Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
February 24, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Govert; C. Quinn; R. Smith
Also Present: W. Brady; C. Brownell; R. Casner; L. D'Aquila; R. Dill; C. Varricchio; J. Ventres; S. Wheeler; L. Woodward; 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 4:02 p.m. and provided information on how the public could submit their questions, comments and concerns to the meeting.

2. 2021-2022 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. General Government

      1. Economic Development Commission: Mr. Casner reviewed the Economic Development Commission's (EDC) operating budget and noted that the only changes were a placeholder for a 2.75% increase in regular employees (wages & salaries) and a request for $5,000.00 for purchased professional services.

         Mr. Casner stated that EDC is supporting CT Landmarks Association's application for a National Parks Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program grant for the Town Street South project. He advised that, if the grant is approved, the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program will design the proposed multi-use trail; however, they do not provide engineering expertise. He noted that EDC anticipates that the project will require some professional engineering work along the Rose Farms open space section of the proposed trail.

         Mr. Casner recommended that the postage budget line be reduced to $100.00

         In response to a request from Ms. Govert for quantitative details from the Economic Development Administrator, Mr. Smith stated that his office had been receiving regular reports from Ms. Haines; however, he had not received a report recently. Mr. Casner agreed to follow-up with the EDC Administrator and ask her to provide an updated report to the Board of Selectmen.

         Mr. Casner responded to several questions and stated that EDC works very closely with the East Haddam Business Association. He noted that the Business Association maintains a comprehensive list of Town businesses.

      2. Land Use Office Operating/Capital (PZC, IWWC, WPCA): Mr. Ventres reviewed the Land Use Office's operating budget and noted that the only change is a placeholder for a 2.75% increase in the regular Employees budget line (wages & salaries).

         In response to questions raised by Mr. Dill, Ms. Varricchio clarified the relationship between the FY2020 Actual and FY2021 Budgeted columns in ClearGov and advised that the legal budget line is in the Board of Selectmen's operating budget. She confirmed that the legal

budget proposed from FY2021-2022 has remained unchanged from the previous fiscal year. She stated that the Board of Finance has discretion over what to do with any budget's unspent funds.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Brownell, Mr. Smith stated that the Land Use Department's request for $25,000.00 for the Moodus Center Conceptual Design Study had been included in the department's capital budget.

There was a brief discussion concerning projected revenues for the Land Use Boards and Commissions and the descriptors in the pie charts. Ms. Varricchio advised that she is still refining ClearGov and stated that the pie chart titles will be more specific going forward.

Mr. Ventres responded to several questions and provided an overview of the Water Pollution Control Authority's challenges.

Mr. Ventres reviewed the Land Use Office's capital budget and noted that, in addition to the request for $25,000.00 for the Moodus Center Conceptual Design Study, there is also a placeholder of $80,000.00 to update the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development which occurs every 10 years.

There was a general discussion regarding any professional services needed to review the proposed plans for the Village Revitalization project and Ms. Varricchio advised that the Board of Finance has proposed a budget of $100k for the Town's overall expenses related to the project.

3. Zoning Board of Appeals: The Board reviewed the Zoning Board of Appeals operating budget and there was a brief discussion regarding the advertising/legal notices budget line. Ms. Varricchio agreed to increase it to $1,000.00.

4. Historic District Commission: Mr. Brady reviewed the Historic District Commission's operating budget and noted there were no changes from the previous fiscal year's budget. He provided an overview of several projects that the Commission is pursuing.

5. Open Space Committee: Mr. Brady reviewed the Open Space Committee's operating budget and stated that it had remained flat from the previous fiscal year. Mr. Smith noted that grant applications for funds to purchase open space generally require a current appraisal. There was a brief discussion regarding the increased cost of appraisals and the group agreed the other professional services (appraisal/survey) budget line should be increased from $2,000.00 to $5,000.00

B. Ambulance Association: Ms. D'Aquila reviewed the Ambulance Association's FY2020-2021 accomplishments and challenges, specifically related to the COVID pandemic. She stated that the Association's mutual aid rate had held steady below 5% for the year and their response time had decreased from 9-10 minutes to 3-4 minutes. She noted that the Town is currently reviewing the Association' renewal agreement.

Ms. D'Aquila responded to several questions. She raised the Association's concern about the Town's ownership of the ambulances. Mr. Smith stated that Finance Director Varricchio and the Board of Selectmen will discuss the Ambulance Association's concerns. Ms. Zemienieski agreed

to distribute the Agreement between the Town and the Association to the Board so that they could review the section relevant to the purchase/ownership of the ambulances.

C. Other Budget Items: Ms. Varricchio reviewed several changes to the Fire Department Operating budget.

Ms. Zemienieski, Ms. Varricchio and the Board discussed the upcoming proposed Budget Workshop meeting schedule. Ms. Govert spoke briefly regarding the state's deliberations concerning its PILOT program.

3. Public Comment: Ms. Varricchio advised that an extensive question about the budget had been submitted to her and she plans to address it in one of the upcoming Budget Workshop meetings. Ms. Zemienieski advised that Mr. E. Blaschik submitted a comment thanking the Board.

4. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Ms. Govert, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary