needs now and especially in the future. Councilor Forgue stated it is a matter of which option is the best use of our funds and either way the purchase of property is necessary.

Councilor Forgue stated a special appropriation can be included in this budget to address the issue. Councilor Forgue further stated if Council includes \$500,000 as a line item, we would give ourselves the tools we need to purchase additional property surrounding the current police station or purchase new property for the taxpayers. Councilor Forgue stated this amount would include the cost of property and the architectural and engineering work necessary to bring it to the build stage and would allow us to take the first step towards improving our municipal infrastructure now instead of a more expensive option later.

Councilor Forgue stated back in 2019 a group of Town dept. heads & representation from Town Council discussed points regarding the repair or replace.

Councilor Forgue stated that in discussing the two options the following points were brought up for consideration regarding repairing or replacing:

These were the issues brought up for considering repairs:

Prioritize repairs: Short Term/Long Term. Cost?

How much time would repairs afford the Police Dept. in the current space?

What else is on the “verge” that is not addressed in the report but is 30 years old and may fail?

Did any of the recent “failures” create possible future problems? (Mold, structural wearing or damage)

Would we spend funds on repairs and still not have adequate space/infrastructure

These were the issues discussed on the question to replace:
Possible properties? (Town owned?)
What would baseline cost be for build?
Ideas for use of existing building.

Councilor Forgue reviewed some of the needs identified in 2019:
#1. - Station Security: Fencing, gate, & reader \$45,000
#2. - Parking lot expansion \$32,000
#5. - Windows \$12,000
#6. - Expansion \$250,000
#7. - Pistol and Rifle range \$12,000

Councilor Forgue stated the question was asked what new legislation/rules/procedures are pending or are inevitable that would cause the need for additional flexible space or dedicated space. (Ex. could be in-house training, space segregation due to gender, additional storage requirements.)

Councilor Forgue stated other issues discussed were: Drainage issues, long term, mold, loss of use of space, File room. Questions arose as to whether state records retention law has guidelines on secure space, and is fire suppression and/or climate control required.

Councilor Forgue stated our Comprehensive Plan is our plan for the future of our Town and is regarded highly, particularly when completing grant applications.

Councilor Forgue referred to the sections of the Comp Plan that apply:

Comprehensive Plan - Goals, Policies, Actions, & Implementation Program

V. Services & Facilities

Goal

1. Provide a well-planned, economically sound and functionally adequate community facility and service network for Gloucester's current and expected future population needs.

VII. Natural Hazards and Climate Change

Policies

3. Protect ongoing operations of critical facilities.

Public Safety Facilities and Services

Emergency Management Agency

As the Town considers future renovations to existing structures, consideration can be given to establishing a dedicated EOC

Councilor S. Arnold stated he thinks it makes good sense to do a set aside for the future of our town.

Councilor W. Steere asked where this money is coming from.

Councilor Forgue stated this appropriation will come from existing surplus and will not increase the amount to be raised by taxes.

A. Muccino stated we can fund from the unrestricted fund balance and still be within the required 12% our Charter calls for.

Councilor W. Steere asked where that brings us relative to the 12%.

A. Muccino stated that appropriation would leave us at approx. 14%.

Councilor W. Steere stated our Charter states 12% but due to an uncertain future he wouldn't want to go below 14%. Councilor W. Steere asked if we needed the full \$500,000 all at once.

Councilor Forgue stated he feels we do and explained that included in that amount is the engineering and architectural work.

Councilor W. Steere stated if we proposed an additional amount for paving it would put us close to 12%. A. Muccino stated he factored that amount in when he gave his estimate.

Councilor W. Reichert questioned the federal money coming to cities and towns for infrastructure. Councilor W. Reichert asked what those funds can be used for. A. Muccino state we will be getting approx. \$1 million from one program, which should be announced shortly. A. Muccino stated he has heard what some allowable uses are but does not have confirmation yet. A. Muccino then referred to a second plan, "Build Back Better" which is still in proposal stage. A. Muccino stated there is a chance of funding, but just a chance.

Councilor Forgue stated that our Police Chief has explained the deficiencies and the thought is do we spend \$3.5 on a building that may not be sufficient or do we explore all avenues to spend our money wisely. Councilor Forgue stated we can at least put the question to our voters. Councilor Forgue stated we would like to find a way to keep this facility in the center of town as that would make in centrally located. Councilor Forgue discussed the possibility of a facility, in the center of town, that could possibly house our EMA's and EMT's in the future should the need for 24 hour service arise.

Councilor Forgue stated the police department we are in is not adequate and once we realized how much an addition would cost we knew we had to consider all options.

Councilor W. Reichert stated this is what the Council did with the Simas property. Councilor W. Steere stated we put away a little at a time to buy that recreational property.

K. Sorenson, resident, questioned if this question would be a separate referendum question or

incorporated into the budget.

A. Muccino stated it would be a separate question.

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to **ADD** a Special Appropriation to the proposed budget in the amount of \$500,000 for Public Safety Infrastructure - Future Purchase of Land for Replacement or improvements; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

- b. Amendments, Additions, Changes to proposed budget
Discussion and/or Action

Councilor Forgue stated at this time, Council can discuss changes they would like in the proposed budget and after discussing these items, motions can be made to amend the proposed budget.

The Clerk stated the budget we are referring to this evening is to include other special appropriations as outlined by the Finance Director and will need motions before they can be added to the budget.

A. Muccino suggested the following:

Special Appropriations:

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to ADD \$68,091 to Special Appropriations for the Storm Fund; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye

Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to ADD \$100,000 to Special Appropriations for the Foster/Glocester Regional Proration set aside; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to ADD \$100,000 to Special Appropriations for Gloucester School District Reserve for loss in State Aid set aside; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to ADD \$100,000 to Special Appropriations for Future Operations of the Gloucester School District set aside; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye

Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

A. Muccino reviewed the proposed changes for Town Council vote:

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to ADJUST the local appropriation for Gloucester Schools to \$7,164,306 for FY 22 with \$78,068 to be used from the prior year's set aside; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to INCREASE the Recreation wage line budget by \$7,847 (due to state mandated minimum wage); seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to REDUCE the DPW Storm Account by \$80,000; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to REDUCE the Human Services Van Drivers wages line item & benefits by \$7,931.72 to reflect one less employee; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to REDUCE the Tax Assessor's salary line item by 3% changing that line item to \$67,553; seconded by Councilor Worthy

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to **REDUCE**, under Adjustments, the abatement to the doubtful accounts (uncollectible taxes) by \$20,000 to \$120,000 ; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to INCREASE the transfer of Surplus from Operations from \$500,000 (current budget) to \$780,000; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Reichert to INCREASE the transfer of surplus from Town Capital from \$300k to \$458,084; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye

Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to INCREASE the Paving line item by \$220,000 to bring the total paving account to \$500,000; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to APPROPRIATE \$1,000 to the Gloucester Light Infantry for the Memorial Day Parade for FY 2022; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Councilor W. Reichert stated that the Gloucester Light Infantry requested \$1000 to use towards the Memorial Day Parade.

Councilor Worthy introduced the subject of appropriating funds for the Gloucester Skate Park, Phase 1. Councilor Worthy stated the skate park would be added to Gloucester Memorial Park. Discussion followed on funding, costs, how this plan would fit into current grant Phase 1 project and the time

table for this proposal. After discussion it was agreed to consider future grant funds, possible federal funding opportunities, and the consideration of these improvements being done in the next fiscal year.

Councilor Forgue DECLARED the Public Hearing CLOSED

Councilor Forgue stated the budget, as amended tonight, as well as the ballot questions will be adopted to go forward to the Financial Town Referendum **at the Council meeting of May 6th**.

Councilor Forgue stated this will give the Finance Director time to calculate and include any changes agreed to this evening.

The all day referendum will be held Tuesday, May 25th, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Gloucester Senior Center.

V. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor Worthy to ADJOURN at 9:18 p.m.; seconded by Councilor W. Reichert

Discussion: None

Councilor Forgue requested the Clerk poll the council:

Councilor Arnold - Aye
Councilor Worthy -Aye
Councilor Steere -Aye
Councilor Reichert -Aye
Councilor Forgue-Aye

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY