

SPECIAL
MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 25, 2019

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chamber, Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA at 6:00 PM by President Figy.

The City Clerk called the roll. Councilor Bean was absent.

President Figy asked if anyone, other than Channel 15, was recording the meeting and if so to state whether it is an audio or video recording and whether the recording is being live streamed. No one responded.

The call of the special meeting was as follows:

To conduct a public hearing on the annual budget as submitted by the Mayor, at which all interested persons shall be given an opportunity to be heard for or against the proposed expenditures or any item thereof.

President Figy called the Public Hearing to order and opened the discussion to the public.

Ms. Kate Phelon, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce addressed the Council. She informed the Council that residents and business owners do not want taxes to go up and the only way to avoid that is to cut the budget. She asked the Councilors to make some tough choices and make some cuts to the budget. She requested the Councilors to look favorably upon opportunities of new businesses coming into Westfield. President Figy questioned her where she thought cuts to the budget could be made. Ms. Phelon informed the Council that she was not prepared to answer that question tonight, but would think about it.

Mr. Robert Pearson, 53 McKinley Terrace addressed the Council. He suggested to the Council to try to get a Raytheon facility in Westfield.

Ms. Donna Vella, 134 Joseph Avenue addressed the Council. She requested that departments not be encouraged to spend every penny in their budget, but to return it the general fund if it is not absolutely needed. She informed the Council that people in public office cannot be fired. She requested that the Council be frugal in their spending on City projects and that it is not necessary to have plants downtown, brick sidewalks or marble on the Green. President Figy disagreed with Ms. Vella by informing her that one million dollars of unused money within departments was swept from accounts into Free Cash, that the City is lucky to have the Department Heads they have and people in public office can be fired. President Figy questioned her where she thought cuts to the budget could be made. Councilor Surprise requested a point of order for the President

not to argue with the participants. Ms. Vella informed the Councilors that there are places that can be cut and there should be a public forum with expertise to look at places to cut. She asked that the Councilors consider the cost of projects and do away with wasteful things such as brick sidewalks and flowers downtown. She requested money be put to water and roads.

Mr. Ron Rix, 24 Simmons Brook Drive addressed the Council. As the School Department Finance Director he requested that the Council not cut anything from the School department budget. He informed the Council that the school budget that is being proposed is no cost to the City and gives back \$800,000.00.

Ms. Diane Kowalski, 7 Harvest Moon addressed the Council. She informed the Council that she will move out of Westfield next year after living here for 13 years because her taxes have doubled and she cannot afford to live in Westfield. She informed the Council that creative math was used to keep within the 2 ½%. She expressed her opinion that Westfield High is terrible and the playing fields are unfit and unsafe to play on.

Mr. Bernie Rosenblum, 39 St. James Avenue addressed the Council. He suggested that the Council use innovative measures to save money, for example, a hiring freeze, accelerate the collection of delinquent taxes, analyze positions for duplicate duties. He informed the Council that Westfield is a great town and he will continue to live here, that the roads are not in good shape but it's the same in other communities as well. He requested the Councilors to cooperate with each other, not confront each other.

Ms. Kristen Mello, 27 Moseley Avenue addressed the Council. She expressed her concerns with money that is left on the table. She suggested that some of that money be used for PFAS items and would like the budget to support art and music. She suggested that interest could be saved if there weren't as many bonds and there should be more environmental enforcement to charge the polluters to generate revenue.

Ms. Dawn McElwey, 22 Laura Drive addressed the Council. She questioned the cost of the study that was recently done and questioned why the study was done if the City doesn't utilize the results.

Ms. Laura Pisano, 28 Caitlin Way addressed the Council. She informed the Council she is approaching retirement and questioning if she can afford to live in Westfield. She informed the Council that money should be used for good roads and good drainage.

Mr. Dave Flaherty, 7 Marla Circle addressed the Council. He informed the Council that there was a \$3.97 million increase in the budget last year, that there was an extra million dollars used from Free Cash for the budget last year, that taxes are being raised 2.86% more than last year, that promises to fix the roads using the meals tax has not happened. He informed the Council that it is great that the schools received more money from the State and are spending 3.1% more than last year and expressed his concern that not all labor contracts have been negotiated yet therefore there may be increases in salaries. He suggested that enforcement be increased in order to collect fines and penalties. He informed the Council that he will propose \$2 million in cuts at the budget workshop meeting and requested that the Council support those cuts.

Ms. Kate Phelon suggested an idea for revenue for the City to make sure that all City of Westfield residents are registering their cars with a Westfield address in order to get the excise tax and that she has noticed Westfield residents with out of state license plates.

Mr. Nick Beluzo, 272 Montgomery Road addressed the Council. He informed the Council that the City needs to look at long term social costs of businesses within the City relative to the costs of road repair and air quality.

Mr. Bill Chiba, 368 Steiger Drive addressed the Council. He expressed his concern that the meeting was scheduled at 6:00 PM rather than 7:00 PM and expressed his opinion that more people would be at the meeting if was scheduled at 7:00 PM. He informed the Council that the budget needs to be reviewed line by line and every item needs to be questioned and that it's the small cuts that add up.

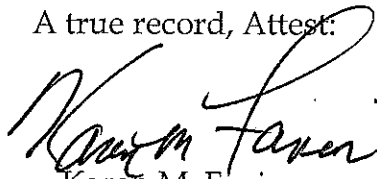
Mr. Albert G. Giguere, 34 Southgate Avenue, addressed the Council as Chair of the Flood Control Commission and requested that the Council not cut anything from his budget. he informed the Council that maintenance on flood control structures has not been done in years and it must be done this year. He referenced the Little River levee, Powder Mill Brook, rebuilding of pump station as items that need immediate attention.

With no others appearing to be heard, and upon motion of Councilor Onyski, it was

VOTED: That the Public Hearing be CLOSED.

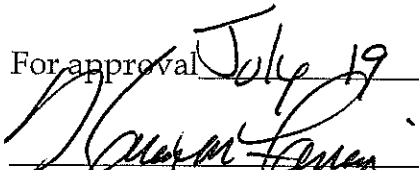
At 6:44 PM, and upon motion of Councilor Harris, it was
VOTED: To ADJOURN.

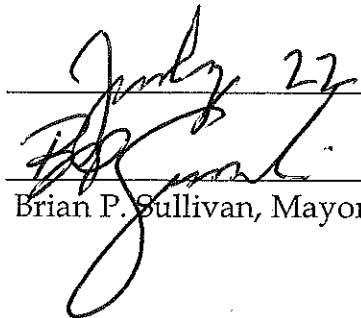
A true record, Attest:


Karen M. Fanion
City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

Presented to the Mayor

Approved by the Mayor

For approval July 19 2019

Karen M. Fanion, City Clerk

July 27 2019

Brian P. Sullivan, Mayor