

Board of Finance Minutes
March 2, 2020 at 7:30pm
Town Hall Meeting Room

1- **Call to Order:** Chairman Steve Ezzes called meeting order at 7:30pm. Also in attendance were Allan Grauberd, Jeff Farr, Rone Baldwin, Dick Bochinski, Amy Gare and Greg Murphy. First Selectman Chris Spaulding, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz and Finance Director Rick Darling.

2- **Board of Finance reviews Board of Selectmen 2020/2021 Budget Request**

First Selectman Chris Spaulding presented the budget via PowerPoint. Mr. Darling noted that the year-end projections have changed slightly, with a better fund balance forecast. First Selectman Spaulding noted that he is suggesting supplementing the proposed budget with additional funding for road paving. Mr. Baldwin proposed that road funding should get settled through the budget process to avoid future supplemental appropriations. Mr. Spaulding concurred.

Mr. Grauberd asked about the changes to residents receiving social services compared to last year. Social Services Director, Allison Lisbon, explained the rise in number of households could be due to having a new director and perhaps metrics have been corrected. Ms. Lisbon also stated it could be because more people are aware of the department's services.

Mr. Ezzes asked for a summary of how the town reached its proposed medical insurance figures. Mr. Luiz provided the history.

Mr. Grauberd asked for an explanation regarding the high cost of the proposed high school roof repair (under capital expenses). Mr. Luiz provided the history on the project. Mr. Grauberd would like a report from the building committee.

First Selectman Spaulding discussed the mill rate, which is impacted by no grand list growth.

Chairman Ezzes began a review of the proposed Board of Selectmen operating budget.

Administration and Finance – Mr. Luiz explained wage contingencies.

General Administration – Mr. Farr asked about health insurance costs. Mr. Luiz explained that the Health Insurance Advisory Committee has determined that the best course of action for the Town to follow the broker's advice. Mr. Farr also asked about the decrease of \$21,000 in contractual services. Mr. Luiz explained that is due to a portion of cleaning services being taken out of this account and put into each department's budget.

Information Technology – Mr. Luiz explained that in Fiscal Year 2020-21, the Town would receive general IT services directly from an outside vendor.

Election/Registrar – Mr. Farr asked about amount of personnel. Registrar Mike Zegers explained how the number of elections support amount of personnel needed.

Land Use – Mr. Farr asked for a clarification concerning the department's proposed budget versus the First Selectman's recommended budget. Mr. Luiz explained that the difference is attributable to amounts shifting from salaries to contracted services and then back again.

Fire Dept – Chairman Ezzes asked about breathing apparatus. Fire Chief John Pokorny said he is applying for a grant this fiscal year so he recommends funding the replacement over two years. Mr. Farr asked about engine replacement in capital budget. Chief Pokorny responded.

Communication Center – Mr. Farr asked what is driving overtime. Mr. Luiz explained it is a combination of contractual increases in base pay, sick time usage by full-time staff and lack of part-time staff because the part-timers are accepting full-time work elsewhere. Mr. Darling pointed out that the budget books contain a summary of overtime causes.

Police Services – Mr. Luiz noted equipment costs are going up due to the budgeting of new vests and firearms and cleaning costs that were previously budgeted in the Gen/Admin budget. Mr. Grauberd asked about overtime. Chief Henion explained that police does not incur significant overtime due to snow storms. Captain Matt Brodacki added that overtime has been significantly reduced compared to previous years. Mr. Luiz said the main driver for OT is officer's covering for others on vacation, sick or workers compensation.

Public Works: Mr. Grauberd inquired about current year operating budget savings due to a light snow season. Mr. Darling and Mr. Luiz said they will provide a written update on this.

Tree Warden – Mr. Grauberd asked about costs for removing dying ash trees and concerned we did not budget enough. First Selectman Spaulding said he is talking to state officials about grant funding and helping coordinate more efficient wood removal. Ms. Gare asked how many trees the \$150,000 would cover. Tree Warden Bill Lomas estimated approximately 107 trees a year.

Solid Waste: Mr. Luiz provided a summary about this budget from last fiscal year to the present. Mr. Spaulding said the budget proposal calls to offset a dramatic increase in recycling expenses and a slight increase in waste removal expenses by increasing sticker price to \$5.50. In addition, neighborhood haulers using the transfer station would experience an increase in town charges. Mr. Darling then walked the Board through the proposed expenses and revenues for the Transfer Station. Mr. Bochinski expressed that the Transfer Station is a core town government service and that he does not agree with the proposed sticker price increase. Mr. Murphy concurred.

Health District: First Selectman Spaulding spoke about possible regionalization. He said Easton might join the district, which would mean budget reductions for Weston.

Water Utility – Mr. Farr asked to look at longer term equipment needs. Mr. Luiz said he asked an engineering firm to give us proposals to do a full evaluation of our facilities.

Library - Chairman Ezzes asked where we are with private grants for facility expansion. First Selectman Spaulding gave an update.

Capital – Mr. Baldwin requested a comparison between last year's budget projection for FY 20-21 and the latest budget projection for FY 20-21. He asked that it shows what is different, what was added, what was removed. Mr. Luiz said he would provide such a comparison. Mr. Luiz then reviewed capital budget request items.

3- **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 10:05pm.

Minutes Submitted by Randi Derene, Administrative Assistant