

PORTSMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
 JUNE 12, 2019 (Wednesday)
 PUBLIC HEARING BUDGET MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL: Kevin M. Aguiar, Linda L. Ujifusa, J. Mark Ryan, Keith E. Hamilton, Leonard B. Katzman and Daniela T. Abbott
 SCHOOL COMMITTEE Emily Copeland, Thomas Vadney, Karen McDaid and Allen Shers
 ABSENT MEMBERS: Andrew V. Kelly, Frederick Faerber III, Catherine Holtman and Juan Carlos Payero

7:00 PM – Town Council Chambers, Portsmouth Town Hall, 2200 East Main Road
 Time: 7:02 PM

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a Moment of Silence for our men and women serving around the world in harm’s way.

SITTING AS THE PORTSMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

BUDGET HEARING – The Full Budget is Available for Review on the Town’s Website at portsmouthri.com

*Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island
 Budget Hearing
 Report to Taxpayers on the Current and Proposed Budget*

	Amounts Actually Budgeted		Proposed Budget Year	
	for Current Year		Operating/Capital	
	Operating/Capital		Operating/Capital	
	FY2018-2019		FY2019-2020	
<u>General Fund</u>				
<i>General Fund Expenses</i>				
<i>Education</i>	\$	37,036,296	\$	37,550,352
<i>School Debt Service (funded by Town)</i>		658,449		548,768
<i>Town Council</i>		11,866		12,366
<i>Town Administrator</i>		278,900		298,231
<i>Administrative Services</i>		4,780,500		4,591,777
<i>Town Debt Service</i>		2,245,896		2,101,464
<i>Planning & Development</i>		727,719		777,994
<i>Public Safety</i>		12,364,687		13,052,352
<i>Public Works Department</i>		2,951,120		2,976,738
<i>Parks, Recreation & Community Services</i>		1,073,088		1,196,072
<i>Transfers out to other funds</i>		1,124,662		1,772,129
<i>General Fund Expenses Total</i>	\$	63,253,183	\$	64,878,243
 <i>General Fund Revenues</i>				
<i>Local Property Tax</i>	\$	54,156,680	\$	55,814,323
<i>Local Non-Property Tax</i>		3,195,148		3,335,588
<i>Federal</i>		-		-
<i>State</i>		5,901,355		5,728,332
<i>General Fund Revenues Total</i>	\$	63,253,183	\$	64,878,243
 <u>Transfer Station Fund</u>				
<i>Transfer Station Expenses</i>				
<i>Operations</i>	\$	853,926	\$	801,772
<i>Debt Service</i>		22,674		22,101
<i>Transfer Station Expenses Total</i>	\$	876,600	\$	823,873
 <i>Transfer Station Income</i>				
<i>Income</i>		876,600		823,873
<i>Transfer Station Income Total</i>	\$	876,600	\$	823,873

The Education expenditure in 2019-2020 budget year is \$38,085,052. This is an increase of \$1,048,756. Below is a Comparison Summary For Educational Expenditures With Prior Year Budget and Current Proposed Budget

	Amounts Actually Budgeted for Current Year Operating/Capital FY2018-2019		Proposed Budget Year Operating/Capital FY2019-2020		Increase (Decrease)
<u>Town of Portsmouth School Funding Summary</u>					
Local Appropriations	\$	32,988,238	\$	33,590,691	
Health Care Reduction	\$	(142,000)	\$	(96,565)	
Total Town Appropriation	\$	32,846,238	\$	33,494,126	\$ 647,888 1.97%
School Capital	\$	-	\$	534,700	\$ 534,700
Total Town Appropriation with Capital	\$	32,846,238	\$	34,028,826	
<u>State Aid</u>					
State Aid-General Funding	\$	4,190,058	\$	4,056,226	\$ (133,832) -3.19%
	\$	4,190,058	\$	4,056,226	
Total Town and State Funding	\$	37,036,296	\$	38,085,052	\$ 1,048,756 2.83%

Copies of the Proposed 2019-2020 Budget will be available June 4, 2019 online and at the Portsmouth Town Hall, 2200 East Main Road, at the Town Clerk's Office Monday through Friday during Town Hall operation hours.

The public is welcome to attend any meeting of the Town's boards or its committees. If communication assistance (readers / interpreters/ captions) is needed or any other accommodations to ensure equal participation, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at 401-683-2101 at least three (3) business days prior to the meeting.

This is to certify that the data contained in this report is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Kevin M Aguiar
Town Council President

Larry Fitzmorris, 50 Kristen Ct. – Commented on the fact that the budget documents that were presented have improved this year. And this tax rate is too high.

Matthew Allen, 040 Concord Ave., Prudence Island – is in support of increasing the Prudence Island Volunteer Fire Department's (PIVFD) budget \$81, 000 for the safety of Prudence Island residents. His full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Susan Allen, 040 Concord Ave., P.I. – is in support of increasing the PIVFD budget. They are in desperate need of new radios and there are required EMT qualifications the State requires. Her full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Thomas Russell, 017 Allen Lane, P.I. – is concerned about public safety and lack of funding by the Town. The requested money would be used for personnel, maintenance, training and certification. He's been on the PIVFD for the last 17 years. His full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Gregory Gempp, 0154 Atlantic Ave, P.I. and 014 Harriette Avenue, P.I. – is a 4th generation islander who lives on the island year round, works 3 jobs on the island, is a member of the PIVFD Board of Control &

Communication Officer, retired professional fighter & retired professional fire dispatcher. He stressed the importance of having an Emergency Medical team on Prudence. His full comments and a copy of Chief Dragon's proposal, which is already on file, have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Cathy Homan, 0369 Narragansett Ave., P.I. – is a year-round resident and wishes to request additional Civic Support for the PIVFD. Take the money from the decreases in the transfer station and the public safety officer and pass it on to the Fire Dept. Her full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Lorrie Brown, 05 Daniel Ave., P.I. – year-round resident and supports the PIVFD. They have come to her family's aid on more than one occasion. The obligation is to all Portsmouth residents. Her full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Priscilla Gill, 0712 Narragansett Ave., P.I. – is in support of giving the PIVFD the money requested. Questioned why it is in Civic Support and not a line item in Public Safety under the Fire Department. Mr. Hamilton explained that PIVFD had been under the Fire Department years ago and only received approximately \$30,000 a year. Moving it to Civic Support, the money appropriated to PIVFD has been increased each year since it was moved.

Dan Blount, 092 John Oldham Rd., P.I. – volunteer on PI for 16 years, works for the Newport Fire department as well. He is the youngest on the PIVFD. The money is essential for required training by the State, new radios and equipment.

Jennifer Gempp, 0154 Atlantic Ave, P.I. – has lived full-time on Prudence for 3 years with her husband and youngest child. She has Multiple Sclerosis and can have complications at any time. Moved to the Island knowing that there was on call emergency services. Without funding how is the town of Portsmouth going to cover the Island's EMS and Fire calls. Her full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

Gil Reid, 046 Providence Ave., P.I. – is in favor of the funding for PIVFD. There is an aging population on the Island and the response time from Portsmouth would not be within the Golden Hour. The need to recruit younger members for the Island is needed and the current stipend is much lower than surrounding communities. His full comments have been entered into the record and are available to review in the Town Clerk's Office.

John Spadaro, 077 Chippaquasett Rd, P.I. – relatively new resident, was surprised that PIVFD and EMT is considered Civic Support, when this is life safety.

Wendy Juchnevics-Freeman, 05 Pier Rd, P.I. – is a new resident and is impressed with the PIVFD self-sufficiency and Yankee ingenuity. Is insulted that Portsmouth would not give the money requested since they are Portsmouth tax payers and their assessed values are 10%.

Mr. Hamilton stated that PIVFD was moved out of the Fire Department Budget and in to Civic Support in either 2014 or 2016 because it is not a Town Department. Since it was put under Civic Support their budget has gone up 450%. He has been trying to work on behalf of Prudence Island with Rep. Cicilline and the USDA for grants. At this time, unless the Town Council strips other things away, they are hard pressed to find money. "We are trying to balance all resident's needs."

Mr. Helfand corrected Ms. Juchnevics-Freeman comment on assessed values. Prudence Island's assessed values are at 3.3% not 10%.

Mr. Roberts, 80 Ormerod Ave – does not believe the \$20,000 should go to the Common Fence Point Community Center because it does nothing for the town. They should hold off on the money for the Rec. Director and give it to the PIVFD.

Nancy Grieb, 110 Thayer Dr. – does not believe the Town should support private organizations. The Portsmouth Library, Senior Center and the PIVFD should receive support. If we did not give money to the other non-profits under Civic Support, there would be \$45,000 right there that could go toward PIVFD.

Mr. Aguiar said with improved communication between both Fire Departments we could possibly find solutions, efficiencies, using combined efforts, not just increased funding.

Matthew Allen is for giving the money to the PIVFD since they are paying taxes to Portsmouth.

Martha Fuller, 069 Raphael Ave, P.I. – finds the circumstances worrisome and the Town needs to give the money to the PIVFD.

Greg Gempp stressed that there are times when they are alone on Prudence Island, with no one coming due to the weather. They can no longer find batteries for the radios bought in 2009. We need people and we need help.

Cathy Homan said that PIVFD asked for \$80,000 and were only given \$1700, there's got to be something in between, please.

Ms. Ujifusa asked Mr. Rainer to explain the slide showing PI Cost vs Revenue analysis. Ms. Ujifusa stated she relied on the staff to make the recommendations. It was to spend for the amounts put forth in the budget. If we go forward, it doesn't make sense for lay people to discuss what would be adequate safety and that perhaps the Fire Chief and EMT's would be in a better place to make recommendations with regard to safety. Also, there was some talk about the misuse of funds for the Common Fence Point Community Center. Essentially, they are a community center and raised \$750,000. The \$20,000 the Town gave was to help establish that the community center had municipal support so that they would be able to receive grants. Ms. Ujifusa recommended to Mr. Rainer the need to start earlier with regards to Civic Support requests and to create a criteria for deciding who should be given what.

Peter Roberts said that the Town spent \$100,000 on Prudence Island to preserve land, \$300,000 toward the purchase of Spruce Acres, \$1,000,000 on Mt. Hope Park and \$4,000,000 to repair stone walls. We should have been using that money for other things.

Mary Clark – 21 Stevens Circle (Melville) – it seems the Town is putting more value on the Mainlanders, but we are talking about basic needs: shelter, food, safety. Enhancements should come later. The Town needs to find a way to do it.

Jennifer Gempp – We can't get more expensive trucks because we do not have enough staff to man them, which is why we have older trucks. We had to have someone in Maine fix an older truck for \$8,000 because no one locally can do it.

Mr. Aguiar – We hear your concerns, we'll look for opportunities to close the gap, we will have the two fire departments work together to look at the bigger picture.

Mr. Hamilton – The main job is to support every single resident of Portsmouth and what is in the best interest of the entire Town. Looking to what available grants are out there, possibly a FCC grant.

Greg Gempp – Can I get one Council member to make a motion to increase funding to PIVFD?

Mr. Katzman – I am not going to make that motion. Let's start setting budget priorities right away, July not December. Have Mr. Rainer provide guidance to the Town Council on what is needed. The cuts should be up to the Council, not the staff.

Motions cannot be made while the Public Hearing is still open.

John Spadaro – What if PIVFD decided to close up shop, what would the numbers be then? Significantly more.

Cathy Homan – I don't understand why no one will make a motion to try to help us.

Mr. Hamilton – How much to replace all the radios? Chief Dragon responded, \$4,000 a piece and 20 radios are needed. Mr. Hamilton – I'd like to make a motion to take \$2,000 from COA after the public hearing is closed, Mr. Katzman seconds. Withdrawn for procedural purposes.

Wendy Juchnevics-Freeman – Approximately 85% of land on Prudence Island is conservation so they don't pay taxes, the numbers are convenient but not realistic.

Ms. Ujifusa – I don't want to leave an impression that the budget was done without knowledge. Every department was cut, we have to balance the conflicting interests of Portsmouth.

On Page 33, CIP is in the amount of \$425,931, on Page 72 the sub total was missed on the CIP in the amount of \$425,931 and will be corrected.

Lawrence Silvia, 24 Old Mill Lane – thought the Transfer Station is supposed to be self-sustaining. Was not happy when he saw DPW throwing trash away without using the orange bags. Why does the Town not use the bags. It's not fair.

Mr. Rainer – All these bins come out of each department's budget (cans on Town property, Town Hall, Police, Fire and DPW) for trash pick-up, the only trash DPW picks up are in outdoor receptacles around Town.

Larry Fitzmorris – does not remember the Levy being set by the vote of the Council at the May 13th meeting.

Mr. Rainer – it is on page 9, you will see levy in the budget and was voted on May 13th.

Larry Fitzmorris – typically the Town Council has done it separately, passing the levy is not the same as passing the budget. Why did we change the listing of property taxes, it was 4 now it is 1, why is that? Why did we depart from past practice?

Mr. Rainer – Over the past 2 years there have been long discussions over the levy and how it was broken down.

Ms. Mills – They are in the Revenue Section are on pages 16 and 17.

Larry Fitzmorris – Labor negotiations and the impact on salary and benefits. The Police will go up 5.01%, Fire will go up 6.99%, these 2 departments total \$11.6 million, that becomes very unmanageable fairly quickly.

Mr. Rainer – The PMEA contract has been settled. The Fire Dept. is under negotiations as are the 4 Fire dispatchers who wanted to join a union. The salaries and benefits have already been worked into the budget. We will start up negotiations with Police and Fire after July 1 as their contracts are up as of June 30, 2020.

Larry Fitzmorris – Questioned again about the Federal Revenue received but not reflected in the municipal or school department budget.

Mr. DiIuro – Most of that is schools funds. It is money that has to be applied for through grants. The money has not yet been received and once received can only be used in a restricted fund. Don't know how to budget for grants we haven't applied for yet.

Larry Fitzmorris – It's money you expect to receive but it's not listed anywhere. I'm not getting an answer I like. I don't see the rationale in not telling the taxpayers. You should be truthful to the people that read it.

Ms. Mills – The money that will be received will be limited to a special restricted account and does not get entered into the general municipal budget. However we can incorporate it into the next budget next year.

Mr. Katzman – Of course we are all being truthful and open and honest. I resent the assertion that something dishonest is going on and would like a retraction. The budget is viewed by the State and also independent auditors and we have done nothing wrong.

Ms. Mills – Let's agree that we will show the detail in next year's budget.

Larry Fitzmorris – Page 72, the Fire boat lease. I do not believe there was any discussion about the purchase of a Fire Boat.

Mr. Hamilton- It is part of the Capital Improvements Budget.

Larry Fitzmorris – How does this lease work.

Mr. Rainer – It is not a lease, that is what Municipal Financing calls it. You do not want to take a bond out for this. We get title the moment we get it. It is a finance payment not a lease.

Larry Fitzmorris – Page 67, proposal for a Full-time Recreation Director is based on projection of revenue to the Recreation Department? Did we advertise as required?

Mr. Rainer – We are not required to advertise department heads, it is my job to appoint individuals. We will discuss internally how the position will be filled and who will fill it.

Motion to close the Public Hearing made by Mr. Hamilton, seconded by Mr. Katzman. Motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Hamilton withdrew his proposed Prudence Island motion from earlier.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Jun 24 7:00 PM - Town Council Meeting & Adoption of FY 2019-20 Budget

Jul 8 7:00 PM - Town Council Meeting

Aug 13 7:00 PM - Town Council Meeting

ADJOURN – Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Hamilton, seconded by Mr. Katzman. Motion passed 6-0.

Time: 9:30 PM

Jennifer M. West, Town Clerk