Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
February 23, 2022
Via YouTube
Special Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I; Haines; E. Dill; T. Govert
Also Present: D. Angersola; D. Dill; C. Varricchio; 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 5:11 a.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance.

2. 2022-2023 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Budget Review, Discussion & Deliberation: Ms. Varricchio reviewed reductions made in the Regional Probate Court, Agriculture Commission, and Fire Department budgets. She stated that she will also clarify the ratio of paid fire fighters' hours to EMS hours and follow-up on a potential increase to the Building Department's revenue.

   Ms. Varricchio advised that the proposed Town FY2022-2023 General operating budget is currently up from last fiscal year's budget by $244,414.00 or 1.6%, not including the BOE budget. In response to a question from Mr. Dill, Ms. Varricchio confirmed that there is a placeholder for Capital expenditures, level with the previous year's funding, in the budget.

   There was a general discussion regarding the impact of the contractual and non-union increase in Salaries & Wages and Ms. Varricchio advised that the total increase to the cumulative Salaries & Wages budget is $84,188.00 (+2.4%). She noted that the Fire Department has requested a $20,887.00 (+8.2%) increase in its Salaries & Wages budget plus a $17,542.00 (+175.4%) increase in Overtime. In response to a question from Mr. Dill, Ms. Haines stated that the current budget proposal does not include the expense for an additional police officer.

   Ms. Varricchio stated that the General Government budget is up .1% over the previous year and the Public Safety budget is up $151,375.00. There was a general discussion regarding the categories of expenses that are not conducive to adjustments. In response to a question raised by Mr. Dill, Ms. Varricchio provided an explanation of how the transfers to Capital impact the operating budget.

   The Selectmen discussed potential reductions to the budget. In response to a question from Mr. Dill, Ms. Varricchio provided additional information regarding the Fire Department's Uniform budget request. Ms. Haines noted there had been a significant increase in the Fire Department's Salaries & Wages budget line since 2009. In response to her question regarding how many Volunteers is reasonable for the Department, Mr. Moreau advised that it is best to recruit as many as possible. There was a brief discussion regarding the proposed expense for Class A uniforms.

   Ms. Zemienieski noted a $1950.00 reduction in the Central Services – Cleaning budget line and stated that the expense may be reduced even further. It was noted that items not included in the current proposed operating budget include: adding one additional police office, funding the Redevelopment Agency, and a longevity bonus program for non-union employees.

Ms. Haines provided justification for adding an additional police officer to the force. Ms. Varricchio noted that the total expense for adding a police officer is $97,182.00. In response to a question raised by Ms. Govert, Ms. Varricchio confirmed that the School Resource Officer had been hired at the beginning of the 2019 school year.

The Selectmen discussed the potential of funding a longevity program for non-union employees. Ms. Varricchio advised that the impact for such a program on the budget would be nominal. She advised that it would cover employees in the Senior Center, Libraries, department heads, and elected officials. She estimated that the added expense would be approximately $5k annually.

The Selectmen discussed the Redevelopment Agency's operating budget and agreed to recommend $25k be budgeted Professional Services and $2500.00 for a recording secretary.

Ms. Varricchio advised that, including the cost of adding a police office, establishing a longevity program, and funding the Redevelopment Agency, the overall increase to the budget is 2.5%; without the additional police officer, it is 1.8%. She also stated that there is $1.6M in revenue in the proposed FY2022-2023 budget that will not be there in the next fiscal year.

There was a general discussion regarding the Capital budget and the BOE operating budget. In response to a question from Ms. Varricchio, the Selectmen agreed that the placeholder for Capital expenditures should remain in the proposed budget they send to the BOF.

1. General Government Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

2. Public Safety Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

3. Public Works Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

4. Health and Social Services Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

5. Culture and Recreation Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

6. Capital Budgets: There was no additional discussion of this budget item.

B. Other Budget Items: There was no discussion of other budget items at the meeting.

3. Public Comment

Jay Moreau provided the following comments

- Although he believes having a Human Resources professional on staff would be of value for all of the Town's employees, he feels that if the BOE is not going to share the position then less than 20% of the people employed will benefit from the service. Consequently, he feels the salary allocation would be better spent on an additional police officer for the Town.

- In 2018, the Fire Department had one full-time fire fighter and six part-time firefighters who provided sufficient coverage for the Town and the Salaries budget was approximately $133k. He noted that EMS coverage constitutes the majority of any Fire Department's duties, including career departments; however, if East Haddam's paid fire fighter staff is not predominantly responding to EMS calls, he believes there should be a discussion as to whether or not there is a need for four full-time fire fighters.

- It is his believe that the Fire Department used to fund the cost of Class A uniforms out of their club budget.

4. Potential Budget Resolution

   Motion made by Ms. Haines, seconded by Ms. Govert, to recommend to the Board of Finance for fiscal year 2022-2023, a budget of $15,180,192, which represents town government, debt service and reserves and capital that is funded through grants and reserves. The Board of Selectmen budget has held capital flat to the 2021-2022 budget for capital funded by taxation. The Board of Selectmen requests the opportunity to work with the Board of Finance to evaluate capital needs (in accordance with the new Capital Policy and the evaluation process conducted by the Long-Range Capital Improvement Committee) any state and federal grants, and any change in reserve and capital funding. Unanimous aye.

5. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss Ms. Govert made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Dill, Secretary