Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
February 18, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Govert; C. Quinn; R. Smith
Also Present: D. Angersola; L. Conroy; D. Denette; Resident State Trooper Patrick Hawes; T. McCabe; B. Parker; C. Varricchio; 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 9:01 a.m. He provided information on how virtual attendees could submit their questions and/or comments.

2. 2021-2022 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Public Safety Budgets

      1. Police Officers: Mr. Smith recognized Trooper Hawes who reviewed the Police Department's major service level accomplishments for FY 2020-2021 and its goals for 2021-2022. He advised that, other than the Salaries & Wages line, the department's Operating Budget was unchanged from FY 2020-2021. Ms. Varricchio stated that the police union contract had expired on June 30, 2020 and is in the process of being renegotiated. She noted that a placeholder for a 2.75% increase had been added to the department's Salaries & Wages budget.

         Trooper Hawes responded to several questions from the Board.

         He reviewed the department's capital requests and confirmed that the plan is to replace one cruiser per year. Ms. Varricchio provided additional details concerning reserving for the on-going replacement of the department's fleet of vehicles. There was a general discussion about repurposing the out-of-service police vehicles.

   B. General Government Budgets

      1. Town Clerk: Mr. Smith recognized Town Clerk Denette. Ms. Denette reviewed her request to increase the Assistant Town Clerk's hours from 30 to 35 per week. She noted that, other than the increase in Salaries & Wages and a $500.00 reduction in the Equipment line, the department's Operating budget remains largely unchanged from FY 2020-2021.

         Ms. Denette responded to several questions from the Board and confirmed that she has no Capital requests for FY 2021-2022.

      2. Legal Services: Mr. Smith reviewed information regarding the Town's attorneys and noted that many of the union contracts will expire during the 2021-2022 fiscal year and will have to be renegotiated. Consequently, he advised that the budget for the Town's labor counsel had been increased by $25,000.00.

         Ms. Varricchio reviewed historical labor counsel expenses and responded to several questions.

3. Fringe Benefits: Ms. Varricchio reviewed the Town's fringe benefits and noted that the 2021-2022 FY budget reflects an overall decrease from the previous year of $57,984.00. She provided additional information regarding the cost-savings and, in response to a question from Ms. Govert, Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the Fringe Benefits budget is based on the current employee census.

Ms. Varricchio reviewed the capital requests plan on ClearGov and Mr. Smith advised that he had requested all departments/boards/commissions provide a 10-year projection of capital requests. He stated that he believes the 10-year projections will help avoid many large ticket item surprises. Ms. Varricchio stated she will provide updated capital requests data to the Board prior to their budget deliberations. There was a general discussion regarding the benefits of switching to hybrid powered police cruisers.

The Board took a break at 9:58 a.m. and the meeting resumed at 10:12 a.m.

C. Health and Social Services

1. Senior Services: Mr. Parker reviewed the Senior Services' FY 2020-2021 challenges and accomplishments and stated that the Senior Center has taken several steps toward returning to normal in FY 2021-2022. He discussed his request to increase the Program Assistant's hours/salary but noted that, other than that and the standard 2.75% projected increase to Salaries & Wages, the department's Operating budget has remained flat.

   The Board thanked Mr. Parker for his efforts in working with Nutmeg Pharmacy to get Town residents inoculated for COVID.

   Mr. Parker stated that there were no changes to the department's capital requests and there was a brief discussion about including the Senior Center generator on the long-range equipment replacement plan.

2. Youth & Family Services: Youth & Family Services Director McCabe reviewed the challenges and accomplishments of FY 2020-2021. She stated that the department's operating budget is largely unchanged from last year and there are no capital requests.

   In response to a question from Ms. Quinn, Ms. McCabe provided an overview of Food Bank supervisor's change in status from volunteer to paid employee. Mr. Smith stated that he feels the program is run very effectively.

   There was a general discussion regarding the apparent lack of impact COVID has had on the program. Ms. McCabe, Mr. Parker and the Board discussed the appropriate reporting structure for the Food Bank and Mr. Smith advised that he and Mr. Parker have agreed to move the Food Bank under Senior Services.

   The meeting participants discussed the need for a comprehensive social services program and Mr. Parker advised that volunteers from the Senior Center members assist community members that are in need on navigating state and federal food assistance programs. Ms. McCabe stated she would provide Mr. Parker with her continued support.

D. Culture & Recreation

1. Recreation Commission: Mr. Smith recognized Parks and Recreation Director Conroy who reviewed the Recreation Commission's FY 2020-2021 accomplishments and 2021-2022 goals. She reviewed several changes in the operating budget, including increases in salaries & wages and building maintenance, and decreases in travel reimbursement and equipment, resulting in an overall budget increase of $5,721.04.

   Ms. Conroy responded to several questions from the Board and confirmed that the department's 2021-2022 operating budget reflects a return to normal for the recreation programs.

   Ms. Conroy reviewed the department's capital requests. Mr. Smith confirmed that the renovations to the tennis courts will be paid for out of a surplus remaining in the Municipal Office Complex Building project. Mr. Angersola stated that Ms. Conroy's proposed improvements to the fields behind the Municipal Office Complex, including better drainage, aerating, and filling in pot-holes, can be accomplished relatively quickly and that Public Works could do much of the work. Mr. Smith encouraged him to schedule the work for this spring.

   Ms. Conroy discussed long-range plans for constructing a community playground but noted that her estimates are very preliminary. Ms. Conroy also advised that she would like to replace the jungle-gym at the Town Beach and estimated the cost would be approximately $20,000.00. Ms. Varricchio agreed to add that project to the capital requests budget.

E. 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 11:55 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary