Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom & YouTube Live
March 6, 2021
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: R. Smith; T. Govert; C. Quinn
Also Present: D. Angersola; 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 9:10 a.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. Budget Review, Discussion & Deliberation

      1. General Government Budgets: No General Government Operating Budgets were reviewed at this meeting.

      2. Public Safety Budgets: No Public Safety Operating Budgets were reviewed at this meeting.

      3. Public Works Budgets: No Public Works Operating Budgets were reviewed at this meeting.

      4. Health and Social Services Budgets: No Health and Social Services Operating Budgets were reviewed at this meeting.

      5. Culture and Recreation Budgets: No Culture and Recreation Operating Budgets were reviewed at this meeting.

      6. Capital Budgets: The Board considered the following Capital Budget items:

         Mr. Angersola reviewed the following capital requests and responded to several questions:

         - *MOC Parking Lot Sealing:* $25k in FY2024-2025
         - *MOC Phone System Upgrade:* in FY2024-2025
         - *MOC Interior Thumblocks:* in FY2021-2022
           Ms. Varricchio stated that the Municipal Office Building Committee had advised her that they may be able to cover this expense from surplus' in their budget.
         - *Grange Hall Windows:* $30k ($15k for 2 years) – in FY2021-2022 and FY2022-2023
           There was a general discussion regarding this capital request and Mr. Angersola agreed that the project could be extended over several additional years. The Board agreed to move $15,000.00 out of this fiscal year's Capital Budget and into the Operating Budgets for FY2021-2022 ($7700.000) and FY2022-2023 ($7300.00).
         - *Town Meeting Hall Windows:* $50k in FY2021-2022
           Mr. Angersola advised that he is still working on getting a firm estimate for this project.
         - *Harris Property Well:* The Board agreed to defer this Capital project out to a future fiscal year.

- *Senior Center A/C:* $28,876.00 in FY2028-2029
  Mr. Angersola stated that he will check to see if this project can be made part of the Eversource LED Upgrade loan.

- *Senior Center Driveway Sealing:* $10k in FY 2024-2025

- *Senior Center Boiler:* $17,500.00 scheduled replacement in 2027

- *Rathbun Library Boiler Replacement:* Ms. Varricchio advised that she had reduced the budget to $66k for this Capital item based on conversations Mr. Angersola had had with a local vendor who confirmed that that amount is appropriate.

The Board considered the following capital budget items:

- *Emergency Management/Town Wide Radio System:* Request for an additional $300k in FY2021-2022. In response to questions from Ms. Quinn, Mr. Smith provided information regarding the request for additional funding. He confirmed the Town Wide Radio system is expected to be completed early in the next fiscal year. No changes were made.

- *Lakes Association*
  - Bioretention Basin - $13k in FY2021-2022
    The Board agreed to recommend the Lakes Association push this capital project out one year to take advantage of CT DEEP's Clean Water Section 319 grant program.

  - Lake Hayward Dam Reconstruction - $15k in FY2021-2022

- *Public Works – Infrastructure*
  - Culvert Replacements: Beebe Road ($710.4k), AP Gates Road ($801.7k), Bashan Road ($2,554,900.00), and Falls Bashan Road ($1,990,000.00).

    Mr. Smith stated that the estimated capital expenses for culvert replacements is based on contracted prices; however, he believes Public Works may be able to accomplish some of the work. Ms. Varricchio noted that the state local bridge program grants could cover 50% of the expense if we were awarded the grants by the state. No changes were made to this Capital request.

  - Guardrail Replacement: Bone Mill/Hemlock Valley intersection ($30k). No changes were made.

  - Road Reclamation & Repaving: 10-year plan ($550k annually), Shim Overlay ($128k annually), Road Improvement Materials ($167.8k annually)

    Mr. Smith reviewed the proposed Annual Road Reclamation and Repaving program. He noted that the annual cost for the program is projected to be approximately $846k and state road work grants could cover 50% of the expense. No changes were discussed.

- *Assessor / Revaluation:* $385k - Ms. Varricchio advised that the Revaluation occurs every 5 years and the Town reserves for the project. No changes were discussed.

- *Planning & Zoning Commission / Moodus Master Plan:* $25k in FY2021-2022

There was a general discussion regarding this capital request and the Board agreed to defer recommending funding for this project. Ms. Govert stated the project should be reviewed and prioritized by the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee.

- *Fire Department Vehicles:* The Board reviewed the Fire Department's vehicle replacement schedule and Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the Town has been reserving for the planned replacement of a number of Fire Department vehicles. There was a brief discussion regarding the new capital request for a duty vehicle.

  Ms. Quinn expressed her concern about the apparent lack of agreement between the paid and volunteer staff on budgetary requests. No changes to the department's vehicle requests were made at this time.

- *Police Department Vehicles:* Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the Town reserves for the planned replacement of one police cruiser per year. No changes were made to the Police department's planned vehicle replacement schedule.

- *Public Works Vehicle:* The Board reviewed several vehicles on the department's planned vehicle replacement schedule. Mr. Smith stated that Public Works Superintendent Hedler recommended changing the replacement schedule from a 10-year cycle to 7-years on the small trucks to take advantage of the manufacturer's 7-year bumper-to-bumper warranty. The Board agreed with Mr. Hedler's recommendation.

- *Recreation - Community Playground:* $600k ($50k for 6 years). Mr. Angersola stated that this project is in the research phase and is not yet scheduled in the capital budget. There was a general discussion regarding this capital request and the Board agreed to defer any action on the proposal until a future budget year. No other changes to the Recreation Commission's Capital Budget were made at this time.

- *Senior Center:* The Board reviewed this department's capital requests and no changes were made.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert to take a brief recess at 10:51 a.m. Unanimous aye. The meeting reconvened at 11:02 a.m.

The Board considered the following capital budget items:

- *Board of Education – Equipment:* The Board agreed that the BOE should prioritize their own capital plan within the parameters of a $300k capital budget recommendation.

- *Emergency Management / Annual Maintenance:* Mr. Smith stated that this budget is for non-scheduled replacement of equipment and/or tower site(s) that are damaged/destroyed by weather or other unexpected events. There was no change to this item.

- *Fire Department*
  - Fire Hose Scheduled Replacement: ($15k annually) – No change was made.
  - Air Pack Scheduled Replacement: ($50k annually) – No change was made.
  - AEDs & Chest Compressor Devices Replacement: ($25k in 2022) – No change was made.

- Hydraulic Extrication Equipment &Airbags Scheduled Replacement: ($21,250 for 3 years) – The Board agreed with Ms. Varricchio's recommendation to extend the plan for 4 years to avoid any impact on the Town's mill rate.

- Heavy Duty Extruder/Dryer Closest: ($15k) – The Board agreed with Mr. Smith's recommendation to move the purchase of this item up to 2021.

The Board reviewed the Fire Department's long range capital plan. Ms. Varricchio advised that the Town has been reserving approximately $76k annually for the department's existing long range capital plan; however, if the proposed new 10-year plan is approved, she stated that that amount would have to be increased to $260k annually.

- *Lakes Association:* The Board discussed Moodus Reservoir's request to share the cost of a dump trailer for use with the new EcoHarvester. Ms. Varricchio stated she would ask the Board of Finance if Moodus Reservoir's FY2020-2021 $7000.00 surplus could be transferred into its capital account.

  The Board discussed Moodus Reservoir's balance of $67k on the EcoHarvester and agreed to recommend $15k-$20k be added to the capital budget for this purpose.

- *Police Boat Replacement:* The Board discussed this capital request and agreed to recommend deferring the replacement to a future fiscal year.

- *Public Works – John Deere 410L Backhoe Replacement:* ($133k) Mr. Smith provided information about this Capital request and stated that the oldest 410 backhoe will be repurposed for the Transfer Station's use. Ms. Varricchio advised that the Town has reserved $45k for the scheduled replacement. In response to a question from Ms. Quinn, Ms. Varricchio stated that the Long-Range Capital Improvements Committee did not review the request for this purchase last year because their deliberations had been suspended due to COVID restrictions. The Board agreed to recommend the purchase of a replacement backhoe.

- *Town Beach – Playground Equipment:* ($20k) The request has been made to replace the circa 1980's jungle gym at the Town Beach or add another complementary climbing structure. The board noted that this would be wonderful but felt that there were a number of other capital items that took priority so the Board agreed to defer any action on the proposal until a future budget year.

- *Grounds Maintenance – Ventrac Tractor:* ($14k per year for 3-years) The Board discussed the Facilities/Grounds Department's request to begin the savings plan for replacement of this piece of mowing/maintenance equipment. The board made no changes to this capital request.

- *Registrar of Voters:* Ms. Varricchio stated that this department had no capital requests for FY2021-2022. She noted, however, that looking forward, the Town will have to plan for a capital expenditure to replace its voting machines.

- *MOC Video Conferencing System: ($15k annually)* Mr. Smith provided information about a multi-year plan to expand the Municipal Office Complex A/V system to include all meeting/conference rooms and possibly the gymnasium. Ms. Varricchio stated that the Municipal Office Building Committee Chairman had informed her, that the Building Committee may be able to pay for this item from a surplus remaining in their construction budget. The Board made no changes to this capital request.

Ms. Varricchio stated that the Board had so far achieved a $535,559.00 reduction in the FY2021-2022 budget. She noted, however, that after debt and the BOE budget is backed out, the net increase to the budget stands at $2.55M. Ms. Varricchio confirmed that most of that increase is due to capital items.

Motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn to recess at 11:40 a.m. Unanimous aye. The meeting reconvened at 12:05 p.m.

Mr. Smith reviewed the decisions made earlier in the meeting and the Board stated that they concurred with the decisions.

B. Other Budget Items: Mr. Smith called the Board's attention to materials in their meeting packets related to salary deficiencies across all levels of the Town staff. He stated that a study of Town salaries had been done in 2007 and Ms. Varricchio noted that the study had been refreshed in 2018.

Mr. Smith reviewed the findings for the non-union hourly staff and the non-union professional staff. Ms. Varricchio stated there would be a cumulative cost of approximately $30k to achieve assurance that all non-union hourly staff are receiving at least the minimum average rate and $23,500.00 for non-union professional staff. She recommended developing a plan to then achieve the mid-average rate in the following 1-2 years. Ms. Govert noted the challenge to attracting qualified applicants for open positions, if the Town does not adjust its wage and salary rates. The Board agreed to make this recommendation to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Smith reviewed the findings for the three Stipend/Elected Officials compensation. Ms. Varricchio noted that two of the positions are in the mid-average range while one does not achieve the low-average range. Mr. Smith noted previous Boards of Selectmen have had discussions concerning the First Selectmen's salary being significantly below normal when compared to other CT towns of a similar size and demographics. He stated that, if the Board recommend adjustments to the First Selectman's salary, he will forego any wage increase during this or any future term. The Board were split on whether to move forward with a recommendation for this budget cycle.

Ms. Varricchio stated that she will add a line to the Town's budget for Salary Adjustments.

The Board discussed several requests for new staff positions, including a Public Works crew leader, Technology Systems Specialist, and the open part-time Human Resources Specialist. Ms. Varricchio responded to several questions.

3. Public Comment: There were no public comments discussed at the meeting. Ms. Varricchio stated she is drafting a response to a multi-question email that had been submitted by Mr. David Carbo.

4. Potential Budget Resolution: No budget resolution was made at the meeting.

5. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Quinn, to adjourn the meeting at 1:03 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary