

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
Wednesday, March 11, 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, John O'Hare, Andres Gardner (not seated).

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, Charlie Greeny.

BUSINESS

Continued Budget Discussions

Lauren distributed a copy of the responses to BOF questions submitted to her since the last Budget Workshop meeting.

BOS Budget

Funds requested for community events have included police services for Winter Carnivale. This year, funds would be used for a celebration/re-opening of the Meeting House, Main Street project and, if necessary, adjustments for Budget Hearings, Town Meetings etc. relative to the Corona Virus. Consensus of the BOF members was to approve the funds requested for community events with the understanding that all line items/budgets can be re-visited as necessary.

The BOF discussed the format of budget documents developed and presented to the BOF via a vis projections for the remainder of the fiscal year etc. and the status of the current software system in the Finance Office.

Lauren reported that she and Peter to review projections when developing the budgets that are presented to the BOF.

Finance Budget

Peter has researched upgrades to Finance software/technology but has not yet requested funding for replacement of same. Lauren will follow-up with him to understand cost and potential financial reporting improvements it would provide.

Town Office Operations

The Service Contract increases are due to operating expenses for hardware, software, cybersecurity on IT contract with CT Comp (including Purple Dog).

Town Clerk

Advertising costs are dependent on the number of Town Meetings, Public Hearings, etc. necessary throughout the year. The auditors did recommend that the Town Clerk's office utilize a cash register connected to the Town's software. The estimate to facilitate this recommendation is approximately \$7,000.

Treasurer

As previously discussed, Lauren will follow-up with Town Attorney regarding the appropriateness of a family member being paid for Deputy Treasurer duties.

Tax Collector

The additional \$250 fee for DMV is due to the addition of the CIVLS program. The mileage, supplies, outside contractor and professional development figure is a result of the Tax Collector being unable to attend professional development.

The BOF had no further comments on Tax Collector's budget.

Assessor

Lauren outlined the parameters of the contract with Haddam relative to "sharing" an Assessor. The Assessor is an employee of Haddam and Chester contracts with Haddam for Assessor duties. Chester pays for only the hours the Assessor actually works in Chester (no vacation, sick, holiday etc.).

Board of Finance

The BOF discussed extensively an appropriate amount to be budgeted for Contingency (legal, engineering and general) and the uses of same (additional funds that may be necessary during a "bad" winter, tree work). **Lauren will request that Peter provide a 5-year history of the uses of the Contingency account.**

Legal Contingency is used in P&Z and BOS. The BOF has its own legal line item as Attorney Bennet represents the BOS and Virginia, on occasion, seeks legal counsel relative to BOF matters.

The BOF will discuss the Contingency further at a future BOF meeting.

The Postage budget was discussed. These funds are used to facilitate the post card mailings to Chester residents and includes postage, printing and design for 2 full mailings to residents.

Registrar

Professional Development – training required but Registrar was unable to attend last year and weekend classes were cancelled due to lack of individuals registered for same.

Building Department

Additional payroll not included in figures presented. Lauren anticipates that figures will be available prior to the finalization of the budget.

Lauren reported that the BOS has not yet voted on new permit fee proposals. Information relative to same was mistakenly placed in the budget books.

Conservation

Requests for Open Space funding would be in the Capital budget.

Harbor Management – No comments from BOF

P&Z

Lauren recommended that the Legal request should not be lowered due to the unknown costs that may arise relative to lawsuits.

Inland Wetlands - No comments from BOF.

ZBA – No Comments from BOF.

EDC

The EDC's request is not part of the \$15,000 approved for Main Street III. They also do business flyers and other initiatives to promote business in Chester. A copy of their plan was included in the budget books.

Park & Rec.

The increase in Temp. Part-time is due to hiring of Camp Counselors and revenue generated by Park & Rec. programs pays for same.

The BOF discussed recent repairs and upgrades to North Quarter Park as a result of the flood. Projects at the park include: top soil to replace clay on previous baseball field, and fees paid to a contractor for fertilizer, field maintenance, etc.

Library

Last year, the library did not have funds for professional development and the BOS paid for CPR and First Aid training.

Public Works

Lauren suggested purchasing the requested tires and other item out of the surplus in the current year's budget and "cut" those out of the request for next year's budget.

Lauren outlined the protocol for catch basin cleaning. More catch basins have been installed. Also, additional OSHA requirements necessitate training for Public Works.

Road Maintenance is down because of flood in 2018. The Town is being reimbursed by FEMA and Federal Highway for some costs.

The Outside Contractor increase reflected in Buildings and Grounds is due to the Skyview property.

Tree Maintenance

The Tree Removal line was moved from Operating to Capital because it is anticipated that this will be a 5 year or more project and considerable funds will be necessary to accommodate the project. This line will be discussed further during the Capital discussions.

The Tree Warden is no longer an Outside Contractor and is now an employee. The Outside Contractor line went to \$0 and Regular Payroll went to \$6,000.00.

General Engineering/Road Maintenance

Includes work done by Jacobson; i.e. Storm Water Management, bridge inspections and dam inspections.

Winter Maintenance

All except for sand/salt and equipment maintenance is prep, essentially everything else is plowing. A 5-year rolling average is reported.

Virginia will request that Peter provide a best/worst case range for the past 5 years.

Landfill Closure – Budget decreased from last year.

Bulky Waste/Recycling/Hazardous Waste – ***Will discuss further along with MIRA at a future meeting.***

Hose Company

The BOF discussed the membership of the volunteer firefighters (level at all-time high). The staffing for ambulance runs was a bit more difficult due to time from work as an average run was about 2 hours and conflicts with full time jobs and increased re-certification requirements. Approx. 524 runs are made a year.

This led to a discussion on what the ramifications might be over the next several years and the possibility of increasing coverage and costs. There would be a balancing act between the increased need and costs with affordability.

Equipment maintenance is based on the age of the equipment and the older equipment needs more maintenance.

Police

Lauren provided an update on the search for a new Trooper. It has been narrowed down to two candidates. The expected start date is April 1 and the cost is still expected to show a savings.

Hydrants

Costs per hydrant are increasing.

Street lights

Costs are continuing to decline with the implementation of the new energy saving LED lights and a \$5,000 decrease is reflected in the budget.

Emergency Management

Outside contractor is up but so is the grant revenue that covers part of these costs.

It was asked if we had adequate emergency equipment /gear? Lauren answered, yes and no. We do not have cots, but batteries etc., yes. The concern was there is no generator for the Town Hall. This has been discussed in previous budget discussions and it should be again; though the cost is significant at \$100k.

Animal Control

Lauren indicated the need for the Animal Control officer to have an assistant. The need is being shared across multiple towns.

Lauren then discussed the Coronavirus safety issues that are being considered from the Governor's office, the local Selectmen and the Superintendent. Issues around voting, public hearings, primary voting, and the Referendum; concerns regarding the school system etc. are all on the table to formulate plans and coordinate responses. Lauren will ensure information is put on the website and other means for communicating are utilized. Guidance from the Governor's office is expected and all the questions are getting raised.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk