Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
February 14, 2022
Special Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; E. Dill; T. Govert
Also Present: D. Angersola; D. Barlow; J. Bielot; L. Conroy; D. Denette; D. Dill; R. Funk; M. Hansen; C. Hughson; B. Kaplita; I. Luciano; T. McCabe; B. Parker; B. Reas; W. Thody; M. Velez; TFC K. Vivino; R. Wonneberger; L. Zemienieski; and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. 2023-2024 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. **Public Works:** There is an increase of $29,818.00 (2.3%) in the Public Works operating budget. Public Works Director Velez reviewed the departments FY2022-2023 accomplishments and its FY2023-2024 major service level goals. Mr. Funk provided clarification regarding the Public Works operating budget and there was a general discussion regarding the open posting for a Road Foreman.

      1) **General Highways**: Ms. Velez noted that roads, sidewalks, and updates to the Town's road signs are a priority for the department in FY2023-2024. She reviewed increases in the In-Service Training, Telephones/Cell Phones, Travel Reimbursement, and Uniforms budget lines.

      2) **Snow Removal:** Ms. Velez noted the Town is currently under budget for snow removal; however, she noted that weather is not predictable, so she does not want to decrease it for FY2023-2024. She confirmed that the Town is fully supplied with sand/ice for FY2023 and may even have a surplus going into next year.

      3) **Transfer Station:** Ms. Velez stated that the increase in the Transfer Station budget is primarily due to Building Maintenance, Supplies and the cost of the composting program. She advised that she has taken the Certified Operator course and reviewed on-going improvements at the Transfer Station. Director Velez noted the state's regulations against picking and discussed moving the What-Not Shop to a more compliant location outside of the Transfer Station. She stated that, starting July 1, she is considering imposing a fee for mattresses, tires, and freon products. Ms. Zemienieski advised that by the Solid Waste Ordinance the Board of Selectmen would have to approve any new/increased fees.

      4) **Tree Care Removal:** Ms. Velez stated that she plans to take the Tree Warden course and would also like to appoint two Deputy Wardens from the Public Works staff. She reviewed the $25k (1%) increase to this budget and responded to questions from the Board members.

      5) **Public Works/Transfer Station Capital:** Public Works Director Velez and the Board discussed the Department's FY2023-2024 Capital requests. Ms. Velez noted the success the

Department has had selling obsolete equipment at auction and responded to several questions from the Board.

In response to a question from Ms. Haines, Ms. Velez advised that her number one priority in the department's capital requests is the John Deere 544 Loader.

B. **Police Department Operating/Capital:** There was an increase of $16,141.00 (3.2%) in the Police Department's budget. Resident State Trooper Vivino reviewed the department FY2022-2023 accomplishments and FY2023-2024 major service level goals. She noted that the increase in the budget was due to the annual salary increase. There was a general discussion regarding the use of cell phones by the department staff. Trooper Vivino advised that the majority of officers are not interested is using cell phones supplied by the Town and that budget line was reduced to $5,000.00.

Mr. Funk noted that the Board of Finance had reallocated $49,000.00 reserved for a new cruiser to purchase another Town vehicle because the Police Department did not need to replace a cruiser in 2023. He advised, however, that the Police Department capital reserves should be replenished in FY2024 so that the funds are available when the Town needs to purchase a new cruiser.

C. **Town Clerk:** There was a decrease of $42,722.00 (15.7%) in the Town Clerk's operating budget. Ms. Denette advised that there was also a decrease of $45,000.00 (11.7%) in projected revenue due to the slow down in property sales. She reviewed the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and its FY2023-2024 major service level goals.

D. **Assessor:** There is an increase of $2,165.00 (2.2%) in the Assessor's operating budget. Assessor Luciano reviewed the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and its FY2023-2024 major service level goals. Mr. Funk stated that he would update the Mapping budget line from $7,900.00 to $8,200.00. In response to a question from Ms. Govert, Ms. Luciano confirmed that she had everything she needs to address the systemic impact of the latest revaluation on motor vehicle property taxes.

Assessor Luciano recommended retaining the services of a part-timer for field work assistance. In response to a question raised by Mr. Funk, she confirmed the reasonableness of projected revenues. There was a brief discussion regarding the increase in the Capital budget for the next townwide revaluation.

E. **Recreation Commission:** There was an increase of $10,777.00 (7%) in the Recreation Commission's operating budget. Recreation Director Conroy reviewed the Commission's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and FY2023-2024 major service level goals. Ms. Conroy reported that she hopes to grow the Recreation Commission's FY2024 revenues by 20% and stated that she would also like to increase the Assistant Director's schedule by 5 hours per week to help support the growth in programs. She responded to questions from the Board and advised that her capital priorities are as follows: #1 – adding a complementary climbing/sliding structure at the Town beach, and #2 – a Community Playground. There were general discussions regarding the proposed location for the Community Playground and the use of the Dog Park.

F. **Collector of Revenue:** The Tax Collector's budget reflected an increase of $3,087 (3.1%). Ms. Dill provided a brief review of the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and FY2023-2024 major service level goals and responded to several questions from the Board.

There was a general discussion regarding the agenda for the next budget workshop. The Board recessed for lunch at 12.08 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 1.02 p.m.

G. **Elections/Registrars:** There is an increase to this budget of $10,153.00 (19.3%) due to significant increases in the Salaries and Voting Machine Set-up budget lines. Ms. Hansen distributed updates to the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and its FY2023-2024 major service level goals. She advised that the increase in the Voting Machine Set-up line was due to an increase in the vendor's contract fee and the increase in the Salary budget line is a placeholder to accommodate newly legislated early voting. She expressed concern about the impact of the state's new early voting requirements and stated she expected it would require a lot more work. There was a general discussion about purchasing laptops to check in voters. The registrars and the Board had a brief discussion regarding the department's capital budget to reserve for the acquisition of new voting machines.

H. **Building Department:** There is an increase in the Building Department's budget of $3,644.00 (2.9%). Building Official Thody reviewed the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and FY2023-2024 major service level goals. He noted that the only increase in his operating budget is in the Salaries & Wages line. Mr. Thody and the Board had a brief discussion regarding the department's fee schedule.

I. **Regional Animal Control:** Ms. Zemienieski reviewed the background of the regionalization of this service and responded to several questions from the Board. She advised that Animal Control Officer Olzacki had not submitted a budget for FY2023-2024. Since Mr. Olzacki was not in attendance at the meeting, discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

J. **Youth & Family Services/Food Bank:** There is an increase of $14,276.00 (6.2%) to the Youth & Family Services budget. In response to an request from Ms. Haines, Ms. McCabe reviewed Y&FS staffing. Ms. McCabe advised that they will be adding a social services position which will be funded by an endowment that they recently received. She stated that the proposed increase in their budget represented the salary for a new part-time case manager position. Director McCabe and the Board discussed potential uses for the opioid settlement funds.

K. **Board of Education Capital/Shared Services:** IT Manager Kaplita reviewed the Shared Services capital budget for technology. He provided an overview of the Municipal Office Complex Wireless Network Access Points project and noted that the updates will make the Municipal Office Complex network compatible with the schools' network. Mr. Kaplita noted that the capital request for the Libraries Network Rebuild is for the East Haddam Free Public Library only and advised that the Rathbun network also needs to be rebuilt. He stated, however, that he will have to work through the logistics for the project with that library's board before a cost can be developed.

Mr. Kaplita briefly reviewed the Shared Services operating budget and discussed the need to fill the vacant desktop support position with the Board.

Superintendent Reas reviewed the Board of Education's capital requests and responded to questions from the Board. In response to a question from Ms. Haines, Mr. Reas stated that he feels the BOE's capital priorities would be to complete projects that have already begun, such as the Middle School Exterior Basketball Court and the design for ADA compliant seating at the High School's softball field.

Mr. Funk stated that, after the conclusion of FY2024 budget season, the BOS and BOE should discuss several capital request items that he believes more appropriately belong in the BOE's operating budget. There was a general discussion regarding the impact of such changes on the CT Department of Education's mandated minimum budget requirement for the Board of Education.

L. **East Haddam Public Library System**: There is an increase of $25,173.00 (6.3%) in this budget. It was noted that the overall increase is primarily due to increases in the salaries, electricity, and heating budget lines. Mr. Funk provided clarification regarding changes to the Salaries & Wages budget line. Ms. Barlow, Mr. Bielot and the Board discussed the need to achieve fair and equitable wages across all employees. In response to a request from Ms. Barlow, the Supplies budget line was increased to $7,500.00 to support programming.

   The libraries' capital budget was discussed and Ms. Haines provided information about the proposed window replacements at the libraries. Ms. Barlow noted that the BOS should anticipate a capital expense for upgrades to the Rathbun's HVAC system.

M. **Senior Services:** There was an increase to the Senior Services operating budget of $11,332.00 (6.8%). Senior Services Director Parker reviewed the department's FY2022-2023 accomplishments and its FY2023-2024 major service level goals. He noted that the increase to the department's budget is primarily due to an increase in the Building Maintenance line in anticipation of the need to remove several trees in FY2024 and an increase in the cost of utilities and fuel. He provided the Board with documentation of growing use of the Senior Center noting that sign-ins are almost back to pre-Covid levels.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Dill, Ms. Zemienieski and Mr. Kaplita provided clarification regarding the disparity between the cost of the telephone service for the Municipal Office Complex and that of the libraries.

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

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 4:20pm.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary