

March 9, 2021
Board of Finance and Finance Committee
#1 Department Budget Hearings
2021-2022

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lainie McHugh called the virtual meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom. All those present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board of Finance members present / absent:

PRESENT

Michael Barker
Elaine Hammers
Marty Isaac
Lainie McHugh
Paul Timpanelli
Vincent DeGennaro – Alternate
Marc Mascola – Alternate
Christine El Eris – Alternate

ABSENT

Steve Choi

Also present:

First Selectman Vicki Tesoro; Maria Pires, Finance Director; Kathleen McGannon, Chief Administrative Officer; Cynthia Katske, Chief Administrative Officer; Dan Schopick, Esq., Town Attorney; Therese Keegan, Internal Auditor; Mary Isaac, Finance Committee; Carole Hans, Finance Committee, Alternate; Dawn Cantafio, Finance Committee

01011800 Board of Assessment Appeals

Jeff Crow and Tim Cantafio

- Asked for \$2,900; reduced by First Selectman to \$1,900.
- This is a revaluation year, postponed from last year, and values have gone up. Due to increases, public will most likely be appealing their tax increase due increase in assessment.
- Now doing revaluations every 6 years; at last valuation prices were more stable.
- The expenses connected with the appeals include clerical fees and legal notices.

0101100 Tax Assessor

Mark DeVestern

- First Selectman reduced request by \$80,000.
- Postponed reduced attorney fees for tax appeals \$60,000, which is based on range of fees provided by attorneys.
- The postponement of the \$20,000 upgrade for Vision software is not a problem, since the revaluation rescheduled to this year.
- Goals last year were affected by Covid-19 and he needed to rescheduled the revaluation.
- He also had a retirement.
- This year, he wants to implement on-line services.

01015400 Conservation Commission

Mary Ellen Lemay

- Budget of \$1,385 is less than the last 2 years, since we requested \$5,000 for both years for funding for the Natural Resource Inventory.
- She is working on a tree replacement plan and wants to present the findings from the Natural Resource Inventory to the plan.
- She has acquired 4 new commissioners that have been sworn in.

75501023200 Building Official

Robert Dunn

- He is being creative with keeping the Building Department running seamlessly during Covid-19.
- They began accepting credit cards 2 days before shut down due to Covid-19 and implemented procedures on the fly to accommodate the increase in permits.
- They had no idea that people would put in pools or add on to their homes, since they were staying at home; however, they have been able to keep up with the volume.
- Currently, they are at 49% of their budget income and believes they meet their goal this year.
- The First Selectman cut the overtime from \$10,000 to \$7,000. He went over in overtime and he and his staff just kept working to get everything done.
- They didn't put in for overtime; the admin. staff was given comp. time however it is impossible to take time off due to the work load.
- Overtime due to Covid-19 was not out of the ordinary for his budget and he also has individuals working out of class at 10%.
- The overtime may be reimbursed by FEMA.
- His goals include finalizing the on-line permitting software and coordinating with other department for training. Once the software is finished, the overtime will stop.

01012000 Tax Collector

Donna Pellitteri

- There is no change from last year.
- It has been difficult with one 2 on staff at a time.
- Staff comes in at 7:00 am to keep up with the work.
- Her overtime is being covered by Covid-19 and she has no overtime in her budget request.
- She needs a full-time cashier and she will need a temporary person this summer.
- The First Selectman reduced the temporary summer hours request from 8 weeks to 6 weeks.
- Payments can currently be made online yet there are still a great number of walk-ins.
- She is still working to transition from a quarterly payment system to a semi-annual payment system, which would definitely save time..

01014600 – Economic Development

Rina Bakalar

- There are no changes to the budget.
- She was not able to do many of events planned and funds are not spend.
- There was an open admin. position since March of last year that has made it very stressful and difficult for those who are covering. That position has only just been filled.
- They are very busy despite Covid-19; there are 11 businesses opening this year.
- Still working on Long Hill Green improvements; Trumbull Center study - RFQ for the Trumbull Center corridor study.
- The plaza on the former Marissa's property is 89% rented.
- Urgent Care facility is going in where Chips was located.
- Primo 111 is adding a patio and a new pet store is replacing the one that was there.
- There is also a \$200,000 federal grant program that has been implemented, with the assistance of Dan Martin and Michele Jakab, to supply dinners to seniors and economically challenged individuals that will help with their food concerns. The Town Hall will receive an invoice from the restaurants to be paid from the grant.

01014200 Planning and Zoning

Rob Librandi / Rina Bakalar

- The First Selectman reduced the Legal Notices from the \$30,000 historical request to \$25,000.
- The number of legal notices has actually reduced. Due to Covid-19, we don't need to post in the newspaper, just on the website.
- He continues to work on digitizing records.

- Assisting Rina with Small Cities Grants; working on planning regulations; working on updating POCD; submitting documentation for a Silver Certification.
- He is also working on the Trumbull Center Study, looking to make a plan with developers and residents.
- He is also working on extending the sidewalks at Long Hill Green that are now 75% completed; the pedestrian issues are still being worked on. Needs to focus on where we need additional sidewalks.
- The Oakview apartments are fully rented; the impact to the school system was estimated at +/- 30.
- The studies for IL 1 & 2 (Reservoir Avenue) are completed; IL 3 (Unilever) is in progress. These can be viewed on the P & Z website.
- He is also the Fair Housing Officer in Trumbull.

01022400 – Animal Control

Lynn Della Bianca

- There were no changes to the budget. Overtime is the only issue and she uses it when she covers for part-timers who cannot come in. She will normally go over the overtime budget and then will use part-time funds or take comp time.
- There were 472 calls to Animal Control, down from last year.
- 169 animals were brought in and 90 animals were adopted.
- Lynn wonders if number of animals surrendered will increase once Covid-19 is over and people return to work full-time.
- Dog licensing is a problem, and she is looking for a way to have people do it online. Some towns are sending out reminders; other towns have residents pay online and then send the license after payment is made.
- Lynn mentioned that if she goes over her budget in the Professional Services account, which is also used to pay vet bills for the residents at the kennel, there is a Dog Fund Account. This account holds the receipts collected from adoptions and donations. By state statute, it can only be used for certain items. In addition, she has a TAG volunteer group that will also help out.
- Going forward, she would like to put up sound barriers in the kennel to keep the noise down. To spend the funds she collects, she needs to request use of the funds from the Chief.
- Currently, there is approximately \$137,000 in the account that we use for animal hospital bills and a part of the licensing fee that is sent to the state. There are an estimated 6,000 dogs in town; however, there are only +/- 2000 licensed.

01022000 – Police Department

Michael Lombardo, Chief of Police

- Attained Tier I accreditation and now continuing to work towards Tier II.
- Looking to reduce liability of the town due to an officer's behavior, etc, and training records are usually the first thing that is asked for.
- All officers need to be recertified each year and every three years requires drug and steroid testing.
- Every 5 years, each officer needs to have a psychological evaluation and be fit for duty.
- Continue to attract and hire minority officers.
- Wants to establish a Citizens Police Academy; a comprehensive 8-10 week course, 4 hours per week.

01022000 – Police Department

Assistant Chief Glenn Byrnes

- Covid-19 affected the work they do and how they do it.
- Contract negotiations are in contingency and will be transferred; the requested salaries are higher than usual.
- Seasoned officers are leaving to work in towns that currently offer a pension.
- Costs that are related to increased testing requirements, body cameras, etc. were included in many of the accounts.
- The First Selectman adjusted a number of accounts downward and he feels they can work within those constraints.

01023400 – Emergency Management

Megan Murphy, Fire Marshal / Andrew Kingsbury

- Wrote emergency management plans for the ongoing Covid-19 response.
- Distributed surgical masks and thermometers throughout town businesses and town work sites.
- Assisted in the set-up of Covid-19 testing facility.
- Assisted in distribution of 1000 meals to homebound.
- Assisted in the planning for the reopening of schools.
- Assisted in the planning for the reopening of Town Hall.
- First Selectman reduced capital outlay \$17,950 for purchase of message signboard trailer. Ms. Murphy indicated that she is currently borrowing from other departments when she can; it costs \$2500 per month to rent. Usually 2 in use at all times in town so she would really like to buy rather than rent one as it is more cost effective.
- FEMA will reimburse \$5,000 per month for 2 sign rentals, for COVID use only.

01022800 Fire Marshal

Megan Murphy

- No changes made to the budget.
- Goal carried over from previous year due to Covid-19.
- The department was able to digitize and it is working well; moved to 100% electronic permitting submission.
- The department adjusted very well to working within the Covid-19 constraints, including inspections, providing timely service.
- All reports can now be generated using the new software.

01022824 Fire Hydrants

Megan Murphy

- No changes made to the budget.
- Charges dropped from last year.

01050000 - Social Services

Michele Jakab

- No changes made to the budget.
- Goals were set aside due to Covid-19; will re-evaluate when the seniors comeback.
- Focus centered on meeting the food needs of the residents.
- Last year we were serving 219 families that we were serving. From the outbreak of Covid-19 to June, we added an additional 177 clients, and now we are adding approximately 20 per month. WE will need to see if these individuals continue to use our services.
- We have great team of volunteers in the pantry and we will need to see if that trend continues.
- We are seeing a lot of food insecurities; food prices have gone up as well as the need for food.
- The entire senior center team is working with Social Services. They will go back to the Senior Center once this is over.
- We have about 6,000 seniors in our database, many who have called regarding vaccine and food services.
- Homebound seniors are being supplied with meals, grocery bags and vaccines. Trying to get more involved using robocalls, etc.
- Purchased tablets for seniors and had them trained to use. They are now able to connect with families and zoom classes, etc.

01050600 – Senior Services

Michele Jakab

- No changes made to the budget.
- Goals were set aside due to Covid-19; will re-evaluate when the seniors comeback.
- Learned how to use Zoom and get the seniors engaged. Also now can get groups together on Zoom to play their favorite games.
- State funded lunch program; no options; no fee; donations only; not popular. Looking for better alternative. This is what members are requesting.

- Meets regularly with other Senior Directors in the State, and also in Fairfield County.
- Once they re-open they will look to keep some Zoom programs going.
- Does not want to increase membership fees this year.
- Many seniors will not be coming back due to health issues, etc., so will need to assess when seniors come back.

01012600 –Technology

William Chin

- No changes to the budget; can work within constraints.
- Overtime was reduced; we just ran out this year. Any increase is appreciated or comp. time.
- Most proud of how quickly they were able to assist all co-workers to transition to remote Covid-19 operation, implementing new processes and procedures and supplying them with equipment
- Implemented Zoom for all Town meetings and instructed everyone in how to use it,
- Implemented case tracing ahead of schedule, due to Covid-19, that was very helpful for the Health Department.
- Implemented online VEOCI health screening system for all employees to use each morning and also instituted case tracing ahead of schedule.
- Instituted a Veoci appointment schedule system to reserve a time with a town employee.
- Looking to implement more online systems to assist departments.
- Implemented security system and training for all employees.

01013600 –Town Clerk

Mary Markham

- Working from home and at office.
- No changes to budget; only one small increase in records books.
- Currently short one person in the office; she is in the process of hiring.
- State will pick up some expenses until we can work them into our budget.
- To issue dog licenses online, we need to have credit card access. Now we ask for an envelope with a stamp; we take the money and then mail the license.
- To be able to take a credit card payment would be a big help and they are currently looking into it.

01040200 – Vital Statistics

Mary Markham

- All Vitals are standard and must be done according to the law.
- We do have people doing business remotely; however, people still come in.
- Death certificates will eventually be on line; having these online will move the process along quicker and they will be made available in all towns.
- Program expense request went down; we haven't used the \$500 in years.

01010000 Town Council

Maria Pires

- We are currently going out to bid for a new auditor; cannot estimate the cost.
- Clerk fees increased by 2%.
- Not sure if legal notices will increase back to before Covid-19 change.

01010200 Ethics Commission

Maria Pires

- No change from last year. \$120 per year for clerk fees.

01010400 First Selectman's Office

First Selectman Vicki Tesoro

Kathleen McGannon, Chief Administrative Officer

Cynthia Katsky, Chief Administrative Officer

- Covid-19 has changed everything.
- Do not know what the town will receive in a stimulus amount or how to spend it.
- Continue to focus on public safety in town, including road work.
- Town Charter opened and revisions were voted on.
Focusing on economic growth both in the redevelopment of underperforming properties and new development, having P&Z review and possibly reduce height restrictions in the industrial zones and allow for mixed use in our corporate parks and Trumbull Center.
- Continue to work with surrounding towns on issues concerning the WPCA.
- Continue to work with the Board of Education to identify areas of duplicate services to achieve greater cost savings.
- Adding additional security systems throughout the town..
- Move the Engineering Department to the new Public Works facility; this was delayed by Covid-19.
- Trying to bring an additional grocery store into Trumbull.
- Working on grants to redo roads.
- Intersection at White Plains Road and Daniels Farm Road being looked at for safety issues.
- Focusing on the Covid-19 vaccination process at the moment.

01012400 – Town Treasurer

Anthony Musto, Esq.

- No changes from last year.
- No salary increase.
- No expenses.
- He is ok with the projected revenue.
- This year he is encouraged that interest rates have been increasing; however, he doesn't think he will make his budgeted revenue.

01011400 – Board of Finance

Maria Pires

- No change from last year.

01080300 –Trumbull Day

Kathleen McKinnon

- Trumbull Day was cancelled last year.
- We already have made a down payment for the Fireworks.
- We can extend the amusement contract from last year.
- We have budget funds in the special account.
- We are going ahead with Trumbull Day this year; however, it may have a different look.
- Possibly scheduled July 2 & 3.

01080000 – Public Events

Kathleen McKinnon

- Memorial Day - no Parade
- First Selectman's Golf Classic

01011000 – Finance Department

Maria Pires

- Working 2 teams alternating days of the week.
- Staff bringing work to and from home.
- Challenging times; you sometimes find yourself working into the night.

- Inventory of Town Equipment should be completed by the end of June.
- Looking to automate PDF procedure.
- Purchasing Policy Committee. Recommendations are starting to come in and will need to be approved by the Town Council.
- All positions are now filled in the department.
- Special Agency accounts will be closed out by the end of next fiscal year, June 2022.

01012800 – Attorneys Fees

Daniel Schopick, Esq.

- 3% increase in the retainer fee.
- \$35,000 of the retainer fee is paid by the WPCA Budget.

01070000 – Library

Stefan Lyhne-Nielson

- Covid-19 changed everything when we needed to close,
- Goals for last year were put on hold temporarily.
- Goals this year include bringing the Library back to pre-covid-19 functions, including operating hours, use of meeting rooms, etc., and to rehabilitate the trans library group membership and focus.
- To get both libraries to where we were before Covid-19 will take time. Up until then, our stats had increased.
- Asking for increase in part-time salary to \$14 per hour, since the minimum is going to \$13/hour and without increase they will be at the same rate as the seasoned employees.
- Overtime includes Sunday wages. First Selectman reduced so it only covers 24 weeks not the scheduled 48 weeks.
- Program expenses includes memberships that allow us discounts and funding for programs. They have been doing Zoom activities with the children and teens.
- Program supplies reduced from \$170,000 to \$155,000. Would like to continue to accommodate the public. People still like their books despite the digital books. They are still ordering digital content; however, people are no long seeking out the audio books. A digital book has a limited number of times it can be checked out before you need to purchase a new copy.
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01015800 – Transit District

Maria Pires

- No change. Same as previous years.
- Our portion is \$44,084 for the Bridgeport Transit service.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis C. Collier

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Finance Board Clerk