

Board of Finance Special Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2021 at 6pm

Meeting held virtually due to COVID 19

1. **Call to order:** Board of Finance Chair called the meeting to order at 6pm, attendance were Amy Gare, Dick Bochinski, Allan Grauberd, Rone Baldwin, Jeff Farr, First Selectman Chris Spaulding, Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Selectman Stephan Grozinger, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Finance Director Rick Darling, Town Department Heads and Town Residents.
2. **Discussion/ Decision concerning the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget for FY 2021- 2022:** First Selectman Spaulding presented the budget via PowerPoint and pointed to a 2.82% or \$387,029 increase in the Board of Selectmen operating budget.

First Selectman Spaulding went over the Capital budget numbers explaining the overall proposed ask is for \$2,933,210 with \$2,125,819 from the Board of Selectmen and \$807,400 from the Board of Education. With offsets by capital closeouts of \$165,950, health care reserves of \$329,500 and the capital bond fund of \$269,771, as well as the sale of the Fromson Strassler property. There was a brief discussion around the sale, the appraisal process, sale price and intended use as an open space for Weston residents.

First selectmen Spaulding and Mr. Jonathan Luiz reviewed and answered questions on the capital items of note; the Library roof replacement cost of \$225K, \$262K for camera related expenses related to the Police Accountability legislation, \$262.5K for the replacement of Michael's Way Bridge, \$360k for Road Paving, \$200k for a new Front End Pay loader for the Department of Public Works, and \$266.5K for a 20% municipal share toward the Transportation Alternatives Sidewalk grant project.

First Selectman Spaulding discussed the mill rate increase of potentially 2.5% which includes the increases in the Town operating budget of 2.82% and Board of Education operating budget of 2.68% less the offsets.

Chairman Ezzes began a review of the proposed Board of Selectmen operating budget with questions asked on the following items.

- Administration and Finance: Mr. Jeff Farr asked where the revenue number came from, Mr. Luiz explained that there were salary and wage decreases from last year with a new hire starting at a lower salary. Mr. Darling mentioned that part of the revenue amount is from FOIA requests.
- General Administration: Mr. Farr asked about the increase in property insurance. Mr. Luiz explained that this was an increase with CIRMA. Mr. Baldwin asked about the community grants and budget for Homes with Hope; First Selectman Spaulding said these are a part of the Social Services package.
- Elections and Registrars: Mr. Ezzes asked about the Annual Town Budget Meeting (ATBM). First Selectman Spaulding said this would be at the High School Field, details are being finalized and a mailer will be going out. Mr. Luiz said the ATBM would be held at 2pm on Saturday, April 24th, 2021 with the referendum vote the following Saturday on May 1, 2021. Rain dates being the May 1st and 8th accordingly.
- Legal Counsel: Mr. Luiz noted that the Town will go out to bid for services in 2021; to ensure current prices are at market rate. First Selectman Spaulding highlighted expenses like FOIA requests and special projects.
- Town Clerk: Ms. Amy Gare asked about the increase in contractual services. Mr. Luiz and Town Clerk Ms. Donna Anastasia explained this was due to an increase in the volume of documents being processed as a result of a surge in home sales, mortgage refinancing, mortgage modifications, second mortgages etc.

- Police Department: Mr. Farr asked about year to year grants and subsidies for the Emergency Management Director, Chief Ed Henion responded saying they are a part of Sergeant Miceli's salary. The Board of Finance asked for information on the Police Accountability bill and specifics surrounding vendor and equipment purchases. Chief Henion and Captain Matt Brodacki went detail on these items. Police Commission Chair, Ms. Beth Galnick commented that the Board of Police Commissioners supported these decisions.
- Volunteer Fire Department: Mr. Ezzes asked if there was a new truck that needed to be considered. Fire Chief, John Pokorny said that Engine number 7 is due to be replaced within the next two years. Mr. Luiz noted that in the 2020-2021 Town budget a \$150K installment for a new SCBA was approved. The second installment is not included in this year's budget due to an outstanding grant submission. If this is not successful the Fire Department will approach the Board of Finance to request a supplemental appropriation.
- Communication Center: Mr. Baldwin asked about the revenue offset and how it was calculated, a discussion ensued over telecommunication tower rentals and how the funds are distributed. Mr. Baldwin asked about Georgetown Fire Department being included in the budget. First Selectman Spaulding and Mr. Luiz explained that Weston's portion was a statutory formula driven by assessments and usage in Georgetown.
- Public Works: Mr. Baldwin asked about a 1.5% increase in the salary line. Finance Director, Rick Darling explained this is due to a correction to Longevity payouts, and an individual step increase. Mr. Grauberd asked about snow storm and ice control estimates for the current year and next year's amounts. Mr. Luiz explained the cost was based on a multi-year trend analysis.
- Tree Warden: Mr. Farr asked whether general maintenance costs were for contractors to do tree cutting. Mr. Luiz affirmed this explaining that the Department of Public Works does the ground work; another company does chipping and disposal. First Selectman Spaulding said they were working to regionalize this.
- Solid Waste Disposal: Mr. Luiz explained a change in vendor at the transfer station and discussed an increase in sticker price. Mr. Grauberd asked about the overall effect of the price increase. Mr. Luiz said they are seeing a decrease in contractual services and that it costs the Town to dispose of recycling.
- WWHD: Mr. Baldwin asked about expenses potentially going down if Easton joins. First Selectman Spaulding commented that this was anticipated; they have not joined yet and will not be budgeted for until such time.
- Senior Services: Mr. Baldwin asked about an increase in salaries and the grant line. Mr. Luiz commented that they are proposing bringing the Senior Center Director's hours up to full time. First Selectman Spaulding said through COVID emotional and interpersonal needs have increased and an increase in hours needed. Mr. Darling mentioned a \$16k grant that we consistently receive for the Dial a Ride service.
- Park and Fields: Mr. Farr asked about Bisceglie Pond. Mr. Luiz said that it would be open this year, he went on to explain that the pond loses \$20K to \$30K per year and Fireworks cost the Town \$5K per year.
- Capital: The Board of Finance asked for more details on capital budget items like the Library Roof replacement, road repaving, the Onion barn improvement project, Michael's Way Bridge replacement, the Sidewalk Project, a front end loader for the Department of Public Works and an SUV for the Police Department. First Selectman Spaulding and Mr. Luiz answered questions and provided information.

Mr. Ezzes said thanked everyone and said that no additional meeting would be needed.

Adjournment: Mr. Ezzes adjourned the meeting at 9.26pm

Minutes Submitted by: Sara Beer, Executive Administrative Assistant