

Chester Joint Budget Workshop including Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance

February 4, 2021

7:00 pm

First Selectmen Lauren Gister called the Selectmen to order at 7:05; seated Gister and Charlene Janecek. Tom Englert joined the meeting at a later time after attending CES Bdgt workshop

Chairwoman Virginia Carmany called the Board of Finance to order; R. Strauss, J. Rannestad, J. O'Hare, J. Joslow, M. Joplin seated for R. Nygard and A. Gardner, not seated. R. Nygard joined the meeting at 8:00 pm having had technical difficulty.

Also in attendance: J. Grybowski, Fire Chief, P. Evankow, Accounts Manager, E. Netsch, Treasurer and S. Wright, Chair Economic Development.

There were no comments or questions in the Audience of Citizens.

Gister's opening remarks included identifying that some parts of the budget are non negotiable e.g. CT Water Company's expected increase.

Carmany requested that all members keep in mind two questions: How much of an increase are we willing to support? and How much of surplus are we willing to utilize?

Gister then proceeded to go through the document that had been sent to the members of the two boards prior to the meeting. That document is below.

*Comments throughout are added in blue italics from notes taken during the meeting and may not reflect all the conversations or questions and answers.*

FY 2021-2022 Draft Budget

Preliminary Review

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BUDGET**

**Revenue Estimates as of 1-26-2021 - Grand List increase of .7%**

1. Assigned Fund Balance static as placeholder (\$200,000 – ↓ \$25,000 from last year)
2. State Govt ↓\$28,000 (assume similar to last year except DUI and LOCIP)  
*Final numbers are not yet available and these numbers have been reduced \$5-10k based on this year.*
3. Property Taxes ↑\$77,000 based on 50% Masonicare  
*The Masonicare court case has been to a pretrial conference and the Judge has requested that the case be resolved within the next 6 months. Attorney Bennet has indicated the outcome maybe be favorable to Chester. Gister indicated that there are several properties that are seeking reduced assessments that potentially may have a negative impact on the Grand List.*
4. Licenses ↑\$6,000 (building and zoning)
5. Misc ↓\$89,000 (ambulance, interest, P&R, park passes, Meeting House rental)  
*These numbers have been adjusted downward based on actuals this year and the expected continued impact of Covid on our community.*

6. **Total ↓59,000.00**

**Expenditure Estimates Operating Budget as of 1-26-2021**

**Note:** Payroll items for salary and hourly employees increase 2.75% per Union Contract.

*Peter Evankow indicated that there is an extra day for some employees and this is appropriately reflected in the salary lines for those areas.*

*Lauren Gister indicated the parentheses below indicate the areas that are driving the increase or decrease.*

1. General Gov subsection ↑ \$27,654 or 2.45% (bldg. dept, P&Z, P&R)  
Peter
2. Public Works ↑\$22,053 or 2.67% (road maint)
3. Public Safety ↑\$71,999 or 7.38% (CHC employee, fire marshal, police, CWC)
4. Health & Welfare ↑\$13,718 or 8.96% (TriTown)
5. Miscellaneous ↑\$69,098 or 8.25% (FICA,health insurance, orgs, etc – based on partial data)  
*Final numbers are not expected until later in the process.*
6. Debt ↓\$605 or .73% (street lights paid off mid year but new LED light debt from 2020))
7. Capital ↑\$220,000 (without analysis – from current 5 year capital budget document)
8. Schools ↑\$no detailed overview data yet

Expenditure Budget is currently up \$423,917 without any school increase.

**Schools:**

Supervision District increase of \$278,720 (3.49%) Chester portion \$141,928 ↑9.21% from 20-21

*Tom Englert indicated that the CES budget would be up \$171,840 from Supervision District and would research the disconnect of \$30k with the published number of \$141K. CES was increasing it's budget by only \$56,680. However, there might be a request for \$10k for CES capital.*

Region 4 School Budget increase of \$667,158 (3.15%) Chester ADM ↓.74% Next workshop 2/9

*Virginia Carmany indicated that R4 could be up by as much as \$170K, but this was a very rough number as the R4 website was down and a current accurate percentage was not used but a rough proxy of 25%.*

Chester Elementary Budget 1<sup>st</sup> workshop tonight Next workshop 2-23

- Unknowns:
- State revenue is a moving target
  - CWC rate increase request pending at 20% to PURA
  - Capital needs not fully analyzed to date
  - Masonicare negotiation re taxes, several large assessment appeals pending

- There are a few new initiatives and line items where we are missing estimates, particularly with regard to technology/public wifi and medical insurance costs

#### NEW CAPITAL REQUESTS AND INITIATIVES

*An amount for tree work has not yet been added. Gister indicated that last year's budget was \$70k.*

\$25,000 Harbor Management – dredging –

*Gister indicated she did not yet know what was driving this increase.*

\$50,000 Conservation Commission – Open Space Request

\$50,000 Police – unfunded mandate body cameras effective 7/1/2022.

*Gister indicated there might be additional costs for storage of this video data.*

\$15,000 Police - Spare Vehicle

\$70,000 Board of Finance – new GL software

TBD Tax Office – security

TBD First Selectman – technology upgrades TH, MH (online payments, digitize files, meeting tech), recycling containers, electric charging for vehicles, water fountain/fill stations

TBD Park and Recreation – NQP (Entrance fencing, signage, walkway, boardwalk)

*Gister indicated there is much to discuss regarding Capital and how it will be spread over time.*

*Carmany indicated the total preliminary increase based on all these numbers, some estimates, was \$1.2M.*

This concludes the submitted document and the meeting continued.

A request was made to have the First Selectman go through the operating expenditure budget and see what she could find to reduce expenditure costs based on her day to day working knowledge and report to the Joint Board.

This was considered appropriate as long as there was an audit trail of the difference between what the various boards and commissions submitted and her suggestions for consideration. Transparency was the issue.

There were no comments made during the second Audience of Citizens.

The boards voted to adjourn at approximately 9:00 pm.

Submitted by Virginia Carmany.

