Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
February 27, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: T. Govert; C. Quinn; R. Smith
Also Present: D. Angersola; T. Gelston; S. Hedler; 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 9:07 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. Public Works Budgets

   Public Works Superintendent Hedler reviewed the Public Works departments' statistics, FY2020-21 service level accomplishments, and FY2021-22 goals. Mr. Smith provided additional details on the department's 2020 accomplishments, including updates on the status of several road repair projects.

   1. General Highways: Superintendent Hedler reviewed his request for additional staff. He stated that the proposed FTE crew leader would be a 40-hour union position and the grant management role is a non-union 16-hour position.

      In response to a question from Ms. Quinn, Mr. Hedler confirmed that the crew leader role is a new position; however, he stated it would not increase the department's headcount. He reviewed the crew leader's job description and there was a general discussion concerning the new position's impact on the Superintendent's job responsibilities. Ms. Quinn and Mr. Gelston expressed their concern about adding additional staff during the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Hedler responded to several questions from Ms. Govert and Mr. Gelston. Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the Town does not plan to fill the vacant Public Works Director position. There was a general discussion about pay rates and Ms. Varricchio noted that the the wages & salaries budget line had increased by $56,402.00 (12%).

      Mr. Hedler advised that, other than the increase in wages & salaries, the only change to the General Highways operating budget was an overall increase of $4,300.00 in the purchased services category. He stated that funding of $6,800.00 for safety services, a new budget line, was proposed but noted that the increase is partially offset by reductions in the engineer (-$1,800.00) and landfill monitor (-$700.00) budget lines.

      Mr. Hedler provided an overview of the services provided by the safety services contractor, including twice annual OSHA-like safety audits and assistance with updating the department's safety manual. He responded to several questions and stated that the $6,800.00 was a one-time fee and would be significantly less in the next fiscal year.

      In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, Superintendent Hedler reviewed a number of process improvement/efficiencies he has implemented, including a mechanic who is now

staying on top of regular servicing of vehicles and equipment and the investment in diagnostic scanners for the department's vehicles. He noted that the mechanic also provides services to other Town departments, as needed and as time permits.

Ms. Govert requests information on the general highways budgets of comparative CT towns.

2. Snow Removal: Mr. Hedler stated that there had been no changes to the snow removal budget. Mr. Smith advised that this budget is based on a 5-year rolling average of actual expenses. He noted that, due to the mild winter last year, the Public Works department had a significant surplus in the FY2020-21 budget.

3. Transfer Station: Mr. Smith stated that there are currently a number of on-going efficiency and safety improvement projects at the Transfer Station, including investigating hiring a sub-contractor to process compostables. He noted that up to 30% of trash constitutes compostable materials.

   Superintendent Hedler stated that, other than anticipated increases in the salaries & wages category, the only significant change to the budget was an increase of $5,000.00 to the building maintenance budget line, reflecting an overall 1.4% increase to the operating budget.

   Mr. Angersola advised that fencing had been installed around the hydraulic dumpsters (for recyclables and municipal solid waste), and reviewed the Transfer Station's capital budget, including the condition of the buildings and purchasing a new generator to replace the old non-operational one. He noted that Public Works needs to develop a long-range plan for the replacement of the upper and lower buildings.

   There was a general discussion regarding the request for a replacement generator and Mr. Smith noted that the Town had retained a consultant to study and present a proposal for improvements to the Transfer Station.

   In response to a question from Ms. Govert regarding the cost to dispose of recyclables and solid waste, Ms. Zemienieski stated she would forward the Board a copy of the contract containing that information.

4. Tree Care and Removal: Mr. Hedler reviewed the tree care and removal operating budget. He provided information on the department's collaboration with Eversource and stated that the private contractors working for the Town performs their duties efficiently and safely. He reviewed the statistics for the Public Works' tree removal projects and stated that there is still a good amount of work to be done. He noted that he has requested a $50,000.00 (33%) increase to the operating budget.

   There was a general discussion regarding the problem of dead and diseased trees and the Town's efforts to mitigate it.

5. Public Works/Transfer Station Capital: Mr. Hedler reviewed several of the department's capital requests. He stated that he would like to accelerate the small plow truck replacement program from 10-years to every 7-years. He noted that these new vehicles can be purchased with a 7-year warranty which would significantly reduce the department's vehicle maintenance expenses. Superintendent Hedler reviewed the scheduled vehicle replacement list and responded to several questions.

Mr. Hedler provided an overview of the proposed 10-year annual road reclamation and repaving proposal ($5,500,000.00) and reviewed the treatment and management plan. In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, Ms. Varricchio reviewed the grant the Town receives from the state for road work. Ms. Govert also confirmed that the Long Range Capital Improvements Committee is aware of the proposed project and will evaluate it as part of their process.

Mr. Hedler reviewed several proposed culvert replacement projects and, in response to a question from Ms. Govert, confirmed that Public Works has an inventory of catch-basins and drainpipe and he is working on a comprehensive pavement management inventory.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Smith, Mr. Angersola stated that the Public Works building projects are proposed for 2023. Ms. Varricchio reported that she had spoken with the Town's Palmer Fund financial adviser who indicated that the Town can use up to $150,000.00 from the Palmer endowment fund for the storage building.

Mr. Angersola advised that the Town may be able to roll the cost of the Public Works HVAC replacement project into its LED lighting grant from Eversource.

In response to a request from Mr. Smith, Superintendent Hedler provided an overview of the use of the Public Works' pole barn and Mr. Angersola reviewed the proposed repairs.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Hedler, Mr. Angersola advised that the estimate to install security cameras in and around the Public Works' buildings came in much higher than anticipated and, consequently, he had not yet added the request to the capital budget.

B. Other Budget Items: No other budget items were discussed at the meeting.

3. Public Comment: Mr. Gelston stated he is in support of Town safety and properly maintained assets; however, he expressed his concern about the overall cost of the proposed Public Works' capital projects budget.

   In response to an inquiry from Ms. Quinn, Mr. Smith stated that currently on April 19th the Governor's declared state of emergency will expire. It is unknown at this time if the Governor will extend it. As it currently stands, attendance at public meetings would commence so he is not sure whether or not the Town will be required to hold a Town Meeting/Referendum on its budget.

4. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Ms. Govert, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary