Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
February 15, 2022
Via YouTube Live
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; E. Dill; T. Govert
Also Present: D. Angersola; J. Bielot; M. Callahan; L. Conroy; D. Denette; D. Dill; M. Gilroy; T. Gionta; M. Hansen; RST I. Hawes; J. Moreau; M. Olzacki; M. Pisciotti; B. Reas; W. Thody; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public via virtual media

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

2. 2022-2023 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Public Works: Ms. Haines stated that Public Works Superintendent was not able to attend this meeting due to a water emergency at his home. There was a general discussion about rescheduling Mr. Hedler's budget review.

      1. General Highways: Ms. Haines reported that the grant paperwork for storm Isais has been finalized and accepted by FEMA and the Town will be receiving all applicable funds which will cover a number of the road repair projects. There was a general discussion regarding the grant management position.

         She also provided an overview of the recent staffing history and current supervisory needs for Public Work. There was a general discussion regarding Mr. Hedler's request to add a new Crew Leader position.

         In response to a question raised by Ms. Haines, Ms. Zemienieski provided some clarification regarding the General Highways Temporary Employees' budget line ($53,330.00).

      2. Snow Removal: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

      3. Transfer Station: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

      4. Tree Care Removal: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

      5. Public Works/Transfer Station Capital: Mr. Angersola reviewed the following Capital projects:

         - Several equipment purchases were reviewed and it was noted that the Public Works trucks are on a 10-year replacement cycle. It was further noted, that replaced equipment is often recycled for use at the Transfer Station.

         - Town Garage Office Space HVAC: Mr. Angersola advised that this Capital project has been completed.

- Public Works Storage Building: Mr. Angersola provided an overview of this Capital request and responded to several questions. He confirmed that the building is planned for cold storage initially; Mr. Dill emphasized that if Public Works plans to upgrade the building with HVAC in the future, it should be designed and built to accommodate it.

- Highway Garage Exterior Siding Replacement: Mr. Angersola described the extend of siding deterioration and advised that it is not structural in nature. He responded to several questions from the Board.

- Public Works Cameras: Ms. Haines advised that this Capital project had been revisited and it was determined that the need could be met with a less expensive solution. She stated that the projected $30k expense had been eliminated from the Capital Improvements budget.

- Transfer Station Roll-Off Covers: Mr. Angersola advised that the state requires the demolition bins to be covered and responded to several questions from the Board members. There was a general discussion regarding the best option to comply with the state's requirements.

B. Police Department Operating/Capital: Resident State Trooper (RST) Hawes reviewed the Police Department's year-over-year Performance Measures and noted that much of the current increase in the 2021 incidents was a result of the pandemic and car theft problems. In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, he confirmed that the police and Student Resource Officer all carry Narcan.

RST Hawes reviewed the Police Department's Operating Budget. In response to a question raised by Ms. Haines, he confirmed that the 8.1% increases in the Salaries & Wages budget is because of contractual reasons. He also confirmed that, other than the proposal to add one new officer, all the increases in the budget were contractual in nature.

Ms. Haines reported that the Police Department has identified qualified candidates for an open position; RST Hawes noted that one of the candidates is a Training Officer and, as such, his hire would result in a reduction to the department's training expense.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Dill, RST Hawes confirmed that he is normally very conservative in scheduling over-time hours There was a general discussion regarding the appropriate staffing requirements for the Department. Trooper Hawes advised that he would like to have seven full-time officers; however, he can work with what is proposed in the budget. It was noted that the "Regular Employees – Police Officers" line needs to be updated. Trooper Hawes advised that he is tracking the possibility of a federal grant to cover 3+ years of the salary of a new officer.

RST Hawes reviewed the Police Department's Capital requests and advised that the plan is to replace one cruiser per year. There was a general discussion regarding the rotation of the use of police cruisers.

There was a brief discussion about the Department's request to replace the Police Boat which had been totaled in a motor vehicle accident. In response to a recommendation from Mr. Dill, RST Hawes stated he would be agreeable to re-purposing the Fire Department boat provided it meets the Department's criteria.

C. Town Clerk: Town Clerk Denette reviewed the Department's Operating Budget and stated that most of the 12.6% increase in the budget is due to the increase in workload resulting from the pandemic and the booming real estate market. She noted, however, that the Department's Revenue budget tracked many of its expenses. Ms. Denette reviewed the need to make the Assistant Town Clerk's 35-hour schedule permanent. She responded to several questions from the Board members.

D. Recreation Commission: Parks and Recreation Director Conroy reported that Recreation programs grew 15.5% since FY 2018-19 and she expects the trend to continue. She reviewed the department's proposed Operating Budget and noted that the overall increase is 1.1%. She provided justification for her request for a part-time (20-hour) Recreation Assistant and pointed out that there will be little to no impact to the budget if her request is approved. She responded to several questions and there was a general discussion regarding the challenge in filling the life-guard positions.

Ms. Conroy reviewed the following Capital Improvement requests:

- Add complementary climbing and sliding structure at the Town Beach playground.
- Add a climbing structure at Nichols playground – Ms. Haines noted that there may be a grant available for this Capital item.
- Community Playground – Ms. Conroy provided an overview of this Capital request and suggested that the proposed MOC Fields would be an appropriate location for the playground. Mr. Dill stated that he feels the proposal to create additional playing fields on the MOC site is not feasible due to significant drainage issues.

The Board members discussed the schedule for future Budget Workshops. They broke for lunch at 12:15 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

E. Elections/Registrar: Ms. Hansen stated that the primary reason for any increase in the proposed FY 2022-2023 Elections/Registrar Operating Budget is due to an increased request for absentee ballots. She stated that the Registrars hope to continue to use a single polling station to avoid any related increases to their budget. She noted that, at some point, they will be required to replace the Town's voting tabulators but advised that this expense is being reserved for in their Capital Improvements budget.

F. Collector of Revenue: Tax Collector Denise Dill reviewed the Collector of Revenue's proposed FY 2022-2023 Operating Budget which reflects a 2% increase. She stated she would like to add funds ($2730) for a delinquent tax payment billing in August and noted that the Conferences budget line is increased due to re-certification requirements; however, both are offset by other budget reductions. She reviewed the Revenue budget and noted that the department has no Capital requests. Ms. Dill responded to several questions from the Board members.

G. Assessor: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

H. Building Department: Building Official Thody provided a brief overview of the proposed FY 2022-2023 Building Department Operating Budget which has a 0% increase. He noted there has been a slight change in his and his assistant's hours and advised that the building codes are expected to be updated in October which will require him to purchase new code books. Mr.

Thody responded to several questions from the Board.

I. Regional Animal Control: Animal Control Officer Olzacki provided a brief overview of this budget and discussed the need for bodycams. There was a general discussion regarding CT Dog Licensing Fees. Ms. Haines stated that the town of Columbia is negotiating with Mr. Olzacki for his services as a part-time Animal Control Officer. She noted that Mr. Olzacki will use the East Haddam animal control vehicle in that role and Columbia will reimburse the Town for the expense.

J. Board of Education Capital: Superintendent Reas advised that several Capital projects were not completed last fiscal year and, also, they are dealing with rising costs. He reviewed the following Capital Improvement projects:

- Elementary School Playground Equipment – $88k has been reserved but the cost has increased to $115k.
- Middle School Building Fire Alarm Upgrades – The plan is to replace only the smoke alarm sensors.
- Middle School Score Board – $22k is projected for engineering and installation expenses.
- Middle School Basketball Court – The cost increased by $40k last year and Mr. Reas expects it to increase another 7% this year due to inflation.
- Middle School Field Irrigation – The BOE is not planning on getting this project done in FY 2022-2023.
- High School Athletics Complex – The architect has been hired and has presented the committee with several options. Mr. Reas hopes to get the BOF's sign-off in March so the referendum can be held in early spring. If the project passes referendum, he anticipates construction will begin in the spring/summer of 2022.
- Mr. Reas also reviewed the following Capital requests: the High School Ceiling Tiles Replacement Project and the High School ADA Softball Fields Area Seating Study, and the following System Wide Capital Improvements projects: Carpet/Flooring Replacement, Paint Upgrades, HVAC, Field Improvements, Gymnasium Floor Upgrades, Modernization of Learning Environments, Cafeteria Equipment, Wireless Access Points Updates, Floor Scrubber, and Motorized Cart.

Mr. Reas stated that the BOE has also included a placeholder of $25k for replacement of the Maintenance Supervisor's vehicle.

Mr. Reas responded to several questions concerning the requested System Wide HVAC project. Ms. Govert noted that the Governor's current budget proposal includes a 50% reimbursement for BOE's HVAC projects; however, she noted it is not guaranteed to be in the final budget.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, Mr. Reas clarified that the Middle School Field Irrigation project is separate from the High School Athletics Complex project. There was a general discussion regarding what is included in the System Wide Field Improvements project.

K. Shared Services: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

L. East Haddam Public Library System: Library Director Gilroy reviewed the Library System's 2021-2022 Major Service Level Goals and provided an overview\of its proposed FY 2022-2023 Operating Budget. He stated that the $5,000.00 increase in Building Maintenance is due to the age of the two library buildings and the elevator and noted that the 6.7% increase in the Books and Periodicals expense tracks inflation.

Mr. Gilroy responded to a question raised by Mr. Dill regarding the $800.00 increase in the Telephone/Cell Phone expense and stated that IT Manager Brian Kaplita is looking into options to reduce that cost.

Ms. Haines recommended including the longevity raises they had discussed in the Salaries & Wages line and Director Gilroy agreed to update the Library System's proposed 2022-2023 budget accordingly.

Mr. Gilroy reviewed the Libraries' Revenue budget and advised that they have replaced late fees with voluntary donations and the Revenue budget reflects that change.

Mr. Angersola and Mr. Gilroy reviewed the following Library System Capital Improvement requests:

- Rathbun HVAC and Boiler Replacement – Mr. Angersola provided information about this Capital project and recommended making the boiler replacement a priority.

- Rathbun Window Replacement/Insulation Upgrade – Mr. Angersola advised that some window replacement should be done; however, the remaining work can be postponed until the New Library study/recommendation is completed. Mr. Gilroy noted that the Rathbun is in one of the Town's historic districts and, therefore, the expense will be higher than typically expected due to Historic Commission requirements.

- Rathbun Parking Lot Repairs/Expansion – Mr. Gilroy stated that an expansion is not required and noted that repairing the potholes and repainting the parking lines would suffice until the New Library study is completed.

- EHFPL Parking Lot Repairs/Expansion - Mr. Gilroy stated that an expansion is not required and noted that repairing the potholes and repainting the parking lines would suffice until the New Library study is completed.

In response to questions from Mr. Gilroy, Ms. Haines confirmed that the Board of Selectmen expects to establish the New Library Study Committee in the next several months and Ms. Zemienieski stated that she believes the EHFPL storage shed replacement request is included in the Operating Building Maintenance budget line.

3. Public Comment: There were no public comments brought up at the meeting or submitted electronically.

4. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Govert seconded by Mr. Dill, to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Dill, Secretary