

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF/BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF FINANCE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JOINT BUDGET WORKSHOP
Thursday, February 27, 2020
Community Meeting Room
Chester Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Rick Nygard, Jon Joslow, Jennifer Rannestad, Richard Strauss, Greg Merola, and Michael Joplin.

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek and Selectman Englert. Also in attendance: James Grzybowski, Stephanie, Library Director, Trooper Ward and representatives from the Hose Co.

SHORT PRESENTATIONS FROM POLICE, VISITING NURSES. LIBRARY AND CHESTER HOSE COMPANY – Budget Requests

Library - The Library Director updated the Boards on the request for additional hours (3) for the Director to accommodate the increase in Library hours and programs. The total request is for \$5,300.00. Note that additional Library employees are part-time and do not receive benefits.

The Library Director provided an update on the increased programs and the resident's participation in same.

Jon Joslow asked if the Library Director could provide a forecast for future years and the potential for additional requests for increased hours. Stephanie reported that she is developing a comparative outlook of surrounding Town's libraries. Most of her colleagues work between 35 and 40 hours per week. There has been a great response to the library's increased hours and programs. The library has become a gathering place for residents and the needs continue to expand.

The library's utility expenses were discussed. Lauren reported on the protocol used to determine an appropriate figure to budget. Lauren will follow-up with Peter for additional clarification.

Jon Joslow requested clarification on the book purchases account. Stephanie reported that she has approximately \$5,000 remaining in the account. This account is also used to purchase magazines, newspapers, downloadables and a Hoopla streaming service. Lauren reported that there is a "lag" in the recording of the line item due to the timing of credit card payments.

Police

Trooper Ward updated the BOF on the Police budget request. The State decreased costs for State Troopers (reduced the fringe rate and Chester realized an approximate \$55,000 in savings). Trooper Ward is requesting that this money be used to enhance police services in Town. His proposal includes a request for additional constable hours. Funds for these increased hours have been approved for the current fiscal year. Moving forward, the request is for 16 to 24 hours per week (approximately \$45,000)

for this part-time constable in the upcoming budget. There is also a request for additional OT for Resident Trooper, increase in equipment maintenance, gasoline, and professional development.

Note that town tickets will now be issued and the Town will realize some revenue as a result.

Trooper Ward provided a summary of crime/incidents including car break-ins, drug issues, burglaries, motor vehicle accidents, and approximately 5,000 calls for services per year. Trooper Ward offered an update on private-duty details and the use of less expensive constables vs. use of Troopers for same. Note that the Town is reimbursed for private duty details and Chester has a relationship with Deep River to accommodate private duty needs.

The need for police coverage as the Main Street Project progresses was discussed. Trooper Ward reported that during the approximate 10-week period, police assigned to the project will be funded by the State. Most of these costs will be incurred in the current budget.

Lauren and Trooper Ward updated the Board(s) on the protocol for Trooper replacement. Trooper Ward reported that he and Lauren are participating in the interview process with the State for the replacement of Trooper Ward. It is anticipated that Trooper Ward's replacement will not be at the same level as Trooper Ward and the Town will realize savings.

Chester Hose

Chief Grzybowski and representatives from Chester Hose were present to discuss their proposed budget.

- Ambulance - Staffing – Chief Grzybowski reported that as a result of schedule adjustments, the amount of Ambulance calls not responded to has dropped. However, the Ambulance/Town can realize additional revenue if more staffing is provided. Additional funds have been requested for increased staff hours. James provided a brief outline of the surrounding town's Ambulance operations and staffing. James does anticipate requesting funding for a full-time employee in a future budget request.
- It is anticipated that the additional staffing request of \$7,400 will be off-set by net revenue.
- Paramedic costs – remain the same at \$1.00 per capita and have increased approximately \$200 based on population.
- Equipment maintenance shows an increase.
- Supplies – represents medical supplies for ambulance, office supplies.

Lauren distributed Household Hazardous Waste documents, workers comp estimates (down 4%), liability estimates (up 3%), and tipping fee information from MIRA. Peter will update the budget(s) accordingly.

Virginia developed and distributed various spreadsheets (preliminary budget figures as of 2/27/20, budget to actuals, Grand List, mil rate calculations).

Lauren requested that the dredging cost share be removed from the budget and transferred into Capital. Note that the Capital Budget will be discussed at a future meeting.

The Net increase to date is \$363,839.00, excluding Capital.

REVIEW OF DRAFT BUDGET REVENUE AND CONTINUED REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE BUDGET/ DISCUSSION OF INITIATIVES AND BOS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Boards discussed the following budget requests:

- Treasurer request – new hours - \$300 – no action/hold - Lauren to research further.
- Library Director – new hours - \$5,677 – consensus of Boards– reasonable request – note that the Library payroll consistently comes in under request because the part-time employees are not paid for sick time, personal time, vacation time, etc.
- Police – new hours off set by retiring State Trooper now but not for next year – 24 hours - \$44,117. While there are savings to be realized due to lower Trooper fringe costs. Lauren reported that she has requested a police patrol during the Farmer’s Market, Cedar Lake Snack Shack concerts, and the Town has expanded events. Constables are also working Private Duty events. Lauren recommends additional hours to accommodate public safety, events and administrative responsibilities. Note that Constable DeCrosta is a current employee and is interested in the increased hours. He already has his certifications, training, equipment, uniforms, etc. The Boards discussed the need for additional constable hours and debated an appropriate number of increased hours. The consensus of the Boards was to add the requested 24 hours understanding that this may be re-visited during the budget discussions. Lauren updated the BOF on the history of issuing town tickets vs. State tickets. State tickets are much more expensive than town tickets and the Town receives no revenue from State issued tickets. Town issued tickets provide revenue to the Town.
- Hose Company/Ambulance – new hours off-set by increased revenue - \$7,400 – James Grzybowski updated the Board on the possibility of the Ambulance generating a revenue for the Town. The Chester Ambulance, unlike private Ambulance companies, i.e. Hunters, is not licensed to provide routine transport. Jon Joslow expressed confidence in the work of the Hose Company and their data. He continued that the Town is not a for-profit business. The consensus of the Boards was to approve the request for additional funds.
- Visiting Nurses – budget had been cut prior to 18/19 – feeling was that the ratio was set too high for Chester – \$13,600 - data, including services provided by the VNA was included in the Board’s budget books. The Board(s) discussed same. For the past 4 years, Chester has not increased funding to the VNA. Jennifer outlined Medicare/Medicaid, private pay protocols. She requested information on the VNA’s protocol to make up for contractual allowances. She continued, why should Chester subsidize the VNA’s home health, skilled nursing and other therapy when we don’t subsidize other agencies doing that same work? The VNA and their Board were invited to this evening’s meeting but no representative was present at the meeting. In the past, requests for additional information has not been provided by the VNA. The BOF requested additional information prior to making a decision on additional funding. The consensus of the Boards was to NOT increase funding to the VNA until additional data is received from VNA. The VNA will be invited to an upcoming meeting.
- Camp Director/Medical Officer stipend or as needed basis - \$3,000 - Per State Statute, the Health Director (Dr. Kotrady in past) was the official Camp Director. The Health District does not provide this service. The Hose Co. pays “a la carte” for necessary services. Lauren is currently in discussion with Dr. Bird relative to this matter. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.
- Public Works – additional hours - \$3,450 - additional hours for part-time seasonal employee (leaves, mowing) (was 20 hours for 20 weeks, request for 25 hours for 22 weeks), 110 hours –

The Public Works budget will be reviewed in further detail at a future meeting. The Director of Public Works will be invited to present to the Board(s) as appropriate. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.

- There is an additional Highway General Maintenance request for funds due to purchase of tires for payloaders
- Building Official – \$6,600 - Part-time Building Official – the position has been posted twice. There is a shortage of Certified Building Officials – additional funds requested to attract a qualified candidate; also funding for mileage has been requested. Note that many towns in the State are in need of a Building Official. An interim Building Official is in place in Chester and the COG is in the process of pursuing a grant relative to a Regional Building Dept. to be shared by 2 or more towns. The consensus of the Board(s) was to put \$6,600 as a placeholder and re-visit if/when a Building Official is hired.
- Tree Warden – The Tree Warden has experienced increased hours to address the state-wide tree crisis. An additional \$2,500 has been requested to accommodate his increased hours. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.

As discussed this evening - Sub-total - \$528,398, less additional Grand List increase of \$178,159:

Bottom Line, excluding Capital - \$350,239 budget increase.

Lauren encouraged Board members to forward additional questions to her no later than 3/4 for discussion at the March 11th budget meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting(s) were unanimously adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Recording Clerk