

TOWN COUNCIL  
**Town of Trumbull**  
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TOWN HALL  
Trumbull

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FINANCE COMMITTEE  
BUDGET HEARING  
MINUTES  
MAY 11, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

The clerk called the roll and recorded it as follows:

PRESENT: Kevin Shively, Chairman, Michael Miller, Vice Chairman, Ashley Gaudiano, Mary Isaac, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, (Arrived at 7:37 p.m.), Tony Scinto and Carole Hans, Alternate

ABSENT: Donna Seidell, Alternate

ALSO

PRESENT: First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Chief Administrative Officers Kathleen McGannon and Cynthia Katske, Town Council members Thomas Whitmoyer, Eric Paulson, Nicole Satin, Patricia Borghesan, Jason Marsh, Bruce Elstein, Director of Finance Maria Pires, Town Attorney James Nugent, Director of Public Works George Estrada, Town Engineer/WPCA Administrator William Maurer, Parks Superintendent Dmitri Paris, Fleet Manager Douglas Bogen, Purchasing Agent Kevin Bova, Nature Commission members, Kevin Mallone, Sheryl Bauman and Emily Sufrin, Laura Walden. Kate Donahue of TCTV, Director of Nurses Lynn Steinbrick, Assistant Registrar Tracy Vonick, Health Director Luci Bango, Dan Neuman of BEI, Don Espach of Tashua Knolls/Golf

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**01060800/Trumbull Community Television** – Ms. Donahue indicated they support the budget as proposed by the BOF. The capital outlay account was changed by the first selectman because Ms. Donahue didn't explain the need. The BOF reinstated the funds for the encoders. TCTV is trying to meet the residents where they are. For most of their history it has been through Charter

or Frontier, as time has gone by people are using many other platforms to watch television programming. The pandemic has accelerated this. The Zoom meetings have been streaming to the TCTV Facebook page so the people can watch live, what they can't do is stream it to the channels which is why they need the encoders. Ms. Donahue shared her screen showing the viewer numbers. They never claimed TCTV has 1,000's of views but she has never seen 400 people at a BOE or Town Council meeting no matter how big the issue was. The numbers show when you give people other ways to see what is happening in government they are tuning in by having the programming delivered by different technologies. They will replace two (2) encoders with one (1), the studio encoder has failed and the Frontier encoder is failing. The new encoder will allow them to stream to Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo. One other line was reduced but they can live with that and asked the committee to please keep the encoder in the budget. The encoder will give them a better ability to stream to cable. We don't have viewer numbers for cable, as people continue to cut cable and move to streaming they will have look at the cable again. We don't pay the cable companies to carry the channel, the people who watch on television are older residents. From the commission's standpoint they want to be able to reach all the residents, maybe in the future it won't be necessary to keep the cable signal, but for now it does make sense. The committee indicated the cable is valuable tool for those that watch television. Ms. Donahue stated explained currently there are three (3) encoders and will go to two (2).

## **Public Works**

**Overview** – Mr. Estrada indicated the adjustments in the budget this year were an effort to establish upward mobility tracks within the Public Works Department. There were several retirements within the last few months. He took that opportunity to readjust positions. The organizational chart changed the most. In the Highway Department, a senior grade maintainer retired at an upper pay scale. The position was reprogrammed into a junior grade maintainer and took the remainder of the salary to adjust Maintainer IV positions, that the current staff in the maintainer II and III positions will have an opportunity to compete for. One of the first things he saw when he came to Public Works was the lack of upward mobility within the ranks. That affects morale and productivity. People who work hard can aspire to a pathway to a better classification. Another adjustment of the reorganization was within the Parks Department. The majority of the Town's tradesmen are in the Parks Department, during the warmer months they are very busy, working on the external facilities, on rainy days the work comes inside, and during the winter the tradesmen come into the buildings where work orders are prioritized unless they are working on snow removal or responding to storms.

Within this budget salaries have been reorganized with guidance from the Finance Department. Salaries are aligned by certain percentages in the Building Maintenance Department and a certain percentage within the Parks Department so they can capture expenses where they actually are occurring.

The final adjustment was within the Fleet Maintenance Department. There was a retirement of one (1) of the senior mechanics and that salary was reduced by one (1) position, because if the Council's support allowing them to modernize the fleet with not as many vehicles over the twenty (20) year mark they are now in an aggressive pm program and are no longer reacting to constant collapse of the fleet. The Fleet Maintenance team has shifted to aggressive maintenance to

preserve the integrity of the fleet and were able to reduce one (1) position there and shift it to creating pathways in the Highway Maintenance Department so the team members in the lower classification have areas where they could be elevated to.

**01030100-501105/Highway Salaries Overtime** – An adjustment will be put forth next month for some of the accounts because they will be close to expending them or slightly over. They are looking at closing the gaps within the budget.

**01030100-581888/Highway Capital Outlay** – The Chair noted the first selectman reduced this account. Mr. Estrada explained they did put off a couple of purchases because they would not be critical to the coming year operations. They consulted with the Fleet Maintenance Department and felt comfortable they could support their functions one more year. Mr. Estrada thinks they will be fine.

**01030400-501105/Recycling Center** – Mr. Estrada explained that once they make the physical adjustments at the Transfer Station we should see some way to alleviate lines and have a smoother operation. The recycling area will be an area that has regulations and mandates that change annually. They are constantly adjusting to meet state requirements. Overtime he hopes this year they will slow down at the Transfer Station. Last year due to COVID-19 they were averaging 700-800 cars per day and as high as 1200 cars per day. Two weeks ago during the middle of the week they had over 1,000 cars. They are still running far beyond where they were a couple of years ago. He anticipates as things normalize and people have more to do things will taper off.

### **Enterprise Fund**

**20100000/WPCA** – The Chair indicated the BOF put back some money for Svcs/Fees - Professional.

Mr. Maurer explained the BOF put back \$50,000 for the alternate flow they are investigating. They are looking for alternate places for Trumbull's wastewater other than Bridgeport. Mr. Estrada explained the first selectman had charged them to investigate all opportunities that would be in the best interest of Trumbull ratepayers. They continue to investigate, they began before he came to Trumbull. There has been an assessment and data collection to explore their options. This supports the on-going investigation, which requires expertise from consultants and engineering firms. The Chair indicated this has been the first selectman's agenda for some time to try to alleviate some of the high costs our residents pay compared to other places in the state. The Chair spoke in favor of this.

**010080400 Recreation** – The Chair indicated there were no changes.

Mr. Paris confirmed the numbers assume everything is open and all programming is in place. They are optimistic, anything they can run they will try to. It seems that a lot of it is going to come together well but also know a lot of the expenses associated with everything they budgeted for a year ago just don't relate. It's an operating budget and they will work within to the best of their abilities and keep it as tight as they can.

**01080800-Parks** – The Chair indicated the BOF had made a salary adjustment in Parks.

**01080800/Tree Warden** – Mr. Paris explained there was a mini part-time position originally created to assist in the U.I. Enhancement Tree program. That has been eliminated and now have a second permanent part-time tree warden. We have two (2) going into the next budget and hopes the additional hours will allow for a lot more service completed within the system. This is an improvement from where they were.

**01010000/Town Council** – Ms. Pires explained they went out to bid for the auditor, two (2) bids came in, either one will be \$10,000 over the current year.

**01010200/Ethics** – No changes. No questions.

**01010400/First Selectman's Office** – Ms. Katske explained the increase was the salary of the administrative assistant based upon the job importance and duties, there is a companion increase in the administrative assistant to the Chief of Police. They do not get step increases because they are not union, this keeps them in line with other administrative assistants' salaries.

**01010800/Elections** – The Chair indicated there were no changes by the BOF. No questions.

**01040000/Health** – Ms. Bango explained they had a few changes: Permanent Part-time line item decreased. They eliminated two (2) of the part-time nursing positions to make the part-time nurse a fulltime permanent position. They need her there due to COVID-19. Many of the duties of the part-time nurses were funded with the state grant program;

Another change is an increase to the seasonal temporary line item to allow them to hire a person to oversee the budget, the grants and all of the financials and a part-time position to do COVID enforcement, and;

Another increase is the contractual services line item to hire a billing company to handle the COVID vaccine. They administered 10,000 vaccines and are able to bill \$40 for the first and second dose. They don't have anyone to do that in-house. This has the potential to take in a lot of revenue. Those are the major changes

Ms. Bango explained they are currently using grant money for other positions, in the near future they will most likely be administering the COVID vaccine and need someone there permanently until things settle down. The increases are outside of the grant money they have received. The Chair indicated the Town has over 70% of people who at least have one dose of the vaccine and 55% is fully vaccinated which is a testament to Ms. Bango and her staff's hard work.

**01015800/Transit District** – No questions.

**01011000/Finance Department** – No changes and no questions.

**01013800/Town Hall** – No changes and no questions.

**01011400/Board of Finance** – No changes and no questions

**01012200/Purchasing** – Mr. Bova indicated for many years they have always wanted a fully staffed Purchasing Department, (three people). He extended his gratitude to the Town Council as he did get a part-time person who is working out very well, but with the amount of work due to COVID along with the BOE and Stern Village they are using over-time to meet the needs and services of the town.

He has some suggestions for the Town Council to think about, not for this year but in the future. If we wanted to do this right we could be overlooking the BOE and help them understand the purchasing policy and procedures. He has had training with the BOE but there is still a lot missing on that side. There was an external audit and currently there is an internal audit. He believes the town purchasing could help them if they were staffed or funded more. They could have great purchasing for both the town and the BOE.

For this budget, the only increase is his over-time. There will be a new Purchasing Policy introduced that allows for cooperative bidding systems we would join those so those prices may increase, but for right now the budget is fine. One day he would like to get to the point of where they should be. He has a high goal on how he wants to operate. All the end users all know how much comes through purchasing and believes the Council is listening. The Chair indicated this is something they will need to continue to look at in the years ahead.

Mr. Bova explained Stern Village receives a Small Cities grant and, they are good at applying for the grant through Rina Bakalar and they keep getting more, they are on their 5<sup>th</sup> project. They are doing the congregate boiler system, and ADA bathroom. This is something he does to help and facilitate. It is a great service. They do put a lot of time and effort into Stern Village and he is glad to do it. They have helped the Kennedy Center when they got a grant, Engineering helped them. Ms. McGannon noted they were not applying for the Small Cities grant this year.

## **Nurses**

**01040400/Nursing/Senior Wellness** – The Chair noted no BOF changes. No questions.

**01060200/School Nurses** – Ms. Steinbrick asked for a salary increase to be more competitive with area towns. Prior to this request, we are second to lowest in the region with Stratford being the lowest. With this increase, we will be on par with 4-5 other districts that we have lost nurses to in the past.

**01050200/Mary J. Sherlach Counseling Center** – There was a BOF increase for Svcs/Fees.

Ms. Steinbrick explained they were down a counselor due to a retirement, but as for accessing services they saw a brief decrease when COVID started because they weren't running a virtual platform but have started to since, which has helped tremendously and did phone sessions and

they were the first to come back to in-person sessions. Sometimes you need to be face-to-face with people. They have been very busy lately and it is a perfect time for their new person to start. Many people in Trumbull don't realize they have a counseling center in town until they have a problem, they do reach out to the community. It is always in their minds to get the word out. It was suggested they give a presentation to the Town Council so they could spread the word as well.

Ms. Steinbrick there are FEMA funds, many of the post COVID grants are for schools not counseling centers. The center does have some regular grants they apply for when they offered, they always are looking for grant opportunities.

**01060600/BEI** –No questions

### **Enterprise Fund**

**Fund21/Golf** – The Chair noted there were no changes. Mr. Espach explained their budget has modestly increased. It is a mandated salary increase, minimum wage increases and a couple of small projects but essentially similar to last year and previous years' budget. No questions.

**01010100/Nature Commission** – No changes and no questions.

**01080300/Trumbull Day** – Ms. McGannon promised she would not overspend, the budget is okay and confirmed there is a special agency account with funds. \$20,000 is for the fireworks, she thought they paid half last year but in fact they did not pay anything. The special agency account balance is approximately \$40,000 representing a surplus from prior years.

**01080000/Public Events** – No changes

**01090000/Debt Service** – No changes. Ms. Pires explained the budget went up 3%, a portion will be from refunding, and they were going to collect from haulers and a portion was going to come from the general fund. They eliminated trash hauler collection and taking from the general fund because of the grant money received.

First Selectman Tesoro explained part of the issue is the loss of revenue; the treasury department is addressing communities, municipalities, cities and towns' loss of revenue. We like everyone else lost a considerable amount of revenue due to COVID-19. We hope that as the economy improves we will make up the loss of revenue in time. It will not happen overnight and it may not happen next year, hopefully it will the following year. It will gradually improve.

Ms. Pires explained the loss of revenue as follows:

- Last year = Tax appeals

- This year primarily programming
- EMS revenue was down due to COVID as they were not transporting as many people.
- Some of the permitting
- Town Clerk's Revenue was way above budget.

The loss in revenue is approximately \$1.2 million

Ms. Pires will provide a spreadsheet.

**Revenues/Various** – Interest rates are down and lost approximately \$1 million. Ms. Pires will provide the revue report to the committee.

The Chair announced the Public Hearing on the budget is scheduled for May 15, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to discuss and upon motion made by Rosasco-Schwartz and seconded by Gaudio the Finance Committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Margaret D. Mastroni, Council Clerk