

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
Monday, April 20, 2020
Via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Jennifer Rannestad, Richard Strauss, Jon Joslow, Greg Merola, Rick Nygard. In attendance but not seated: John O'Hare, Andrew Gardner, Michael Joplin, Peter Evankow, Business Manager, Madaline Meyer and Elizabeth Netsche. Several members of the public participated via ZOOM including Betty Perreault, Susan Wright, Lol Feron, and Terry Englert.

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek and Selectman Englert

Note that documents discussed at the meeting were available with the agenda.

The Boards had continued discussion on the proposed 20/21 Chester Budget.

BUSINESS

A memo received from Betty Perreault regarding the Resident State Trooper budget was read into the minutes and distributed to board members.

"With my apologies for not submitting this correspondence to the entire Board of Finance, and a request that members of that Board be advised of my comments.

As this meeting will be held via Zoom, may I please request that my comments in connection with this Agenda item be included as a part of the deliberations?

As your Boards address the need to minimize the impact on the tax implications of an increased mil rate, it is also important to recognize the need to maintain the safety and protection of residents and businesses in a changing world.

It appears that currently Chester officers provide extensive coverage for day-time patrols, while there seems to be scant coverage for evening patrols. As was noted in the last Workshop, increasing numbers of motor vehicle thefts as well as the theft of items from unsecured vehicles have been reported. Most of these activities seem to occur during night hours, when there is seldom an officer on patrol.

During your deliberations, please give careful consideration to ensuring that funding for the Police Department provides for scheduling patrols during both day and evening shifts. The visibility of officers on daytime special traffic duty, generally paid for by the contractor and not the Town, may discourage criminal activity during daylight. Evening patrols would extend that awareness until after dark.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Bettie Perreault”

Review Operating Budget with New Information, Prior Proposed Adjustments

A copy of the Budget Adjustments document was included in the Board packet and discussed. Lauren responded to questions relative to the document. She reviewed the protocols and recording of payments (approximately \$50,000) made in the Town Clerk’s office. As previously discussed, new software/cash register is anticipated in the Town Clerk’s office for processing of payments.

Lauren and Peter have been working with Department Heads to “fine tune” their budget requests to realize any potential savings. Several departments have offered cuts to their budgets per this request.

John O’Hare suggested that employee pay increases, totaling approximately \$22,000 be frozen at this time and recommended that they be re-visited at a later date. He suggested that perhaps bonuses could be offered in lieu of wage increases. Richard Strauss disagreed and commented that agreements relative to wages should be honored.

Liz Netsch reported that the minimum wage was increased. All wages of camp counselors are “covered” by revenue received from camp enrollments. If there is no camp this summer due to the Corona Virus, no wages will be paid to camp counselors.

The request for additional hours (\$3,021) for the Library Director, Public Works, Regular Payroll (\$1,016) Tree Warden (\$2,400), and Hose Co. (\$7,400) were discussed.

Constable

The Boards discussed the request for increased Constable shifts (\$28,412 for two 8-hour shifts). The original request was for 3 shifts. Also, due to the status of the new Resident State Trooper (not at top of salary range), the Town did realize savings of \$55k. Lauren reviewed the protocol for scheduling constable shifts vis a vis private duty (Eversource, Water Co, etc.). There is a shortage of “late night” constable coverage.

It was expressed there is concern that the position is being considered based on the individual’s “wants” and not the town’s “needs”.

The Selectmen responded that there has been an up-tick in “petty” crimes and constable coverage is needed at the Sunday Market, Chester Fair, Halloween event, Cedar Lake events. The consensus of the BOS members was that these increased hours would benefit the Town and its residents. Note that the increase in hours is for a Constable that is currently on staff. There are savings to be realized since this individual already has the appropriate training, equipment etc. In the past, this individual has covered primarily “private duty” events. The Resident Trooper costs will be decreased if constable hours are increased. This individual will not be eligible for pension due to the number of hours.

Library Director – request for additional hours

The Library Director is regularly working hours that she is not being compensated for at this time. Peter reported that the requested increase of \$3,021 is offset by reductions made to the Library in the following areas Outside Clerical, mileage, and supplies. The net requested increase is approximately \$600.00.

A member reported that the Chester Library is significantly smaller, with less staff, patrons etc., than surrounding town’s library facilities. During the current Covid 19 crisis, she is most likely not working as many hours. Part-time employees have currently been laid off, with the exception of one whose hours have been

reduced. Full-time, salaried employees are working and being paid. The Librarian has, like all employees, has received cost of living adjustments. Virginia suggested that this be re-visited after the pandemic.

Jon Joslow expressed the importance of \$0 based budgeting. Departments should budget for what they need.

Richard Strauss suggested that there should be a discussion with the Librarian regarding a potential modification in hours.

A final determination on the request for increased hours will be discussed at a later meeting (Wednesday, April 22).

REVIEW REVENUE ADJUSTMENTS & REVENUE WITH ASSOCIATED RISKS

No additional changes made to Revenue since April 7 BOS/BOF meeting. The potential use of surplus to fund revenue shortfalls was briefly discussed.

REVIEW CAPITAL AND DETERMINE PROPOSED ADJUSTMENTS

Including adjustments to date, the budget reflects an increase of approximately \$203,000 or ½ mill (1 mill = approximately \$433,000).

A copy of Capital Plan (updated through 3/31/20 on 4/1/20) was included in the Board's packet.

Lauren reviewed proposed adjustments to the Capital, including the "postponing" of some projects (a portion of the NQP playground, Hose Co. Ambulance Replacement, equipment replacement, Fire Dept. parking lot, Project Adventure course). Projects would be "postponed" not deleted from the plan. Matching funds are required for the natural resource repair project for steams damaged/blocked in flood, Chester Creek dredging project. Lauren was available to respond to questions posed by board members. If Capital is pre-funded from surplus/fund balance in the amount of \$150,000, next year's Capital can be reduced from \$667,500 to \$490,000. This scenario would bring the "gap" between Revenue, Expenditures, etc. to approximately \$264.00.

The fund balance is currently at 19.1%, which is above what is recommended.

Twenty thousand dollars was placed in Main Street III Capital for emergency purposes. Main Street Contingency is at 10%. The contingency for the non -state funded portion is over 20% .Virginia proposed eliminating the \$20,000 and either save it, or put it towards tree work. The Boards discussed potential "unknowns" that may be uncovered when the road is opened up.

Michael Joplin reported on the funding necessary for portions of the Main Street project; i.e. Spring Street/Chester stair area, drainage on Maple Street. The sources of funding for these projects has been from approved to spend monies set aside for the Main Street Phase III project.

Richard Strauss reported that a clear understanding of available/authorized funds for the project is necessary prior to adjusting the budget. Lauren reported that we have planned, budgeted and released funds for items that the State grant will not cover. There is also \$30,000 in contingency for same at about 24%.

Per contract, the project must be "substantially completed" by 8/8/20 but it is anticipated that the project will be complete before that date.

The Boards discussed the disposition of the funds located in the McBroom and McBride BOF Strategic Plan account. The consensus of the Board was to direct Lauren to release from encumbrance the unused portion of

the contract that pertains to McBroom and McBride assisting the BOF with a Strategic Plan and count it as part of the estimated year end forecast.

Revenue was reduced by \$170,000 relative to the tax status of Masioncare. The decision has not yet been determined through the court system. The Boards discussed pro/cons of increasing the revenue. If the town “loses” in court, money would be necessary from the Fund Balance to address the shortfall.

Lauren and Peter will “crunch” the numbers discussed this evening in preparation for the Wednesday, 4/22 Joint meeting. Outstanding items include the Constable shifts and additional hours for the Librarian. Updated Revenue and Expenditures figures will be available for the 4/22 meeting.

Criteria for potential cuts of the budget will be discussed at the 4/22 Joint meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 20, 2020

Lauren Gister made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 20, 2020 meeting. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by both boards.

February 27, 2020

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 27, 2020 meeting. Rick Nygard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by both boards.

Note: Included Stephanie Romano full name in the minutes.

March 11, 2020

Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2020 meeting. Greg Merola seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by both boards.

Note: proper spelling “Andrew”.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk