

Board of Selectmen  
Municipal Office Complex  
Rooms 1 & 2  
February 11, 2019  
Special Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: E. Lyman; S. Link; R. Smith

Also Present: E. Blaschik; M. Callahan; L. Conroy; M. Gilroy; B. Lunt; T. McCabe; J. Moreau; B. Parker; Officer J. Rhoades; Resident State Trooper P. Hawes; R. Turner; C. Varricchio; S. Wheeler; L. Zemienieski, and other members of the public

1. First Selectman Lyman called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 9:11 a.m. and the attendees said the pledge of allegiance. At Mr. Smith's request, the meeting was recorded. Ms. Varricchio noted several updates to the proposed budget and the Selectmen replaced the appropriate pages in their binders.
2. 2019-2020 General Budget Review Workshop

A. Public Safety Budgets

1. Police Officers & Police Capital: Ms. Varricchio advised that this budget had been updated to include the wages, fringe benefits, and equipment expenses related to the new School District Resource Officer (SDRO) and that an error on the Uniform Allowance line had been corrected. In response to questions raised by Ms. Link and Mr. Smith, Trooper Hawes clarified the anticipated work schedule for the SDRO and confirmed s/he would require a police vehicle.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Link, Trooper Hawes advised that the bulk of overtime in the Police budget is case related rather than officers taking on additional shifts.

The capital requests were reviewed and there was a discussion regarding the request for two new police cruisers and the impact on the vehicle maintenance budget line if the request is approved. Ms. Link noted that, if the request is approved, the maintenance budget should be reduced accordingly.

2. Resident State Trooper: Ms. Varricchio stated that the only change to this budget was a 3% increase for wages and overhead. Ms. Link pointed out that the Town's decision to hire several full-time officers rather than relying solely on resident State Troopers had been very cost effective resulting in better coverage for the Town.

Ms. Varricchio distributed a spreadsheet detailing the cost of wages and fringe benefits by department and noted that the total cost of wages and fringe benefits is approximately \$4.7M. She stated that the retirement contribution for Public Works employees is higher due to the Town's required contribution to the state's Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund and that the CT Council of Municipalities is gathering data from a number of towns regarding this expense in preparation for lobbying the state to allow municipalities a role in negotiating the yearly contribution.

Ms. Varricchio reported that the Registrar's office had conducted a detailed analysis of elections for the upcoming year and, as a result, reduced their budget by \$4,000.00.

3. Regional Animal Control: Ms. Zemienieski advised the Selectmen that Animal Control Officer Olzacki would not be able to attend the meeting as planned due to a family emergency.

Ms. Varricchio distributed a spreadsheet for the Regional Animal Control Special Review Fund and reviewed the details. She reported that Colchester has expressed an interest in regionalizing their Animal Control services with East Haddam and East Hampton and their request is being evaluated.

It was noted that there is a capital request to replace the Animal Control truck with a van; however, the discussion of this budget item was postponed until Mr. Olzacki was able to attend a budget review session and respond to questions.

#### B. Public Works Budgets

1. General Highways: Ms. Varricchio reviewed several updates that had been made to this budget. Several line items were reviewed and, in response to a question raised by the Selectmen, Public Works Director Lunt went over several reasons why the Maintenance expense had increased this year.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Link regarding why the line for temporary/seasonal employees is over budget, Ms. Varricchio stated that a grounds maintenance seasonal employee was also paid from this line. She noted that the board will see when they are reviewing the grounds budget for the 2019-2020 budget that there is an allocation for the seasonal employee to be expensed out of the proper budget.

2. Snow Removal: Ms. Varricchio noted that Director Lunt continues to use a 5-year rolling average for this budget and that the only increase was due to the 2.25% salary increase. It was noted that, so far, the Snow Removal budget for 2018-2019 is running at a surplus and there was a general discussion about the Town's ability to redistribute the surplus funds.
3. Town Garage Maintenance: Ms. Varricchio noted that, this budget has been eliminated and the line items were transferred to the General Highways budget. The budget for the purchase of general paper and cleaning supplies for all buildings was transferred to the Municipal Office Complex budget.
4. Transfer Station: Ms. Varricchio stated that the budget line for fuel for Transfer Station equipment could be reduced and Director Lunt stated she was comfortable with setting that line item at \$2,450.00. Ms. Varricchio noted that additional reductions to the Transfer Station budget could be expected if the Town implemented the bag-system. She noted that, as an example, a capital request for costly repairs to the hopper would not be required.

Director Lunt confirmed that the Transfer Station is over-budget because she was not able to implement her proposal to shift to hauling the Town's trash to Willimantic with Town-owned equipment and employees. She further reported that the Town can expect an increase of approximately \$35/ton for the cost of processing recyclables.

The budget lines for overtime and Other Supplies were briefly discussed by Director Lunt and the Selectmen.

5. Tree Care & Removal: In response to a request from Ms. Link, Ms. Lunt agreed to secure a written quote from a tree removal contractor and do an analysis comparing the cost of hiring a contractor vs. purchasing a bucket truck and hiring two new employees for the removal of diseased/dead trees. Director Lunt stated that, due to the evolving nature of the problem, a contractor would only provide an hourly rate. She reviewed the advice she had received from the Town's insurance company regarding marking trees to be removed and reiterated that the Public Works staff is spread very thin because of last fall's storm remediation and tree removal work.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Smith, Ms. Lunt advised that an ad hoc committee of CT municipalities had received negative feedback regarding their inquiry about securing FEMA funding for the cost of the tree removal work.

6. Public Works/Transfer Station Capital: In response to a question from the Selectmen, Ms. Lunt confirmed that it would be possible to extend the useful life of the loader for a while longer. She provided information about the benefits of purchasing an asphalt hotbox for repairing potholes noting that the expense for cold-patch would be eliminated and labor costs would be reduced.

There was a general discussion regarding the request to replace the road crew superintendent's vehicle.

The Selectmen discussed the FEMA grant for 75% of the cost to repair the September storm damage and Ms. Varricchio advised that, in a recent meeting, FEMA representatives informed her that some of the remediation would be reimbursed at a rate of 100% and, further, that labor and administrative costs related to the repairs could be factored into the Town's matching 25%.

Ms. Link suggested using contractors for the repair work which could free up Public Works employees and, therefore, potentially eliminate the need to hire additional staff for tree removal work. The Selectmen discussed Ms. Link's suggestion.

There was a brief discussion regarding the revenue generated by the Transfer Station.

A motion was made by Mr. Lyman, seconded by Mr. Smith, to take a brief break at 11:10 a.m. Unanimous aye. The meeting reconvened at 11:20 a.m.

C. General Government, Health & Social Services, Recreation & Leisure Budgets:

1. Building Maintenance and Operations & Capital: The Selectmen reviewed the Building Maintenance and Operations & Capital budgets and no changes were made.
2. Town Office Building: Ms. Zemienieski noted that this budget had been reduced significantly due to the municipal offices' relocation to Moodus. She advised that the building had been winterized so the heating costs were minimal and reviewed the remaining contractual services required. Ms. Zemienieski responded to several questions from the Selectmen.
3. Municipal Office Complex/Central Services & Capital: Ms. Zemienieski reviewed several minor edits to this budget's narrative. In response to a question raised by Ms. Link, Ms.

Zemienieski confirmed that the line item for telephone expense covers all of the Town's buildings and reviewed the services included in this expense item.

Ms. Zemienieski reported that the electricity expense had been under-estimated by approximately \$30,000.00 and that the average cost per month is \$7,500.00. There was a general discussion regarding the electricity expense.

In response to a question from Ms. Link, Ms. Zemienieski reviewed what is covered under the "Other Supplies" category. She distributed and reviewed a detailed spreadsheet for Building Maintenance expenses. Ms. Zemienieski and Mr. Turner responded to several questions from the Selectmen.

4. Cemeteries: In response to a question from the Selectmen, Mr. Turner confirmed that four of the Town's cemeteries are maintained by a contractor and the others are maintained by the Public Works grounds crew. There was a brief discussion regarding the evolution of the Cemeteries budget and, in response to a question from Mr. Smith, Mr. Turner advised that the Cemetery Committee is responsible for the maintenance of headstones.
5. Town Greens: In response to a question from Ms. Link, Mr. Turner advised that this budget had increased due to the allocated budget for one seasonal employee to the towns current two part-time employees that maintain all the Town properties. He responded to several questions from the Selectmen and confirmed that he plans on adjusting the timing of the motion-sensitive lights around the walking path at Heritage Park.

There was a brief discussion regarding the capital requests for replacement windows at the Grange Hall and new decking for the porch. Mr. Turner agreed to research whether or not any window work had been done at the Grange Hall in the recent past. He also agreed to prioritize all of the departments' requests for paving work and to research whether or not contractors would consider a discount if they are awarded multiple paving/sealing jobs.

Mr. Turner discussed the request to purchase a sound system for the gym and confirmed that several groups had expressed a desire for a system.

6. Recreation Commission & Recreation Capital: Ms. Varricchio noted that the Recreation Director's request for a scoreboard for the new gym did not meet the threshold for a capital improvement so it was included in the regular budget for the Parks & Rec Department.

In response to a question from Ms. Link, Mr. Turner agreed to provide detail for contract mowing of the Town's playing fields. The Selectmen and Mr. Turner discussed capital requests for replacement of the tennis courts, repairs to Chapman's basketball court, the skateboard park and Nichols Field. They also discussed the request for installation of a volleyball net and lines in the new gym and Mr. Turner responded to several questions from the Selectmen.

7. East Haddam Public Library System & Library Capital: Library Director Gilroy reviewed the buildings' maintenance needs. In response to a question raised by Mr. Smith, Mr. Lyman advised that he expected the court's decision this week on whether or not ownership of the East Haddam Free Public Library building could be transferred to the Town. There was a brief discussion regarding what might happen if the Town voted not to accept the building and who would then be responsible for capital improvements to the building.

Mr. Gilroy reviewed the library's staffing for the Selectmen and he and Mr. Turner reviewed several of the capital improvement requests. In response to a question from Mr. Smith, Mr. Turner stated that it was his opinion that repairs to the HVAC systems needed to be done as soon as possible. He also agreed to research and provide more detail on re-paving the parking lot at Rathbun library and installing an exterior lighting system and confirm the estimates for repairs to the HVAC systems and boilers.

There was a brief discussion regarding the appropriate use of the Rathbun's trust's annual distribution of \$18,000.00.

In response to a question from the Selectmen, Director Gilroy advised that a sub-committee of the library board members had been formed to research the cost of constructing a new facility. He stated that the \$5M estimated price was based on the square footage construction costs experienced by similar municipalities.

Mr. Lyman made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to recess for lunch at 1:01 p.m. Unanimous aye. The meeting reconvened at 2:01 p.m.

8. Youth & Family Services: Youth & Family Services Director McCabe responded to staffing questions from Ms. Link and clarified the roles and responsibilities of several employees. She also agreed to provide 2018-2019 year-to-date actual income/expenditures for the Selectmen.
9. YFS Early Childhood Council: It was noted that the Early Childhood program is funded by a United Way grant and the Board of Education. There were no changes made to this budget.
10. Senior Services & Senior Services Capital: Senior Center Director Parker advised that the Senior Services budget had increased due to required pumping out of the septic and grease trap systems. He noted, however, that vehicle repairs and maintenance had decreased because the older vehicles had been replaced. Mr. Parker further stated that the increase in the cable television expense was due, in part, to an increase from the supplier but also because he would like to improve the service to the Center so that they can stream movies and sporting events on the large screen. He noted that the hardware to stream the programs had been purchased by the Senior Club.

The Selectmen and Mr. Parker discussed the capital request to seal the driveway and parking lot.

11. Chatham Health District: Ms. Zemienieski advised that the expense for this budget item was based on a best estimate of the per capital cost. She stated that she expected to have a more solid number after the Chatham Health District's board votes on their budget later this week.
  12. Human Services: The Selectmen reviewed this budget and no changes were made.
- D. Debt Service: Ms. Varricchio reviewed the preliminary information for this budget item. She noted that some of the Town's debt had been retired and that \$492,610.00 would be transferred in.
- E. Interfund Transfers: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed.

- F. Shared Services: Discussion of this agenda item was postponed for discussion at the next meeting.
- G. Capital Improvement Detail: The Selectmen briefly reviewed Capital Improvement requests from the Fire Department, including repairs to the roof of Fire Company No. 3 and a \$6,000.00 security camera system, as well as from the Conservation Commission, Facilities, Public Works, the Lakes Association, Parks and Recreation, and the Libraries.
- H. General Fund Revenue Detail: Ms. Varricchio stated that she hopes to have revenue information for every department by the next budget review session.
- I. Other Budgets Items (as time permits): The Selectmen briefly recapped changes and concerns regarding a number of the Town's departmental budgets.
3. Public Comment: The following public comments were made:
- Mr. J. Moreau expressed concern about the Fire Department's budget and capital requests and stated he would attend the review session when that budget is considered in detail. He stated that he did not think the Town could place limits on when the School Resource Officer could take vacation time and encouraged the Selectmen to familiarize themselves with the Town's union contracts to achieve better supervision of its employees. He suggested that the Town consider restricting its hiring practices to non-smokers to reduce fringe benefit and health insurance expenses.
  - Mr. Callahan suggested the Town "set the stage" for its budget sessions by reviewing its long- and short-term goals and objectives. He stated he felt doing so would help them to allocate limited funds. Ms. Link advised that the Town has established a Financial Needs Roundtable to create 5 and 10- year capital plans and that the Board of Finance is working on a strategic funding plan.
4. Adjournment: There being no additional regular business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Lyman, seconded by Ms. Link, to adjourn the meeting at 4:21 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Link, Secretary