

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF FINANCE
JOINT BUDGET HEARING

A joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance was held Thursday, March 8, 2012, at the Education Center on Kings Highway, Fairfield, Connecticut.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Vice Chairman Robert J. Bellitto, Jr.

Present: First Selectman Mike Tetreau, Selectman Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Board of Finance members Rob Bellitto, Ken Brachfeld, Jim Brown, Chris DeWitt, Elaine Gaffney, Kevin Kiley, and Mary LeClerc.

2. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Mr. Bellitto noted that Chairman Flynn is absent due to the recent death of his father.

3. Public Works Budget

Dept. 5050 Building

Building Official Jim Gilleran noted that the increase in his budget is contractual due to the THEA employee contract.

Selectman Vahey asked about health insurance. Budget Director Linda Gardiner noted that discussion on all health insurance in the budget would occur during the March 20 joint meeting.

Selectman Vahey asked about the secretary requested in the department summary and what the impact is.

Mr. Gilleran said he requested a secretary again this year but the First Selectman removed the request. He explained that in his 25 years in the department, there have been two secretaries. Last year when one of the secretaries retired, the position was not filled. At that time he was asked if he could make do with one, he said he could not. His current secretary is working above and beyond her duties. If she goes away for a week, permits do not get issued while she is away and she has two weeks of work to do when she gets back.

Mr. DeWitt asked if he could share the part-time Conservation clerk.

Mr. Gilleran explained that he does get a part-time clerk from TPZ for four-tenths of the week. He said that since under the Connecticut General Statutes and the Town Charter, he is able to set the building permit fees, he had proposed to increase the fees by \$3.00 for the first thousand, which would make up the cost between his 4/10 of a position and a lower-level secretary.

Mr. DeWitt said that that sounded like a fair compromise.

Budget Director Gardiner explained that the staffing is the reason it appears that the health insurance decreased in this department.

Selectman Vahey asked if the department could work with IT to automate permitting.

Mr. Gilleran explained that three years ago when Board of Ed IT Manager Nancy Nash was in charge of Town Hall IT, she had pursued a permitting system that would allow read-only access to other departments such as Assessor, Fire Marshall, TPZ and Conservation for \$250 per license. That system was approved but was never established.

Mr. Brown asked how the 4,300 permits issued last year compares with previous years.

Mr. Gilleran noted that last year's revenue was higher than anticipated. It was lower this year because TPZ and Conservation approved fewer projects.

Dept. 5011 Public Works Administration

Director of Public Works Richard White explained that there was an increase in the PWA budget due to the increase in the cost of cell phones.

Selectman Vahey asked if the cell phones are contracted through the Purchasing Department or directly through Public Works. Mr. White said the contract is through the IT Department.

Dept. 5030 Public Works Operations

Mr. White noted the increase in the budget but reminded the Boards that \$1 million for asphalt paving had been removed from Capital projects and placed back into the operating budget. If you take away that funding, the overall total would indicate a small decrease from last year. He attributed the decrease to favorable utility rates and the fact that Asst. Director of Public Works Ed Boman has sought several cost-reducing initiatives.

Mr. White discussed the capital replacement items. The head mechanic produces a replacement schedule and Mr. White stressed that they ask the mechanic to reduce the replacement requests to the bare minimum and that is what has been submitted in the budget.

Mr. Stone asked if Mr. White is comfortable with the reduced snow-related overtime fund.

Mr. White said he would like to see the budget for snow higher but that we can hope for another mild winter and he can live with the proposed amount.

First Selectman Tetreau noted that many accounts within the overall budget are somewhat overfunded for contingency and he is working to reduce these hidden dollars in the budget and move them all into the Contingency Account line item.

Mr. DeWitt stated that he is happy that the paving has been placed back into the operating budget. He asked if the bucket truck scheduled for replacement has passed State inspection.

Public Works Supervisor Scott Bartlett said that the truck would pass inspection today but that the company that services it is no longer in business, and he does not know if it would pass in six months.

Mr. Brown asked if the same paving goals are in place from previous years, i.e., 13 miles per year.

Mr. Bartlett said that we strive for 13.65 miles of new roads per year, and we are doing double now with extension practices such as microchip-filling, crack sealing and chip seals.

Mr. Brown asked about fuel costs.

Fiscal Officer Paul Hiller said that we got quotes today of 352 but we budgeted at 377. There is an overall increase of 29,000.

Ms. Vahey asked for a list of all grants received.

Mr. Bellitto asked that all capital requests be itemized for the next quarterly budget review meeting.

Mr. Bellitto asked why account 54010 for Fees and Professional Services is increased by eleven percent.

Mr. White explained that tree trimming and removal costs have gone up and after Hurricane Irene and the late fall snowstorm there has been a backlog. We will get hit with additional work in the spring once the trees start blooming.

Dept. 5070 Engineering

Mr. White noted an overall decrease of 2.97 percent.

Selectman Vahey asked why the capital replacement item for \$3,000 is not being requested by IT.

Town Engineer Bill Hurley explained that this is a specialized piece of equipment for the sole use of the engineering department.

First Selectman Tetreau said that although he is trying to centralize certain computer-related items to IT, there are certain specialized items specific to departments which should stay in the department's budget.

Mr. DeWitt said that he would like to discuss IT Director Don Leslie vision for upgrading the engineering department's computer. Mr. Bellitto noted that would be appropriate discussion during the IT portion of the budget.

Dept. 4070 Street Lighting

Mr. White noted that the decrease is due solely to the better rate for electricity delivery.

Dept. 6070 Solid Waste and Recycling

SWR Director Mike Zembruski said the 1.43 percent increase is due to the increased trash fee in account 53200.

Ms. LeClerc asked if the volume of trash has been reduced due to single-stream recycling.

Mr. Zembruski said it has not but he is not sure why.

Dept. 13013010 WPCA

Mr. White explained that the increase in account 54130 reflects a change to the United Illuminating rate structure. Also, the non-recurring capital item for the Mill Plain Road project should be switched over to this account.

Mr. Bellitto asked that Ms. Gardiner provide a corrected page to the Boards with those changes.

Mr. White said that with the \$192,000 capital item added, the overall budget went from a half percent decrease to a half percent increase which he called reasonable.

First Selectman Tetreau noted that this is a self-sustaining department and does not increase taxes.

Mr. Kiley thanked Ms. Gardiner, Mr. Hiller and Mr. Tetreau for the new budget format, calling it more user-friendly.

There being no further business, and upon motion made, duly seconded and carried unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann E. Roche
Recording Secretary