Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
March 4, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: R. Smith; T. Govert; C. Quinn
Also Present: M. Knittel; M. Piscotti; B. Reas; 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 2:01 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. Board of Education Capital Budget:

      Superintendent Reas advised that the Town has been reserving for most of the items on the Board of Education's capital list. He stated that there are two new items and a few changes to the current list. He noted that the Board of Education has added a generator for the Elementary School ($52k) and a pre-K playground at the Elementary School ($88K) to their capital plan, and that they have increased the capital request for new heating mechanicals for the High School to $280K (+$115k).

      Mr. Reas reviewed several other capital items and noted that there is $200k remaining in the budget from last year because of reduced expenses due to the pandemic. Ms. Varricchio stated she will move those funds into reserves. There was a brief discussion about alternative funding sources for the stage curtain at the Elementary School. Superintendent Reas stated that, due to significantly reduced use this school year, the work on the gymnasium floors can be deferred for a year.

      Mr. Reas and Ms. Varricchio responded to several questions from the Board. There was a brief discussion regarding the ranking of capital projects and the use of reserves.

   B. Shared Services:

      Superintendent Reas noted the cost-savings benefit of the Shared Services model. He reviewed the Shared Services staffing requests and noted that, to date, they have been unsuccessful in recruiting qualified applicants for the posted part-time Human Resources Specialist position.

      Mr. Reas reviewed the responsibilities of the current Technology staff and asked Mr. Knittel to speak about the department's request to add a Systems Specialist to the team. Mr. Knittel reviewed the growing demand for technology-based solutions and the increased workload on the Technology staff. He noted that the need for an additional staff person was not a consequence of COVID, however, the pandemic did exacerbate the problem. Mr. Knittel stated that holding Board/Commission/Committee meetings via Zoom/YouTube is an additional responsibility for the Technology team; however, he noted that putting Board/Commission/Committee meetings on

YouTube, and recording them for later viewing, has greatly increased the number of citizens viewing the meetings.

In response to a question from Ms. Quinn, Ms. Varricchio stated that the salary range for a Systems Specialist is $35-$40K, not including benefits.

C. Interfund Transfers

Ms. Varricchio reviewed several lines in the Interfund Transfers budget. She noted a number of changes and updates to this budget.

Regarding the Fire Department's FY2021-2022 capital plan, she stated that, given their previous capital plan, the Town has been reserving for $76k annually for fire apparatus; however, to achieve their new capital plan the Town would have to increase the reserves by up to $200k annually and potentially more in future years.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Quinn, Ms. Varricchio advised that the Ambulance Association's request to have the Town refund the Association's contribution of $60k toward the purchase of a new ambulance would not deplete the fund since it has a balance of $305k.

D. Budget Review, Discussion & Deliberation

Ms. Varricchio called the Board's attention to information in their budget binders regarding the impact of several levels of spending on the mill rate. She advised that she had not included any fund balances in the budgets she prepared for their review/deliberation and confirmed that projected revenue remains essentially flat.

1. General Government Budgets: The following General Government Operating Budgets were reviewed:

- Assessor's Office: Mr. Smith noted that this budget reflects a decrease of 2% from the previous fiscal year. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Tax Collector: It was noted that his budget reflects a small increase. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Registrar of Voters: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only increase in this budget is a placeholder of a 2.75% increase in Salaries/Wages. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Finance Department: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only increase in the Finance Department's budget is a placeholder of a 2.75% increase in Salaries/Wages. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Land Use Department: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only increase in this budget is a placeholder of a 2.75% increase in Salaries/Wages. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Probate Court: Ms. Zemienieski advised that the Town's contribution to the Regional Probate Court is an assessed fee based on the Grant List. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only increase to this budget is a placeholder of a 2.75% increase in Salaries/Wages. No changes were recommended at this time.

- Shared Services: Ms. Varricchio stated that this budget is shared by the Town and the Board of Education. She noted that there is a request for a new Systems Specialist Technology position and there was a brief discussion regarding the vacant Human Resources Specialist position. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Town Clerk: There was a general discussion regarding the Town Clerk's request to increase the Assistant Town Clerk's hours from 30 hours to 35 hours per week and it was noted that the Assistant Town Clerk currently provides 10 hours of clerical support weekly to the Parks and Recreation Department. There was a brief discussion regarding how approving the request would impact the Parks and Recreation Department. There were essentially no other changes to the Town Clerk's Operating budget and no changes were recommended.
- Grange Hall: The Board reviewed the Grange Hall Operating budget. Ms. Zemienieski and Mr. Angersola provided additional information regarding proposed Building Maintenance & Repairs. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Millington School House: The Millington School House operating budget was considered, and Mr. Angersola reviewed the requested increase in the Building Maintenance budget line. Mr. Smith advised that he expects to receive a $1,500.00 donation to offset the increase in the Building Maintenance budget. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Municipal Office Complex/Central Services: The Board discussed a 5.4% increase in the Building Maintenance budget line. Mr. Angersola responded to questions from the Board and confirmed that the contractors' warranties have expired. Mr. Smith stated that, after the renovations to the tennis courts, there may be a balance remaining in the Building Committee's budget for several Maintenance/Repair projects which could offset some of the proposed increase. Mr. Smith noted that the only other increases in the Municipal Office Complex/Central Services operating budget relate to the Salaries/Wages and Cleaning Services and Telephone budget lines. No changes to this budget were discussed.
- River House and Annex: The Board reviewed the River House and Annex's operating budget, and no changes were recommended.
- Town Meeting Hall: The Board reviewed the old Town Meeting Hall's operating budget, and no changes were recommended.
- Former Town Office Building: The Board reviewed the former Town Office Building operating budget and no changes were recommended.
- Fringe Benefits: Ms. Varricchio stated that she had been notified that the Town's contribution to MERF will be an additional $3,000.00 for FY2021-2022; however, she noted that the overall Fringe Benefits budget has decreased. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Risk Management: Ms. Zemienieski stated that due to the timing of receiving premium quotes for the new fiscal year, this budget is typically not final when the Town's budget recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Finance. She advised; however, that the Risk Management operating budget will increase next year due to a change in CIRMA's pool insurance for cyber-security coverage. She noted that preliminary estimates for the premium for that coverage is $20-$30k. No changes to this budget were recommended.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert to take a recess 3:52 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 4:17 p.m.

The following General Government Operating Budgets were reviewed:

- Legal Services: Mr. Smith advised that several union contracts are coming up for renewal and, consequently, the Labor Counsel budget had been increased $25k. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Agriculture Commission: Mr. Smith stated that since Ms. Varricchio has not received a FY2021-2022 budget from the Agriculture Commission their budget is being flat funded. No changes were recommended.
- Board of Assessment Appeals: Ms. Varricchio stated that there was a minor increase in this budget. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Board of Finance: Ms. Varricchio advised that the increases in the Board of Finance's budget are due to a $100k placeholder for professional services related to the East Haddam Village Revitalization project and an increase in the Town's Audit fund.
- Conservation Commission: It was noted that there is a 1.4% decrease in this budget and no changes were discussed.
- Economic Development Commission: Mr. Smith noted that Mr. Casner had requested an additional $5,000.00 in EDC's Professional Services budget line for potential engineering services related to the anticipated National Parks Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program hiking/biking trail project. No changes were recommended at this time.
- Historic District Commission: The Board reviewed this budget and no changes were recommended.
- Open Space Commission: Ms. Varricchio advised that, based on an earlier discussion of this budget, she had increased the Professional Services/Appraisals budget line. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Zoning Board of Appeals: Ms. Varricchio noted that the Advertising budget line had been increased. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Debt Service: Ms. Varricchio reviewed this budget again for the Board.
- Interfund Transfers: Ms. Varricchio reviewed this budget for the Board.

2. Public Safety Budgets: The following Public Safety operating budgets were reviewed.

- Building Department: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only increases in this budget related to the Salaries/Wages and Cell Phone budget lines. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Emergency Management/911 Services: Ms. Varricchio stated that, other than a 2.5% projected increase to the Valley Shore 911 service contract, the Emergency Management Operating budget is essentially flat from the previous fiscal year. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Fire Marshal: Mr. Angersola stated that the Fire Marshal's budget had decreased $500.00 because he had shifted his conference attendance from in-person to on-line. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Paramedic Services: Ms. Zemienieski noted there was a slight increase in this budget because the fee is based on the Town's population. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Police: Ms. Varricchio noted that the only change to the Police operating budget is a placeholder for a 2.75% increase in Salaries/Wages. No changes to this budget were recommended.
- Regional Animal Control: The Board made no change to this budget.
- Resident State Trooper: Ms. Zemienieski provided background information on how the Resident State Trooper Operating budget is developed. The Board made no changes.

- Fire Department: Mr. Smith reviewed several significant requests in the Fire Department's operating budget. Mr. Angersola provided background information on the fire ponds' existing problems. Mr. Smith recommended not to approve the Department's request for two additional FTEs and Ms. Govert and Ms. Quinn agreed with his recommendation. There was a brief discussion about the Overtime budget line and Mr. Smith stated that all increases related to the request for two additional FTEs, such as Overtime, Uniforms, Training, etc., should be decreased accordingly. In response to a request from Mr. Smith, Ms. Varricchio agree to split out the Volunteer and Paid Staff expenses for Training and Uniforms.

  Mr. Angersola reviewed the reasons for the increase in the Fire Department's Building Repairs & Maintenance budget line. The Board did not recommend any changes to the Building Repairs & Maintenance budget line.

3. Public Works Budgets: The Board reviewed the following Public Works operating budgets:

   - General Highways: Mr. Smith reviewed Superintendent Hedler's request for a new Crew Leader FTE position. He noted that the Town has decided not to fill the vacant Director position, consequently, approving this request will not change the department's head count. Mr. Smith responded to several questions from the Board, and it was agreed to recommend to the Board of Finance that the request for an additional FTE Crew Leader position be approved.

     Mr. Angersola reviewed the Building Repairs & Maintenance budget line and the Board made no changes.

   - Snow Removal: The Board made no changes to this budget. Mr. Smith stated that he will ask the Board of Finance to transfer any surplus from this year's budget to the Tree Care and Removal budget.
   - Transfer Station: Mr. Angersola stated that the requested increase of $9,421.00 (1.4%) in the Building Repairs & Maintenance budget line was to relocate the staff office away from the main hopper. No changes were made to this budget line at this time.
   - Tree Care & Removal: Mr. Smith reviewed ongoing work to remove dead/diseased trees and advised that he has requested an additional $50k for this budget. There was no change to this budget.

4. Health and Social Services Budgets: The following Health and Social Services Operating budgets were reviewed:

   - Cemeteries: Mr. Angersola reviewed the request to increase this budget $6,950.00 to allow the Town to contract out the mowing and spring/fall clean-up for all but one of its cemeteries. Mr. Angersola responded to several questions from the Board and confirmed that the two part-time staff have 31 other lawns to mow. He stated that contracting out the cemetery work would free them up to address other projects. The Board did not discuss any changes to this budget.
   - Chatham Health District: Ms. Zemienieski advised that the fee charged to participate in the Chatham Health District is based on a $12.72 per capita rate for all six towns. The Everbridge Notification System is handled through the Chatham Health District and only one other town participates in its use. The cost for the system is split between the two

participating towns and the Chatham Health District. The Board made no changes to the budget.

- Human Services: Ms. Zemienieski reviewed this budget and noted that it was flat from the FY2020-2021 budget.
- Senior Services: Mr. Smith noted that other than the increase to Salaries/Wages to accommodate the Senior Center Director's request to increase the Program Assistant/Café Manager's wages and hours, the budget was flat from FY2020-2021. No changes were made to this budget.
- Youth & Family Services: This budget was flat, and the Board made no changes.

5. Culture and Recreation Budgets: The following Culture and Recreation operating budgets were reviewed:

    - Library Services: The Board reviewed this budget and no changes were made.
    - Lakes Association: Ms. Varricchio stated that the three Lake Associations split the Town's allocation to this budget equally. There was a brief discussion regarding transferring the FY2020-2021 balance of the Moodus Reservoir share to Capital Reserves. The Board made no changes to this operating budget.
    - Recreation Commission: Ms. Varricchio noted that there were small increases in the Salaries/Wages and Building Maintenance budget lines. Mr. Angersola reviewed several repair projects. It was noted that the Assistant Town Clerk provides 10 hours per week of clerical support to the Parks and Recreation Department and there was a brief discussion regarding the impact of increasing her hours in the Town Clerk's office on that department. No changes were made to this budget.
    - Town Greens, Grounds & Fields: The Board discussed the request to increase one of the part-time positions to a full-time position. Mr. Angersola responded to several questions. Ms. Quinn suggested increasing the part-time position to a 30-hour rather than a 40-hour position. The Board deferred a decision on the request for an FTE.

6. Capital Budgets: The Board reviewed the following Capital budgets:

    - Board of Education: Ms. Varricchio stated that historically the Board of Selectmen have recommended a set Capital budget amount for the Board of Education and allowed them to prioritize their projects. The Board agreed to recommend the same Capital budget for the Board of Education as they had received in FY2020-2021 ($300k).
    - Fire Department: The Board discussed several Capital projects the Fire Department have scheduled for FY2021-2022. Mr. Angersola reviewed the Company 2 flooring replacement project and recommended it be deferred to FY2022-2023 to occur during the proposed kitchen renovation project and the Board agreed with his recommendation. The Board agreed to recommend the Fire Department be funded for the following FY2021-2022 Capital projects: Fire Companies #1 & #2 Security Access Controls ($21,084.00) and Overhead door openers ($16,000.00), and replacement of deteriorating metal sheathing on Fire Company #2.
    - Library System: The Board discussed the Library System's FY2021-2022 Capital projects requests. They agreed to recommend the request for $12,000.00 for interior/exterior painting at the Rathbun. Ms. Varricchio stated she would add a Town Buildings Scheduled Brick Maintenance section in the General Government Capital budget. Mr. Angersola reviewed the Rathbun window replacement/insulation upgrade ($175k) and HVAC System ($147.8k) Capital projects and the Board agreed to revisit the Library System Capital budget at a later meeting.

- Public Works: The Board reviewed Capital requests for a new storage building ($500k), renovations/repairs to the existing pole barn ($15k), and garage/office space HVAC ($25k). Mr. Angersola stated he might be able to include the HVAC upgrades in the Eversource LED project loan. No changes to these items were requested.

  The Board agreed to recommend the following Capital projects to the Board of Finance for FY2021-2022: Transfer Station generator ($30k); security camera systems for Public Works ($30k) and the Transfer Station ($40k).

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

3. Public Comment: There were no public comments discussed at the meeting.

4. Potential Budget Resolution: The Board was not prepared to vote to send this budget to the Board of Finance at this time.

5. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Ms. Govert, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary