

At the Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown, County of Washington, and State of Rhode Island, held in and for said Town, County, and State this 13th day of March, 2023 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 80 Boston Neck Road, at 6:18 p.m.

PRESENT WERE: Gregory A. Mancini, President
Katherine K. Anderson
Lawrence C. Mandel
Matthew B. McCoy
Dr. Kimberly Ann Page

ALSO PRESENT: A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager
Jeannette Alyward, Town Clerk
Susan A. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk
Matthew F. Callaghan, Jr., Town Solicitor

An audio recording and video recording of this meeting was made to supplement the written record.

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown held on March 13, 2023 was called to order by President Mancini.

2. Notice of Meeting being posted

Pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-6(c), notice of this meeting has been posted on the Secretary of State's Website.

3. Executive Session

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-4 and 42-46-5, Subsection (1) – Personnel (Town Manager's Evaluation) - and Subsection (2) – Litigation (Opioid Lawsuit).

Clerk's note: The Town Manager was notified in writing to have his evaluation conducted in public.

MEETING RECONVENED AT 7:00 P.M.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To seal the Executive Session Minutes.

4. Salute to Flag

President Mancini led those in attendance in a salute to the flag.

President Mancini led those in attendance in a moment of silence in memory of the passing of Wickford resident Michael Kraynak.

I. SPECIAL BUSINESS

5. Presentation of Town Manager’s Preliminary Budget

Mr. Mollis gave the following presentation:



FY 2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION
 TOWN OF NORTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager

March 13, 2023

Mr. Mollis stated that in accordance with the Charter of the Town of North Kingstown, he is happy to present to the Council the Annual Budget proposed for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2024. The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget reflects a zero-based budgeting process as required by the Town Council. While some adjustments have been made during this lengthy budget process, these departmental budgets have been compiled by the department heads with a goal of continuing to provide the outstanding level of service our residents have come to expect. He wants to recognize the Department Heads in attendance tonight and they will be presenting their department budgets to the Council on Thursday, March 16th and on Monday, March 20th with the budget public hearings to be held on April 19th. We are fortunate to have a great team here in North Kingstown.

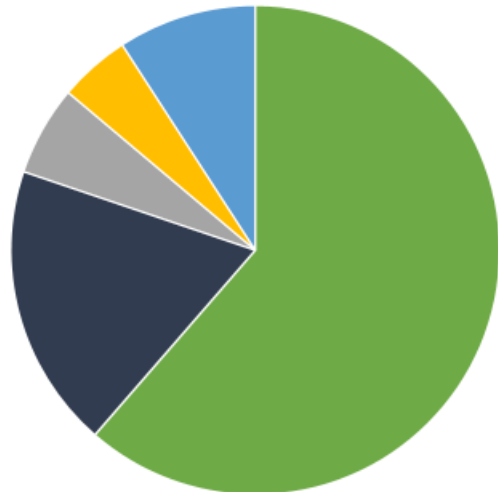


The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget also continues the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award winning format we designed and introduced in 2019. This award recognizes our efforts to present a budget in a format that is informative, transparent, and easy to read for our residents. This budget will be available on our website.

I want to thank the dedicated workforce and department heads within our municipal team for their hard work. The employees of our town have developed a reputation of being responsive to the needs of our residents and businesses while also being effective and efficient. Through their efforts, we have introduced new ways to conduct business, provide services and improve service during challenging times. The budget presented this evening reflects that dedication and innovation.

FY 2024 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

School Department	62%
Public Safety	19%
Public Works & Utilities	6%
Debt Service	4.75%
Government Services (Library, etc.)	9.25%



3/13/23

FY24 BUDGET PRESENTATION

3

The General Fund portion of the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget reflects a total increase of just over \$3.4 million, or what amounts to a 3% increase in expenditures over Fiscal Year 2023. \$2,072,341 of that increase, or 62% is the requested and allocated increase being provided to the School Department’s Budget, 19% is Public Safety, 6% funds Public Works, 4.75% Debt Service, and 9.25% of the General Fund supports Government Services, such as the Administration functions, Library, etc.

NORTH KINGSTOWN 2024



350th ANNIVERSARY
Incorporated 1674



MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING RENOVATIONS
100 Fairway Drive



BASKETBALL & TENNIS COURTS
Photo: 401Photo/Jason Freedman



MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE
Quanset Tavern by the Green, opening soon

3/13/23

FY24 BUDGET PRESENTATION

4

While many difficult decisions were made to reduce the General Fund Budget as much as possible, this budget builds on many exciting projects and improvements we’ve made over the past year and budgets for important initiatives to take place the coming year:

- Funding for plans for our 350th Anniversary Celebration in 2024
- Renovations to our Municipal Office Building
- Renovations at McGinn and Wilson Parks to resurface our basketball courts, tennis courts, provide additional and dedicated pickleball courts, additional seating, and potential relocation of a new volleyball court

- Upgrades to our Community Center
- New LED lighting at Ryan Park and McGinn Park
- AEDs through our town as we embark on becoming a “4 minute city”
- \$700,000 of road paving
- Much needed improvements and repairs to our Senior Center
- Increased funding of OPEB
- Two additional Police Officers to bring our four shifts to full complement compliance?
- Funding of the priorities outlined within the CIP
- Continued improvements at our premier Municipal Golf Course

These initiatives are just some of the plans we have for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2023 and upcoming Fiscal Year 2024 and begin putting our growing fund balance to good use thereby reducing the impact of these one-time initiatives on the taxpayer.

TOWN OF NORTH KINGSTOWN PROPOSED FY 2024 BUDGET ENTERPRISE FUNDS

FUND	FY 2023	FY 2024
Golf Course	\$1,811,869	\$1,968,137
Municipal Court	\$206,021	\$198,921
Sewer	\$2,606,290	\$2,568,684
Transfer Station	\$1,323,181	\$1,354,673
Water	\$4,214,518	\$5,784,736



3/13/2023

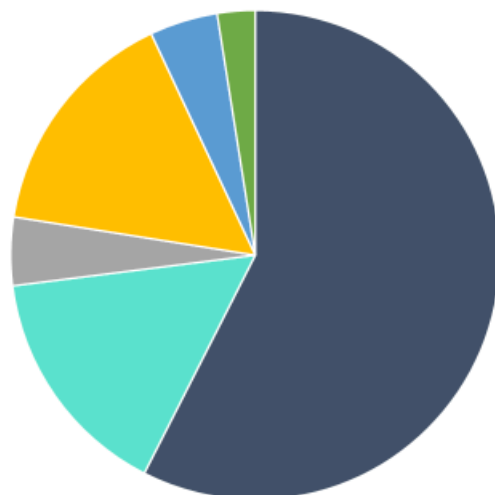
FY24 BUDGET PRESENTATION

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The proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget is also comprised of vital enterprise funds which are self-supporting and funded outside the General Fund. These departments provide valuable services to our residents and are self-sufficient, meaning they are funded by users of the fund and not the General Fund. The enterprise funds consist of our award-winning Water Department, one of the best conditioned and most popular municipal golf courses in Rhode Island, a municipally owned and operated Allen Harbor, our Transfer Station, the Sewer Department, and Municipal Court.

FY 2024 GENERAL FUND REVENUE

Residential Taxes	57.0%
Commercial Taxes	15.5%
Quonset Business Direct Payments	4.5%
State Aid	16.5%
Departmental Revenue	4.0%
Other	2.5%



3/13/23

FY24 BUDGET PRESENTATION

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While most of our budget deliberations will focus on departmental expenditures, it is the revenue portion of our budget that sets the tone for the upcoming year. We have been very successful with our financial accomplishments over these past few years. Our budgetary surpluses, growth of our unassigned fund balance to over \$12 million, strong collection percentages, strong controls leading towards expenditures less than budgeted, on time audits and recognition and awards from GFOA have been just some of the accomplishments that have led to our AA+ ratings by S&P Global Ratings. A detailed and comprehensive list of all revenue sources can be found in the budget book with detailed back-up information.

PROJECTED 2.2% TAX INCREASE IN FY 2024

- THIS FOLLOWS NO TAX INCREASE IN 2021
- AND AN AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF 1.2% OVER FISCAL YEARS 2021 & 2022

TO LESSEN THE EFFECT OF THE STATE-MANDATED PROPERTY REVALUATION, TOWN COUNCIL ADOPTED A 5% HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION AND REDUCED TAX RATES

And continues to provide over \$3.8 Million in exemptions:

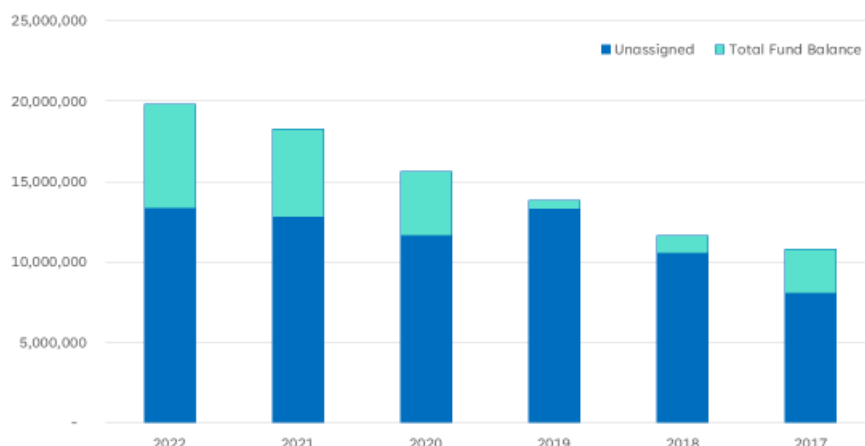
- Gold Star Families
- Veterans
- Disabled
- Senior/Flat
- Senior/Income
- Income
- Homestead

No Motor Vehicle Taxes effective FY 23

North Kingstown is also generous in exemptions we provide our residents, led by the Homestead Exemption enacted last year. North Kingstown is projected to provide, within this budget, over \$38.8 million in exemptions to our residents. In addition to the exemptions, we've been able to stabilize our tax rate with no tax increase in Fiscal Year 2021, an average increase of 1.2% over Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 and a reduction in rates via the revaluation in Fiscal Year 2023. While it is too early in the assessment process to determine an exact tax rate, the budget being proposed using the current preliminary assessment figures in order to fund the School Department Budget request and the municipal General Fund portion of the budget will call for an increase in the tax rate of 2.2% leading to a residential rate of \$14.37, commercial rate of \$16.31 and a tangible rate of \$17.89. As we know, the motor vehicle tax was phased out last year. I do want to emphasize that these are all projected numbers as the assessments change daily.



**TOTAL FUND BALANCE:
LAST SIX (6) YEARS**



As previously stated, the budget continues to build on our success over the past few years and we have a lot to be proud of. Our programs and services are complimented by visitors and residents alike. We live in an outstanding community. Fiscal Year 2024 provides a conservative approach to budgeting, maintains flexibility, maintains our strong fund balance, and provides a quality of service our residents deserve.

As we look to next year and our celebration of our 350th Anniversary of becoming a Town, we are increasing our social media presence and have redesigned our website to provide information and connection to many generations of North Kingstown residents. I encourage everyone to follow us on our social media platforms and utilize our website for valuable information and easy to use online services.



THANK YOU

**Town Council & Department Head workshops:
March 16 and March 20**

**Budget Public Hearing:
April 19**

The next steps in the budget process will be a budget session between the Town Council and Department Heads during the day on March 16 and the evening of March 20. These sessions will be held at our Municipal Office Building at 100 Fairway Drive. This will be followed by the adoption of the Preliminary Budget by the Council during the evening of March 20 and a public hearing to be held at our Town Hall on April 19. I look forward to working with the Council in the days ahead as you meet with our Department Heads, receive input from our residents, and adopt a budget that builds on the progress we have made.

Thank you and if the Council has any questions, please forward them to him.

6. Public Comment

President Mancini congratulated the North Kingstown Musical Theater for their production of Grease, the Girls Basketball Team for their trip to the state championship and their second place finish, and also the Swim Team for their third place finish in the state.

Richard Welch, 8 Arrow Lane, stated that he is concerned that both the Town and School’s level of the undesignated fund balance is way too high for something that is never put in the budget or vetted by the taxpayers. He stated that the money needs to go into the budget to lower the burden on the taxpayers. He also stated that at the school level, he has seen this money being spent on things like teacher incentives because it can be used anywhere. That’s not what the money is there for. It needs to be used for things in the budget and the taxpayers should be made aware of how it is being spent.

Rickey Thompson, 194 Plain Road, read the following statement:

“In the years that I’ve been involved, I’ve always heard that North Kingstown should maintain an undesignated fund equal to 10% of our budget for a favorable bond rating. Well, our fund balance is far in excess of this number, growing and does not include the taxpayer dollars moved out of this fund in case health care costs rise nor does it include the significant school surplus.

As a taxpayer, I'm pleased that North Kingstown has another surplus and based on what I am hearing North Kingstown is flush with taxpayer dollars. So, I am requesting that the taxpayer surplus be used to offset any reasonable required tax increase in this year's budget. Let's face it, this is taxpayer's money."

Town Manager Mollis stated just for the general public it was mentioned our goal is to have 10% set aside for the fund balance, we have \$12 million in unassigned spendable money, of a total of \$20 million. Our budget is \$117 million and 10% would be \$11.7 million. It was also mentioned that we wanted to put the money aside to reduce the tax increase. Using the fund balance and surplus to fund one-time initiatives that would normally be in the budget does essentially help the taxpayers. You never want to use a surplus as operational because if you transfer it next year, you need a tax increase to make up for the surplus you don't have. So, this year this budget does have one-time initiatives using the surplus and finally nothing gets expended without a public hearing unless it's under \$9,000.00.

Allison Hall, 31 Hideaway Lane, stated that she is in favor of the proposed School Budget, especially the Mental Health portion of the budget. She talked about the increase in needs in this field and stated that we need more help from the providers.

Mary Lopresti, 29 Chestnut Road, stated that her comments came from something her daughter wrote. She stated that mental health issues are higher than ever right now, and she feels we need more resources. There are more students in need than there are providers, which means time and resources are scarce. Mary asked the Council to honor her daughter's request and support the School Budget for school psychologists.

Linnea Drew, 191 Camp Avenue, stated that she supports the School Budget for the mental health increase and she feels they need more mental health services.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To approve Consent Agenda Item Numbers 7 through 16 as presented with the exception of Agenda Item Number 16.

7. Approval of Minutes

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 6, 2023 as submitted by the Office of the Town Clerk.

8. Receipt of Donation

VOTED: To accept with gratitude the following donation in the amount of \$25.00:

For: Beechwood Senior Center	
To be used for the Mealsite	
From: Anonymous	\$25.00

9. Approval of Purchase

VOTED: To approve the purchase of a 1998 Pierce Dash Reserve Pumper for the Fire Department from the Westerly Fire Department, 7 Union Street, Westerly, RI 02891, in the amount of \$35,000.00.

Funding for this purchase will be from the sale of a rescue vehicle to the Town of Exeter for \$7,500.00 and the remainder will be from Rescue billing.

10. Annual Entertainment License (renewal)

VOTED: To approve to December 1, 2023 the renewal application for an Annual Entertainment License by the Lafayette Band, Inc., PO Box 855, to hold various indoor and outdoor concerts, on various dates and locations on file with the Town Clerk's Office, subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

11. Entertainment License (new)

VOTED: To approve the application for an Entertainment License by the North Kingstown School Department, 250 Tower Hill Road, to hold an outdoor concert featuring North Kingstown Elementary School Music Students, on the grounds of the North Kingstown Town Beach Campus and bandshell on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (rain date Thursday, June 8, 2023), from 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

12. Holiday Sales License (new)

VOTED: To approve to July 1, 2024 the application for a Holiday Sales License by Star Smoke Shop Inc., 6172 Post Road, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a copy of their RI Retail Sales Tax Permit, and approval from the Building Official and the Fire Marshall.

13. Refuse Collector – Commercial for Hire Licenses (6) (renewal)

VOTED: To approve to January 1, 2024 the renewal application for six (6) Refuse Collector - Commercial for Hire Licenses by D. Lewis & Son, Inc., 252 South Road, Exeter 02822, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a bond, inspection approval from the Transfer Station, and receipt of a Certificate of Insurance if needed.

14. Refuse Collector – Commercial for Hire Licenses (transfer) (renewal)(new)

VOTED: To approve to January 1, 2024 the transfer and renewal application for two (2) Refuse Collector - Commercial for Hire Licenses from Charlie's Rubbish Removal Inc., dba Charlie's Old Time Rubbish Removal, 280 Dry Bridge Road, to Eastern Waste Services, LLC, dba Charlie's Rubbish, 280 Dry Bridge Road, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a bond, inspection approval from the Transfer Station, and receipt of a Certificate of Insurance if needed; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To approve to January 1, 2024 the application for nine (9) new Refuse Collector - Commercial for Hire Licenses by Eastern Waste Services, LLC, dba Charlie's Rubbish, 280 Dry Bridge Road, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a bond, inspection approval from the Transfer Station, and receipt of a Certificate of Insurance if needed.

15. Refuse Collector – Commercial Not for Hire Licenses (5) (renewal)

VOTED: To approve to January 1, 2024 the renewal application for five (5) Refuse Collector - Commercial Not for Hire Licenses by Caldwell & Johnson, 6500 Post Road, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a copy of their vehicle registrations, and receipt of a certificate of liability insurance.

16. First Bond Reduction

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To continue to the Regular Town Council Meeting of March 27, 2023 the request by Reynolds Farm LLC for a first bond reduction on Reynolds Farm, Phase 1D.

III. REPORTS

17. Report by the Town Manager

Town Manager Mollis gave the following report:

- We are proud to announce that the Town has received the GFOA Award for our Popular Annual Financial Report. That makes three major Awards – Budget, Financial Reporting, and now PAFR – that we’ve received from the GFOA. We can all be very proud of these Awards as they are reflective of our workforce, financial accomplishments, and efforts towards transparency and easy to read & easy to use documents.
- A meeting of the School Department’s Building Committee took place last week where the Committee forwarded a recommendation to the School Committee for a new Middle School Complex. The Town Council can expect the School Committee to approach the Town Council with this proposal shortly. As a result, I plan to introduce the long-awaited plans on a new Public Safety Complex and Recreation Center either at the end of this month or sometime in April. All of these proposals, if supported by the Town Council, will require a referendum question on a ballot sometime this year.

In a somewhat related note, we have applied for Federal Funding under the Fiscal Year 2024 Community Project Appropriation Program for funding assistance for a potential Recreation Center. We also have ARPA funds put aside for this project.

- We are meeting with the developers of the proposed Wickford Schoolhouse Project this week. They appear excited about moving forward and we will be inquiring about an updated timeline. They’ve also notified us that it appears the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, in an effort from the developers to obtain tax credits, will be requiring the project to have a one-story addition versus their proposed two-story addition. If this is accurate, we expect this to be looked favorably upon by the neighbors in that area.
- Rhode Island Energy has informed us that they are undertaking a project to remove trees growing into the power lines located in the Right of Way along the Glen/Transmission Line in town. They have advised that the tree growth is affecting the reliability of service to the southern part of the state, and they are hoping this project will reduce unplanned outages by enforcing Rhode Island Energy’s Rights of Way rights.

They plan to visit each abutter in person, explain the issue and possible mitigation, and then follow up with each person with a letter summarizing the conversation and expectations.

- Congratulations to our North Kingstown Police Department as they were recognized last week by the RI Police Accreditation Committee for being one of six law enforcement agencies granted reaccreditation last year.
- We had a meeting of our Technical Review Committee last week regarding a proposed 138-unit two building apartment complex to be located off Post Road. The complex is proposed to have 15% - 20% affordable housing. It will primarily be one bedroom and studio suites with approximately 1/3 of the project being two-bedroom units. This project is receiving continuous internal review as well as going before the Planning Commission on March 21st for a “pre app” followed by a “master app”, Zoning Board and then Town Council approval of the water model. This will be a private development with private roads.
- I’ve been active with other Managers and Mayors, as well as the RI League of Cities and Towns, and Nicole has been active with her counterparts in Planning, in receiving briefings on the Housing Legislative Package and all related bills with analysis. We will continue to stay on top of this issue and do our best to keep you up to date.

- As you know, our Planning Department was scheduled to have a planned introduction of our next steps relative to Recreational Marijuana here in town. However, the Planning Commission had to reschedule their meeting due to a lack of a quorum which has pushed our schedule to appear before the Town Council at either your March 27th or April 24th meeting.
- Our Recreation Department's Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on April 1st at Wilson Park from 11am – 1pm. This is a free event with no registration required. There will be photo ops, entertainment, and planned concessions. It is for ages up to 12 years old.
- Speaking of the Recreation Department --- Summer Camp Registration opened up this morning at 9am. A lengthy line throughout the hallway at Town Hall began at 8:30am and between the line and the calls, our Summer Camps were filled up in a matter of 5 minutes. We currently have approximately 200 people on our waiting list among all four camps. As we receive more applicants for our Camp Counselor positions, we will expand the size of the camps and reach out to those on the waiting list. However, for safety reasons, we need to maintain a suitable counselor to child ratio and we are sorry for any residents who are not able to register their children for this very popular and cost efficient 8 week camp. We will do our best to attract more Counselors in the meantime.
- Ironically, we are having similar issues at our Senior Center. We had sign ups last week for classes and they filled within 15 minutes. The numbers at the Senior Center are growing quickly and we're unable to fulfill all of the requested spots and are unable to add extra classes due to space limitations. Hopefully with a new Rec Center we will be able to open the Community Center to more classes and address this issue with our growing Senior population.

The Council thanked Mr. Mollis for his report.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

18. Board of Canvassers - Appointment

Motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Mandel and was unanimously

VOTED: To reappoint Joan Pucino, 244 Hatchery Road, to the Board of Canvassers to March 1, 2029.

19. Presentation by the Town Manager – Whistleblower Policy

Mr. Mollis stated that at the request of the Audit Committee, we reviewed the Whistleblower Ordinance at the January 23rd Council Meeting as the Whistleblower reporting in the ordinance was not meeting the intent of the ordinance. During that meeting, the Council agreed with that opinion. However, the Council was concerned because the ordinance did not function you wanted to have a mechanism for the public to have guidance to file complaints in order for them to reach out to town bodies to let them know of any concerns. His concern at that time was that there were a lot of applications outside of town government that people should be made aware of such as the Ethics Commission as that would be the appropriate avenue. The Council asked that we put together some type of alternative. He has provided the Council with a very rough draft of a Whistleblower Policy which is a mechanism for residents, the public, and employees to report concerns of actions of any one individual.

He further stated that if the Council is in agreement with this policy and flowchart which was provided to the Council, he would ask that we rescind the existing ordinance which would require a first reading and a public hearing, at which time he will introduce a resolution to amend the Personnel Rules and Regulations to allow for accurate language for a Whistleblower Policy, introduce a flowchart, and will ask that we provide a draft of the policy and flow chart to the School Department for their consideration so we could make it a Town policy. Then, he would cancel EthicsPoint which costs \$5,000 per year.

Basically, the draft policy states that there will be a flowchart online, giving exact directions to do so. The Council asked us to find out what the best practices are, and we couldn't find any other community that has one on their websites. The draft policy and flowchart outline different scenarios with links to the different state and local agencies to report those complaints.

Again, the whole idea is that this will replace what is an antiquated policy which we received only six complaints over six years all of which did not meet the level of a valid whistleblower complaint.

Councilor Mandel congratulated Mr. Mollis for putting something together that is thorough and complete and anticipates various scenarios. He further stated that he does have three concerns:

- We are replacing an ordinance and it seems that we would want to replace this with another ordinance as this is an important issue to be codified.
- Because the ordinance that exists covers both the town and school, he thinks it is important that we have a policy or ordinance that applies to both the town and school. He would urge that we wait until we have a coordinated approach and address it at the same time that applies to both entities.
- The Ordinance provides for a screening committee that had oversight authority to be a sounding board to be aware of issues. The proposal eliminates that step as there is no screening committee or higher authority to be aware of what is going on and he thinks that is a serious oversight. All complaints that come in should go to someone and he doesn't think the Audit Committee is the appropriate group to do this. However, there should be a designated member of the Council to hear these complaints as there are potentially serious matters that could come up.

Councilor Mandel stated that what the Manager is proposing is a good start for this discussion.

Councilor Anderson stated that the Manager mentioned looking for best practices and was unable to locate them from other municipalities online. That would suggest that there are no best practices which is problematic and not transparent or accessible as it ought to be an effective whistleblower mechanism. She thinks the most important thing is increasing visibility and appreciates the Manager's intention to do just that.

Councilor Page stated that she remembers adopting the Whistleblower Policy years ago when she was on the School Committee and the School Committee basically said that they weren't going to have a separate policy. If someone had an issue and didn't go through the School Department, then it would follow the Town's Whistleblower Policy, which still might be in the manual that the Town's Whistleblower's Policy is what the School Department would follow. She is fine with what the Manager is proposing.

Councilor Mandel stated that the screening committee consisted of one member of the Audit Committee and the school representative. Councilor Page stated again the School Department didn't have a separate policy.

Councilor McCoy stated that instead of having a separate policy for the town and one for the school, he would like to define this by ordinance.

President Mancini stated that his experience with this type of matter in the private business world it would be addressed in a manual and feels that is the way to go. He further stated that he is on the board of a small non-profit and they have a process and an avenue to go to someone independent of the hierarchy in the organization. He feels we should have an independent avenue whether it is a Council Member or Solicitor.

Mr. Mollis stated that to address some of the concerns expressed it is his opinion a resolution is the right way to go. He had a discussion with the Solicitor who seems to agree as this really isn't worthy of a "law" but is a policy and policies can be amended frequently. He would encourage a policy versus an ordinance. It is the Council's decision, but he thinks that it would be beneficial to have the School Department adopt their own policy as we cannot direct them to follow a town policy.

Mr. Mollis further stated that he feels very strongly and respectfully disagrees with having a Council Member be an independent party or a member of a screening committee as Council Members cannot be involved with day-to-day operations and personnel per the Charter. If this is the way we are going to go, we should just keep the ordinance in place.

President Mancini stated he wasn't suggesting a screening committee but someone independent in the event that somebody felt threatened by going through the chain of command. He doesn't think that person has to be a member of the Council, but it could be someone such as our Solicitor. These situations happen rarely, but as a matter of best practices and the limited experiences he has been involved in calls for something like this. Mr. Mollis stated that this is a good discussion, but his concern is how does the Town Manager determine which complaints rise to the level on when to notify the Town Solicitor. President Mancini stated that the Solicitor would make the determination of whether to notify the Manager.

Councilor Page stated that she feels that we should follow the chain of command and agrees that Council interaction in these matters is not appropriate. However, if there was a complaint about the Manager, the Council would be involved as he is their employee.

Councilor Anderson stated that she thinks the way she understands this is if an employee has an issue and is not comfortable going through the chain of command, they would have the option to go to the Solicitor. If history has taught us anything the chain of command doesn't always work as people feel they can't make a report within a closed system. She is not suggesting that an elected body step in but an independent person that could fill that role if the reporter wants it. She further stated that the Manager has her full respect and confidence in handling these situations.

Mr. Callaghan stated that he feels that a policy is easier to administer and enforce and agrees that we do not have any authority to force the school to adhere to a Town policy. He further stated that an independent person has the potential to cost a lot of money and does not feel the Council should be involved in the day to day operations of the staff.

President Mancini stated that it seems that the Council is leaning towards a policy. The school issue is something we can keep them abreast of and concurs with the lack of authority on the Council's part. He further suggested that he has some language from the private sector that he will forward to the Manager and Solicitor that may narrow the scope of a policy and something that we can build on to review and discuss at a future meeting.

20. Correspondence

- Email from Lori Duffy expressing support for proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from Caylin Duva expressing concerns about a playground in the vicinity of Laurel Ridge Lane.
- Email from Kylah LeComte requesting roofs for softball dugouts.
- Email from Sarilee Norton expressing support for proposed Whistleblower's Policy and recommendations pertaining to the Audit Committee.
- Email from Brian O'Dell expressing concerns about the proposed NKSD budget, town surpluses, and taxes.
- Email from Joel Palermo requesting to have a pool at the NKHS.
- Email from Colin and Courtney Reilly expressing support for proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from Megan Reilly expressing concerns about proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from Laura Rogers expressing support for proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from Samuel Rosendale expressing concerns about playground in the vicinity of Laurel Ridge Lane.
- Email from Kelley Ryan expressing support for proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from Aubrey Schabowsky expressing support for the proposed NKSD budget.
- Email from William Schatz requesting to have a pool at the NKHS.
- Email from Tracy Wilkinson expressing support for the proposed NKSD budget.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Jeannette Alyward
Town Clerk