Board of Selectmen
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
February 29, 2024
Special Meeting Minutes
.

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; T. Bourgoin; E. Dill
Also Present: D. Angersola; V. Belles; C. Brownell; L. Conroy; T. DeBrito; D. Denette; M. Hall; C. Hughson; K. Stofko; P. Stricker; K. Thompson; L. Zemienieski and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Haines called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 4:41 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. 2024-2025 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Board of Education Capital

   Ms. Hughson provided opening comments and reviewed the BOE's Capital projects that are currently in progress. Mr. Angersola reviewed the FY2024-2025 Capital project requests which totaled $1.437M. He noted that the request for the hot water holding tank for the High School should be corrected to $100k and advised that Eversource may provide the BOE with a grant for the High School Stage lights ($150k). He responded to several questions from the Board and Ms. Stricker. Mr. Angersola confirmed that the new Capital requests have not yet been vetted by the Long Range Capital Improvements Committee. It was noted that the BOE's FY2024-2025 Capital projects requests were 74% less than the previous year.

   B. Shared Services

   Ms. Hughson distributed an updated proposed Shared Services FY2024-2025 Operating budget. She provided an overview of how the Shared Services concept originated and responded to questions from the Board. It was noted that the budget had increased $102,842.00 (7.3%) over last year, primarily due to the Transfer To Shared Services/Technology line items.

   IT Manager, Matt Hall reviewed the Town and BOE FY2025 technology budgets. He noted increases in the cost of software that supports various Town Departments, such as Zoning, the Assessor, Tax Collector and Town Clerk, and the Fire Department's training and inventory platforms. Ms. Stricker commented on the request for funding for Turnitin Feedback Studio, plagiarism detection software, in the High School technology budget. She noted that Chat GPT is AI technology that would be detected as plagiarism software; however, the BOE's Curriculum and Policy Committees are still in the process of discussing whether or not it can have an appropriate application in the High School environment.

   Ms. Hughson provided the Board with an explanation about the difference between Cat 1 and Cat 2 technology services and noted that there is a potential to reduce Cat 2 items by an additional $25k for FY2024-2025.

   C. Early Childhood Council

Ms. Hughson advised that the Early Childhood program is part of Youth & Family Services budget; however, since the United Way grant for the Program had ended, the Town has contributed $9k to the Program and the BOE has paid for the majority of its Salaries & Wages of $24.5k/year. She stated that the BOE is requesting that the Town pick up an equal share of the Salaries & Wages expense. There was a general discussion about which entity's budget (Y&FS, the Town, or BOE) should carry the Program expense. Ms. Hughson agreed to ask the Program's coordinators to provide relevant current statistics which she would share with the Board of Selectmen.

D. Agriculture Commission

Ms. Haines advised that the Agriculture Commission has not requested the Town fund its budget for several years. There was no further discussion about this agenda item.

E. Cemetery Committee

Ms. Denette stated that the Cemetery Committee does not currently have an Operating budget and requested the Board of Selectmen establish one for FY2024-2025. She proposed it be set up with $5k for the acquisition and preservation of historically significant markers and materials for repairs. She responded to questions from the Board and there was a brief discussion regarding the Cemetery Committee's Capital budget.

F. Recreation Commission Operating/Capital

Parks and Recreation Director Conroy reviewed the Department's proposed FY2024-2025 Operating budget. She noted that the requested $10.9k (8.5%) increase in Salaries & Wages is due, in part, to keeping a number of positions in-line with increasing minimum wage requirements. There was a general discussion about the increase to the Beach Parking Lot Attendant's wages and Ms. Conroy confirmed that the beach pass program had been very successful.

Director Conroy stated that, in general, the line items under Purchased Property Services had decreased for FY2024-2025. She noted that the only increase, $499.00 (3%), is a consequence of maintenance at the Dog Park. There was a discussion about the general disregard of pet owners for cleaning up after their dogs and other potential uses for the space. The Board members recommended that Director Conroy provide a cost analysis of what the Dog Park costs prior to recommending to the Parks & Rec Commission that they close the Dog Park.

Ms. Conroy reviewed the Commission's FY2024-2025 Capital requests. There was a general discussion about the proposed community playground and Ms. Conroy responded to questions from the Board.

G. General Overall Operating/Capital Budget Review

Mr. Angersola reviewed the Fire Department's request to move up its FY2028 $50k Capital request for a replacement generator for Fire Company No. 1 to FY2025. He noted that the existing generator has failed several times, and it is getting difficult to get parts to repair it. He responded to questions from the Board and confirmed that the requested amount includes installation costs.

Ms. Haines reported the following:

- After discussions with the Interim and new Library Director, the Libraries' FY2024-2025 Salaries & Wages request has decreased from $29k to approximately $14.6k

- She confirmed that the Police Department's FY2024-2025 Capital requests for funding for body armor and bulletproof vests is a duplicate request, as are the requests for a replacement for Cruiser 60 and a new Ford Interceptor.

- She has determined that the cost to bring on a new Firefighter is approximately $12k. She noted the Fire Department recently recruited five new volunteers and would like to recruit 8 more in FY2024-2025.

There was a brief discussion concerning the BOF's contingency fund. The Board also discussed how they will move the budget review process forward at their March 2nd meeting.

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 Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary