Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
February 17, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Govert; C. Quinn; R. Smith
Also Present: D. Angersola; B. Auld; D. Barlow; S. Daigle; M. Gilroy; E. Kolasinski: R. Lenois; C. Mansfield; J. Spencer; R. Swol; C. vanValkenburg; C. Varricchio; R. Warriner; S. Wheeler; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public via virtual media

1. First Selectman Smith called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 4:01 a.m. Mr. Smith provided information on how virtual attendees could submit their questions and/or comments.

2. 2021-2022 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Culture & Recreations Budgets

      1. East Haddam Public Library System: Mr. Smith recognized Library Director Gilroy, who reviewed the Library's operating budget. Mr. Gilroy stated that he had requested increases in the Salaries & Wages, Building Maintenance, Telephone/Cell Phone and Electricity budget lines.

         He stated that the $5,700.00 projected increase in electricity is due to the split-heating system that was recently installed in the East Haddam Free Public Library and noted that he expects the increase to be offset by a comparable decrease in heating fuel costs. There was a general discussion concerning adding the libraries to the Town's contract for energy from the Shagbark solar array.

         Mr. Gilroy and the Board discussed the projected increase in Salaries & Wages. Mr. Gilroy stated that most of the Libraries' staff are minimum wage employees and the projected figure is in anticipation of the state's mandated increase in the minimum wage rate. He also noted that a number of employees have many years of service and their salaries should reflect their longevity. In response to a question raised by Ms. Quinn, Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the 2.75% wage increase placeholder had been applied to the Libraries' Salaries & Wages budget line.

         The Telephone/Cell Phone budget was discussed and, in response to a question from Mr. Smith, Mr. Angersola confirmed that he is gathering estimates from potential security vendors and stated that there could be some cost-savings realized in the Libraries' budget if they are included in the analysis.

         Mr. Gilroy stated that the $5,000.00 increase to the Building Maintenance budget is for "unplanned" repairs and is based on historical experience. He confirmed that it does not include any capital improvements items. In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, Mr. Gilroy advised that previous years' overages for Building Maintenance had been covered by excess funds in other lines that came in under budget.

         Mr. Gilroy reviewed the Library System's Capital requests, including a long-range plan for a new library facility. Mr. Smith confirmed that the Board of Selectmen expects to establish an exploratory committee for the project this spring. Mr. Angersola provided additional

information regarding the Libraries' capital projects, including replacement of the Rathbun's HVAC system, window replacement and insulation upgrades, and parking lot repairs for both libraries.

Mr. Gilroy advised that the Rathbun's HVAC and window replacement projects are his top priorities. He stated that he believes the repairs to both libraries' parking lots are not critical and can be delayed for a few years. There was a general discussion regarding the historical nature of the windows and how both projects might be staged concurrently. Mr. Gilroy and Mr. Smith discussed repurposing some of the Library System capital reserves.

Ms. Barlow stated that she is pleased that the Town is looking into upgrades for the Rathbun HVAC system and noted that Mr. Gilroy has applied for a grant from the National Library Service for funds to purchase additional digital materials.

The Board, Ms. Varricchio and Ms. Zemienieski discussed the upcoming Budget Workshop schedule.

B. Public Safety Budgets

1. Fire Department: Chief Auld reviewed the department's 2020-2021 accomplishments and 2021-2022 goals.

   Ms. Spencer noted the department has requested an increase in Salaries & Wages. Lieutenant Kolasinski reviewed the trial schedule for coverage that has been put in place and addressed the request for additional staff. He and Ms. Varricchio agreed to meet and discuss the staffing proposal. Lieutenant Kolasinski confirmed that the overtime budget is based on the firefighters' overtime and does not include any Captain or Lieutenants overtime.

   There was a general discussion concerning performance measures and, in response to a statement made by Ms. Varricchio, Mr. Smith requested updated, complete performance measures data.

   Ms. Spencer reviewed the rest of the department's operating budget. There was a general discussion regarding the increases in Training ($8,000.00), Repairs & Maintenance ($5,000.00), Building Maintenance ($5,000.00), Uniforms ($7,350.00), and Fire Ponds ($4,500.00). Mr. Angersola provided additional detail regarding the repair items under building maintenance and agreed to reach out to the Firehouse Renovation Building Committee to determine what items, if any, are the contractor's responsibility.

   The supplies budget was discussed and Ms. Spencer stated she could not explain why it was so high last year. She noted that the Facilities Department handles most of the department's grounds maintenance and Ms. Varricchio stated she would eliminate the grounds maintenance budget and repurpose the funds to the supplies budget line.

   There was a general discussion regarding the requested increase in the uniforms budget and the pros and cons of a contract service were discussed. Ms. Spencer agreed to provide more detail on this request, including breaking out the cost of uniforms for career and volunteer staff.

   In response to a question from Mr. Smith, Ms. Spencer confirmed that there was no increase in the equipment/gear budget line because the department had secured a grant for those items. She noted that a grant had also been received for PPE.

Lieutenant Kolasinski reviewed the department's capital requests. Several of the requests were discussed and Ms. Varricchio recommended the department include more detail regarding each on ClearGov.

Lieutenant Kolasinski stated the budgeted amount for thermal cameras could be reduced significantly if a different brand than what the department currently uses, is purchased. Chief Auld stated he would like to see reviews of the alternate brand before making a change.

Requests for replacement/additional vehicles were discussed and Lieutenant Kolasinski clarified the need for a duty vehicle for volunteer staff use. He also advised that the department has applied for a grant for the heavy extruder and dryer closet; Mr. Smith recommended moving this Capital request up for purchase in the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Several additional capital requests and proposed purchase schedules were discussed and Lieutenant Kolasinski and Ms. Spencer responded to questions. Ms. Varricchio emphasized the department should verify that all of their capital requests have been submitted on ClearGov.

Mr. Mansfield provided the following information regarding several of the department's Capital requests:

- The generator was last replaced in 2011.
- Fire Co. #1's boiler was last replaced in 2008.
- O&G did a study of the condition of the Fire Houses in 2014-15.

Ms. Varricchio recommended a follow-up meeting with Fire Department representatives regarding their budgets.

2. Emergency Management: Mr. Mansfield reviewed the challenges and current status of the Townwide Radio System project. He stated that the only change to Emergency Management's budget, other than a placeholder for 2.75% increase in Salaries & Wages, is a placeholder for a 2.5% increase in the Valley Shore 911 contract.

   Mr. Mansfield reviewed the department's capital requests and provided information regarding the increases in the department's capital budget and efforts to streamline some of the projected expenses. He provided an update on the status of getting the radio system fully operational and additional details on the plan for purchasing replacement equipment.

C. Other Budget Items – No additional budget items were discussed at the meeting.

3. Public Comment: There were no public comments submitted to the meeting.

4. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Mr. Smith by seconded by Ms. Govert, to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary