

BOARD of SELECTMEN BUDGET MEETING – FEBRUARY 2, 2016

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 7:00 P.M.

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the Board of Selectmen Meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, R. Hebert, M. Kozlark, B. Manners, S. Zemo
Kevin Redmond, Director of Finance

Agenda

- Information Technology Budget
- Fire Department Budget
- Parks & Recreation
- General Budget Discussion

R. Marconi called the Budget Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. for the first meeting of the budget cycle for the 2017 fiscal year. Kevin Redmond came forward to present an overview of fiscal 2016 and looking forward to 2017. The Town has come in at 1.88%. He indicated that they heard about health care today and it is less than anticipated, which is good. All is open to review.

The numbers do not include any new headcount. The response to the Social Services request is no. The P&Z part-time position to full-time is also a no. Two fireman will be hired to fill the current vacancies. Betty Brosius will retire as of July 1st. If someone were to be hired for her position, the new hire could possibly start before the end of this current fiscal year. That has not been determined.

K. Redmond indicated that we do not yet know the BOE numbers. They have a meeting scheduled for Monday, February 8. 3.5% is just a place holder. He does not know what they will come in with but 2.5 is low.

Roads are coming in at 2.375M. Road drainage is a big issue. The Highway Department did a lot with roads this fall. Do we need a full 2.75M? K. Redmond stated how he is expecting a 5.75 reduction from the State of CT. Due to the lower cost of oil, the cost of asphalt should come down also.

K. Redmond has met with Tony Phillips about the Town of Ridgefield's ADA compliance issues. Mr. Phillips came forward to discuss this mandate. We are behind the times and need to catch up in this area and schedule appropriate training programs. What about training with department heads? We need to ascertain where there are deficits, do a tour and document needs. This is ADA's 25th anniversary. S. Zemo asked if there are any grant dollars for this project? He stated how this is a "daunting task". Each department needs to take responsibility for this in their respective department. We could go out and hire an outside firm to do this, but instead we are going to charge each department to look at their own building. B. Manners pointed out that when a building is renovated, it has to be made ADA-compliant. The project is left to the architects to make the updated building fully compliant. 20% of the cost of the project is supposed to be dedicated to handicapped use. R. Marconi responded that we need to look at the basics. We have for many years looked at how to be ADA-compliant, but many areas may have projects that need attention – like door handles and access ramps. We want to suggest we have a half-time person to do this. S. Zemo suggested we put out an RFP for this position. It will be good to know our overall plan. By hiring someone who is knowledgeable, we will have more credibility. M. Kozlark indicated a problem with priorities when each department is responsible for their own building(s). The cost of an

analysis would be about \$600,000, when we compare ourselves with other municipalities of a similar size with about 40 buildings that need to be ADA-compliant both inside and outside.

S. Zemo said he is in favor of a plan for the whole community to be assessed. He would like to have an RFP so we can know how much all of this would cost. R. Marconi stated how he would like to have our plan in place by February 29. He charged Tony Phillips to come up with a couple of options. Being ADA-compliant is part of the Civil Rights Act and not a building code. An inspection self-assessment helps us look at what we have already accomplished. We can then show that this is our agenda.

Rich Vazzana of the Lounsbury House (Community Center) stated how one becomes concerned when a lawsuit comes. Then one has a problem. How do we prevent this from happening? They have done some ADA-compliance drawings with the Community Center's same professional decorum. They are talking about \$120,000 (\$50,000 for only the lift). They are going to apply for some grant money but also will need some help from the Town. The Community Center garden is lovely but the ramp is not ADA-compliant. \$38,500 is in capital plans for electrical construction. \$31,000 is for painting and carpeting. Who should pay for this? The total of their "wish list" is \$119,500. B. Manners stated she would like to see their budget.

Debt Service is experiencing a slight increase but still on plan to come under \$50 million by Fiscal Year 2020/2021. K. Redmond stated how the goal is to get debt service to \$50 million or below, but to do so we must "keep an eye" on capital expenditures with \$10+ million for roads and a possible \$5 million for an updated and/or new Police station. K. Redmond stated how debt service is on Page 313 of the Budget Expense book. He has figured the debt service with the numbers carried out to Fiscal Year 2025. We add \$2.3 million/year to debt service when bonding each year. R. Marconi stated how the goal is to get back to where we were. We are paying debt service down very quickly, which is good.

Revenue – K. Redmond stated how we do not have the numbers from the State of CT yet – possible \$3 million to General Fund. Conveyance is at \$725K which represents sales of \$24 million/month.

Special Services – Net profit that goes into one area. Ambulance costs had been higher but are now back on track. There was a problem with collections between the company with the data and Danbury Hospital. We haven't seen any increases in rental incomes. We will experience a decrease in rental income due to the short period of time left from the RVNA rental.

We do not use fund balance – there was \$13.3 million in fund balance as of 6/2015. There is some surplus this year but also using some for Fiscal 2017.

The Grand List growth is at 4% - was hoping for 4.75%.

Expenses –

R. Marconi stated we need to revisit our car policy. We are buying out a police car and avoiding buying any new cars.

S. Zemo stated our First Selectman is not paid equal to BOE people. We need to "bulk up". We need a sub-committee to look at this. B. Manners mentioned this topic other years to the BOF but it never went anywhere. She stated how we need to look at comparable towns in the Tri-State area. Darien has both a First Selectman and a Town Manager. K. Redmond will contact Laurie Fernandez, Director of Human Resources, to look into this.

R. Marconi stated Ridgefield is in good shape.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Andrew Neblett came forward to discuss the budget for his department. His capital requests from last year were moved over to this year's budget. Our IT spending will come down if we make these requested capital investments. Our biggest savings is in services. All are connected with Fiber. Only two items are in capital requests, Page 3 in the Capital book – VMWARE Server/System Upgrade - \$65,000 and a Town-wide Phone System - \$35,000. Everything is to be in VMWare – no down time the last three years. The cost would be \$35,000 to connect the whole town and make it all network-based; town-wide IP Telephony.

GENERAL TOPICS –

No questions on employee taxes and insurance. R. Hebert stated how the EDC needs a charge – a goal. He would be happy to help them develop a framework. B. Manners stated how she is not happy with how they have spent their funds - \$2500 for further discussion? B. Manners stated how grants were cut back following the recession. She thinks we should reconsider raising the amounts.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Tappe came forward to discuss his department's budget requests. His budget does include the two additional firefighters previously discussed. Everything is "status quo" – union contract controlled. We continue to address overtime over the years. How can we get the overtime hours down? We need to approach overtime with a more realistic number each year. Our surplus in the salary line this year is due to the two vacancies. If we hire two new people to fill the current vacancies, they probably will not be on board until September 1st.

There are small increases in small line numbers – increase in uniforms is more than 2%/year. Each individual is furnished with a specific number of certain clothing items/year.

There is a policy in effect in terms of arriving at the scene of a call – the firefighters must get off the truck fully suited and with their breathing apparatus in place.

The Fire Department's oil costs were locked in last year for two years. No one would have anticipated how oil costs have gone down.

Capital Items – The Drenzek Fund for three projects is requested at \$10,000 each. These are already approved and taken out of Capital.

Renovation to Headquarters – put off to next year. R. Marconi stated that they want to see what recommendation comes from the nine-person Citizens Committee relative to a possible municipal building.

Our community as a whole needs to be CPR trained and this is possible now that the hands-only procedure is approved. Suggest CPR training for all our Town employees which would be a good example to other businesses for their employees as well.

PARKS & RECREATION

Paul Roche, Director of Parks & Recreation, Phil Kearns, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission, and Barbara Dobbins, Past Chairman and a member of the Budget Committee, came forward to discuss their department's budget requests. Also present from the Parks & Rec Department were: Bob Schneider, Assistant Director Parks, Evie Bottali, Commissioner, Eileen Cipolla, Parks & Rec Dept., Robin Matthews, Assistant Director Recreation, and Justin Lawrence, Intern.

P. Kearns reviewed the booklet prepared outlining their 2016-2017 Operating Budget and Capital Requests. They are requesting an increase in operating expenses of +3.53% for a total of \$154,106; an increase in operating revenue of +5.2% for a total of \$173,540, and a resulting Parks & Rec Department cost to the Town of -1.7% or -\$19,435. Their revenue continues to be strong with a last year increase of \$353,000. This exceeded their 7/08 peak level by \$569,000. This is attributed to their very strong summer camp program, strong membership and other income-generating programs. If an individual joins, they can use all the facilities. Their members are all-inclusive. SprayBay has met their expectations.

Regarding expenses – there is now a government ruling requiring that chemical treatment of school grounds be done with organic materials, which cost more. This is the third year for this requirement. Also, their building gets a lot of use and maintenance needs to be continual. The one request they wish to stress is for an outdoor classroom/pavilion at a cost of \$53,000. This added facility is to be located off the gym and is to be used for expanded programs and summer camp and will be well utilized. It will also provide for additional picnic facilities.

B. Manners commented on how out-of-town residents need to pay for use of the Dog Park. This needs to be enforced. In-town people who use the Dog Park can pay when they get their dog license. S. Zemo asked how do we survey and manage the policies of the Dog Park?

S. Zemo asked how much pressure do they as managers of the Parks & Rec Department feel to drive and bring in business, especially in the winter months? He experienced a situation where the boys had to leave the gym for a scheduled girl's birthday party, which was a revenue-producing event. Yanity Gym and the Boy's & Girl's Club gym were all closed. R. Marconi indicated how the Parks & Rec Department have put a lot of their attention to revenue driving and they have been successful. B. Manners stated how they are doing an extraordinary job!

M. Kozlark stated a rotary mower was requested both last and this year. They will look into this request.

R. Marconi asked if the P&R Department has any expenditure requests relative to ADA-compliance? They would like a handicapped porta-potty but the location for such is not yet handicapped-accessible. P. Roche indicated that they have a committee that deals with ADA issues. They have brought everything that they can up to the required standards. They have been working on one of their parks at a time. They did put in automatic doors in the Rec Center which are all ADA-compliant. They had a State representative come one day to do a program on this issue. The parking area needs ADA work.

GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Community Grants – This is not a year when we want to add much, but we need to be proactive with the grants that are the most important. This can be a recovery year but we want to keep it in line. K. Redmond will look back at 2010 and 2011 and see what grants were cut during these tight years.

M. Kozlark suggested that the BOS look at all of Ridgefield's lake to keep them healthy. Maybe we need to be more proactive with treatment plans.

M. Kozlark moved and R. Marconi seconded a motion to adjourn the BOS Budget Meeting at 10:12 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet L. Johnson