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

Selectmen Present: I. Haines; T. Bourgoin; E. Dill
Also Present: D. Angersola; V. Belles; M. Callahan; J. Moreau; 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. 2024-2025 General Budget Review Workshop

   A. Board of Finance

   Ms. Belles reviewed the Board of Finance's proposed FY2024-2025 Operating budget. It was noted that the budget is down $143,412.00 (-48.2%) primarily due to non-repetitive contributions to the Contingency fund for the Police Accreditation Project and Ambulances Services. The Board reduced the Supplies line to $750.00 and eliminated funding for the Equipment line since it had incurred no expenses for several years. No other changes were made to the Board of Finance's FY2025 Operating budget.

   B. Finance Office

   Finance Director Belles reviewed the proposed FY2024-2025 Operating budget for the Finance Office. No changes were made to this budget.

   C. Fringe Benefits

   Ms. Belles reviewed the Fringe Benefits FY2024-2025 Operating budget. It was noted that there is an overall increase of $123,900.00 (8.7%) in the budget primarily due to an anticipated significant increase in health care premiums. Ms. Haines noted that the Town is going out to bid for its employee health care insurance and the FY2025 expense for that line may decrease. No changes were made to the FY2025 Fringe Benefits budget.

   D. Interfund Transfers

   Ms. Belles provided a line-by-line review of the FY2024-2025 Interfund Transfers budget. She noted that this budget will fluctuate until after decisions are made on the requested FY2025 Capital projects. There was a general discussion concerning the specific departmental reserves lines in this budget.

   The Board discussed the $545,294.00 transfer for "*Tax Collection to be Applied Forward*". Ms. Belles confirmed that this line represents overpayment of taxes in FY2024 due to a reduction in the mill rate after the tax bills were mailed out. Ms. Haines emphasized that they need to communicate to taxpayers that this amount will be used to offset the Town's overall FY2025 Operating budget.

No changes were made to the FY2025 Interfund Transfers budget.

E. State Budget Review

Ms. Belles reviewed the anticipated State Municipal Aid to the Town for FY2025. She noted an overall reduction of $2,357.00 (-0.1%) due to lower contributions for Adult Education, LoCip, and PILOT.

At this point, Ms. Haines opened the meeting to public comment and Mr. Moreau suggested that, when the Town communicates that the FY2024 property tax overpayment is being applied to offset the FY2025 Operating budget, it should also inform the public that the overall increase/decrease in the budget was calculated prior to applying the $545k offset.

F. Budget Review, Discussion & Deliberation

1. General Government Budgets – The following FY2024-2025 General Government Operating budgets were discussed:

- Animal Control – Ms. Haines stated that she had instructed Ms. Belles to increase the FY2025 Animal Control Operating budget to $57,000.00 to match East Hampton's contribution. She advised that she would discuss cost-sharing with East Hampton for the state's mandated upgrades to the dog pound. Ms. Belles responded to several questions.

- Land Use – There were no changes to this Department's Operating budget.

- Historic District – There were no changes to this Commission's Operating budget.

- Zoning Board of Appeals – Ms. Belles stated she will move the legal expense out of this budget and into the Legal Services budget. There were no other changes to this Board's Operating budget.

- Open Space – There were no changes to this Committee's Operating budget.

- Redevelopment Agency – There were no changes to this Agency's Operating budget.

- Conservation Commission – There were no changes to this Commission's Operating budget.

- Economic Development Commission – The Board agreed to decrease EDC's Operating budget line for Communications to $500.00. There were no other changes to this Commission's Operating budget.

- Town Office Building – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Town Meeting Hall – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- River House – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Grange Hall – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Millington School House – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Municipal Office Complex – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Probate Court – There were no changes to this Operating budget.

- Selectmen – There were no changes to the Board of Selectmen's Operating budget.

- Legal Services – Ms. Belles noted that the Legal Services Operating budget will increase by $1k due to the transfer in of the legal expense from the ZBA budget. There were no additional changes to this Department's Operating budget.

- Insurance – There were no changes to the Insurance Operating budget.

- Cemetery Committee – The Board agreed to fund the Cemetery Committee's Operating budget with $2k. There were no other changes to this Committee's FY2025 Operating budget.

- Town Greens, Grounds & Fields – Ms. Haines noted that Mr. Angersola had requested increasing the Assistant Grounds Keeper hours to fulltime at a rate of $23/hr. No changes were made to the Town Greens, Grounds & Fields Operating budget at this meeting.

- Town Clerk – There were no changes to the Town Clerk's Operating budget.

- Assessor – Ms. Belles confirmed that the expense for the Assessor's software license(s) will be moved to the Shared Services IT budget. There was a general discussion regarding the Assessor's request for $7k to audit business property. In response to a question raised by Ms. Haines, Ms. Belles stated that the Assessor has not provided any data on the potential impact of such an audit on the Grand List. No other changes were made to the Assessor's Operating budget at this time.

- Debt Service –There were no other changes to the Debt Service budget.

- Board of Assessment Appeals – There were no changes to this Board's Operating budget.

- Shared Services – Ms. Haines noted adjustments to the percentage of Salary increases for the IT Data Integration Specialist and the IT Systems Specialist. There were no changes made to the Shared Services Operating budget.

- Agriculture Commission – There were no changes to this Commission's Operating budget.

2. Public Safety Budgets - The following FY2024-2025 Public Safety Operating budgets were discussed:

- Fire Department – Ms. Haines reported that she had spoken with the Fire Commissioners who advised that the start-up cost for a new firefighter is approximately $12,222.00 and that the start-up costs for the five new volunteers has already been expensed. The following changes were made to this operating budget:

    - Training budget line reduced to $18k.
    - Supplies budget line reduced to $3k.
    - Uniforms budget line reduced to $12k.
    - Equipment budget line reduced to $50k.

    Finance Director Belles advised that the above reductions result in a lower overall increase of 1.9% to the Fire Department's proposed Operating budget. Ms. Haines stated that she would meet with the Fire Department officers and provide them with information about the changes to their budget.

    Mr. Moreau provided comments regarding realistic average lifespan expectations for the Town's Fire Department vehicles. He stated that he believes the Department did not provide the Board of Selectmen with appropriate alternative options for its Capital fleet requests.

- Fire Marshal – There were no changes to this Department's Operating budget.

- Emergency Management – There were no changes to this Department's Operating budget.

- Paramedic Services – There were no changes to the Paramedic Service's Operating budget.

- Police Officers – There was no change to this Department's Operating budget.

- Resident State Trooper – There were no changes to the Resident State Trooper's Operating budget.

3. Public Works Budgets – The Board reviewed and discussed the following Public Works proposed FY2024-2025 Operating budgets:

    - General Highways – No changes were made to this budget.
    - Snow Removal – No changes were made to this budget.
    - Transfer Station – Ms. Haines noted that the increase in this budget is primarily due to a significant increase of $96,610.00 (18.3%) in contracted Refuse Removal. She advised that Public Works Director Velez is looking into alternatives to using Cassella for this service. No changes were made to this budget.
    - Tree Care & Removal – No changes were made to this budget.

4. Health and Social Services Budgets - The following FY2024-2025 Health and Social Service Operating budgets were discussed:

    - Youth & Family Services – There was a general discussion regarding Y&FS request for rental assistance. The Board agreed that is not a good precedent to set by funding the Agency's request for assistance with their rent expense ($12k). No changes were made

to this budget at this time, but this will be discussed again through the Board of Finance process.

- Chatham Health District –There were no changes to the Chatham Health District's Operating budget.

- Human Services – There were no changes to the Human Service's Operating budget.

- Youth & Family Services Early Childhood Council – Ms. Haines stated that she feels this is an educational program and should, therefore, be a Board of Education expense. There were no changes made to this Department's FY2025 budget at this time.

5. Culture and Recreation Budgets – The following FY2024-2025 Culture and Recreation Operating budgets were discussed:

   - Libraries – Other than the modifications to the requested FY2025 Salaries & Wages budget line discussed at the February 29th meeting, no other changes were made to this Operating budget.

   - Senior Services – No changes were made to this Operating budget.

   - Lakes Association – There were no changes to the Lakes Association Operating budget.

   - Recreation Commission – There was a general discussion regarding how the Special Revenue fund for this Department offsets it program expense. Ms. Haines noted that there is a potential reduction in this budget if the Commission decides to close down the dog park. The Board discussed the proposed increases to the Salaries & Wages budget lines. They agreed to keep the Intern salary flat at $1,202.00 which would partially offset the increase for the Assistant Recreation Director. Mr. Dill noted that the salary increase for the Assistant Director would not trigger fringe benefits. There were no other changes made to this Commission's Operating budget.

Ms. Haines recessed the meeting for lunch at 1:00 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 1:30 p.m.

6. Capital Budgets – The Board reviewed Capital Requests for FY2024-2025 and discussed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocations. They agreed to earmark $272,384.00 in remaining ARPA fund to the following Capital projects: Roads Management Plan Consultant ($80k), John Deere 5075E Cab Utility Tractor ($63k), Fire Company No. 1 Generator ($50k), a Complementary Climbing and Sliding Structure for the Town Beach ($50k), Rammer Tamper Jumping Jack for Public Works ($5k), and $24,384.00 to complete work on the interior and exterior of the Town Meeting Hall and the Transfer Station network project.

   The Board discussed several other Capital budgets, including the following:

   - Assessor – There was no change to this department's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

   - Cemetery Committee – The Board agreed to fund $8k to the Cemetery's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Economic Development Commission – There were no changes made to this Commission's FY2024-2025 Capital budget at this time.

- Fire Department – Other than the request to fund the replacement of Fire Co. No. 1's generator in FY2024-2025, the Board agreed that they needed more information about the Department's additional Capital requests before making any decisions on them.

- Emergency Management – There was no change to this department's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Town Greens, Grounds & Fields – The Board agreed to purchase the Utility Tractor ($63k) with ARPA funds. Mr. Angersola stated the Ventrac Tractor ($20k) could be pushed out another year and that he is looking into a lease for the riding mower ($18k).

- Lakes Association - There was no change to the Association's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Land Use - There was no change to this department's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Library System – The Board agreed not to provide any additional funding in FY2024-2025 for the Rathbun Window Replacement/Insulation Upgrade Capital project.

- Police Department - There was no change to this department's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Public Works/General Highways – Other than their decision to use ARPA funds for the Roads Management Plan Consultant ($80k), the Board made no additional change to this department's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Recreation Commission – In addition to their decision to use ARPA funds to purchase and install a Complementary Climbing and Slide Structure at the Town Beach ($50k) the Board agreed to defer the Commission's request for $150k for a Municipal Office Complex Recreation Field Plan in FY2025. They made no additional changes to this Commission's FY2024-2025 Capital budget.

- Shared Services – The Board agreed it would not fund the IT Department's Capital request to rebuild the Library network in FY2024-2025.

The Board agreed they would more closely review the FY2024-2025 Capital budgets together with the Board of Finance.

G. Other Budget Items

There were no other budget items discussed at the meeting.

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

4. Budget Resolution:

   Motion made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to recommend to the Board of Finance for fiscal year 2024-2025, a budget of $15,476,740 which represents town government, debt service and reserves and capital that is funded through grants and reserves. The Board of Selectmen budget has made no provision for any capital that would be 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 Capital Policy and the evaluation process conducted by the Long-Range Capital Improvement Committee) and any state and federal grants.

   The Board of Selectmen also recommends that the Board of Finance authorize the allocation of $272,384 of the remaining Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF aka ARPA) to capital projects. The Board of Selectmen list of recommendations is included with this motion.

   Capital Requests:
   - Town Meeting Hall Exterior upgrades - $13,125
   - Town Meeting Hall Interior upgrades - $6,775
   - Transfer Station Network Projects - $9,484
   - Firehouse #1 Generator - $50,000
   - Grounds Utility Tractor - $63,000
   - Roads Management Consultant Plan - $80,000
   - Climbing/sliding structure at Town Beach - $50,000

   Unanimous aye

5. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Dill, seconded by Ms. Bourgoin, to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,
Erik Dill, Secretary