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Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing #4 Final Minutes
Tuesday, March 23, 2021
7:30 pm

The Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing was held virtually at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 in Fairfield, CT.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Edward Bateson, Jim Brown-Chair, Lori Charlton, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Police Chief Kalamaras, Deputy Police Chief Don Smith, Captains John Bucherati, Chris Tursi and Keith Broderick, Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn, Ruthann Greco, Administrator Sullivan-McKinney Elder Housing, Jeanette Muñoz Allam, Director of Grants and Special Projects Kennedy Center

I. Call to Order

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

Public Safety

4030 Police

Mr. Brown said this budget has a 3.45% increase due to contractual salary obligations, training costs to Police Accountability Act, internet and computer crimes, cars and additional equipment. He said it includes a three-year vehicle replacement plan which is a working document and unpredictable events could change the plan.

Mr. Testani thanked the police for all they have done during the pandemic. He said there is an increase for IT software and additional security. Chief Kalamaras said items were moved from fees and professional services. He said the department had an increase in several posts due to COVID. He said the crossing guards' pay increased, but there was also a reduction when schools were closed. Mr. Testani asked about the OT regarding training and asked if it was a result of the new legislation or COVID or both. Chief Kalamaras said the training is a result of the Police Accountability Act. Mr. Testani asked about the motor vehicle fuel expense that went up 31% and Chief Kalamaras said they average the gallons at \$1.58/gallon.

Mr. DeWitt thanked the police for their service. He mentioned the IT software went up \$56,000 and said it seems to be driving their budget. Chief Kalamaras said it is for a crime scene software increase due to internet and computer crimes, policy review documents and document share and accountability.

Mr. Mitola asked about OT that was reduced and why. Chief Kalamaras said the training for the legislation was less hours than originally thought. He said the \$56,000 is reflected in the line item.

Ms. Charlton asked where about staffing and if the department is filling vacancies. Chief Kalamaras said in December, the department had 98-99 officers and currently has 106. He said by July, he projects 4-6 retirees. He said the department is allocated for 108 officers and currently has 106. He said as soon as he was sworn in, it was his duty to get the staff back up to 108. Chief Kalamaras said he would also like to add two-three more as the department will likely need more officers. Ms. Charlton asked about the 10% increase in crossing guards. Chief Kalamaras said it has been at least 12 years since crossing guards had an increase. He said he is requesting \$10 more per day; right now they make \$50/day and it would go to \$60/day. Mr. Walsh asked why part-time payroll went up and the Chief said the department added more training hours for special police officers. Mr. Walsh asked about the maintenance and repair increase and wondered if there was anything significant making the increase. Chief Kalamaras said based on a three-year average and basic repair. He said he also anticipated radio repairs for the Emergency Communications Center.

4050 Animal Control

Chief Kalamaras said some drivers of the increase in the budget are overtime lines, education increases (increased training for ACO's). He said he anticipates hiring part-time officers. He said overtime will be for full-time officers who will be working overtime while other officers go through training. Mr. Brown asked how much overtime there is currently. Chief Kalamaras said they are currently trending at about \$12,000. Mr. Brown asked what training is for \$1500. Chief Kalamaras said they need 100 hours of training. He said they will bring in part-time for training as it will be a foot in the door for full-time openings.

4150 Emergency Communications

Captain Tursi said IT costs went up. He said the fiber backup was increased for the new ECC. He said utilities are subjective as they do not have an exact number. He estimates \$62,400 for utilities and \$55,300 for the communications line for radio consoles. He said those are the main increases in the budget. Mr. Mitola asked if the staffing included Westport employees yet. Captain Tursi said it includes all personnel and the Westport personnel are coming.

Mr. Walsh referenced the large budget and asked if Westport was paying its share. Mr. Schmitt said all costs will be shared between the two towns. He said Westport will also be required to pay typical costs that go with an employee. He said Westport will pay one-third contribution, \$78,000 will come from New Canaan, there is a State ECC subsidy and the Town will get additional money from the State for being a regional ECC. Mr. Walsh said he would like to have a breakdown next year of the different towns and contributions from each town.

4010

Fire & Regional Fire School

Chief Denis McCarthy said the department has a 1.49% increase with some significant changes. He said he is petitioning an increase in staffing in the Fire Marshal's office. He requested one position effective January 1, 2022 for training relief. He said the department is anticipating retirements between now and this time next year. The Chief said there is an active list and interested candidates are vetted by the department. He said there is sick and injury increase of 4-5% and the capital reflects a car requested last year that was not approved, so it is in the budget again.

Mr. Bateson asked what the new Fire Inspector position will be called. Chief McCarthy said it will be the equivalent rank of a firefighter. He said there are two firefighters who trained with the State to be inspectors. He said there are four positions that are kept vacant on each shift and they will be filled over time. He said with retirements, he is anticipating four to five new hires. The Chief said the capital outlay is \$120,000. He said since 2015, the department has secured \$700,000 in grants which have helped avoid capital expenditures. He said there is a grant request now for \$200,000 for next year. He said part of the ongoing programs is being current with equipment. The Chief said the department annually replaces hoses and appliances. He said each set of gear ages out at 10 years and each firefighter has two sets of gear. He said foam is replaced a little at a time with foam that is safe for the employees as the old foam has been linked to cancer. He said the State is working on recovery of old foam which will not be a cost for the Town. The Chief said there is a 2008 Crown Victoria that needs replacing.

4090

Hydrant and Water

Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn presented a flat budget. He said this budget is for hydrants and water mains and the department pays Aquarian to use them. He said there are 1500 hydrants and there is a formula to determine cost and create the budget.

4110

Emergency Management

Chief McCarthy said this is the sum total of expenditures of emergency management. He said the team has done extraordinary work supporting the Town and Health Department. He said Sands Cleary said Fairfield has managed COVID the way it is supposed to be done. He said this budget is absorbing some communications from ECC that are not shared with Westport. He said it goes up marginally in FY22.

Chief McCarthy had a request from Town Controller Caitlin Bosse for an update on projections for the current fiscal year. He said year to date, they have \$148,000 which is below the budgeted amount of \$500,000 which was revised to \$400,000. He said both universities have projects that will be permitted and will generate revenue. The Chief said there are also new buildings and other projects in Town that will bring the revenue up to the \$400,000 mark.

Chief McCarthy said the Regional Fire School has proven its value as an essential resource over the past year. He said it has been the hub of emergency response and has been a safe meeting space for the Emergency Management Team. He said it also served as a repository and point of distribution for state and federal-funded PPE for the town and local business community. He said the State grant is \$72,000 to maintain the facility, along with user fees.

He said the Town gives \$28,000 toward the school and maintenance. He said there is a revenue increase of 9.32% in the budget and a 9% increase in expenses.

Miscellaneous

Not-for-Profit Organizations:

2370 Sullivan-McKinney Elder Housing

Ruthann Greco said the reason for the increase is due to the superintendent spotting water on the roof and the mortar and bricks need to be replaced. She said staging alone will be costly. She said she included projects for the courtyard in the budget, but thinks the money will be used for the roof repair. She said SMEH is HUD funded and the budget was approved with a 2% increase, but she has not heard of any other funding coming to SMEH. She said every year the needs can change and the budget changes as well.

2430 Kennedy Center

Jeanette Muñoz Allam said the Kennedy Center has been serving the Fairfield community and State for 70 years this year. She said the Center serves people with disabilities, seniors and children with disabilities providing them with a multitude of services. She said 100% of proceeds go back to communities served. She said there are 99 residents in Fairfield who benefit from services. She said this is the second time the Center has presented this increase request. She said the Center has been helping people even through the pandemic.

2470 The Pilot House

Doreen Caruso is requesting a \$2000 increase due to the pandemic. She said Pilot House had to revamp its program as COVID brought an increase in new services for preschool special needs children and the rise of depression and anxiety in other kids. She said most staff is volunteer or partially paid. She said Pilot House had to increase staff for depressed and anxious kids. She said there are very limited services for mental health in the community. Ms. Caruso said her board has stepped up and introduced a new program that will take place at the farm. She said programs are fee based and the Town gives \$8,000. She said the Town support helps along with other grants and outside funding, but Pilot House does not get state funding. Ms. Caruso said she started Pilot House 15 years ago and does not draw a salary. She said the non-profit started in the FWMS basement, grew and programs were increased for younger kids. She said mental health services have been added and the farm is helping a multitude of people.

2480 Center for Family Justice

Mark Antonini said this budget is up to \$12,000 from \$6,100. He said a year ago, he met with First Selectwoman Kupchick and talked about an increase which he did not get. He said CFJ has had an increase in the number of clients and especially now with COVID. He said during the pandemic, people were staying home with their abusers. He said CFJ had to put people in hotels and incurred \$70,000 in hotel costs. He said some of it has been paid through FEMA. Mr. Antonini said CFJ has also applied for grants, but he had no idea what this year would look like. He said CFJ has been back open since July.

Finance

3110 Information Technology

Dave Kelley said his budget is up for many reasons. He said he restored the capital outlay line to normal to request a line for computers. He said there are ongoing annual contracts used throughout the Town. He said this year, the three largest items are Munis, Microsoft licensing and Fiber Optics with ending contracts so the Town will be negotiating and he made an estimate of what he thought they would be which also caused an increase.

Mr. Kelly said he is looking to modernize the internal operation of the IT online forms processing system. He said forms and documents in Town are not included in the permitting system. He said software products would be \$19,000. Mr. Kelly said there is also a communications line for a fence against internet threats. He said here is \$15,000 for capital outlay to take over security systems in Town. He suggests that IT take them over and go from site to site to replace them. He said the RFP has gone out to select storm surveillance cameras.

Mr. Kelly said the capital outlay is up from last year, but on par from previous years. He said this increase will help maintain PCs and laptops. He said laser printers are cheaper so there is a slight reduction. He said server usage will generally go down with cloud models, but cloud based services could be more expensive. Mr. Kelly said Public Safety still needs servers. He said the Town operates a traditional email system; people use cloud based email. Mr. Kelley looked into it and the quote was \$65,000 more than the Town pays now. He said if there was a network outage in Town, email could continue to operate. He said a cloud based system is being used that translates to email. He said there are some advantages to moving to cloud, but it is a higher cost to the Town.

Mr. Brown said there was a request for an update on the Stimulus Package which will be a follow-up question on 3/29. He asked Mr. Schmitt if there was an update. Mr. Schmitt said he is in constant contact with Congressman Himes who is waiting on answers from the US Treasury. Mr. Schmitt said the money will be coming out in 30-60 days and there are two parts to the money - there is \$13 million that will go directly to the Town and \$12 million that will come from the State. He said both should get to the Town within 60 days. He said the tranches will be equally split, half this fiscal year and half next fiscal year. Mr. Brown said the BOE is going to receive money through the ESSR2 program; it has an amount of \$2.8M-\$3M, but no one has answers on how it can be used. Mr. Schmitt said he will follow up on that.

Mr. Brown said if anyone wanted to follow up with any department to let him know and he can invite them to Monday's meeting.

IV. Adjourn

Ms. Charlton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:43 pm. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary