

March 15, 2022
Board of Finance and Town Council Finance Committee
#1 Department Budget Hearings
FY 2022-2023

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.

The Chairman called the roll and the clerk recorded the following:

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

The Finance Committee had a quorum:

Mary Isaac, Vice Chairman
Dawn Cantafo
Michael Buswell, Alternate
Kevin Shively, Chairman
Nicole Satin

Steve Choi
Joy Colon, Alternate
Tony Scinto

Also present:

First Selectman Vicki Tesoro; Maria Pires, Finance Director; Kathleen McGannon, Chief Administrative Officer; Cynthia Katske, Chief Administrative Officer; Rebeca Lopez, Internal Auditor; Ashley Gaudiano, Town Council Chairman

01011800 Board of Assessment Appeals

Jeff Crow and Tim Cantafo

- We have received a large number of appeal requests, since this is a revaluation year.
- This is a revaluation year, and to date we have 50 requests. Deadline for a request is 3/18/2022.
- The administrative costs with the increase in appeals will also increase and we may need additional funds for FY ending 6/30/2022.
- We don't adjust too many; the Assessor maintains everything and he may go out to reassess the property – 105 or more
- Currently over in legal fees for this year. Legal fees include the legal notices.
- Increase in clerk fees due to increase in meetings.

0101100 Tax Assessor

Maria Pires, Finance Director

- Tax Assessor position was recently filled; the Asst. Tax Assessor is retiring next week; still short 2 positions in department.
- Implemented personal property on-line.
- Upgrade Vision software; waiting for new Tax Assessor to begin; doubtful if it will happened by end of fiscal year. We did not do it last year; we wanted to wait until the valuation was over.
- Will need additional funds in salaries for the new Tax Assessor; unable to attract qualified applicants without raising salary; we were under what other towns will pay. Very specialized position and not many people have the background.
- We budgeted \$135,000 this FY 2022-2023 for attorney fees; \$150,000 for FY 2021-2022 last year.

01015400 Conservation Commission

Mary Ellen Lemay

- 4 new commissioners.
- Finished Resource Inventory to parks Commission and Public Works/Engineering Staff. This was a 2-year process.
- Achieved Silver Certification for Sustainable CT.
- Worked with IWWC in an advisory capacity regarding tree preservation at Moorefield.
- Working on a survey to send to residents asking about how they feel about tree removal and conservation of open spaces in town. Goal to have it sent out by April 1, 2022.
- Based on survey develop outreach to public on best practices for land use brochure, etc.
- Clear cutting tree removal by residents is affecting storm water management in our streets, etc.
- Brochure "Can't Uncut a Tree" for the public to educate them about the value of the trees. Needs funding this year in budget to print and distribute \$3,000. Impact of trees on land use and ground water.
- She is working on a tree replacement plan and wants to present the findings from the Natural Resource Inventory to the plan.
- Begin outreach for Thousand Trees for Trumbull, tree replacement project.
- We really need to begin replacing trees in public right of ways because that manages the storm water and ground water.
- P&Z to update regulations for protection for water systems. Provide for buffers to assist in cleaning Long Island Sound.
- We really do need a full time tree warden.

75501023200 Building Official

Robert Dunn

- Has not changed anything from last year.
- There are new codes taking effect in October 2022 and he will need new codebooks; he gets by with a minimal amount.
- His administrative assistant, Linda, retired and he needs additional help as they are being overwhelmed with permits. He wants Laura to move up into Linda's position and he asked Tom to find an additional position. He has asked Laura to work 40-hours a week, since he has the funds.
- Reached 57% of estimated goal for fee income this year. We have large projects we are working on.
- He did not quite finalize the Veoci on-line permitting software, and there are still a few issues to resolve.
- Continuing Education classes suspended during Covid-19. He will be able to complete classes by August 2022.

01012000 Tax Collector

Donna Pellitteri

- QDS is increasing their fees.
- She is still working to transition from a quarterly payment system to a semi-annual payment system, which would definitely save time.
- CCM Certification now requires 50 credits in 5 years. She will need to become recertified and there are 3 others in the office. The new cashier will need to attend 2 classes per year at \$300 per class for 2 years. No policy for employees to reimburse Town if they do not complete a course.
- Delay in implementing Munis link to QDS due to upgrades to both programs.
- She is still looking into having the taxes paid in 2 installments per year rather than 4 installments and she feels it would be beneficial to the town.
- Revenue collected by collection agencies \$300,000 with \$90,000 in interest.

01014200 Planning and Zoning

Rob Librandi / Rina Bakalar

- Still looking for a full-time administrative assistant and the Blight Enforcement Officer is retiring. Working with HR to get these positions filled so they can continue to function.
- Finalized IL 2 and IL 3 planning studies.
- Starting to digitize all applications and better online presence 75%
- Finalize Zoning Regulations rewrite.

- Still assisting with Stern Village new Grant applications.
- Sustainable CT implementation (Silver Certification) 100%
- Digitizing user friendly checklist for ZBA Application 50%
- Assist in Long Hill Green Municipal Development phases - meet with them every few week 60%
- Conducting Long-Range Development study of upper route 25; lots of activity there
- Trumbull Center study final report 100%
- Plan to update POCD to add recent studies
- Assist with Mall study hopefully coming
- Assist Stern Village on new grant applications
- Assist in Long Hill Green Municipal Development Phases
- Look into a multi modal transportation and sidewalk Master Plan; for commercial developments, the owners are normally responsible for snow removal and maintenance
- Review moratoriums for apartments and revising them to allow other classifications
- Upper 25 - Spring Hill and north to Monroe - request approved regulations for mixed use development; trying to bring everything to street grade and will need a retaining wall, but they will need to come before inlands-wetlands, since partially in Trumbull.
- Trumbull Center presentation review; study by consultants – findings and recommendations for that area. Received an application for Trumbull Center; we will need to see if it complies.
- Rina spoke to the timeframe for the Mall study, indicating that she drafted the RFQ details and the scope of the mall, market feasibility and planning study. We are trying to arrange for funding and we are not able to move forward with the RFQ until the money is under contract.
- She added that the market is demanding change and that is the reason for zoning changes and apartments. This is happening in other areas of the state.
- Zoning changes sought to revitalize underutilized properties north of Spring Hill Road.
- The last building in Woodside is not yet finished, so any vacancies are in this building. Normally the units fill up ahead of their plan and they must wait for the certificates of occupancy. The average family income is \$220,000 per year for the initial 80 units.
- Rob presented to P&Z commission on the service data to date. This includes police, ems, parks, and schools, etc.
- Rob went on to add that certain commercial properties lose value; residential properties gain value.
- Commercial businesses want housing diversity for employees if they consider moving to Trumbull.

01014600 – Economic Development

Rina Bakalar

- The Adopt a Ramp Program - Rina, Dmitri in conjunction with the DOT. She looks for people who want to get involved. New signs are posted only when someone gives up or abandons a site. New mall are – 4 new signs and landscaping.
- Restaurant week - well received and we should be doing it in September/October 2022. She is looking for volunteers. If more money were available, she would like an Economic Development Associate in the Department who could assist her with her projects and push further. She can always use more grants – to help businesses stay open and provide initiatives.
- The administrative position, open in the department 50/50 with P&Z, is currently held by a temporary person.

01022400 – Animal Control

Lynn Della Bianca

- Dog licensing is a problem and we didn't do very well this year. She noted that the Town Clerk prior to Mary Markham stopped sending out reminders. She tries to post signs, since she has trouble getting the word out.
- Some towns are sending out reminders; other town have residents pay online and then send the license after they receive payment.
- We impounded less dogs this year. 44 animals were redeemed that were impounded and 94 animals were adopted.

- When kennel is full, it is very loud and she would like to put up sound barriers in the kennel to keep the noise down. To spend the funds that she collects, from fines and donations, etc., she needs to get permission from the chief. She has approximately \$130,000 +/-, according to Ms. Pires.
- Needs to replace the gravel in the pen area. She needs to replace it every several years. She isn't sure if it is taken out of her budget or if Public Works absorbs the cost.
- Fund raising is on hold due to Covid-19. She expects TAG to start up again.
- She will get back to us regarding the cost of material to soundproof the kennel. 4-5 years ago, she received a quote of \$6,000.

01022000 – Police Department

Michael Lombardo, Chief of Police; Assistant Chief Burns; Lt. Lopes

- He still wants to establish a Citizens Police Academy; a comprehensive 8-10 week course, 4 hours per week that he mentioned in last year's budget.
- Seasoned officers are leaving to work in towns that currently offer a pension.
- Increases in salary due to unions. Overtime amount increase requested due to staffing shortages.
- Requested increase in salary for his executive assistant who is appointed and is not in a union. He is asking for \$2,700 to bring her from \$69,344 to \$72,411.
- Training now has additional requirements and additional testing – drug and steroid usage, and psychological – for every member of the department, for 1/3 of the department each year, and when we send them we need to pay them and backfill their shift. He asked that they do the psychological testing be done at the police department. We are looking to have testing done here or nearby (close).
- 1 vacancy due to the retirement of a sergeant. Not funding that position until January 2023, per the First Selectman's request and he is working with the HR department to have it tested from within, since it must be filled from within. When you give that test, it must be within 90 – 120 days and then you must fill the position within 45 days.
- 6 open positions were reduced from 12 to 6 months in the budget, since it is doubtful we will have candidates within the first 6 months of the budget. Board would prefer to issue a supplemental rather than fully fund the budget for new hires. If we fill the positions, we will come back in July for full funding. We currently have an open position to be filled from within. HR needs to test for this and then fill it within the union timeframe.
- Looking to add 5 new vehicles and currently waiting for 2 hybrid vehicles ordered in September. Assistant Chief Byrnes indicated the benefits for the hybrids being along separate issues for the mechanics to manage. Lieutenant Lopes indicated that the cost to purchase a hybrid is an additional \$3250; the savings in the first year with fuel is \$3,509. The mechanic will need to be trained and might need new tools. The cars are gas electric and therefore there is no electricity charge.
- 3 full vehicle costs would be taken from ARPA, which is \$210,000 and putting one in the budget, for a total of 4 cars. We are not using the special agency account this year.
- The chief indicated that 2 cars being driven by the detectives are very old and one is reaching the end of its life. We continue to spend more and more time and money to keep them on the road. It was noted the detective cars are not as expensive when purchased new as the patrol cars.
- Many of the "outside" programs the Chief has talked about previously have been put on hold. Due to constraints with the work force he has not been able to pursue these. He wants the public to feel that the officers are approachable.

01023400 – Emergency Management

Megan Murphy, Fire Marshal / Emergency Management Director and Andrew Kingsbury, Deputy Director Emergency Management

- Very busy over the last few years dealing with the pandemic and storms coming through.
- Updated the town local emergency plan, which they submitted to the state and it was approved.
- Continue to work with regional partners at the, local, state and federal levels.
- Working with utilities regarding restoration.
- They have been meeting with IT regarding cyber-attacks; working with other municipalities regarding attacks and how they would impact the town.
- Looking to access national weather service; be able to access weather for different sections of Trumbull.

- Overtime salary in the budget is actually a grant to be used for salary of emergency management director and needs to be reinstated.
- Everbridge has changed modeling format so now we need to acquire more credits so we are asking for an increase in the request amount.
- Trailer is going out for additional upgrades and inspections. We had to find a new company to review and we will need a new roof immediately and air conditioning. ARPA funds might cover the cost of a new trailer and it could cost approximately \$400,000. She will get updated numbers.
- Everbridge used to allow us to use as much as needed and now we have to as we go along.
- They will go back 60 months to see when the trailer was used and when we couldn't use it because it wasn't in working order.
- She will take a look to see what grants are available for equipment, etc.
- Need an additional \$1,500 for a weather and lightning detection to be used for the safety of the students who might be the fields at the time. The systems only cover a certain radius, so you do need several.
- Needs iPads to capture data as it occurs, i.e., power outages, fallen trees, etc., when you are out in the field. More reliable than using a cell phone and provide more of what FEMA is looking for.

01022800 Fire Marshal

Megan Murphy, Fire Marshal/ Emergency Management Director

- Continue to promote fire safety in the community.
- Continue to work with getting the permits on-line.
- She asked that the full time Assistant Fire Marshal position be reinstated. Must be a town employee not a consultant.
- We currently have 584 apartments in town that we needed to be inspected. Since then we have are looking at an additional 539 and there are additional 704 in progress or waiting to be approved.
- One building that was 1 year old and was only 40% occupied, had 27 fire violations and one fire. Only a town employee can issue the appropriate citations, etc., that would be needed.
- Apartment building visits are scheduled in advance; however, if they refuse to let you in, you have no recourse unless they refuse twice, and then we can get a warrant. If there is a violation, you need to return and make sure the violations are corrected. This is all very time consuming.
- The building owner is cited for the violations. Since the tenants come and go, the owners do not check to make sure their tenants are in compliance.

01022824 Fire Hydrants

Megan Murphy

- Budget changed; increased from last year to \$1,581,206.

01050000 - Social Services

Michele Jakab

- We are able to serve our clients again with other options during the pandemic.
- We offer Meal on Wheels and we had a grocery bag program for anyone who was a shut-in, but have since discontinued it.
- Through economic development, we now have a food grant for meals.
- We have a grant to assist caregivers and their families.
- We were added two thousand people to our database that we need to connect with and follow up
- We are hiring a social worker.
- We are very lucky to receive donations from the public so we can afford to do for those in need.

01050600 – Senior Services

Michele Jakab

- Dropped state funding and hired a catering service for lunch and the state came back to us with funding since the liked what we were doing.
- The lunch program has been a huge success.
- Slowly adding more seniors each month.

- Received a grant to purchase new furniture during the pandemic.
- Want to focus more on mental health with training for staff.
- Would like to have a full time building attendant to assist.

01013600 –Town Clerk

Mary Markham

- Increased seasonal with \$8,000 for absentee ballot counting.
- E-filing by COTT; all the land records.
- Organized a good portion of the lower vault; ordered new shelving for books and reorganizing books for easier storage.

01040200 – Vital Statistics

Mary Markham

- Reduced program expenses since vitals are in the process of being done on line and we won't have to print as many,
- Increased account 803 since they need more binders for the vitals.

01012600 –Technology

William Chin

- Migrated e-mail server to Microsoft 365; a few problems with staff training but otherwise ok. Blocked more than previous one.
- Very concerned with security over the last few years.
- Introduced an intelligent antivirus software that recognizes characteristics of malware and blocks it.
- Firewalls were updated and Veoci projects are completed.
- Planning and Zoning tracking system to keep track of forms.
- Looking to upgrade our aging video system and upgrade storage.
- Need a dedicated pool vehicle for them to use in town to travel to different buildings. If one of our personal vehicle were damaged, who would be responsible? He has a total of 4 individuals in his department and they try to secure a town vehicle but the process is very time consuming for what they need.
- Not able to live stream from the Council Chambers. This should be addressed in the CTTV budget or the use of ARPA funds.
- Cameras have been added in and around the town buildings; they are monitored but not all are watched all of the time.

01012400 – Town Treasurer

Anthony Musto, Esq.

- Attorney Musto indicated that everything is the same as last year.

01012800 – Attorneys Fees

Daniel Schopick, Esq.

Retainer increased by

- Attorney Schopick indicated that the retainer is \$374,164, an increase of 2.25% from last year, and is split 3 ways. Part of the retainer, \$35,000, is paid by the WPCA.
- \$60,000 is allocated in the budget to hire other attorneys, if needed,
- Bercham & Moses currently handle the tax appeals and they will continue to do so.
- They cover the Town meetings and foreclosures and other matters as they arise.

01010000 Town Council

Maria Pires

- The budgeted amount for professional service shown is used to pay the audit done each year.
- The other fees cover the Council clerk and the cost of posting the legal notices in the newspapers. It was suggested that we stop posting notices in the newspaper and only post on the website; however, it was decided against since there are too many townspeople who do not use computers. The Charter still shows the requirement.

01070000 – Library
Stefan Lyhne-Nielson

- All library functions are up and running since the pandemic. The children's play area and programs are now open so we 100% functional.
- Circulation is nearly at the same level as before the pandemic; we are now averaging 90-95% what we were doing prior to the pandemic.

We are now in the process of organizing a new non-profit Friends group, since the previous group moved on due to the pandemic.

- Cameras have been installed for public safety.
- Looking to coordinate cohesive programming events going forward.
- Looking to increase marketing using software to determine how effect are services are.
- Wants to increase library registrations by at least 10%. We did register new cardholders over the phone during the pandemic but it wasn't the same for the school children who would come on a class trip for a tour during which they get their first library card. This is returning in the Spring.
- Our curbside service went well during the pandemic. He would like to keep up the home delivery program, since it went well during the pandemic and it is good for those who are homebound.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis C. Collier
Phyllis C. Collier
Finance Board Clerk