

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Finance and the
Board of Finance Budget Review Meeting

Town Hall – April 18, 2016

Members present: Justin Donnelly, Ryan Anderson (via teleconference), Chris Childs, Eric Harrington, Dr. Ann Huntington Mickelson and Brian Kost. Alternates present: Tracy Eccles and John Sullivan. Alternate J. Michael Stevens was also present via teleconference.

Also present: First Selectman Melissa Mack, Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato, and Economic Development Director Patrick McMahon.

Chairman Donnelly called the Special Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion and possible action regarding the Utility Expansion Project

Director of Economic Development Patrick McMahon was in attendance and explained that the Town secured a \$980,000 state grant to design and install water and sewer main extensions along Route 75 in our light-industrial zone by Bradley International Airport in 2012. The project design was completed by Cardinal Engineering. The Town received three bids for the first phase of the project and the balance of the state grant after design is not sufficient to complete this phase. The lowest bid total was for \$1,067,141.25. The Urban Act Grant balance is \$880,000. Additional funding of \$187,141.25 will be required to move forward with the awarding of the construction contract. With the State's increased focus on Bradley International Airport as an economic driver, the Economic Development Commission sees this utility extension project as a tool that will bring new business and as a result increase State and Town tax revenue and produce quality jobs for the region.

The current water line ends just south of the Mach One Industrial Park. The sewer line ends on the northern boundary of a Town-owned 63 acre parcel across from the airport's Perimeter Road. The first phase of the project consists of installation of about 1,720 l.f.(linear feet) of 12" water main within the Rte. 75 Right-of-Way from a point south of Mach One to the project limits (approximately station 32). The majority of this water main is within the existing pavement of Rte. 75. In addition, about 1,200 l.f. of 8" sanitary sewer pipe and 5 manholes will be installed from the connection point in an existing sewer manhole located in an overland utility easement crossing the Town property. From the existing manhole connection, the sewer pipe will cross southwesterly through a wooded area on Town property until it reaches Rte. 75. It then continues south within a private easement on the property of #1160 South Street until ending at the project limits (approximately station 32).

The state grant budget period runs through December 31, 2016. We would expect to award the project in May with a June construction start date.

Mr. Kost remarked that the project was intended to be grant funded with no expenditure from the Town but now it appears that the town would be liable for 16% of the project. He suggested that this be funded by the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA). Mr. McMahon replied that the \$980,000 request was based on a 2008 estimate. He also noted that this is a sewer and water project so it would not be only WPCA. Chairman Donnelly suggested a possible cost share. Mr. Childs asked if the Town would lose the funding if not completed by year end. Mr. McMahon said that the money must be spent by calendar year end. First Selectman Mack added that the project is important from an economic

development perspective. Mr. Childs agreed that the town portion is a small amount to encourage economic development. Chairman Donnelly suggested that Mr. McMahon approach the WPCA for their consideration.

Mr. Kost made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Harrington. By unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

At 7:08 p.m. Chairman Donnelly called the Budget Review Meeting to order.

Citizen Comment

Darlene Burrell of 623 Forrest Road spoke in support of the original Police Department budget submission. She said the police department is minimally reactive and requested enough funding to become proactive. She spoke of drug problems in town and a 16% increase in property crimes which can be partially attributed to drug issues. Mrs. Burrell cited survey results from 1980 that showed the need for 3 patrolmen on the road at one time. She also noted a 29% increase in police calls over the past couple of years.

Nancy Gegesky of 171 Jackson Drive said she was not here to support the officers but rather here for them to support us. She said citizens want more officers and a dedicated narcotics officer. She praised the emergency services and asked the board to reconsider possible cuts and instead increase their funding.

Lauren Life of 2910 Mountain Road handed out pages of the Bridge Street School Community Center business plan. She pointed out that the plan (dated February 2015) showed Hazmat costs to be assumed by the owner (Town of Suffield). She noted that the capital plan dated 3/13/15 included \$450,000 for hazmat remediation irrespective of the disposition of the building. The amount had been removed on a spreadsheet dated 7/21/15. She said that it was irresponsible not to fund the abatement somewhere in the budget.

Shannon Adams of Griffin Road said that the state cuts to Social services and mental health will trickle down to the towns. She added that there is a drug problem in the schools. She said ignoring it will cost a lot more money and damage to our community.

Matt Joyal of 365 Babbs Road identified himself as a former Police Commissioner. He thanked the Board of Finance (BOF) for their dedication and effort. Mr. Joyal said that he is concerned for officer safety and that Suffield has the lowest headcount of officers in the towns around us and a large geographic area. He asked that the budget be funded at 100% and suggested that reducing it was importing a lot of risk on ourselves.

Nancy Gegesky read a statement from Jackie Mahannah of 50 Diane Lane which said she was in full support of the police budget and believes they should become accredited to reduce the risk of lawsuits.

Gary Lamagna of 831 River Blvd urged the BOF to protect the Bridge Street School building and repurposing should go forward. He also suggested that the town should not be penny wise and pound foolish regarding Police and Fire spending.

Lindsey Burrell of 400 Halladay Drive described the five common staffing calculation methods and said that Suffield is well below the calculated minimum of officers for 4 out of 5 of the methods. She also was in favor of the narcotics officer.

Richard Burrell of 623 Forrest Road said that the Police Department has emerged from past problems and asked to keep that forward trajectory going.

Correspondence:

Chairman Donnelly acknowledged correspondence received from Kate Rietberg, Beth Chafetz and Jeanne Gee.

Overall Budget Review:

Chairman Donnelly suggested that the Police budget be discussed first.

Dr. Mickelson made a motion to approve the Police Budget as presented by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Childs seconded the motion. Captain Brown passed out the schedule form and described how the proposed positions would impact it. First Selectman Mack pointed out that the proposal included an additional narcotics officer, a records clerk and the promotion of one officer to the rank of sergeant. Captain Brown discussed the need to move towards accreditation and that the proposed positions provided opportunities to attain that goal. Mr. Harrington and Mr. Anderson said they had tried to do analysis of staffing and requested more information from Captain Brown. Ms. Eccles was in favor of more officers and suggested that the department manage the costs by having a younger force, slower promotions and keep down the entitlements. She requested information on how Suffield officer seniority compared to other towns. Captain Brown said that other nearby towns have better collective bargaining contracts. Mr. Anderson pointed out that an additional officer was approved two years ago to help with overtime issues. He said he would like to understand the staffing model coupled with overtime so he could understand and support their request. First Selectman Mack said she's been in discussions with Windsor Locks and East Granby to regionalize Animal Control which would save money. Mr. Childs asked Superintendent Berasi about the drug problem in the schools and she replied that k-9 sweeps have not found drugs in the high school but acknowledged that there are students addicted to heroin.

Chairman Donnelly called for a vote and the motion to approve the Police Budget as presented by the Board of Selectmen passed unanimously.

Chairman Donnelly said that currently the governor's budget shows a net reduction of \$637,000 to Suffield. He added that we do not receive aid from the state but a return of some of the funds we send to the state in the form of sales tax and income tax.

Director of Finance Cerrato passed out a list of changes that needed to be addressed including changes in Animal control operations. First Selectman Mack said that by regionalizing that function we could eliminate the Animal Control budget of \$62,162; add \$20,000 to the contracted services line of the Selectmen budget to cover regional costs; and remove the \$16,000 in revenue we currently receive from East Granby for animal control services.

Mr. Kost made a motion to remove \$16,000 of revenue, reduce the Animal Control budget from \$62,162 to \$0 and increase Selectmen contracted services by \$20,000. Dr. Mickelson seconded the motion. First Selectman Mack said that the state is urging towns to find regionalization opportunities and Windsor

Locks has a new facility with capacity. Chairman Donnelly called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Other changes on Ms. Cerrato's list were considered minor and were not acted on.

Mr. Harrington discussed adding an item for Risk Assessment. Discussion then turned to the insurance fund. Mr. Kost said that we had an anticipated \$1M surplus to the end of the fiscal year. He made a motion to reduce the insurance contributions in next year's budget by \$300,000 with \$225,000 for the Board of Ed and \$75,000 for the town. The motion was seconded by Mr. Harrington. School Business Administrator Bill Hoff said this is a risk but didn't disagree with the idea. He said that most employees are now on a Health Savings Account and they may be reaching their deductibles and the town costs may increase through the end of the fiscal year. He also said that there is an increased cost to the budget for the stop loss insurance of about \$90,000. Mr. Kost changed his motion to modify the amounts to \$95,000 for the Town and \$205,000 for the Board of Education based on the Finance Director's analysis. Mr. Harrington seconded the modified motion. Chairman Donnelly called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding fire trucks began with First Selectman Mack supporting holding off on funding through capital but said there needs to be a plan on how to finance and replace the apparatus. Mr. Childs and Chief Flynn discussed possible financing options and project timing.

Mr. Kost made a motion to move the budget to Public Hearing for discussion. There was no second.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to transfer \$175,000 from the unassigned fund balance as a revenue source for the budget. Mr. Kost seconded the motion. The board is trying to keep the budget increase at Consumer Price Index (CPI) and there was discussion about what the proper CPI level should be used. Mr. Childs suggested that the five year plan recommends capital expenditures and debt service to be 11% of the budget and that this proposed budget was below that number(9.5%). He recommended that \$450,000 be added to the capital budget for environmental radiation of the Bridge Street School to stay within the 11% range.

Chairman Donnelly called for a vote on Mr. Anderson's motion to transfer \$175,000 from the unassigned fund balance as a revenue source. The motion passed by a vote 4-2 with Mr. Childs and Dr. Mickelson voting against.

Mr. Childs made a motion to add \$450,000 to the capital budget to be funded from the unassigned fund balance for environmental remediation for Bridge Street School. Dr. Mickelson seconded the motion. The motion failed in a 3-3 vote with Chairman Donnelly, Mr. Childs and Dr. Mickelson voting in favor and Mr. Anderson, Mr. Harrington, and Mr. Kost voted against.

Mr. Kost made a motion to submit the budget with a 1.51% increase to a Public Hearing. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 4-2 vote with Mr. Childs and Dr. Mickelson voting against the motion.

Chairman Donnelly noted that this is based on the governor's most recent aid figures.

The total proposed budget is \$57,257,670, a 1.51% increase over current year and would yield a mill rate of 28.20.

Dr. Mickelson made the motion to adjourn and Mr. Harrington seconded the motion. By unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Trase