

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

June 21, 2010

President Rheault – Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the June 21st City Council meeting. Can we hold it down please so we can start the meeting? Thank you.

Item 1. Citizen's Speak Time

President Rheault – We have several citizens wishing to address the Council this evening and I would have hope that some of these spoke under the public hearing part to minimize the amount of time we're gonna spend on speak time. However, the first speaker is Diane Juzba. State your name and address for the record please if you would.

Diane Juzba – Diane Juzba, 189 South Westfield Street in Feeding Hills. I'm here tonight to address the City Councilors who are in favor of education. As the Chairwoman of the Budget Finance Sub-Committee I invited you to our workshop to go through proposed budget dollar for dollar. We explained everything throughout the entire process. Each of you that attended the workshop were given an opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns or have concerns clarified. The Superintendent made herself available after the workshop as well. No one came forward with any fiscal concerns then. Not one of you spoke out at our public hearing. The fact that you waited until a week before your public hearing is disturbing. The fact that some of you are waiting until now to propose cuts to a budget that has already been reduced by 2% from last year is nothing short of fiscally irresponsible. It is extremely frustrating to me as an elected official such as yourselves that you choose to work against us and propose these cuts now. The Mayor, Superintendent and School Committee worked diligently to create a sound balanced budget while maintaining programs and staff. Any cut now would mean not rehiring fifteen employees which includes two Project S.E.E. teachers, an Athletic Director and 12 teachers. Without an Athletic Director, we cannot have sports programs available to our students. Without hiring the two Project S.E.E. teachers we cannot offer this outstanding program to our students and if we fail to rehire twelve teachers, class sizes will increase dramatically. Why would any of you vote to do this to our students? I'm here tonight to advocate for Agawam's education system and urge you to vote in favor of the proposed FY11 budget and not make any further cuts to the school department. Our goal is to propose a balanced budget. Why would you vote to cut a balanced budget? Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Kathy Mouneimneh?

Kathy Mouneimneh – Hi. My name is Kathy Mouneimneh. I live at 81 Independence Road in Feeding Hills. I have three children all of who graduated from Agawam High School and went onto excellent colleges to pursue very worthy careers. They all received an outstanding education in Agawam because the community's elected officials funded the education budgets. We need to continue to support education as well as other public services in order to preserve the quality of life in our community. The Mayor requested a

level-funded budget; the Superintendent along with assistance from her staff presented a level-funded budget. It should be accepted as it stands. To cut exorbitant amounts from the School Budget now would be devastating. We need to serve those citizens who have built this community and we also need to serve those who will be preserving it. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Anthony Bonavita?

Anthony Bonavita – Thank you. Anthony Bonavita, 683 Cooper Street in Agawam. I'm here to ask you to support the entire budget that will be presented to you this evening. The Mayor has presented a balance budget. Concerning the School Budget as Mrs. Juzba indicated, we've gone through that budget line by line. We had many budget hearings, workshops, we met with the City Council Budget Sub-Committee, we went through the entire budget. We looked for ways to save money. The Mayor came to us at one point and said that the entire City Budget was not balanced and we had to cut \$839,000.00. We didn't gripe about it. We sat down and we did. We know times are tough. We know we have to be fiscally responsible. The Mayor then came to us after that even and said it is still out of whack by \$200,000.00. We have to reduce the budget again. We didn't gripe. We sat down and we did it. We went through it line by line. So I would suggest to you that we have been fiscally responsible. We've considered each position, every position, that's concerning our budget. Now concerning various positions, some of the things that we have to consider for example if you go beyond June 15th and you try to lay-off teachers at this point, you wind up in violation of state law and cost the town hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars if you tried to do that. Administrative decisions those people have personal contracts. If you try to eliminate them you'd have to buy them out of their contracts, which would cost you hundreds of thousands of dollars plus they'd be able to collect unemployment after you're through. Step raises, step increases for \$445,000.00 we've been advised by legal counsel that it would be an unfair labor practice if we tried to get rid of those step increases because we actually proposed that. All of that would lead us to different types of litigation and cost the Town above and beyond the city budget. Now I understand the frustration the citizens are feeling out there about the economy and different problems, federally, statewide and locally, I understand the frustration, the anger against government and the fact that people want advice. I understand that. I get it. People are concerned about food stamps, putting people up in hotels. I understand it. I get it. What we have to do is we have to make sure we don't take that anger and frustration and somehow try to react by cutting our local government in a situation where we have a balanced budget and it's not necessary. We've been fiscally responsible. We've done our job and I would ask you and I just heard a few moments ago that your sub-committee now has voted in favor of the budget 4-0 in favor of the budget if I understand it correctly and if that is true I thank you but we ask you to support the entire city budget which is a balanced budget. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Linda Galarneau?

Linda Galarneau – Linda Galarneau, 24 Sycamore Terrace in Agawam. Good evening. I'm here tonight as a School Committee member to speak about the additional cut of one

million dollars to the School Department budget that Councilors Rossi, Magovern, and Walsh recommended at a Council School Department Sub-Committee meeting late last week. I was quite shocked to hear this because during the School Committee budget workshops which were approximately three none of the councilors on the School Department Sub-Committee had any questions, voiced any concerns or acknowledged any disapproval and at our School Department Budget public hearing not one City Councilor came forward to speak against the budget that was being proposed. It has been approximately six weeks since the School Budget has been approved by the School Committee and there has not been any correspondence requesting additional information by City Councilors with regards to our budget, program development or the internal workings of our school district. Now at the eleventh hour some councilors are recommending that the School Department cut another one million from the budget which is in addition to the \$1,032,649.00. Their recommendation and the timing of this is very concerning to me because of the following reasons. The Mayor is bringing forth a balanced budget to the Council therefore there is no need to make any additional cuts. In the Sunday Republican it was stated that Councilors floated the idea of asking the School Committee to make as much as one million in additional cuts to their Fiscal 2011 budget. Then Councilor Rossi is quoted as saying that he thinks one million would be unrealistic but that he's still looking for something substantial in the way of School Department budget reductions. Then Councilor Magovern was quoted as saying he would like to see more than \$400,000.00 in cuts to the school spending. Should a reduction be approved tonight it would not only destroy all the progress that has been made but will paralyze the educational advancement of our students in our school district. To be blunt, it would be cutting the Superintendent off at her knees again because there's nothing concrete to substantiate additional reductions to the School Budget; it leads me to believe there may be some other reason that precipitated this eleventh hour recommendation to cut the School Budget even further. It would not only be disappointing but troublesome to learn that the decision to make additional cuts to the School Budget was made for any other reason than budget shortfall. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Shelley Borgatti-Reed?

Shelley Borgatti-Reed – Hi. My name is Shelley Borgatti-Reed. I live at 10 Shelley Lane in Feeding Hills. I'm a member of the Agawam School Committee, a taxpayer and a parent of two children, one entering third grade at Granger and a son entering eighth grade at the Jr. High. I am also a 1978 graduate of Agawam High School. I come before you tonight because I had heard a few Councilors were discussing about possibly cutting our School Budget this year. I'm here to tell you that any additional cuts to our School Budget would be devastating to our schools. This year will be the third year that our budget has been level-funded. We have already cut over one million dollars for Fiscal Year '11 and I am wondering how we're going to continue to improve the education of our children with all the state mandates we have without any additional funds and you're talking about cutting more? Many people including some of our elected officials feel that our School Department is too top heavy. I have realized during my time on the School Committee that many do not know what the school administration really does. Our school administration has managed to keep a balanced budget while bringing on new

initiatives like RTI, teaming, PVIS, NovaNet, Project S.E.E. and many others. They work hard to give us an excellent school system with our balanced budget. When I first got on the School Committee, one of the first questions I asked is why does the High School have three Assistant Principals? When I went to school, we only had one. It wasn't long before my question was answered as I saw what these administrators do. As my son got older I realized that school is not the same as it was when I was there or when many of you were there or when many of your children were there. There was no attention to ADD, ADHD or autism. We didn't have MCAS and the many number of state mandates and testing that we have today. We never heard about heroin overdoses, peanut allergies or child obesity problems. We didn't hear of school shootings or teenage suicide and we did not need a police officer at the High School. There were fewer broken families and more respect for our school officials. Things are simply not the same in a lot of respect both positively and negatively. The world has changed and so has our schools. Now that I'm in my third year at the School Committee I see what these Vice Principals do and I can't imagine what our High School or Jr. High would be like without them. Our Superintendent and her assistants in my opinion go above and beyond to keep our schools safe and running smoothly during very difficult times. As a taxpayer and a parent, I understand why the School Budget gets scrutinized as it's the largest part of our town budget but I feel the Council should also give a fair look at other departments in town such as Fire, Town Hall, the DPW. Do we really need our trash picked up every week? As a lifelong resident of Agawam and a graduate of Agawam High School with two children in the school system and a School Committee member, I am worried about what more cuts would do. Agawam has an excellent school system and we need to keep it that way. There are people on this Council who I've known my whole life and they have a great amount of experience and wisdom and they have served this town for many years and I know they truly care about Agawam. I hope your deep passion for Agawam will continue by not taking away from Agawam schools but by continuing to work with what we have and keeping our great education in our Agawam system. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Allison Bessette?

Allison Bessette – Hello. My name is Allison Bessett of 148 Roosevelt Avenue in Feeding Hills. I am here to talk about how the budget cuts will affect the education of our future leaders – the children of this town. The FY11 budget was already cut with \$1,032,629.00, anymore cuts would be fatal to the students. Last year I spoke for the program called Project S.E.E. This program is for advanced students to excel and stretch their thinking. Just like I was striving to keep the program, I'm striving today to maintain the education of the students. I have reviewed the proposed budget and one of the cuts that struck me was the Athletic Director cut. In two years, I will be entering Agawam High School as a freshman. I'm planning on playing several sports like many of my classmates. Colleges choose students who are well-rounded which includes academics, athletics and many other extracurricular activities. Cutting of the budget will decrease the chance of students getting into college and becoming leaders. My sister Amanda did several extracurricular activities in high school. She got accepted into the school of her choice and she is currently on the Dean's list for Florida Tech. Another cut that struck me was the class sizes being increased to 30 to 35 students. That size of class would

make it difficult for kids who are struggling to get help. Elimination of Project S.E.E. would make advanced students hold back on their...Dr. Czajkowski once said and I quote "It takes a community to make a difference". Well, tonight the community is here to make a difference to save the schools. Do the right thing, save the education of our future leaders – the children – by not making any more cuts to the budget. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Renee Jury?

Renee Jury - Renee Jury, 48 Horsham Place, Feeding Hills. I too have been a lifelong resident of Agawam, an Agawam graduate. I have four children who are successful adults who also graduated from Agawam High School. I've worked for the school system for 35+ years. I work very hard and I think everyone from administration down to the custodians do over a day's work. There always working over 100%. The mandates from the state that Shelley Reed had alluded to have really put an extra burden on everybody in the offices to the support staff to the principals to the Superintendent and her assistants. I do urge you to support our budget in full and we've always worked closely with the town and if anybody wants to see what happens in the administrative offices, you're welcome to come and we'll answer any questions you have.

President Rheault – Thank you. Lou Conte?

Lou Conte – Lou Conte, 900 Springfield Street in Feeding Hills, MA., presently the Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Student Activities. First of all, I have four children that went through this town and it's a great town. We are blessed. I visit many of the surrounding communities through Athletic Director meetings and activities, sports activities and we are blessed and we thank you for that through your public dedication and what you do. We know it's a labor of love in a long sense but an older gentleman, Joseph Conte, Sr., always taught me that our future is our people, our youngsters today and never short change them and you haven't in the past. You've been supportive. Our Town Council and our School Committee have been both supportive. We appreciate your support on this budget as it is. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Frankie Mazzei?

Frankie Mazzei – Frankie Mazzei, 476 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills. Well, I'm not gonna talk about the school budget. Many things have come across your tables in the past few years and a lot of things you guys have been hearing – the way a lot of sub-groups within our community such as commission or committees which you folks help oversee and help keep running and the administrations pretty much keep it going as well and tell those small groups on how they're supposed to operate. Those small groups are an extension of your arms. It's kind of like in the military which I know a few of you have served in, you and the administration are like officers. While these sub-groups, the committees and the commissions, are like the enlisted. Everybody knows the old adage – when you want something done, you give it to the enlisted, you give it to the sergeant. The job will get done, nothing will be said and all the officers get a pat on the back. For our community that works great or it did work great until politics got involved. Once the

officer or the ones that are in charge of a business actually reach right down and tell you which way to turn your screwdriver, tell you how to push your broom, the job doesn't get done right and all you have is a committee that fights amongst the community. That is what we have in our community right now. I work with various organizations and groups on the outside that deal with strictly volunteers. Not one of us get paid. We don't get a free cup of coffee. We don't get an ice cream cone after the game is done, you know? We're there, our enjoyment is to see our kids run safely along the streets, make sure they don't fall down and get their hands scraped on the glass that can't be picked up. I'd love to have a group of volunteers – do you realize our community would save a lot of money if we could get volunteers like this to come out instead of fighting for people to get paid? You have several things in front of you between several committees and commissions, some that we've been haggling over for quite a while and it's been in the papers and misquoted, please when you go to re-address these, find a way to remove the politics so that the community can work the way we once did. So we can go down to Mrs. Jones' house and rake up the leaves from her yard as a good neighbor and she can say thank you and we can enjoy looking at her yard, we can enjoy looking at our community and take pride and stop the internal bickering. Thank you.

President Rheault – Alexandra Walters?

Alexandra Walters – Good evening. My name's Alexandra Walters and I've been a resident of Agawam for over 22 years. I've had four children attend the Agawam school system, one of whom is still a student here. I'm here tonight to express my outrage at hearing of the possibility of further cuts to our school budget. I share with you a quote from Mark Twain. "If you close a school, you will have to build a jail. What you gain on one end, you will lose at the other." In considering our children's education I am appalled to hear of such short-sighted priorities. It is getting more and more competitive for our children to get into college and they need a thorough and well-rounded education to have a decent chance in higher education. These programs in question are not expendable. I'm especially concerned about the future of Project S.E.E. The educational growth that these students gain from this program goes way beyond learning simple facts a little bit quicker. They pursue broader ways of thinking and learning that advances these students entire educational success. I ask you who will be the engineers, the lawmakers, educators and the doctors who take care of our society. Who will take care of you in your later years and what message would you be sending to your future caretakers with these further educations cuts? I quote Albert Einstein "The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them." While I am not at all suggesting that anyone in this Council is in any way personally responsible for the national economic we've been struggling with, we all have faced tough life-changing choices but I do suggest that we need to take some of the proverbial 20/20 hindsight and learn from our mistakes. It is a mistake to continue to cut educational funding, throwing our students into the deep end of life with smaller and smaller lifelines. I urge you do not be penny wise and pound foolish. Thank you for your time.

President Rheault – Sherry Balzano?

Sherry Balzano – Sherry Balzano, 74 Roosevelt Avenue, Feeding Hills. I thought long and hard about what I want to say tonight especially in light of the fact that I work in the Amherst public schools and have spent the last seven months facing a similar budget situation which was resolved this spring with the passage of a Prop 2 ½ tax override vote. This past Friday night I made a post on a public blog expressing my discontent with the Council regarding the thought that they are going to ask the Superintendent to cut one million dollars this late in the game after the contractual deadline for staffing cuts has passed. As a result of my post, I had the opportunity to speak with one of the councilors about the situation. While we did agree on some pieces and respectfully agreed to disagree on others, one striking thing came to light. During our conversation, I questioned why were not pursuing an override vote in this town to save our schools. I was told that in order to save the schools to a level budget which still does need some cuts because of salary and increased costs, we would not even need an override vote. It would just mean a minimal increase that the Council could vote on. So my question is why are we even having this conversation here tonight? Why are we risking the future of this town by further cutting a budget that may impact them in such ways as class size increase, library staffing decreases and athletic cuts? We read often in our papers about a perception of drug use in among our teenagers. Why would we even risk cutting athletics thus allowing several hundred more students to have nothing to do in the afternoons? I assume your answer is that both booster clubs and PTO's can work to subsidize these things and they'll do their best I'm sure. However, who are you really hurting? The children whose families for whatever reason are not able to be here to advocate for them. I can guarantee you that my son and daughter will still receive any educational support at home that an increased class size would prohibit the teacher from being able to give them. They will still play recreational sports through private funding in both Agawam and Westfield. They will still take art and music lessons privately if they desire and they will still have access to the library and research help because my husband and I have the means and are willing and able to give it to them. I am not here speaking for my children. I am here to speak for the large percentage of children in our town that we have on free or reduced lunch, for families that do not speak English as their primary language and for families that are working countless hours to put food on their tables and do not have the discretionary income to enroll their child in private sports and lessons. For those children that I just spoke of, anyone who is supporting these cuts should be ashamed of themselves. I implore you not to make any further cuts to the schools at this time.

President Rheault – Melissa Gillis? I appreciate the applause but you're cutting into speakers' times. Melissa Gillis?

Melissa Gillis – Good evening. My name's Melissa Gillis and I reside in Middle Lane and you guys can applaud for me when I'm done or not, I'm okay with that. Listen, I am here solely as a parent. Many of you know what I do as a job but I'm here as a parent tonight and I wasn't even sure if I was gonna come. I thought gee it's the last day of school, summer's here, let's go swimming and then I thought wait a minute, what if everybody thought that? So I said you have to come, you owe it to your kids to come and I thought to myself what am I gonna say? I don't know and I don't have a prepared speech and I have no papers in front of me and I thought I don't know what am I gonna

say? So as I was leaving my daughter said to me where you going Mom and I said I'm gonna go to the Town Council meeting and she said what are you gonna do? And I said well do you know what a budget is? She said no so I told her and I said let me ask you a question. What would you think if there was no more Project S.E.E.? What would you think if some of the sporting activities were gone and how would you feel if you didn't have music or art or some of the other things that you love? And she said to me well that simply wouldn't be fair and I said what do you mean? She said it just wouldn't be fair. Every kid wants to be in Project S.E.E. Recess isn't enough. We need sporting activities. How else do we learn to be athletic? And I love music and art. How could I not do those things? My daughter's name is Emily and she's seven and at the end of April of this year she was in first grade and she was in Project S.E.E. In the beginning of May, Emily was in second grade and I owe that to Superintendent Czajkowski and Principal Thomas and the Mayor and other people in this town who worked hard so that we could realize Emily's potential and I feel very strongly that without those resources that that would not have been possible. A class of 35 students as opposed to 22 is a major, major difference in the time and ability of these teachers to teach our children at their own rate. I'm gonna be very brief about this. We hold ourselves to a very high standard in life. We all strive to do the best we can for ourselves personally, professionally, financially, why on earth would it be okay to teach our kids mediocracy? Why would it be okay for us to say well we don't really have the money so you're not gonna be able to learn as much this year. That's never okay and if we set that message and that standard now then when these kids get into their later years, what are they gonna think? Well, it was okay then, why isn't it okay for me now? And it's never okay. I mean I hope that one day if my daughter needs to she'll stand up like that wonderful, beautiful young lady and say the same thing to you. With the resources that the town currently has and the ability that the town currently has, she will but I hope she doesn't need to because I hope that with everything that everybody has said tonight you will listen and you will understand the importance of education and I would ask you therefore to approve the balanced budget as set forth for you. Thank you.

President Rheault – Matt Reed?

Matt Reed – Hi. My name is Matt Reed. I live at 29 Nolin Lane in Feeding Hills. I have two children both at Robinson Park School. I'm concerned tonight that it's easy to present this debate as soft-hearted sort of well-intentioned people against the hard-headed realists who understand that money is tight. I'd also want to argue that in fact the level-funded budget is hard-headed realism. My wife and I moved here in 2008 from New Jersey. We had our pick of towns. We looked at towns like Amherst and we looked at towns like West Springfield. Why did we pick Agawam? We picked Agawam for the schools. That's why we're here. I wanted to make sure that Kyle and Jessie got the schools they deserve. From a political science standpoint which is my scholarly background and where I got my doctorate in, I can tell you the number one predictor of property values is the quality of the school district. (APPLAUSE) If you start letting your school district slip, you start letting your property values slip and at that point you start letting your town slip. We've seen that in neighboring towns. We all know it. Let's

not make that mistake now. As the old saying goes “if you think education is expensive, try ignorance”. Thank you.

President Rheault – Tom Schnepf?

Tom Schnepf – Tom Schnepf, 28 Maynard Street, Feeding Hills. Just as an Assistant Principal at the High School where we’ve been dealing with increased enrollments, more mandates, more responsibility in regards to not having attendance officers and curriculum specialist department heads, so as our responsibility grows, I encourage you to support the budget. Thank you.

President Rheault – Nora Ronnau?

Nora Ronnau – Hi. My name is Nora Ronnau. I reside at 111 Florida Drive in Agawam. I’m here to express my disdain at the proposal asking Dr. Mary to cut from the School Budget. At my house and most households in Agawam, we can agree that education is the number one priority – that’s right number one, not number two, it is number one – and I think that it would be ridiculous for any councilor at this point to even consider asking for any more cutting. We will remember those of you who are willing to skimp on education come election time. (APPLAUSE) This year’s graduating class, the Class of 2010, boasts some very remarkable statistics. This class inducted more inductees into the National Honor Society than any previous class before it. Members in the top of the class have been accepted at Brown, Cornell, John’s Hopkins, BU, Northeastern, Villanova, Syracuse University and the Naval Academy just to name a few. This is the right direction for Agawam. This is not the time to skimp. Musically the High School had more instrumentalists successfully complete the Oover competitive process of admissions to all state in Boston than neighboring school districts in Longmeadow, Minnechaug, East Longmeadow, Southwick to name many of them. This is the right direction for Agawam. Not is not the time to skimp. Athletically many of our teams are at the cusp of achieving their dreams of state titles. This is the right direction for Agawam. It is not the time to skimp. Dr. Mary knows what she needs to do to lead our schools. My daughter Molly Mittler has just finished a great year doing teaming at Agawam Jr. High School under Norm Robbins and she absolutely enjoyed the teaming. She had a chance to work with the virtual high school, other great innovations that Dr. Mary has brought to our schools. Our schools are going in the right direction. Councilors, be aware that future residents purchasing the beautiful new homes in town which are generally sold to families will be easily dissuaded at becoming part of our community if they start seeing us skimping on education and pulling the carpet out from under our schools which are so clearly at this time going in the right direction. Again, now is not the time to skimp. Thank you.

President Rheault – Dawn Slinsky?

Dawn Slinsky – Hi. I’m Dawn Slinsky. I live at 35 Jessica Place in Feeding Hills. My husband and I have four children currently enrolled in the Agawam schools so this matter is of grave concern to me. I’m standing here today to implore you to reconsider these

additional cuts to the School Budget and if I'm not mistaken and if what I heard prior to my comments, the cuts will target the humanities. Our music programs, Project S.E.E., the Athletic Director position and a school librarian, retiring teachers will not be replaced increasing class size. Now a class size of 30 to 35 students will make it difficult both for the teacher and the student and cannot possibly aid in academic performance. As it stands the U.S. ranks 18th out of 36 industrialized countries in terms of education. Can we really afford to cut any educational resources in such an increasingly competitive world? This brings me to the financial aspect of this discussion and why I believe that these cuts will actually hurt rather than help Agawam's financial position. Now, I'm a small business owner and I understand the need to reduce costs and focus on the bottom line. I've had to do it over the past couple of years and it has not been easy but what if the proposed cuts actually had the opposite of the intended effect? Consider this – in study after study the facts demonstrate that students exposed to art and music have significantly higher academic performance and are far more likely to go to college. Better education means better jobs and that means that more money is being paid into our cash-strapped Social Security system. At the end of the day, everyone benefits. Now, if the Athletic Director position is cut, who will run the intramural programs our children rely on? These extracurricular programs are so important to the health of our children and yet they are often the first on the cutting block when budget talks come. When you look at childhood obesity statistics and the associated health care costs, keeping the Athletic Director position intact is really a bargain. Then there's Project S.E.E. – the potential loss of such an outstanding program is devastating – a vehicle to help high achieving students challenge themselves in reading and science is invaluable. My oldest son is a product of the program and I can say without hesitation that what he learned in the three years that he participated has greatly prepared him for college. Our children need to be challenged. They need to stretch themselves to see what they are capable of academically. Who knows? Agawam might have the next Ethan Hawke or John Steinbeck sitting at a table in the Middle School just waiting to be encouraged and mentored and wouldn't that be good for Agawam's bottom line? Now I remember vividly when I was a kid growing up a librarian in my Jr. High who was instrumental not only in recommending books for me to enjoy but imparting her own special excitement about the various works that she read and while this discussion is certainly about economics, you can't really put a price on the gift of the love of learning. Some positions are too important to eliminate and a school librarian is one of them. Now our children need to know that we are not just paying them lip service when we say that they are our best and brightest hope for the future. They need to see action behind the words that we're willing to invest in them and give them the tools necessary to succeed. So please reconsider these cuts and fully fund education in Agawam. Thank you for your time.

President Rheault – Alan Griffin?

Alan Griffin – Hi. My name is Alan Griffin. I live at 104 North Street. I'll be honest with you. I think these cuts are ridiculous. I think there's other ways that we can go around it and so forth. It's being an audit team, check out each person in town, how much they're paid, how much this is going around, that's going around, how much gas is going to waste from our vehicles, different things you know? This is what we need to do.

We got to budget everything right down to the T, you know I mean we gotta have a private contract to come in here and do an audit and that's what we need in this town, you know? We got a mayor that's doing a good job, he's doing a fine job but you know we need an audit team, somebody to come here and go over each and everybody's budget and figure out where all our money is going. Half of the money you guys don't know where it's going, understand what I'm saying? So you know as far as cutting our budget down for our schools, no. That's all I got to say. Thank you very much people. Have a good day.

President Rheault – Barbara Lussier?

Barbara Lussier – My name is Barbara Lussier. I live at 39 Oriole Drive in Feeding Hills, Mass. I'm the mother of two daughters, both are incoming – one's an incoming freshman and one's an incoming senior in September – I have been involved in PTO since my oldest daughter was in kindergarten and I've seen first hand what the struggles with budgets have done to the schools and what sacrifices that schools have had to make because of these school budgets. I'm actually going to talk about Allie Bisette for just a minute because all of my notes I sort of crossed off. Allie stood here as only one representative of Agawam's many well-rounded students. They're well-rounded, they're well educated, they're well-spoken and Allie asked you to do the right thing and I'm going to ask that you listen to Allie and that you do the right thing and not stunt the continued growth of Agawam's children. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Elaine Mokrzycki?

Elaine Mokrzycki – Hi. My name is Elaine Mokrzycki and I live at 292 Regency Park Drive here in Agawam. I'm the Middle School librarian having moved to this position after nine plus years as the High School librarian when the Middle School librarian retired two months into the school year. For about three months I did double duty, addressing all of the business for both school libraries until my replacement was hired. My husband and I are both from Chicopee. I've had a unique experience and insight into educational systems throughout the United States and when we lived in Europe for three years as I followed him as an Air Force wife for a twenty year veteran service. We are pleased to call Agawam our home. Through the process of level-funding, the High School library will already lose one half of the hours of the library's secretary. She is not just a secretary; she actually works with the students. As of Friday I was informed that should any additional cuts be made tonight, my position as the Middle School librarian will be eliminated. The skills that I taught this year will not be taught as the position goes away. People across the state ask me how a town like Agawam rebuilds its High School library for \$880,000.00. I tell them it's because the town planned well to build the largest information and technology facility for the entire high school. Our predictions came true and so the library now sees 26 to 30 classes per day. That's per day! Some people asked why a High School library needed to be renovated when the town library was undergoing renovation at the same time. School libraries are not the same as they were in the 70's when I started. We teach classes. We have a curriculum. We have standards. We teach skills so you could say we teach students how to cook a meal

whereas the public library serves the meal. Public libraries cannot do it all. We need school libraries where the attentiveness and teaching can take place right there as classes are underway. I hesitate to use the word “I” or only speak about libraries. Many classroom teachers have an impact on the success of a student by the time he or she graduates. Add to those classroom teachers’ names, physical education, music, art, library, technology and other areas. Add to those such as technologies, special services, reading and math specialists and you begin to see the large team that has been entrusted with the education of a child. In fact, the team doesn’t end there, Town Council, town and school administrators, parents, volunteers and businesses also affect that success. This year my dedicated parent volunteers came in to shelve 27,000 books that were checked out while I was teaching my six classes per day. As for me, I volunteer after school to be on committees without pay and I’ve stayed to 5:00 or 6:00 on many nights because in my work area we cannot take our jobs home. I like my colleagues take work home too because it is what we do as teachers. No overtime is paid. I know that you care about the town and I know that you care about all of the constituents as you should. I saw the financial struggles my parents went through on a fixed income. I too look for ways to dialogue and work toward solutions when people do not agree on methods or programs or ways to save money. I will leave you with this lasting thought – you may never know where a little boy or a little girl will go in their life as a result of their education at Agawam – perhaps he will become another General Frank Abrams or perhaps she will become another quiet hero who’s name will not be so famous but they will do their jobs well as sons, daughters, and grandchildren who will take over this world when it’s their time to serve. So respectfully I ask that you support the School Budget as it is and in fact our school libraries. Thank you for your time.

President Rheault – Mark DelNegro?

Councilor Letellier – Motion to extend Citizen’s Speak Time past the 45 minutes limit?

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Letellier to continue the Speak Time past 45 minutes, seconded by Councilor Bitzas. All those in favor? Ay. Opposed?

Mark DelNegro – Good evening. Mark DelNegro, 28 Losito Lane. First I would like to thank everyone for coming out here tonight. A good showing like this just reinforces the fact that Agawam is a community, a family-based community. I’m a 1998 graduate of Agawam High School and from there I went onto Northeastern University and I recently received my MBA and without the foundation of Agawam’s school system I would not be where I am today. It’s been very nostalgic this evening. I’ve seen so many people here like Mr. Janic, Mrs. Shugrue, Miss Shamatore, Mr. Constanzi, who really made me into the person I am today and for them I’m forever grateful for what they did for me. I am here to speak tonight against the possibility to have any more budgets for the school system. In times of uncertainty we unfortunately need to make cuts. What should not be cut in times of uncertainty are public safety and funds for the school system. If someone is in danger, they call the Police. If someone needs a first responder, they call the Fire Department and when someone is doing their daily routine whether it be going to work, in today’s world a job interview or bringing their kids to school, they deserve safe roads

that are paved by the DPW. Our taxpayers deserve these quality services and nothing less. Especially the service of education because those parents who are dropping their kids off at school, they know that although these times are currently tough, with a quality education tomorrow can be better for their children. Making cuts to the school system is against that quality education and a brighter tomorrow for their children. However, oh excuse me, I can assure every parent and student here tonight that sports, music and the arts will not be cut. However, there are budget cuts that need to be made, that these cuts will not consist of any student activities or the prospect for any teacher for being laid off. What we need to do is find where the cuts can be made without violating the quality of life for our taxpayers and their children. At Calloway, I was a Project Manager for a project that saved the company \$1.2 million. That year no supervisors for the entire company received a bonus and no one to this day through these difficult economic times has received a bonus in close to three years. I really think that municipal budgets should be run like a business. If you lose revenues, spend what you can, and prioritize your allocations. I have been dealing with budgets my entire life, both in the public and private sectors, from managing grocery stores and hotels owned by my family at the age of 18 to being fiscally responsible in the Army with my Department of Defense budget which protected the quality of the lives of the men who served under me. We need to be fiscally responsible like that. It's only fair to the taxpayers and our children. I am here to say that our children are the most important people in our lives and they deserve nothing but the best and should always come first. Let's find the best quality education we can for our children. What we need to do is look out for the best interest of our children and the quality of their education through these difficult economic times. Thank you.

President Rheault – This is my first concession. I can't read the last name. Donna from Wilbraham? I'm sorry.

Donna Mendoza – Hi. I apologize. I was unfamiliar with the format. I got my name on the list and I would like to get it off but here I am so I'll use this opportunity to speak. I don't have a prepared speech however I do represent in part the Guidance Department. Last year I was directly affected by the budget cuts which affected the guidance staff. We lost two positions – a substance abuse counselor in addition to a truancy officer. I was at the elementary and I was moved up to the Middle School. It's my understanding that if this budget is not approved then we will lose an additional counselor due to retirement. This will dramatically impact the Guidance Department. We would have to do additional shifting of staff. We will have challenges implementing many of the mandated criteria that the guidance staff does such as the MCAS, the administrative components in addition to the scheduling and the many tasks that involve that the guidance staff do. In addition, we are in the process of implementing the Comprehensive School Mass Model Counseling Program which has all of us going into the classes and speaking to the students about very pertinent issues related to many of the many of the troubling times the students have as they progress through their education. My concern is that these budget cuts will begin to decrease the value of services being offered by the Guidance Department as we strive desperately to create a state-of-the-art and now an award winning program for the Agawam Public Schools as our Director has said, it's becoming one of the primary guidance programs in the nation as being a leader for the

programs. So basically what we have worked so hard to establish in the second year of budget cuts would be a reduction in three staff members which is a tremendous impact on the department when our ultimate goal is to increase our staffing. Thank you.

President Rheault – Dennis Stempel?

Dennis Stempel – Good evening. My name is Dennis Stempel. I live at 85 Christopher Lane in Feeding Hills. I have three children in Agawam Schools and I received the same notification as all parents in town with kids in schools and I read some of the information in the press and wanted to do a little bit more digging so I actually spent some time to go through the detailed budget that Dr. Czajkowski submitted and I was pleased to see in reading the budget that it appeared to very fiscally responsible. I thought it was near level-funded, very focused on maintaining services and programs without ...programs or spending. So listening to some of the conversation earlier this evening particular at the sub-committee, I suspect that maybe some of the differences and issues that have gotten a lot of press are just a misunderstanding and miscommunication. So I really ask both sides to get together as quickly as possible, share information, answer questions and work very quickly to resolve any differences you have and improve our budget. I think Mr. Conte said it best earlier, he's seen this Council several times support our kids and support our schools and I absolutely agree with him. I have too and I'd just ask you to continue to do that. Thank you.

President Rheault – I spoke too soon. I have a second name I can't pronounce. Kerry on Pineview Circle?

Kerry Conway – Hi. My name is Kerry Conway. I live at 56 Pineview Circle. I have three children in the Agawam Public Schools, one going to be in 11th grade, one going into 7th and one going into 6th. First I'd like to thank you all for the wonderful education my children have received up to this point. It's been phenomenal and we know that. As I was setting the dinner table with my daughter tonight, our budget woes came on the news. She stopped what we were doing; she ran over to the TV and set down. Mom, we have to hear this. So after hearing the story and having a discussion, she told me Mom it's your job, you have to go and stand up so this doesn't happen and I said Mary Ellen, I don't like to speak in front of people and do this, as you can tell with my voice and she said but Mom that's how government works – you have to stand up! (APPLAUSE) Now you tell me she didn't get a good education! Wonderful things have been said, there's really not much to add. I would just ask you to consider that you go over the City's side of the budget just as carefully as you have the school budget, line by line. I'd also like to say something that's gonna be very unpopular but if it means protecting our schools and keeping our teachers, raise my taxes. Thank you.

President Rheault – John Provost?

John Provost – My name is John Provost. I live at 29 Mutter Street in Easthampton. I thank this body for letting me come before them to speak. I rise tonight in support of the entire budget and the school component of the budget not because I feel it's a good

budget, not because I feel it's a sufficient budget but because I feel it's a minimum acceptable budget to provide the services that the parents of Agawam have come to expect. I've had an opportunity to advocate for education at both the federal and state level. At the federal level, it's always about money and I usually get a response with something like you know the Massachusetts delegation supports your point of view. It's too bad you don't live in a state that has a get-able Senator or some get-able Representatives. At the state level, the response is very much the same. We're with you kid but the problem is there are these other Representatives out there but tonight I am speaking to the whole decision-making body and so in particular I'm looking to speak to whoever is "get-able" because I know that some of you may have come predisposed to not support the budget and some of you may have come predisposed to support the budget but I'm really wanting to just make a few points to those of you who may still be in the decision-making process. The proposed budget – the school component of the budget – is level funded. The previous budget was level funded. This essentially is our attempt to enter the third leg of a three-year moratorium on increased public spending on education and I think that's very responsible. During those three years, my advocacy of the federal government has not been very successful. Federal entitlement grants have been eliminated, federal reimbursement programs have been severely curtailed and state reimbursement programs have also been curtailed so we've been able to absorb all of those failures at other levels of government without coming to the town for more increased funding. We've been able to do it through increased efficiency. We've been able to do it using funds more wisely. We've been able to do it through working together with other districts and we've also been able to do it through something that I call a spirit of public service. Prior to coming over here tonight, I was at a local health club just sort of relaxing and one of the patrons said "You know the problem here in Agawam is people have forgotten what public service means. Public service means you're not gonna be able to raise your family the way you want to. You're not gonna be able to have the types of lifestyle that maybe you experienced but that's your choice and if you go into public service then that's what you get and you should live with it". Well, I have a different view. For me, public service means people doing more. When I look at what happens in our district I can name other places where I've worked where for example on the 6th floor of 57 Suffolk (?) Street, there are three departments and at least 5 – 10 people who do jobs that are all consumed in certain line items of our Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and I can also look at least half of the fourth floor and a quarter of the first floor and at least four departments that are consumed under functions that are part of our Business Manager's job description and I can even tell you a little bit about what happened to me this morning. It's time for my performance review. It was a good performance review and in a lot of ways it was one of the best but you know what I'm getting – it's 0% - for me that's public service. You understand some times you're going to do well and you won't be rewarded and I guess if my colleagues can put in the kind of effort and take on all the responsibilities that they've taken on, if I can live with okay this is the best and you're getting nothing for it, who here can say in the name of public service that they can't support a third year level funded budget? Thank you.

President Rheault – Melissa Fraga?

Melissa Fraga – Good evening. I speak tonight as a concerned parent. My name is Melissa Fraga of 280 North Street in Feeding Hills and I will be brief. We obviously aren't spending money on air conditioning. The first thing that I have to say is that my son Kyle will be a junior at Agawam High School next year. Kyle will be the ninth generation, not the ninth child, not the ninth person in my family, generation to graduate from Agawam High School. Nine generations! Folks we're talking 1800's and now you dare to take that away? That's wrong. It's about time you oppose the, you decide on the budget and we get on with this. This is not right. We should not have to be worried about this. This needs to stop tonight. Thank you.

President Rheault – Karen Hastings?

Karen Hastings – Hi. I'm Karen Hastings, 131 North West Street, Feeding Hills, MA. Many colleges require fine arts courses as an admissions requirement. These include choir, band, orchestra, traditional art, drama and dance. Some will accept drafting, foods or interior design. The appreciation and knowledge of fine arts can be integrated into many courses through a student's college experience. Research indicates that students who participate in the arts often do better at school and on standardized tests. The arts help you recognize patterns, discern differences and similarities and exercise your mind in many ways, often outside a classroom setting. So with this said, why is it that this is always where we look first to cut money from the budget? These courses are important for our children's future and these children are the future. In our electronic world, these children need to have course work that encourages them to use their brains. By cutting the school budget, you're costing these children valuable learning and your taxpayers increased out-of-pocket expenses. Each year our list of needed back-to-school items continues to grow. What's next - rental fees for desks and lockers? Project S.E.E. is a program that is equally important to our school system as any other special education programs other. These children need to be challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential the same as those with other special needs. By removal of this program, you're telling these students that exceeding expectations and succeeding do not matter. I highly doubt this is how you truly feel. The children are the future of Agawam and without a well-balanced education; you are setting them up to fail. I thank you for time.

Callan Hastings – My name is Callan Hastings, 131 North West Street. I am a Project S.E.E. student. I worry for the children like me who feel they are not challenged enough during class. I feel I miss out on great opportunities in learning things from higher grade levels. After completing my first year of Project S.E.E., I think going into 5th grade would be a step back for me without 5th grade Project S.E.E. next year. Please save Project S.E.E. Thank you.

President Rheault – Vinny Tirone?

Vinny Tirone – Vinny Tirone, 396 Meadow Street. It's pretty difficult to speak after such great speakers this evening but I'd like to talk a little bit about something completely different than the school budget. It's the Stretch Code. I know that it's been proposed to the Town, the City Council and I'd like to talk a little bit about it. In this

town, there's hundreds of city contractors, state contractors, electricians, plumbers and people of this related field. These individuals if this particular code passes, it will be directly affected in their revenue. We all know that residential taxes are one of the largest and major sources of revenue for this town. Purchasing a home is not a civil right, it's the American dream and when individual save all their lives – their money – and put it towards a brand new home they, we have an obligation to give them every opportunity that they can to purchase their home. Now the Code if it does pass, it will put a direct dagger in the wallets of the individuals purchasing the home. The City Council I do offer a solution to this – the City Council I think that if they would just sit back and rather than prematurely vote on that – follow the course of some of the other towns that are not for this and just assess the circumstances and the things that follow this particular code. This particular code what a lot of people don't know is that over time a residential or commercial building needs to breathe. By passing something that makes sense on paper, ten or five years down the road it will leave the house or the building vulnerable to mold, mold ... and things of that nature. Rather than again jumping the gun, let's just sit back and there are other towns in the immediate area that have not passed this particular code, let's just assess and see the problems that may come down the road. As far as energy efficiency, homes today are being built and designed and buildings are being built with the highest efficiency factor. Individuals that have saved their entire lives to develop and build that home, we can see an approximately 3% - 5% cost increasing of these homes which will then turn an individual to purchase a home or to build their dream home into only elitists building and purchasing these homes. I appreciate your time. Thank you so much.

President Rheault – Deanna LeBlanc?

Deanna LeBlanc – Tonight I address you as an outraged citizen of Agawam, a teacher and parent of three school aged children. As a taxpayer, I expect that my tax dollars are being spent within my community on education. Instead my children are faced with the possibility of cuts to their education so they can keep money aside. I understand that there needs to be fiscal responsibility but I urge you to think about our children and realize that it is irresponsible to cut spending on education even though the district has presented you with what's considered a balanced budget. As a parent, I'd like to explore what cuts would mean for our children. We receive emails as parents from the school that say clearly in the signature "Put children first". We have maintained programs in the district, built in teaming at the Jr. High, kept class size at appropriate adult to student ratios, implemented technology in the classroom to better prepare our youth for the world that awaits them, established and maintained after school programs to educate students while involving them in positive activities and cultivating a well-rounded education including the arts, technology courses, vocational programs, counseling, health education, fiscal education, family and consumer science education which included control substance education that's so vital to our students, DARE programs, foreign language courses, performing ensembles and athletics including team and individual sports. Cuts as large as large as the proposed measure by the members of the Council will decimate all of the efforts of our school district that they've made to improve the education of our children. Imagine a school where technology stood still, students had no courses to

select, only a narrow view of their world without any applied academic courses or where there were no after school activities, no teams of teachers to keep students from falling through the cracks, limited counseling for students in need and no limit to class sizes so your student becomes just a number. This is what cuts of this measure can do to our schools. And for what, with a reasonable budget already presented? Finally as a teacher, consider that this will mean increased class sizes with a sizeable decrease in materials. Teachers will be faced with impossible conditions much like in Springfield and teachers will end up leaving, Agawam will lose fantastic educators that your children rely on and be forced to hire inexperienced teachers to expect classes of over thirty children. Please tell me how that situation puts children first. Each and every program that Agawam has developed exists because there is a need for it. Educators in Agawam need your support to continue the tradition of excellence in this town and to achieve educating our children to the 21st century. Budget cuts will eliminate many of the programs that are vital to our successes.

President Rheault – Mary Young?

Mary Young – My name is Mary Young. I live at 184 Coyote Circle in Feeding Hills. I'm a mother of a soon to be third grader at Robinson Park Elementary and although clearly I am here on his behalf, I'm also and just importantly here on behalf of Dr. Provost, Dr. Czajkowski, Mrs. Palazzi, every teacher, paraprofessional, administrator and staff person that works and for the children of our town. There's one aspect that has not been directly addressed tonight and that is the additional services, additional resources required for special education children in our town. My son is on an IEP and does have relatively significant service needs and since the minute he entered kindergarten, I have never once been told no we cannot provide that service because we can't afford it. He has been given every service that he needs and he is thriving, excelling and loves school. (APPLAUSE) And I am terrified that come next year if this budget cut is passed that not only will we be losing traditional services like athletics, music and things like that but how deeply this could affect the ancillary services provided to the special ed children in our town. Mrs. LeBlanc...a little bit as we're all aware every communication sent by someone in our school district ends with the same closing remark "Put children first". It may sound simple but in my experience almost without exception the people that I've worked with and come to know in the Agawam Public Schools, the people sitting right here in this room, live and breathe this motto. To them it is more than a tag line or an ending on an email; it is a guiding principle of their work. It's why they get up and do what they do every day. As far as I'm concerned gentlemen, and I'm speaking particularly to the three gentlemen who are proposing this cut, I don't believe you are putting our children first in any way, shape or form and you should be ashamed of yourselves for what you are ultimately trying to do for the children of this town. Councilor Rossi I think you in particular should be the most ashamed. You had the unmitigated gall to suggest that teachers not take raises this year to help fund whatever it is you're trying to fund and I still don't really know what that is. Parents are required, not asked, not suggested, parents are required every year to contribute from their own personal household budgets some of the most basic supplies in educational needs and we do it and we do it willingly because we put our children first. The teachers, the

administrators, all do the same thing. I can't tell you how many times I've seen an art project or some sort of extracurricular activity and I know that it wasn't in "the budget" but it came out of the teacher's pocket. I would assume then that you and your fellow councilors proposing this budget cut would be glad to jump on the band wagon of those who are willing to put their money where their mouths are and to help in any way your personally can to help fund any necessary budget cuts. So I'd like to challenge you and Councilors Magovern and Walsh to do your part to ease this financial crisis. Your salary as Town Councilors is \$600 per month which equates to \$7,200 per year. If only you three councilors put your money where your mouths are you'd be able to add \$24,600.00 to this effort and I'm so sure that you would rather be part of the solution than the problem so I challenge you to give up your salaries and allocate them toward the School Department budget if you are at all serious about helping our children. How dare you ask other town employees to give up part of their salaries when you sit here and collect yours without batting an eye. (APPLAUSE) And just imagine if others on the Council whether they supported these cuts or not were to do the same. A fully volunteer Council would mean more than \$79,200.00 in available funds. Dr. Czajkowski, correct me if I'm wrong – but that could easily save two teacher positions or fund the Athletic Director position for next year if these fine folks handed you \$79,200.00?

Clerk – One minute please.

Mary Young – But we all know that you won't do that because it's too easy to ask others to fund your ludicrous budget cuts and put our children's education at risk. If you truly think that we need additional money, you should be out fighting with everything you have to find that money as Dr. Provost talked about. You should be fighting for our kids and doing everything you can to find money in the state level, the federal level, be creative. Be aggressive. Be responsible. Be vigilant in your efforts to find this money somewhere else, some other way. Only when you do that will you truly be able to say that you've put our children first. Until then I'm afraid to say I will continue to be ashamed of you and ashamed that elected officials of this town would even consider doing this to our children. So I challenge you on behalf of our children to stop this nonsense, take the budget as submitted and put our children first. Thank you.

President Rheault – Kathy Shepard?

Kathy Shepard – Kathy Shepard, 184 Poplar Street, Feeding Hills. Changing course here I'm going to talk about the proposal to do the intermunicipal agreement to have the Animal Control Officer work part-time in Agawam and part-time in West Springfield. I can't speak to what will happen in West Springfield although I think they need a lot of help but Agawam definitely needs a full time Animal Control Officer. In all the time I can ever remember, we've always had a full time Animal Control Officer and things now are worse than they ever have been, not better. Some people move, they leave their animals behind. I've heard them even leaving them inside buildings. I know our current Animal Control Officer has done more than her share of full time work. She does things at home. She fosters animals. She helps find homes for them. There's a lot of people in this room who have helped me. You know that I go out and I feed animals and I try to

sometimes take them in and get them spayed and neutered. You all have heard the story. Many of you have helped me. Some of you have come to my tag sales, my craft fairs, there have been some grants, there have been some...people that have made room for my organization to have events happening and I thank you for all of that but I honest to God all I can say is that we need as a town irrespective of what happens in West Springfield – we need a full time Animal Control Officer. Thank you.

President Rheault – Our final speaker is Karen Shugrue.

Karen Shugrue – Good evening. I'm Karen Shugrue. I often reside at 1305 Springfield Street – I'm the librarian at the Jr. High. I'm having a very tough time trying to grasp why some Town Council members are intent on damaging the school system. We should be considering more ways to bring the 21st century into the schools. As Elaine had said and Allie can attest, libraries are not what they were when you went to classes. They are now media centers that are the hubs of the school. Presently we are at the low end of the totem poll in comparing our technology offerings to neighboring school systems. Speaking just about the Jr. High, we have only thirteen computers in a library that serves 723 students. We have 24 additional laptops that are now aging and soon need to be replaced. We have 72 classes a week in the library as well as many individuals and small groups that are sent from classes to do research. Our adjacent computer lab is the only one that we have. Also, unlike most Middle Schools in the area, our school has no video production capabilities and no quality sound system in the auditorium. Prospective buyers for Agawam homes are sure to look at the quality of the school system. Good teachers, small class sizes, lots of technology and a strong support staff to help make it all work. Some of you want to cut all this. You are certainly this town then in the wrong direction. Please don't save your money for a rainy day when it appears a lot of you think it's already raining. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. The Council will now stand in recess for three minutes.

Item 2. Roll Call

President Rheault – Hello? The Council would like to get back in session. I'd like to call the Council back in session please. Will the Clerk please call the roll?

ROLL CALL – 11 PRESENT, 0 ABSENT

President Rheault – Eleven present, we have a full quorum.

Item 3. Moment of Silence and the Pledge of Allegiance

President Rheault – Please rise for a moment and Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 4. Minutes

(a) Regular Council Meeting – June 7, 2010

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Perry, seconded by Councilor Mineo. Any discussion, corrections? If not, voice vote is sufficient, all those in favor? Opposed? Unanimous.

Item 5. Declaration from Council President

None.

Item 6. Presentation of Petitions, Memorials & Remonstrances

President Rheault – I'm allowing Councilor Rossi, Councilor Magovern and Councilor Walsh to respond under Remonstrances. Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Letellier – I'm sorry. What is the point of, what's going on here?

President Rheault – Under remonstrance, I'm providing the Council the opportunity to speak.

Councilor Letellier – You can do that under the public hearing, that's completely out of order. Where in Roberts' Rules can you allow under Presentation of Petitions, Memorials and Remonstrances Councilors to respond to what was said at Citizen's Speak Time. I don't mean to be disrespectful but I don't think that's an appropriate use of the position of the Chair.

Councilor Bitzas – I second that.

President Rheault – Well, we'll wait until public speak for that.

Councilor Bitzas – Mr. President? Point of information?

President Rheault – Councilor Bitzas?

Councilor Bitzas – Because of so many people here that probably want to go with their children, can we move to suspend the rules and have the PH-2010-4 and TR-2010-28 Resolution to adopt the Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Budget right now and then go to the other business later on because it takes more time?

President Rheault – Pleasure? Motion to move the item of Agenda up, moved by Councilor Bitzas, seconded by Councilor Simpson. Any discussion? All those in favor? Opposed? The item is now in front of the Council.

1. **PH-2010-4 - (TR-2010-28) A Resolution Adopting the Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating Budget for the Town of Agawam (Mayor)**

President Rheault – I now declare the public hearing open...briefly. Mayor?

Mayor Cohen – Thank you Councilors. It's an honor to be here. The budget process began on January 3, 2010. The Capital Budget ended when I submitted it to you on April 14th and I thank you for approving the Capital Budget as presented. The City Budget including the School's culminated on my end on May 13th when it was submitted to the Council forty-five days prior to the end of the fiscal year. I am proud of the budget and I must thank all the Department Heads, all of the schools and everybody who worked diligently and overtime at no cost to help with this budget. What I would like to do is start. I have a short PowerPoint presentation. Laurel? This budget continues the drastic reductions in state aid to cities and towns. FY 2010 local Aid was \$1,829,905 lower than FY 09. FY 2010 ARRA Funding for the School Department totaled \$1.38 million. To compare that with this year's budget, the FY 2011 restores \$477,000 in local aid. ARRA Funding for the School Department totals \$207,000. FY 2011 local aid including local aid and ARRA Funds which is the Stimulus Funds that the Governor appropriated is \$698,232 lower than FY 2010 and \$1.14 million lower than FY 2009. So we continue to see drastic reductions. We had Chapter 70 funds and then when we receive the ARRA Funds, the Chapter 70 was reduced by the amount that we received in ARRA Funds so it wasn't really an increase in ARRA Funds, it helped to level fund the cuts from the state in local Chapter 70 funds. I am very pleased to report that the FY 2011 Budget Revenues – there's absolutely no utilization of Stabilization Fund otherwise known as Rainy Day Funds. New growth is estimated at about \$250,000. Agawam continues to be one of only a few communities to never seek an override of Proposition 2 ½ and this budget also maintains that. Unemployment costs are avoided and we've been able to avoid them because for every person you lay off with unemployment costs to make you save money or break even, you really need to eliminate two positions. Agawam is self-insured for unemployment costs. Personnel positions were carefully reviewed in view of reduced revenues. Vacancies were left open and the following positions were not budgeted in the FY11 Budget. The Clerk's Office – a half time Senior Clerk; the Treasurer's Office – the Assistant Treasurer; Inspection Services – the half time Code Enforcement Officer is eliminated; in the Police Department – it will be a half time Animal Control Officer IF you pass the intermunicipal agreement then that person will be a full time employee servicing not only Agawam but also West Springfield. If it isn't passed, then that person will be half time starting FY2011, July 1, and we will have to pay unemployment costs for her. Again, it came up in the budget review, what will happen if there's a call on Brush Hill in West Springfield and there's a call in North Agawam. Well, it's the same thing we would do if there's a call toward Suffield and a call in Feeding Hills. The Animal Control Officer would have to decide what would take precedence and priority and take care of that call first while our public safety and our mutual aid with Southwick which we established back in 2005 is also available. So with the intermunicipal agreement, this person maintains full employment, will service two communities along with the animals in West Springfield, the Mayor knows, they have already established a place to bring their animals and a veterinarian. We in our town will continue exactly the same, the only difference is we will receive approximately \$30,000 in savings and avoid any unemployment costs. It is the way of the future with regionalization of services. It's certainly something to try. If it doesn't work, there's always an escape clause on both sides – both for West Springfield and with Agawam and in the DPW – the Senior Clerk position has not been filled or funded. If you look at Free Cash used, in FY 2003 was

one of the two was the beginning of the very difficult financial times. We used \$3 million in fiscal year 2002. In 2003 - \$2.9 million; last year 2.5 million; this year we used only \$2 million of Free Cash. Free Cash is utilized to diminish the amount we have to raise in taxation, maintains less borrowing and also allows to maintain our extremely positive bond ratings. All Collective Bargaining agreements expire on June 30, 2010 and I can tell you that contractual step obligations on the city side amount to \$43,000.00 in the budget because they have to be funded or we could have, the Attorney General would be suing us and we would not be maintaining all Collective Bargaining agreements. Fiscal 2011 Budget highlights – the School Committee budget is level funded. It is actually almost \$80,139 less than last fiscal year. American Reinvestment and Recovery Act Funds (ARRA) - \$207,338 will fund budget items removed from operating budget to achieve level funding and it's \$117,801 less than the original SFSF allocation. Extracurricular and athletic programs continue without user fees - something the School Committee, the Superintendent and I have worked hard to maintain no fees. If you've heard today Amherst now has \$231 per sport per season for their students. We have none. Most town departments were level funded. Level funded meaning they were funded at the same level that they were last year. We retained all critical town and school services. There maintains trash pick up, yard pick up and all other services that our residents have come to expect and deserve. Principal and interest costs funded for the new Senior Center are in the budget and included in the 1.2% increase in the overall budget. Fiscal Year 2011 budget chart shows the school last year was 49% of the total budget, this year it is 47%. You can see the school or the overall budget has changed – benefits is up a little bit; public safety – we tried to maintain and that gives you an idea of how the allocations have been done. Next is education. You can see appropriation FY10 – \$33,989,637; FY11 - \$33,909,498 a decrease as I said of \$80,139. ARRA Funds – we are using \$207,338 that we received that is less \$1.175 million from last year and we carried forward \$550,000 from last year's because the City Council, excuse me, the administrators and the School Department and the School Committee watched the budget very carefully so we were able to bring that forward. The School Department cut \$892,000 I believe in the first round and then I went back to them and said I want an additional \$200,000. The \$200,000 in savings was achieved by reducing the budget without having to cut any services. We moved \$70,000 in grant retirement costs to the IDEA Grant saving 9% in retirement costs. We made a prepayment of \$75,000 in summer tuitions from the FY 2010 budget and increasing school choice funding by \$55,000 and it only increased those grades where it would not have an impact on class size in any which way or form. Public Safety – increased from last year 1.8%. Ambulance service continues in Feeding Hills. There are four firefighters that will be paid out of the Ambulance service; continuation of one police officer – School Resource Officer – with funding offset by the School Department and the Quinn Bill was funded fully at \$439,755 with only \$19,000 contributed from the state. Public Works went up 1.3%. One Senior Clerk position was eliminated – it was not filled so I did not budget it this year. Capital Improvement appropriation includes \$230,000 in capital expenditures. Street Improvement - \$150,000; Highway equipment is \$50,000 – payment for one new dump truck. They had asked for three, they are only going to be able to get one and Sidewalk rehab of \$30,000. Weekly trash pickup continues and the yard waste pick up also continues. Culture and Recreation increase by one percent. Library budget is

increased \$16,900 that's to meet the requirements for Library State Certification and to receive state funding. State aid to libraries is expected to be about \$36,000; Park & Rec services are maintained and our parks still are in good shape and our DPW and the Park Department work hard to maintain it for our children and those who utilize the parks. Council on Aging decreased by savings on utilities and related costs savings at the new Senior Center by good management by our Senior Center Director Joanie and her staff. Our Human Service department went up one percent. Most of things that you see that went up are contractual obligations that we have to. Western Hampden District Veterans Services assessment increased \$3,600 to address the additional needs of Agawam veterans. The Health Department salaries increased for step increases with full time school nurses continued at all schools for the health and safety of our children and our students and part time nurses included so that we have coverage at every school every day. General government decreased by .81% - the Reserve Utilities for that administrative building was reduced \$50,000; vacant position of half time Senior Clerk eliminated in the Clerk's Office; vacant position in the Assessor's Office was reduced from the Principal to Senior Clerk position which it was a long time ago, it's not a new position but the Council had allowed us to increase it to a Principal Clerk when we had to move some employees around for some personnel reasons. We have now restored that back to its rightful Senior Clerk position. It is not a new position. Data processing equipment costs have increased \$4,000 - that's in an effort to maintain the system that we have and staff reduction continued in the Treasurer/Collector's office saving us almost \$9,000. Debt and Principal and Interest is down 4%, down 4.7%, it's decreased \$160,000. School Construction debt refunded to reduce the interest costs and with our high bond ratings and fiscal management, we continue to go out to reduce our interest rates. The Treasurer/Collector is constantly reviewing and buying and selling our bonds in order to save the town money so I commend Laurel Placzek and her staff for the wonderful job that they do for our town and our taxpayers. You can see the debt, principal and interest and where it's at for all of the different projects and everything. Our largest debt still continues to be the renovations of our schools in 1998 which will be up sometime in five years so that continues to be some of the largest debt. Benefits and insurance is the largest increase in the budget but I'm glad to say that our health insurance - originally our quote was about 10.9% increase, they went down to 7.9 and through negotiations they went to a 5% increase. Everybody maintains their health insurance, no changes in co-pays, no changes in what they get and anybody who's at that age and needs a colonoscopy. It used to be if you find a polyp, it's a surgical procedure they remove and you have to pay the deductible. We were to negotiate no matter what; it is no longer gonna be any co-pay for any procedure along with the colonoscopy. So we save even there. So if you have to have that done, you have no copayment! Medical claims and insurance - well our staff is aging I have to be including myself and that's a good thing - I'll move on now! Medical Claims/insurance includes dental, health and life insurance for both school and town active employees and retirees. Medical Insurance increased \$610,659 with coverage continued for retired and active employees. Pension costs have increased \$149,711. These are things that are out of our control and are an issue at all levels of government. Property and Liability Insurance increased 10% - it went up \$50,000 from \$500,000 last year to \$550,000 this year. Property and Liability Insurance includes all insurances both for Town and Schools. School Department

contribution of \$80,500 was eliminated from the School Budget. The Personnel Department continues to administer all Workers' Comp Claims and has done an excellent job in keeping our claims at a minimum. The Reserve Fund is level funded at \$400,000. We're very cautious how we use that. At one time it was always funded at a half a million so the Reserve Fund has been decreased a total of \$450,000 since FY 2008. Our Self-Sustaining Departments – there was an increase of 4.27%. Wastewater budget increased – increased salaries include positions of the Deputy Superintendent salary; a Special Heavy Motor Equipment Operator with a Laborer; increased costs for Wastewater Treatment and Professional Services and Debt Service. Water spending is up; decreased salaries reflect moving a portion of the Deputy Superintendent's salary to the Wastewater Fund and increased costs for Water Purchase and Professional Services have all increased. Water Service has increased drastically in our purchase of water from Springfield. Our Golf Course budget increased 1.76%. These are all self-sustaining department and have no impact on tax dollars. Capital Improvement Appropriations approved in the budget and in this year's budget for Appropriation – Hampden County Land which we have to pay. It's for the land on South West Street and School Street Park of \$9,500; Street Improvement Program - \$150,000; Sidewalk Rehab - \$30,000; Public Works Equipment - \$50,000. And that concludes my presentation and I believe the entire budget went up 1.2% with the increase insurance, maintains all of our services and I'm pleased that if you read about surrounding communities closing schools, adding user fees, laying people off we have been able to avoid that and produced a budget that continues to be in the best interest. And I know all of you, Councilor Perry always asks, "with this budget we set a tax rate" – right now if everything is the way we think it will be, the average tax bill would increase \$18.00 per quarter which is somewhere between I will say \$50 to \$80 for the average median home. So I hope I've answered all your questions and I hope if you have any we can answer it. I'll ask the School Department and anyone else to please come forward who would like to join us here. Dr. Mary?

President Rheault – Thank you. Are there any questions from the Council for the Mayor? Councilor Mineo?

Councilor Mineo – Yes, just a question about the Animal Control Officer if that was passed tonight. What would we be paying for unemployment insurance....I can't remember her name.

Mayor Cohen – Yes. Allison Strong. She does a good job so we'd love to be able to keep her. We'd have to figure that out for you. Cheryl's getting her calculator or Laurel has it.

Councilor Mineo - The reason I ask that being where I work we have unemployment....unemployment benefits, this is something we would be paying for the next two years. I'm just interested on what the percentage is....50%...and I can't remember, what is her salary?

Mayor Cohen – I believe with benefits and everything \$49,000.00.

Councilor Mineo – So \$24,500 so we'd be paying \$12,500 in unemployment –

Mayor Cohen – Approximately yea, \$41,800 is without benefits so yea, somewhere around \$12,000 a year – for two years. It's per year.

Councilor Mineo – Yea. Thank you.

President Rheault – Thank you. Councilor Letellier?

Councilor Letellier – Thank you. I also had a question with regard to the Animal Control Officer. The budget has her listed as a full time at 1.0 so I don't see that we've gotten any amended budgets that would show that she would be halftime.

Mayor Cohen – I can explain that. What would happen is once you approve it, we will pay her and maintain her as an Agawam employee and we will show a revenue stream from West Springfield for the other half because she would be an employee of Agawam. We have different systems, different pensions and she's already worked in Agawam and so we would pay her salary and show a revenue stream which is the way the intramunicipal agreements work with our discussions with the Department of Revenue.

Councilor Letellier – And then I have a follow-up question on that and then I have a question about unspent monies for Cheryl but in the meantime if we cut the Animal Control budget to half and then we pay half of that half for unemployment we're basically paying her $\frac{3}{4}$ of her salary. If you combine the 50% we're gonna pay her directly and the 25% we're gonna pay to her unemployment so basically we're saving only about \$12,500 a year when we really should be, unless my math is all wrong, we're really losing a lot of service for only the cost of \$12,500 which is a minute portion of the budget. So are we really biting our nose to spite off our face? That's what I'm saying so we're basically gonna pay 75% of her salary and only get half time to work. So I don't know that that really is the best – I mean if we're worried about money why are why worried about \$12,500?

Mayor Cohen – Councilor, we worry about everything when we prepare the budget because when it comes down to cutting and making changes, you have to look at everything. When you get down to the bare bones in all areas, where do you cut? Do you cut a Police Officer? No. Do we cut teachers? No. Do we cut Fire? No. So it would be my – we have to make cuts somewhere to balance the budget based on decreased revenue and that was one place that we would be able to do it and the Commonwealth has been pushing through the Commonwealth of Mass to do intermunicipal agreements and this was one area that we could do that and service two communities. I don't think it would decrease our services to the community at all. I think things will continue and you wouldn't see a change in services but I would be willing to bet that the \$30,000 approximately that we save in the revenue stream is significant. \$30,000 is a lot of money. That's a salary.

Councilor Letellier – The point I’m trying to make is if my math is correct, we’re saving only about \$12,500 a year and we’re losing services of someone who’s job I think directly impacts the health and safety of the community. You’ve got rabid animals out, we’ve got increase in rabies, I mean it’s your decision. I just want to make sure I understand the math and the public understands the math. What I really wanted to talk about and I do this every year but I’ve limited my questions ‘cuz I’ve learned the answers. I won’t be asking why we haven’t spent all our money or why we haven’t paid all our bills because I know we’re waiting for bills but if you look at the Capital Improvement printout from the May 31st printout from the Auditor’s office, according to this printout not one single penny of the \$150,000 for Street Improvement has been spent. Is that right? Why? Maybe the Superintendent of DPW can help us with that. We’re budgeting the same amount next year and it shows with one month left we haven’t spent any of it.

Anthony Sylvia – Well, the Street Improvement Program incorporated improvements for South West Street, the end of last calendar year...and we utilized all of our Chapter 90 Funds for FY 2010 prior to the end of last calendar year. If there are any remaining funds of that \$150,000 to be honest with you I thought we spent all of it.

Councilor Letellier – It says you haven’t spent any of it, ANY of it with one month left of the fiscal year.

Anthony Sylvia – Well, we have plenty of roads to fix so I will be requesting a carry-over of those funds.

Councilor Letellier – How much can we carry over Cheryl? All of it? If this doesn’t get used again next year, I’m gonna have to vote to make a cut. I think it’s important that we do it but I was shocked to see that we hadn’t spent any money on it this year.

Anthony Sylvia – It’s a pleasant surprise to me sitting here before you tonight.

Councilor Letellier – And also it shows that the Water Department Water System Maintenance again in May 31st has a balance of over \$200,000.00 unspent. The pages aren’t really numbered – it’s the one, two, three, four, sixth item on the Water Distribution Page?

Anthony Sylvia – That would be a line item for Water System Maintenance. We are in the process of making water system improvements now on Harvey Johnson Drive for instance where doing that in house and trying to save money by not hiring contractors. We were able to do that with our own Water Department staff. That’s just one example of water system...excuse me.

Councilor Letellier – I know but my question is why did we budget \$307,000 when we only spent \$100,000. You’ve only used 34% of your budget, there’s \$200,000.00 left. Why are we budgeting these high amounts because if they go into Free Cash, that doesn’t

help us because then it's for – we have to levy the monies....carried over into next year?
Self-staining? Okay

Cheryl St. John - Plus our receipts were lower than we budgeted so we didn't spend all the expenses that we had budgeted for.

Councilor Letellier – There was another Capital Improvement Project that shows it wasn't done yet either and that was the DPW boiler replacement. That shows that that wasn't done yet either for \$25,000. I look at the Capital Improvement Budget obviously I'm Chair of the Council Budget Sub-Committee, I've got to look at this stuff. It just shows that a lot of the Capital Improvement Budget money hasn't been spent this year and a lot of it is on your side of the ledger – Water and DPW.

Anthony Sylvia – Well, if you want to discuss the boiler itself, when I started working for the town eleven months ago, the boiler was part of the budget but when I evaluated the actual needs of replacing the boiler it was a glaring need so I opted not to spend the money even though it was approved to make sure it was an approved expenditure...through further analysis and look forward to replacing that later this year.

Councilor Letellier – Okay.

Anthony Sylvia – Thank you.

Councilor Letellier – Again, I'm Chair of that Sub-Committee so I pay special attention to that page and it shows that for May we've only spent 48% of our Capital Improvement Budget and we have 52% of it left for one month of the year. So it's concerning because that's money that we're levying the tax rate on. It's nothing against you. You came into this through the fiscal year. I just think we need to be paying attention to how much we're budgeting for these things and we're not spending the money, then we don't need to levy them through taxes. That's all. I don't want to put anybody on the spot. I say this every year. I go through the printout and I say why are we giving people money in their budget if they're not spending it year after year.

Anthony Sylvia – Well, if I could add just one more thing. We do have a team (?) of management study from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission that says we are about 21 million dollars in hole when it comes to road repairs for our town. We have way more projects than we do funding so this admitted oversight of not spending money that was approved won't happen anymore. We do have way more projects than we have funding so I will be making sure that we ...

Councilor Letellier – I'm sure we're all looking forward to smoother roads.

Anthony Sylvia – The money doesn't go far.

Councilor Letellier – No, I realize that it doesn't go far but I was shocked to see that nothing had been spent. Nothing, especially since it's in the Capital Improvement Budget. Every year you're asking for more money for Street Improvements.

Anthony Sylvia – This – what you're referring is nothing of local funds – we did spend well over \$600,000.00 on road repairs with state funding.

Councilor Letellier – Right but nothing from our own budget.

Anthony Sylvia – That's correct.

Councilor Letellier – All right. The other stuff is just small pie stuff and I don't want to waste people's time. Well, for instance Data Processing Equipment. We didn't spend any of it. \$9,600 for Treasurer/Collector; \$7,958 for Data Processing not spent. I mean it's not a lot of money. It's not a lot of money so I'm not gonna ask the questions.

Laurel Placzek - The bills haven't come in yet.

Councilor Letellier – Well I figured that's usually the answer when I ask the question. Oh, the bill hasn't come in yet.

(off microphone)

Councilor Letellier – Okay, that's why I didn't ask but to me the most glaring stuff was the Capital Improvement stuff. Fifty-two percent of it is unspent with one month to go. None of it for road improvement so if it's gonna get carried over and done next year, I say great. But we will look at it really carefully next year to make sure it's been spent before –

Mayor Cohen – The Self-Sustaining Departments what we do is we look at the revenue they generate, if it's down we stop the spending in the Self-Sustaining to make sure we have balance with the money that would go back into that account so that it constantly balances and we don't go into a hole. Because we make a prediction and have no control over the weather, rain or shortages or whatever, that's the retaining. The \$150,000.00 on the roads – I know he's been using all of the state money first and then the money that we appropriate and we can carry that over in order to hope to get more streets done this year because we have cut from ten years ago when we used to put a half of a million in down to \$150,000 so we can certainly use that first.

Councilor Letellier – No, I'm sure we'd all like to see it used. All of us, not just up here but down there too. Thank you, those are my questions. Thank you.

President Rheault – Councilor Magovern?

Councilor Magovern – In deference to the hour I'll forego my questions.

President Rheault – Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Yes, one quick question...(audio difficulty)

Mayor Cohen – We have no way of knowing. We have to assume that it will but it would be up to the federal government and whether or not they allocate more funds for cities and towns and if it doesn't and there's that potential, we're already preparing for that...it was a concern last year also that we, that 1.3 when it was used, whether or not we'd be able to fund this year's budget and maintain what's being spent with one time funds. Luckily the School Department saved ...we cut one over one million dollars and next year if we don't have any, what we're gonna have to do is...if the federal government and state government don't give us more. But it's up to the federal government – I hope they continue to.

President Rheault – Is there anyone who would like to speak in favor of the budget as well as the presentation from the Mayor? Anyone who would like to speak in opposition? Anyone who would like to be recorded in name only in favor? If you would, on top of the piano while you're waiting in line, you can print your name and address for the record it would be appreciated.

(the following is a list of people who are in favor of the budget in name only)

Diane Juzba, Anthony Bonavita, Kathy Mouneimneh, Linda Galarneau, Roberta Doering, Susan Dawson, Deanna LeBlanc, Susan Brown, Robert Brock, Alan Cohen, Mark DelNegro, Renee Jury, Cindy Palazzi, Teresa Urbinati, Robin Fernandes, Susan Federico, Nora Bruno, Diane Donah, Maria Petroniero, Kim O'Brien, Theresa Taylor, Robert Taylor, Christopher Benjamin, Curtis Miarecki, Kristin Oberheim, Sandy Sherry-Pitzek, Belzano, Kim Laflamme, Maria Crawford, Theresa Ciarmatori, Faith Footit, Stephanie Harris, Geri Tirone, Tammy Randall, Nicholas Bernier, Karen Shugrue, Edward Jacques, Jim Graveline, Donna Watson, John Benjamin, Kelly Moriarty, Shawn Tatro, Ashley Sarnelli, Shelley Borgatti-Reed, Scott Trahan, Karl Roberts, Karen Roberts, Rhonda Theroaux, Sue Zafolin, Deb Florek, Kathleen Doody, Tom Schnepf, Nancy Piro, Robin Moynihan, Mike Donovan, Norm Robbins, Marjorie Savoie, Theresa Hall, Herb Hall, Shelley Russell, Carla Chase, Katherine St. Pierre, Erica Schlosser, Kristina Liakis, Laura Fallen, Renee Douglas, Debbie Rowe, Carol Patrick, John Patrick, Alissa Gingras, Gina Hodavanick, Amy Uncheke, Wendy Ruha, Donna Modzelewski, Michelle Manning, Lisa Booth, Ian Booth, Ellen Feeley, Margaret Woods, Kristin Pilotte, Alex Pilotte?, Rita Hurley, Sam Hurley, Matt Reed, Margaret Belan, Kathy Marishek, Laura LaPierre, Carolyn Boyce, Mary Avery, Jennifer Roberts, Debra DePalma, Janice Truelove, Jennifer Bonavita, Andrew Kraus, Sheila Chamberlain, Dana Henry?, Cheryl Montessi, Chris Costello, Timothy Jacques, Rick Jagodowski, Susan Morrey, Lisa Burrelle, Andrea Cichetti, Kelly Richards, Ernest Serra, Perry Lamkins, Kaitlin Weyant, Laurie Weyant, Susan Labarski, Charles Neal, Mary Young, Linda Pechekyl, Jay Snow, Elaine Mokziycki, Ann Marley, Dolores Ashadi, Helen Elgoods, Douglas Reed, Al Griffin.

President Rheault – Is there anyone who would like to speak or be recorded in opposition to the Budget? If not, I now declare the public hearing closed. I have a question for Laurel – the figures in the Budget book, are they accurate? So I can read that into record.

Laurel Placzek – There was a change in the state aid after the budget was printed. If you go to Tab 2, Page 4, they increased the Chapter 70 Funds by \$108,000.00 and they decreased the ARRA Funds by \$108,000.00. So the next difference was \$0 however we are gonna have to appropriate that \$108,000.00 at another time. You can't amend it as an increase only decreases. But if you look at the Resolution, unfortunately that's not numbered but your Resolution, your General Operating Budget is \$71,446,399 and if you turn to Tab 2, Page 11 you'll see that they are the same.

President Rheault – So in reading the Resolution –

Laurel Placzek – So your reading of the Resolution would be correct.

President Rheault – I want to read it into record....discrepancies taken care of?

Laurel Placzek – The discrepancy in the state funding is not because it would be an increase in the School Department appropriation of \$108,000. You cannot increase, you can only decrease.

President Rheault – So TR-2010-28is correct.

Laurel Placzek – Yes.

President Rheault – (reading into record)

Whereas, under the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 32 of the Mass General Laws and Section 5-1 of Article 5 of the Agawam Home Rule Charter, the proposed FY 2011 Annual Operating Budget was submitted on May 13, 2010; and

Whereas, under the provision of Section 5-2(a) of Article 5 of the Charter, a public hearing on the proposed annual operating budget was held on June 21, 2010, notice thereof having been published in one issue of a newspaper of general circulation in the Town of Agawam more than fourteen (14) days before such hearing; and

Whereas, it is in the best interests of the Town of Agawam to adopt the attached Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating Budget; and

Now therefore, the Agawam Town Council hereby resolves as follows:

1. That pursuant to the provision of Chapter 44 of the Massachusetts General Laws and Article 5 of the Agawam Home Rule Charter, the Annual Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2011 which begins July 2, 2010, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, is hereby adopted, and the several sums therein set forth to be raised by the levy of a tax upon all taxable property within the corporate limits of the Town of Agawam, Massachusetts, all other funds and receipts are hereby appropriated for the several purposes therein stated.

2. *The Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating Budget is adopted according to the departmental and line item categories contained therein. Said adoption allowing administrative transfer of funds from any line item within any category of any departmental or the line item budget to any other line item within the same category of the same departmental or line item budget.*

3. *There is hereby appropriated in the Line Item – Contributory Retirement an appropriation to the credit of the Hampden County Retirement Board to satisfy the Town of Agawam’s share of the Pension and Expense Credit Funds.*

4. *Consideration has been give for anticipated receipt of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for street reconstruction purposes as set forth in the Highway portion of the budget which is attached hereto.*

5. *In addition to any specific appropriation, revolving, gift and grant funds are hereby established under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, S 3 and chapter 44 S 53A, S 53D and S 53 E1/2 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010, with the specific receipts credited to each fund, the purposes for which each fund may be spent and the maximum amount that may be spent from each fund for the fiscal year, as described in Exhibit A.*

6. *There is hereby appropriated all money from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the United States of America, as well as, from any grants or donations received for public purposes.*

7. *There is hereby appropriated all money received from the interest income on short term investments including the interest earned on funds in interest bearing bank accounts.*

8. *That the Assessor use not more than \$2,000,000 of “Certified Free Cash” to reduce the Fiscal 2011 Tax Rate.*

9. *The Agawam City Council hereby resolves, authorizes and appropriates \$149,600 from the Agawam Municipal Golf course Retained Earnings, account 65200-31510 to Fund Balance Appropriations, account 65210-48500.*

10. *The Agawam City Council hereby resolves, authorizes and appropriates \$1,307,617 from the Agawam Water Fund Balance, account 60100-31510 to Fund Balance Appropriations, account 60110-48500.*

11. *The Agawam City Council hereby resolves, authorizes and appropriates \$1,402,827 from the Agawam Wastewater Fund Balance, account 22500-31510 to Fund Balance Appropriations, account 22510-48500.*

12. *The Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating Budget for the Town of Agawam is hereby adopted as follows:*

GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET

<i>Council</i>	\$	164,231
<i>Mayor</i>		296,064
<i>Administration Building</i>		325,523
<i>Law Department</i>		121,150
<i>Auditor</i>		148,205
<i>Clerk/Elections</i>		214,693
<i>Assessor</i>		242,504
<i>Data Processing</i>		203,441
<i>Treasurer/Collector</i>		287,389
<i>Police Department</i>		4,248,397
<i>Fire Department</i>		3,429,198

Inspection Services	269,459
Health Department	571,727
Community Development	144,571
Library	978,860
Parks & Recreation	166,369
Council on Aging	356,737
DPW Administration	46,777
Highway & Grounds	1,802,961
Motor Vehicle Maintenance	596,703
Engineering	234,716
Building Maintenance	3,764,581
Agawam Public Schools	33,909,498
Emergency Management	32,370
Line Items	<u>18,890,275</u>

TOTAL – GEN. OPERATING BUDGET \$ 71,446,399

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET \$ 239,500

TOTAL GENERAL FUND \$ 71,685,899

SELF SUSTAINING DEPARTMENTS

Wastewater Department	\$ 3,162,476
Wastewater Capital Improvement Budget	47,174

TOTAL – WASTEWATER \$ 3,209,650

Water Department	\$ 3,482,352
Water Capital Improvement Budget	35,995

TOTAL – WATER \$ 3,518,347

Golf Course	\$ 820,096
Golf Course Equipment	30,000

TOTAL – GOLF \$ 850,096

TOTAL – SELF SUSTAINING DEPTS \$ 7,578,093

TOTAL – ALL DEPARTMENTS \$ 79,263,992

13. There is hereby levied upon all taxable property within the corporate limits of the Town of Agawam, Massachusetts upon each dollar of assessed value thereof, taxes in an amount to be determined.

14. The following available funds are transferred/appropriated for use in the Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating budget to help reduce the tax burden:

Ambulance Fees	\$50,000
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15. Authorize the Western Hampden District Veteran's Service to exceed its assessment limitation by \$1,345.42 (Agawam's share) pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 20B.

Dated this day per the Agawam Town Council.

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Bitzas, seconded by Councilor Walsh. Any other discussion? Councilor Bitzas?

Councilor Bitzas – Yes, Mr. President. As a former teacher in West Springfield Junior and Senior High School, I know the value of education. I'm in full support of the budget as is because otherwise if we cut any amount of money, we may cut teacher's positions and the teachers belong in the classrooms not in unemployment lines. We already have cut the School Budget, we have a School Budget almost 2% less than last year and this Council vote in favor of the budget. How can we vote to give this budget any cuts with one million dollars less in cuts? That's not logic. So I urge you, I'm not going to be long, I have a long speech but because it's too late I'm make it short and stop down here. I hope and I believe the Council we pass the budget 11 to 0 because it's a good budget and I give the credit to everybody that worked and also the Councilors we work hard and we have a sub-committees and we approve all the budget sub-committees' budgets in the town side except for some trouble in the School Committee I mean the budget sub-committee with the School and I hope those councilors they change their minds and they vote in favor. Thank you.

President Rheault – Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Thank you. First and foremost let me clear up some things and some misconceptions that are out there. The School sub-committee meeting met back on last Wednesday and never voted to take any action or otherwise stood for any cuts, reduction in services, teacher's positions, athletics, million dollar figures that I've bantered around here – none of that thing was ever formerly taken by this School Budget Committee. Yes, we spin through a lot of options. We through a lot of things around but we never took any formal vote except to send our Chairman to talk to the Superintendent of Schools that perhaps we could have another meeting with her and or her committee that we might explore some options in case some cuts should be necessary. That was the only thing that was suggested to come out of that meeting and that meeting was scheduled for this evening at 6:15. On Thursday following the Wednesday meeting of the School Committee I got a phone call from the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Czajkowski, and we talked at great length, for a very long time, and to the point of being redundant I explained to Dr. Czajkowski that I was never in favor of any cuts, I wasn't promoting any cuts, I was simply trying to explore some options that I thought needed to be looked at. I assured her that I was not looking for a million dollar cut. I was looking for some cuts and as it turned out and I'll go over that in a minute, I thought that there could be come substantial cuts and I made some suggestions to her that perhaps she might look at furlough programs, perhaps she may look at toward the union for standing aside on some of their step increases and what I had suggested and it was merely a suggestion and it was simply their responsibility – we have no responsibility in that regard – but my suggestion was that if the union agreed, they could sign an addendum to the contract not giving up or waiving any relinquishments of their rights under that contract and just set aside that step increase for perhaps 'til next year where their step raises for next year could be doubled or maybe over a two year period until it was made up. No one was asking them to forego anything. Now, to the point of being redundant I explained to Dr. Czajkowski and assured her that I was very, very flexible. I was willing to work with her on all costs in order to come to something that was sensible and logical. Over the weekend, there was a

bombardment in this community of robo-calls naming me in particular and other members of this Council and I'll let them address that personally of saying that I was in favor of million dollar cuts, I was in favor of reduction of Athletic Directors, athletic activities, 15.8 positions, and responsible for devastating the entire school district when Dr. Czajkowski knew that was not the case. I told her over and over and over again that was not the case but yet her voice came over that robo-call saying that I was responsible for those things and I take exception to that. I have been a friend to education in this community over the years and Dr. Czajkowski knows that. I've always been first on my feet and speak the loudest when it comes to anything concerning these schools and I think my record speaks for itself. Now, I take very exception now and then I think the School Committee member, Mrs. Juzba, who also got on there on Saturday on Sunday, with the same robo-calls giving the same exact message that I was responsible along with other members of this Council for wanting to create devastation in this community of cuts of over a million dollars. Now I don't know where Mrs. Juzba got her information but certainly didn't get it from our sub-committee meeting. I don't know where she got her information and it had to be second-hand information because it certainly didn't come from our sub-committee and I assure you people in this community and everyone within the sound of my voice that none of the cuts that you've talked about here today Project S.E.E. programs, Athletic Director's or anything else EVER came out of that sub-committee meeting. That came out of the Superintendent's office right there. That's where that information came from – NOT from me. I never once ever said anything concerning any cuts to those projects or programs. And in the newspaper when they called me – I'll get you there – (speaking to a citizen in the audience) the newspapers called me and I said totally unrealistic to cut a million dollars of the budget and I was quoted in there. I was also quoted as saying I think there could be substantial cuts. When I got to the meeting tonight at 6:15 and Laurel Placzek was here along with Cheryl, our Auditor, and we reviewed the budget and we found out that there was a discrepancy between the School side budget and the town budget and we corrected that and found out that cuts weren't really necessary because of that discrepancy and our sub-committee quickly voted unanimously to approve the budget as it was. No cuts necessary. So that's what I would like to say and the other thing I would like to say on that behalf is this year, as bad as things are, this is the good news. The bad news is coming next year and I think as the Mayor just alluded to from the questions I just asked that federal stimulus money is not gonna come back next year and we've got three-quarters of a million dollars balancing our budget with that. We're also balancing our budget with retained earnings. That's not a good sign. Now I'm gonna vote for the budget this year because I got some assurances from pretty good people that I trust and respect a great deal including the Mayor here and I'm gonna go along with the budget this year but I'm gonna tell ya, it's raining out there folks and we're gonna have to start dodging those raindrops pretty soon and I'll defer any other comment to any one else to comments.

President Rheault – Councilor Magovern?

Councilor Magovern – I think that Bobby Rossi covered just about everything that I wanted to say about what happened in the City Council meeting but I'm very, very upset over many issues, mainly nobody in this room is more pro-education than I am. I'm a

graduate of Agawam High School. I went on to Boston University. My sister graduated from Agawam High School along with my other brothers and sisters. My sisters became a teacher in the City of Agawam, retired from Agawam. My mother was the very, was in the first graduating class of Agawam High School in this building and she was the one who chose orange and brown as our colors, so nobody is more pro-Agawam education than I am and Mary knew that. I served on the Board of Trustees at Westfield State College for over ten years as Vice Chairman promoting higher education for students. Agawam has one of the highest student enrollments at Westfield State College. I was very, very proud of the students out of Agawam at the State College. I formed a scholarship in my mother's name for an Agawam student out of Westfield State College. I'm very proud of that. I sat last week up on the stage with the graduating class of Agawam High School heard the choral group, heard the band, was never a prouder moment in my life than to watch those kids come up and make their speeches and get their diplomas so nobody is more pro-education than I am and to have my name bantered about as somebody who wanted to destroy the Agawam school system is totally inaccurate! We discussed – I'm a City Councilor in this town and we are paid to ask questions. As Bobby alluded to we've got budget cuts coming down from the State in two years. I consider it prudent to be able to ask questions and to be able to sit in the privacy of a sub-committee meeting and ask questions about the budget so that we don't get taxed next year beyond what we should be and to have our conversations bantered about with robo-calls saying that we want to destroy the school system of Agawam is total fallacy and I'm very hurt by it, that I would be included in that for somebody who has worked so hard for this town as I have and to hear these people up here this evening criticizing Councilor Walsh, Rossi and myself and we should be ashamed of ourselves well I think somebody should be ashamed of themselves but not me! I'm here as a City Councilor trying to do the best for the Town of Agawam. If we've got budget problems coming down the road, we should look and ask questions. I think that Mayor Cohen has done a phenomenal job with this budget. We've sat through many sub-committee meetings and there was questions and answers and I felt that they were done perfectly. We didn't have the luxury of having the School Board people in our sub-committee meeting to ask these questions and that's why we adjourned the meeting with no decision. There was no decision made, no million dollar cut. We discussed the \$445,000.00 teachers' step increases and it was adjourned with no decisions, to come here this evening. We met this evening, the questions were asked, the satisfactory answers were given, we voted unanimously to pass the budget. I have no problems with the budget but as Bobby said, next year there's problems that were gonna be coming, that we have to work together. We're not working together when you put robo-calls out first hand, second hand criticizing people who are just trying to do their jobs and that's what we're up here trying to do. I'm proud of my position here. I want to serve the Town of Agawam and I will continue doing that but I really feel hurt that we had so many negative comments here criticizing people that you don't know and questions that you had no inkling about so again I'm glad that everybody came out this evening. I'm glad that you're interested in the schools. I'm interested in the schools. That's why I'm serving on the City Council because I'm interested in schools. Thank you very, very much for coming out this evening and showing your interest.

President Rheault – Councilor Walsh?

Councilor Walsh – Yes, first thing, one of the budgets that we were given by the School Department showed an increase of \$162,000 over the prior year and everybody's yelling level-funded. It turns out as compared to the final budget that we have which is \$80,000 less. This is almost a quarter of a million dollars so I've got to question why weren't we given updated figures? I mean to me this is sloppy bookkeeping is what it is. I've got to take exception to the Superintendent that cried wolf because we had one school sub-committee meeting; it started last Wednesday it finished tonight. In the middle of it, Councilor Simpson who is our Chair went to the Superintendent with some issues that we had. These were to be cleared up. Based upon that the Superintendent in my opinion misused the robo-system which is the robo-call system which should be used for emergencies to then publicly name three councilors as ready to cut the budget in specific areas and let me specifically tell you some of the areas that we talked about last Wednesday. Nothing to do with education whatsoever directly. We talked primarily about the Central Office – the fact that she may have turned around and put a spin on it that we're gonna cut the Athletic Director – this NEVER came up in our meeting whatsoever. My question, I'm gonna bring them out, seeing as how I was named, I'm gonna bring up some of the concerns that I had aired at the meeting, that I would have been glad to ask had somebody been there. The secretary to the Superintendent makes more money than 184 members of the Agawam Education Association. If I read the figures right we have one Business Administrative Assistant who makes more than any member of the Agawam Education Association. I looked at the total Central Office payroll of \$707,000 if we look at an entire school of the lowest payroll school being the James Clark School – has a total payroll including principles, teachers, etc. of \$1,134,135.00. I truly felt there was not a balance of Central Office payroll versus what we have direct in education. I raised some of these questions at the meeting. I was in favor of looking at the Central Office payroll. I never mentioned anything about any education and one of the School Committee members got up said we don't understand what the School Committee people do. Well, frankly, I spent two terms on the School Committee, one year as Chairman of the School Committee so I think I have a pretty good idea of what goes on in the School Committee. We voted tonight, our final vote on the sub-committee was to recommend to the Council to pass the budget, this is after it was pointed out to us by the Town Treasurer that in fact the budget was level-funded or actually \$80,000.00 less so my suggestion for the future based upon the way the budgets were done when I was on the School Committee which is 23 years ago, I would suggest in the future that when the School Committee has their budget workshop hearings that our Budget Sub-Committee participate in those hearings as we did 23 years ago. We went to the – (off microphone) Pardon? No, no, no. You started off with the final figure from last year; we did a dog and pony show presentation plus this minus this – that to me is not a budget review. We got to sit down. Well, my position is that when you sit down and develop the budget, this is what we did 23 years ago – the Council Sub-Committee was there as it was being developed to ask questions and discuss – not at the tail end for a 45 minute presentation. So that is – and we didn't have time to develop questions at that point – because I thought I was gonna get a more in depth presentation of the budget in which case I could have then directed questions so that's my suggestion.

(shouting from the audience)

President Rheault – Councilor Walsh has the floor.

Councilor Walsh – With that at any rate, I am going to be voting to approve the budget in its entirety and I did not appreciate the fact that the Superintendent went out and named names in the middle of a meeting, I think you’ve got to take a grain of salt in the future with what the Superintendent says on the robo-call system.

President Rheault – Any other discussion from the Council? Councilor Mineo?

Councilor Mineo- Yea, I just wanted to say that I think most people know, folks in the School Department, School Committee members, I’ve been on the School Budget Sub-Committee for the Council for the last ten years. I’ve supported every budget for ten years. I go to every workshop. Sometimes I was one of the only councilors to show up at these meeting that you had and I definitely in favor of supporting this School Budget like I’ve done for the last eleven years. It’s a good sound budget and I, over the last ten years, I did want to mention that for ten straight years I worked with Councilor Simpson and Councilor Young and I thought was had a pretty good committee. Thank you.

President Rheault – Barbara? Could you please call the roll?

Councilor Letellier – I just have one – I’m sorry – I too am in favor of the budget. I think that we really did the best we could with very limited resources. My concern is all these school cuts that we’ve had and I think it was Dr. Provost said, if you look at the accumulation of three years of cuts, when we get more money, I’d like to see some of these things restored – losing intramurals at the Middle School, you know? A lot of kids their parents work all day and they’re going home to an empty house, intramurals, things like that, are a way to keep kids active so they’re not getting into trouble and so I’m just saying that I’d like to see some of these programs restored if God willing we get some more money and my other comment would be I think that it is not a good choice and it’s the Mayor’s choice to fund the Animal Control Officer at half time when essentially we’re gonna be paying 75% of her salary with the unemployment. I’m not gonna vote for the intermunicipal contract, I’m not convinced that we don’t need a full time Animal Control Officer and I think people at the disparate edges of West Springfield and Agawam, it’s very difficult to have one person to be in charge of all of that actual physical area. Other than that I think the Mayor did the best he could with limited funds and I think the School Department did the same thing so I’m gonna vote for to pass the whole thing.

President Rheault – Barbara, would you call the roll please?

ROLL CALL – 11 YES, 0 NO

President Rheault – Eleven yes, you’ve approved the Annual Operating Budget for the Town of Agawam for 2011.

(APPLAUSE)

(a) Resolutions

1. **TR-2010-30 - A Resolution Accepting a Grant from the United States Department of Homeland Security Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53A to be Utilized by the Agawam Fire Department for the Purchase of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Perry, seconded by Councilor Messick. Any discussion on the acceptance of the grant? If not, Barbara would please call the roll?

ROLL CALL – 10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Ten yes, one absent, Councilor Simpson has left for the evening.

2. **TR-2010-31 - A Resolution Accepting an Easement for Storm Drains by Roman A. Radkovets pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 14 for the Town of Agawam (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Perry, seconded by Councilor Messick. Any discussion? If not, Barbara please call the roll?

ROLL CALL – 10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Ten yes, one absent; you’ve approved the Resolution.

3. **TR-2010-32 - A Resolution Approving an Intermunicipal Agreement for Animal Control Services between the Town of Agawam and the Town of West Springfield. (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Perry, seconded by Councilor Walsh. Any discussion? Councilor Magovern?

Councilor Magovern – The only discussion I have Mayor Cohen I know you can’t answer but just listen. God that’s unusual but if we find that this isn’t working out properly can we go back to the way it was with the fulltime Animal Control because my personal preference is to have a full time Animal Control Officer but I’ll vote for this because I don’t want to see us lose what we’ve got but I do prefer a fulltime Animal Control Officer.

(off microphone)

Councilor Letellier – Move to go into Committee as a Whole so that the Mayor can address us on the record?

President Rheault – He briefly stated before in his presentation that we could change it, there was an escape clause on both sides – West Springfield and Agawam. Mr. Bitzas?

Councilor Bitzas – Yea, that’s a good question and I agree we need to have full services and I believe we can have full services with part time and the lady have two pay checks instead of one so it’s better for the lady to have \$60,000 than have \$30,000 in rough times because that’s what halftime here is budgeted and we can try. If it doesn’t work then it’s fine but I believe we can have instead of having to be in the unemployment line better have extra money so \$60,000 is pretty good, she can cover full time both towns so let’s give it a try. Thanks.

President Rheault – Councilor Mineo, did you want to say something?

Councilor Mineo – Yea, I just wanted to say I’m going to be voting in favor of this. I guess if there is an escape clause. I would prefer a fulltime Animal Control Officer but if she’s gonna be cut down to a half a position, we are gonna give her I understand about \$12,000 but that’s the reality of it, that’s what’s in the budget. The Mayor’s not gonna increase the budget so if you vote against it then you’re voting on somebody receiving unemployment benefits to which the Town will have to pay. So I mean I know it’s only \$12,000 and \$12,000 is \$12,000 so I mean if you know hopefully next year there’s more money in the budget where we can actually have a fulltime Animal Control Officer that would be great.

President Rheault – Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Yes, I, the way I understand it is the \$41,000 for her position is funded in our budget. She will maintain full time status employee of the Town of Agawam if I understand it correctly and will be paid or subsidized by the City of West Springfield under the agreement if I understand it. So I don’t really get where if this agreement fell through or we actually didn’t want to go through with it how we would wind up having to let this person go and she’d be able to collect unemployment benefits because her salary is in our budget.

(Mayor off microphone)

Councilor Rossi – Why would it be, Mayor?

(off microphone)

Councilor Rossi – So if we don’t approve this you are gonna cut this?

(off microphone)

President Rheault – Rich, if you’re gonna speak do you want to come to the mic?

Councilor Letellier – We already have had a motion to go into Committee as a Whole and it was seconded, it was just never voted on.

President Rheault – Motion to go into Committee as a Whole?

Councilor Letellier – It's already been made and seconded. It was made and seconded, you just never called for a vote.

President Rheault – Oh, I'm sorry. I'll call for a vote. All those in favor? Opposed? We are now in Committee otherwise Barbara won't be able to pick anything up.

Councilor Rossi – Okay, I guess, well I guess you already answered it Mayor and if we don't approve this you're gonna reduce the budget by a half and then just keep her half time, is that what it is?

Mayor Cohen – That's correct, sir.

Councilor Rossi – Okay now, I don't quite understand and maybe you could help me with this.

Mayor Cohen – Sure.

Councilor Rossi – If we keep her part time, why would she be collecting benefits – if you're working, can you collect and work at the same time?

Mayor Cohen – Yes, to make up the difference. If you are on a full time salary and you're cut to half time, you can collect half time benefits for up to two years.

Councilor Rossi – Oh, okay.

Mayor Cohen – Of which we pay.

President Rheault – Councilor Letellier was next.

Councilor Letellier – Yes, thank you. Everyone keeps asking questions about the escape clause well the contract is actually very, very clear. Page 5 of the contract, paragraph 10, the escape clause is six months' notice and it's a very particular six months notice – “such notice shall be provided one hundred and eighty days prior to the end of the then current fiscal year and withdrawal from the agreement will be effective as of the last date of the succeeding fiscal year.” So our window to escape is very, very, very limited. I don't think this is in the Town's best interest. I think that the physical area is too much. There's no guarantee that we're gonna have Ms. Strong there for half of the time. I don't understand and is the Solicitor still here? He left. I don't understand how if we vote on a budget which we have approved with a full time Animal Control Officer, how do we then have a cut, if we've already approved the full time person but for those

of you who think the escape clause is gonna save us, it really isn't and I think the physical area is just too much. So maybe the Mayor can help me with this, how we can –

Mayor Cohen – The escape clause is put in there that way for a particular reason.

Councilor Letellier – I don't have a question about the escape clause.

Mayor Cohen – Okay, but you commented on it so if I could, for a second.

Councilor Letellier – Sure, sure.

Mayor Cohen – We don't want to get caught with any expenses nor do the Town of West Springfield so in an effort to be fair, the escape clause was agreed upon by both mayors and both cities' attorneys. It has also been set up with the help of the Department of Revenue because this is a new area for all communities because it was just passed by the Commonwealth to enter into more and more of these and I think if the economy continues, you're gonna see more and more. I agree. Is it the best? No but it is a way to save \$30,000 and I think we have to be conscious of all dollars and do I believe that one person can cover both towns? With Environmental Police such as when we had a bear lose and she wasn't on duty, we had the Environmental Police, our Polices, mutual aid from Southwick, we have the ability to do this. It's something I think that if it doesn't work, then we don't do it but I think we have an obligation if we can save money and do what our Commonwealth is asking us to do because you're gonna see a lot of regionalization of services. You read every day about the regionalization of dispatching of ambulance and fire and police, there's regional dispatching. I think it's gonna happen. This is just something that they have done in an effort to allow municipalities to save money. To me \$30,000 is a lot of money, if we streamline. So I would ask you to support it, to try it, change is always difficult but it not always necessarily wrong or bad. Like I said, if there's a bear lose in Feeding Hills and a rabid fox by Suffield, the Animal Control Officer as the expert would make a determination here in Agawam which she would respond to. We would ask her to do the same with West Springfield. She goes over to West Springfield now to help with the ferile cats with Kathy Shepard when she's not doing it under our contract. She volunteers. I believe she has the time and the ability to do it and I think it's worth trying. What you do, as I say, we can save \$30,000, that's your choice but as it's appropriated, I will cut it to half time as a position if it's not with the Intermunicipal in an effort to save half of her salary or even 25%.

Councilor Letellier – Just so we agree, I think on the record, we need to agree on the amount we're saving. It's not \$30,000. Right? We're saving about \$12,000.

Mayor Cohen – If you pass it, we save \$30,000. Yea.

Councilor Letellier – Right, all right, thank you.

Mayor Cohen – And maintain full time employment.

President Rheault – Councilor Messick?

Councilor Messick – I admire your courage to enter into the intramunicipal agreements with another town for services. I've been to a number of trainings or conferences that highlight this as an opportunity for two towns to share services to save money but in all of those cases, you're talking about you mentioned dispatch center. You have 33 people amongst the two towns staffing and you have overlap with the personnel, you get rid of the overlapping personnel, you end up with maybe twenty people staffing but it's fully staffed and people who are working there have the ability to handle all the traffic, handle all the phone calls. So you're not talking about reducing service at all in the best of these agreements. I have heard from a number of people, I've gotten a lot of phone calls this week about this particular thing and the thing that I keep hearing over and over and over again is that between the two towns, the load is too great to be handled in Agawam or in West Springfield by one person. If they had a person and we had a person and we were talking about maybe sharing one and a half times? That might be something but for one person to spend half their time in each town? I just don't think it's sufficient and so I can't support this.

President Rheault – Councilor Bitzas?

Councilor Bitzas – Yes, I've got a question for the Mayor? Mayor Cohen, as I understand, this person will be working for both towns, it's like a ...of both towns like one town of 50,000 people, correct? It's like one town and she would make \$60,000. If she works for one town only –

Mayor Cohen - \$49,000 with benefits.

Councilor Bitzas – How much?

Mayor Cohen - \$50,000 with benefits.

Councilor Bitzas – \$50,000 with benefits, actually it would benefit her also by increasing her salary and the other thing is if we everybody talking about saving money, we cut things in town, this year we cut the sign officer, we cut so many things and if you're determined to cut this person I think we do a disservice to the person instead to make \$30,000, she would make \$50,000 – \$55,000 if I was like her, I would take the job anytime and try it. Maybe next year it's a better times. Thank you.

Mayor Cohen – I've received phone calls from other communities asking for copies of the intermunicipal agreement and West Springfield too had your same concerns and they passed it unanimously in an effort to try and see how it would work. Other communities have called me and thought it was a great thing. The Commonwealth called me and said that they're glad that we're participating and trying to do things – to do more with less. So I guess it all depends. Will it work? I wish I had a crystal ball. Do I believe it can work? Yes, I do. I wouldn't have done it if I didn't believe it would work. Have I been wrong before? Absolutely. I'm not perfect but I say let's try. You know if some people

believe in the Stretch Code, some people don't. I believe in it. I think it works. So you know it's a question of what your opinion is and how you look at it and if you want to try something different and see if it works. If it doesn't work, well, then it won't work but I'm trying to maintain full time employment for somebody that's gonna be cut to half time in an effort to save money and team with West Springfield who was passing it unanimously.

Councilor Bitzas – I make a motion to come out of Committee as a Whole.

President Rheault – Move to come out of Committee as a Whole by Councilor Bitzas, seconded by Councilor Rossi. All those in favor? Opposed? We're out of committee. Any further comments?

Councilor Walsh – I figure it is also a good way to experiment with the municipal sharing. We're working it on a very small level so if it works, we can go ahead on larger items but if it doesn't then we learned a lesson.

President Rheault – Councilor Perry?

Councilor Perry – Yes, thank you Mr. President. I do have some concerns with this myself. I have received some phone calls and emails like we all have about these services. I think it's a very large area for one person to try and cover on a full time basis in Agawam and West Springfield but I'm looking at it from the point of view of what option do we have? If we vote this down, we're only gonna have 50% coverage. If we pass it and we can see how it goes, give it a trial, I think that's the only way in my mind, logically, I can look at this. Am in full agreement with it? No but I figure having her on full time is better than having her here part time and so I'm willing to vote yes on it. Thank you.

President Rheault – Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Yes, having a great of experience with working with the Animal Control people over the years on the Police Department and having served in a supervisory capacity almost my entire career, I can tell you it's very, very difficult to get Animal Control out working in one community never mind two communities. I have some serious reservations as to whether this can work on that large of a scale and when you say that if we don't pass this, we go to a half person, well that's the choice of the administration to go to a half person. But the other end of that is if we approve this, we still have a half person so I don't think it's such a good idea to be splitting your time between two communities. Now I know West Springfield has a little bit of a problem. I did a little research and I heard they have some problems with I guess the Rowley Center there or something, they don't want to pay or they threw them out, I don't know exactly what the circumstances are but I don't think they have a place to keep their animals and their looking for a little bit of help on this side of the river. But be that as it may, I'm looking at it from strictly a practical standpoint I can't, I don't see where this is gonna work and I'd like to say let's give it a try and see if it works but I have to agree with

Councilor Letellier, I think our window of opportunity on this escape clause – we’re very limited here...so maybe it’s in the best interest to try to keep our Animal Control Officer here in hopes that the Mayor will reconsider its position with the cut. That’s just my feeling.

President Rheault – Councilor Magovern?

Councilor Magovern – I feel basically the same way that Councilor Rossi does but by the same token if we don’t pass it and she goes to half time, we’ve got a half time Animal Control Officer anyway. So we might as well pass it and so at least she’s got a full time job and she can share it with West Springfield. I don’t like sharing Animal Control Officer with West Springfield. I don’t think it’s gonna work. I think we’ve got more than enough problems here but if we don’t pass it, we’re gonna be left out in the cold anyway because we won’t have a good half time, so again I’ll support it. I don’t like it but as Councilor Perry says but at the same token I can’t see us not keeping an Animal Control Officer.

Councilor Bitzas – Move the question.

President Rheault – Just one point before we move, you can nod your head Mayor – up and down – West Springfield, the Town of West Springfield has their own recourse for the animals, is that correct? So it’s separate from us. All right. Thank you. Barbara, would you please call the roll.

ROLL CALL – 8 YES, 2 NO (Councilors Letellier and Messick), 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Eight yes, two no, one absent, you’ve approved it.

Item 7. Report of Council Committees

None.

Item 8. Elections

None.

Item 9. Public Hearings

1. PH-2010-4 - (TR-2010-28) A Resolution Adopting the Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Operating Budget for the Town of Agawam (Mayor)

(PLEASE SEE ITEM 6 ABOVE)

Item 10. Old Business

1. **TO-2010-16 - Order Granting or Renewing a Junk Dealer's LICENSE – T's Jewelers, Zinovy Tokman, 559 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA. (Referred to the License Committee) (Clerk)**

President Rheault – A report Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Yes, thank you. The License Committee would suggest sending a positive recommendation for renewal.

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor Rossi, seconded by Councilor Messick. Any further discussion? All those in favor? Barbara, could you call the roll?

ROLL CALL – 10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Ten yes, one absent, you have approved the license.

2. **TO-2010-17 - Order Granting or Renewing a Junk Dealer's LICENSE – John Rosati d/b/a John's Trucking of Agawam, Inc., 415 Silver Street, Agawam, MA. (Referred to the License Committee) (Clerk)**

President Rheault – A report Councilor?

Councilor Rossi - The License Committee would suggest sending a positive recommendation for renewal.

President Rheault – Entertain a motion to move it by Councilor Perry, seconded by Councilor Messick. Further discussion? We should have a roll call on these licenses, so please call the roll on that one.

ROLL CALL – 10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Ten yes, one absent, you have approved the license.

3. **TO-2010-18 - Order Granting or Renewing a LICENSE for an Amusement Devise(s) for an Additional Game – Polish American Club of Agawam, Inc., 139 Southwick Street, Feeding Hills, MA. (Referred to the License Committee) (Clerk)**

President Rheault – Moved by Councilor, seconded by Councilor Perry. Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – The Licensing Committee makes a positive recommendation.

President Rheault – Positive recommendation. Any further discussion? If not, Clerk please call the roll?

ROLL CALL – 10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT (Councilor Simpson)

President Rheault – Ten yes, one absent, you have approved the license.

4. **TR-2010-24 - (VOTE OFF – SHOULD BE AN ORDINANCE) A Resolution Adopting the “Stretch Energy Code” for the City of Agawam (Councilor Messick) (Tabled 6/7/10) (Referred to Ordinance Committee)**

President Rheault – It was put on as a Resolution, it should have been put on as an Ordinance. I’ll just entertain a voice vote to remove it from the Agenda. Moved by Councilor Messick, seconded by Councilor Rossi. All those in favor? Opposed? The item is off the Agenda.

Item 11. New Business

1. **TO-2010-20 - Transfer of \$6569.49 from Fire – Regular Permanent (12201-51010) to Fire – Protection and Safety (12203-52410) (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda.

2. **TO-2010-21 - Transfer of \$129.55 from Fire – Uniform Allowance (12201-51070) to Fire – Protection and Safety (12203-52410) (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda.

3. **TO-2010-22 - Transfer of \$5285.17 from Fire – Regular Temporary (12201-51020) to Fire – Protection and Safety (12203-52410) (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda.

4. **TR-2010-33 - A Resolution Accepting an Easement for Storm Drains by Joe Tirone Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 14 for the Town of Agawam (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda.

5. **TR-2010-34 - Suggest a Public Hearing Date of August 2, 2010 in the Matter of a Petition of Western Massachusetts Electric Company (Mayor)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda. Any problems with that? If not, it will be a public hearing. Barbara, you want to set it up for that item? Thank you.

6. **TOR-2010-3 - An Ordinance Amending the Code of the Town of Agawam Chapter 180, Section 37 by Adding Section G “Restrictions on the Keeping of Farm Animals” (Two Readings Required) (City Council Vice President Rossi)**

President Rheault – That’s gonna be removed from the Agenda. Correct? I’ll entertain a motion to remove it from the Agenda. Moved by Councilor Rossi, seconded by myself.

A voice vote is sufficient to be removed from the Agenda. All those in favor? It's now off the Agenda.

7. **TOR-2010-4 - An Ordinance Adopting the "Stretch Energy Code" for the City of Agawam (Two Reading Required) (Councilor Messick)**

President Rheault – Next Agenda. First reading will take place next meeting and it now will go to the Ordinance Committee for review.

Item 12. Any other matter that may legally come before the City Council.

President Rheault – To my furthest right. Councilor Bitzas?

Councilor Bitzas – Yes, I just want to wish the students and all the teachers a happy and enjoy and safe summer vacation and read many books.

President Rheault – Councilor Magovern?

Councilor Magovern – Believe it or not, nothing this evening. I think everything has been said.

President Rheault – Councilor Mineo?

Councilor Mineo – All set tonight.

President Rheault – All set. Councilor Rossi?

Councilor Rossi – Nothing.

President Rheault – Nothing. Councilor Walsh?

Councilor Walsh – For my taste, too much has been said. Nothing.

President Rheault – Councilor Cichetti?

Councilor Cichetti – No, thanks, sir.

President Rheault – Councilor Messick?

Councilor Messick – I'll pass this evening.

President Rheault – Councilor Letellier?

Councilor Letellier - ...no we talked at the Ordinance Committee meeting about whether there's gonna be a sufficient number of Councilors here at the July meeting because it's July 4th weekend and a lot of people are on vacation. I'm gonna be on

vacation. I didn't know if you had poled people to find out if that was a good week or not.

President Rheault – I didn't have a chance to yet. Anybody gonna be away?

Councilor Letellier – It's Tuesday, July 6th, 7th, 6th, Monday's the 5th so it would be Tuesday the 6th.

President Rheault – Councilor Perry? Anything you'd like to share with us this evening?

Councilor Perry – No, nothing this evening, thank you.

President Rheault – There won't be a test on this either. All right. I'll entertain a motion to adjourn. All those in favor? Opposed? We're now adjourned. Thank you very much and good evening.

Adjournment.