

MAYOR
JEFFREY A. MACMILLEN

DEPUTY MAYOR
THOMAS ZAMPANO

TOWN MANAGER
MICHAEL P. DOWNES



COUNCIL MEMBERS
BRUCE ABELSON
ROSE MARIE ANGELONI
MARIE E. DIAMOND
WALTER GOAD
VINCENT J. MASE, SR.
NICHOLAS PALLADINO
RONALD PELLICCIA, JR.

TOWN OF NORTH BRANFORD

TOWN HALL, 909 FOXON ROAD, NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06471
TOWN MANAGER (203) 484-6000 TOWN HALL FAX (203) 484-6025

MINUTES ARPA WORKSHOP

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

**Town Council Chambers
6:30 p.m.**

Mayor Macmillen called the workshop to order at 6:37p.m.

Salute to the Flag

1. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Macmillen, Deputy Mayor Zampano, Councilor Abelson, Councilor Angeloni, Councilor Diamond, Councilor Goad, Councilor Mase, Councilor Palladino and Councilor Pelliccia.

Also Present: Town Manager Downes and Town Treasurer/ Finance Director Esposito.

2. Discussion and Action on ARPA Funds

Town Manager Downes shared that the current balance left to be spent is \$1.062 million dollars.

Councilor Angeloni asked Finance Director Esposito if we anticipate any more bills on the sewer analysis. Finance Director Esposito stated he believes it has been paid for but will verify with Town Engineer Benni. Councilor Angeloni continued that \$80,000 was allocated for the sewer analysis, and once everything came in and it is at \$54,194 so that leaves about \$25,000 left which would go to the bottom line. With the Police Mobile Command Center there is approximately \$20,000 left as the Deputy Police Chief negotiated the cost down to \$120,000.

Councilor Abelson asked when this money had to be spent. Town Manager Downes shared that the money has to be allocated by December 2024 and spent by December 2026. There has been talk that the Federal government may be taking money back that has not been spent.

Councilor Abelson asked if any of the money could be earmarked as an emergency fund.

Mayor Macmillen stated that the government is not able to take back any of the money that has already been spent but any money that has only been allocated and not spent could be at risk.

With the extra money from other departments the town has approximately \$1.1 million left to spend.

Councilor Angeloni had a suggestion, as all of the cost estimates from town departments were provided in January of 2023. We should concentrate on the project itself and approve and get better numbers from the department heads, and when they come back we can properly allocate the project funds.

Mayor Macmillen asked the councilors to go through the list and see what can be taken off the list.

The first item to be stricken from the list was the Advanced Manufacturing Facility due to minimal information having been provided.

Councilor Angeloni asked didn't the town already authorized the Atwater Library Porch Lift replacement. Town Manager Downes confirmed that it was authorized without having to use Arpa funds.

In regards to the STW Interior Repair, Councilor Angeloni shared that the roof project has just completed, so we are waiting to see the amount it costs, so some of that money could be moved to PPBC with a list of items and have them work with Parks & Recreation to use the rest of the money.

Mayor Macmillen stated that the current items to discuss will be: STW Grounds Improvements, Trail Access at Atwater Library, Gas Connection for STW and TVES, North Farms Bridge Inspection, Storage/Bathroom at Memorial Park, Parks & Recreation Master Plan (already allocated \$25,000).

Councilor Angeloni stated that if we had allocated the \$75,000, it would've been in the capital improvement budget.

Mayor Macmillen continued the list Upgrade LED lights at Northford Park, Upgrade Lights at Memorial Park, Totoket/Swajchuk Park Upgrades, and DPW site cameras/security.

Councilor Abelson stated that Totoket/Swajchuk Park Upgrades should be put on hold as it is part of the Blueprint Committee.

DPW cameras/security- Councilor Angeloni asked if they are part of the door locks system. Town Finance Director Esposito stated they are. The system needs to be updated and DPW Director Merola wants to do some camera work there. Mayor Macmillen stated that the DPW security/cameras be added as a regular budget item and taken off of this list.

Councilor Pelliccia, along with other members agree that Parks & Recreation appears to be having all of the requests and we need to spread the money around to various departments.

Councilor Abelson spoke with Police Chief Halloran about the security cameras that were put up for the POCO fest and they wanted to put more up by the fuel tanks, and should we be looking at the security alone for the NBPD.

Councilor Angeloni shared that for the STW Grounds Improvement at the last Parks & Recreation meeting it was discussed, and they were okay with not doing the Playscape and everything else, but Parks & Rec. Director Caetano shared that number one is the Pavilion.

Councilor Abelson asked about the upgrades to the LED lighting isn't it just replacing a bulb? Councilor Angeloni responded that the whole system needs to be upgraded as it is old. The numbers need to be resubmitted to us.

Councilor Angeloni shared that the purpose for the Pavilion is because during that program, the kids use part of the senior center, and they are taking space away from the senior center for lunches etc. The Pavilion would allow more usable space.

It was suggested that Parks & Recreation Director Caetano and DPW Director Merola need to come back with some refined numbers on their proposed plan.

Councilor Pelliccia stated he also would like to upgrade the fields at STW as they are terrible and have too many rocks.

Councilor Goad shared his opinion on the list of options to spend the Arpa money. He stated that as politicians we are spending the Arpa money, or we lose it. He feels we should be focusing more on security and more fuel storage/ water/ food storage, and stuff to protect our citizens. We should put more money into the Police Department and Fire Department and increase security in schools. There has to be a way the Police Department and Fire Department could sit down with DPW Director Merola to discuss what can be done to add more security to our town to make it safer.

Councilor Abelson shared that in regard to the added security, he is all for it but what specifically with security should be done.

Councilor Pelliccia agrees on the topic of adding security and shared that the new high school has been upgraded to have additional security.

Councilor Angeloni shared that the town has recently added 3 new officers to the Police Department; all the schools have armed security officers.

Mayor Macmillen shared numbers for ground improvements for STW; Councilor Diamond and Councilor Goad will speak with the Police Department to advance security. There is likely enough money to do both.

Finance Director Esposito provided an updated proposal for the Hurst combi-Tool for the fire Department and the cost increased by \$1,000. The council decided that finance Director Esposito should spend the additional money for that tool and there is extra money that can cover that cost.

Mayor Macmillen recapped, that we are to get the cost for the STW Ground Improvement; Councilor Diamond and Councilor Goad will speak with the Police Department and Fire Department on if there is a way to utilize this money in regard to security.

The next topic is the Trail access at Atwater Library with Harrison Farm Preserve. Councilor Abelson shared that the steps are meant to provide access to the Harrison Farm Trail as it is too steep to walk up towards the trail. To provide better access would be to add literal steps behind Atwater Library.

Councilor Angeloni shared that if it's approved it would need to come before Planning & Zoning for approval as it is town property. Mayor Macmillen shared that due to the project costing \$10,000 it is something that could be fundraised for. this will be put on the back burner for now.

Mayor Macmillen shared the next item of discussion, is the gas connection for TVES and STW is over \$1million and what's the ROI for the community. Is this something we really need right now? Councilor Angeloni shared that when this was originally pitched, the gas company was willing to fund part of it; that is no longer happening.

The councilors decided that this is not something to move forward in discussion, as it doesn't seem to have any cost savings.

North Farms Bridge Inspection is next for discussion. Councilor Angeloni shared that Town Engineer Benni had talked about it during the initial Arpa discussions. Deputy Mayor Zampano said this is to inspect the bridge near Crystal Cave to make sure no one falls into it. Councilor Abelson asked if it would also include the inspection and maintenance.

Councilor Pelliccia said if it is only for the bridge inspection that would be a Nay; if it includes the maintenance then it could be considered, but more clarity would be needed.

Storage/Bathroom at Memorial Park, Mayor Macmillen feels it would be a good thing as there are many school activities there so it could be of good use. Finance Director Esposito stated there is a storage unit already being placed on the campus, purchased from the town. It was part of the Memorial Field renovation. DPW Director Merola will need to provide clarity and numbers on the cost for this item.

Councilor Mase shared his opinions on the current list for the use of Arpa funds. As far as STW Interior it only benefits a few people to spend \$435,000. The grounds and pavilion, it doesn't really benefit the community as a whole. People who are elderly, they will not want to sit outside when it's hot out. The kids at the summer camp will be doing activities and not using the pavilion. Changing the lights on the different fields is another item that doesn't benefit the town as a whole. How are we building the future of the town by doing things that only affect a few people? Pickleball is a recreation and activity like the tennis courts and basketball courts. How does it build the future of this town?

There is only one item that can create the bold effect and something that can benefit the town and build the future of North Branford/ Northford, and that's the Advanced Manufacturing School. Some kids don't want to go to college, and some go to technical schools outside of town. Manufacturing is the future of the State of Connecticut. There are more senior classes graduating

and more manufacturing. The ROI is kids that can get good paying jobs and could come back to this community and be a growing part of it. If you want to build the future of North Branford it's not by building trails, bathrooms, but through the youth of the community. The youth of the community is to create this manufacturing school. All the other stuff is window dressing and does not build the future of the community. Investing in our children is the future of this town.

Mayor Macmillen said the act of contention is that there has not been a solid plan provided with an amount. there is a wonderful concept there and the issue with the concept without a plan for execution, leave it as just a concept.

Superintendent Schoonmaker said there are 32 students who go to schools outside of North Branford. Councilor Abelson said it was proposed by the Superintendent but there was no plan besides the initial proposal.

Councilor Palladino shares sentiments as he also went to high school out of town as he wasn't going to college and then went into the military, etc. The issue he had with the superintendent's plan was what was this program going to add that our state Vo-Tech system isn't offering.

Councilor Pelliccia shared that currently in town we have 85-90% of the kids who graduate go off to college. There is a very small percentage that go to technical or Vo-Ag schools in other towns. If this was meant as more of a Co-Op to include other towns to make it worth it. As much as he is in favor of having something like this in town the numbers don't support it.

Councilor Mase stated that "Shauna Papparizzo" should come back and present the plan.

Councilor Goad appreciates Councilor Mase's stance. When you look at the large chunks of money being requested for lighting upgrades and how it can be spent in a different way.

Councilor Goad does not support the Vo-Tech school as he has two kids from North Branford that didn't go to college and work with him and he is teaching them and there are also other companies that are teaching the kids.

Mayor Macmillen shared the next topic is upgrade of the lights at the parks. councilor Angeloni stated that a lot of the items on this list in yellow are part of the Blueprint Committee being formed.

Deputy Mayor Zampano shares that when it goes from standard to LED, there is a big cost to do that for little savings. You don't save on the distribution costs. Councilor Angeloni stated a lot of the issue is that they aren't able to get the replacement parts. Mayor Macmillen stated it's more about usability than the ROI.

Councilor Abelson asked when the original quote was put together. Councilor Angeloni and Town Manager Downes stated it was submitted in January 2023.

The next items are the Replacement of park picnic tables, and DPW site security/cameras. It was decided that the replacement picnic tables are something to request more information and clarity on.

Clarity to be requested for the following projects: STW Ground Improvements, Trail Access at Atwater Library with Harrison Preserve, North Farms Bridge inspection, Bathroom at Memorial Park, DPW security/ cameras, and Town Security Initiative.

Councilor Angeloni stated that we need to work on the guidelines for the nonprofit pool. This is for nonprofits who were unable to raise funds during the pandemic. We have to figure out what we consider a nonprofit, and then advertise it. Finance Director Esposito shared that 501 ©(3) is what non-profits typically use for tax deferments. It should also include that the application is subject to approval by the Town Council.

When these organizations submit their application for the non-profit pool, they are submitting it with a specific amount in mind and the reasoning for that request.

3. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn at 8:31p.m.

MOVED: Councilor Angeloni

SECOND: Councilor Abelson

Discussion: None

With all in favor, the motion is passed.