

Town of Sherman
Board of Selectman Budget Hearing
Wednesday March 24, 2021 at 7pm
Via ZOOM Teleconferencing

Member's Present: First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Kevin Keenan, and Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Member's Absent: None

Audience & Invited: Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, Superintendent Jeff Melendez, Chair of the BOE Kasey Diotte, representatives from the school administration, and residents from the community

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

First Selectman Don Lowe called the budget hearing meeting to order at 7pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Selectman Bob Ostrosky began the meeting by reminding those participating to remain on mute and to direct any comments/questions to the chat that he will monitor.

First Selectman Don Lowe opened the meeting by addressing one outstanding piece of the budget's business that needs approval from the BOS, in regards to adding cyber insurance to the Town's policy. The Board, along with Treasurer Eric Holub and Business Manager Liz LaVia, began discussion on adopting the policy. All parties agreed that having the added benefit of Ransomware and insurance at an added cost outweighs the potential of any serious attacks in the future. The added expense to the budget amounted to \$10,373 for the year.

After the Board settled the conversation pertaining to cyber insurance, First Selectman Don Lowe shifted the conversation to a review of the Town Budget. He noted the overall budget increased by \$171,858, a 3.5% increase. Factors that contributed to the increase were driven by a \$60,000 increase in the Town's debt principle, recycling fees increased, CLA is asking for a 16% increase in their budget, collective bargaining salary and fringe adjustments along with a 3% salary increase for Town employees, and the Town Trooper had a 6% increase. First Selectman Don Lowe turned over the conversation to the respective Selectman for further discussion.

Discussion: Selectman Bob Ostrosky commented that the summary provide by First Selectman Don Lowe was thorough and that he appreciated the hard work from all parties involved in the submitting process. Selectman Kevin Keenan added that he was also aligned with comments.

Following the discussion on the Town Budget, Treasurer Eric Holub reviewed the proposed revenue budget highlights stating that the Grand List increased 2.6% for the year. The Town will generate more revenue at the current mill rate from the grand list increase. Permits and fees

are also showing strength from real estate activity, and the Town is projecting the strength of the market to continue into the new fiscal year. Inversely, interest income will be down due to very low interest rates. The BOS favors moving T-Mobile Cell Tower revenue out of the General Fund and into HAF Operating account and using \$35K from the HAF Trust for Property Management fees. That should provide approximately \$60K for HAF operating expenses for the 2021/2022 fiscal year. Further, the BOS is in favor of pre-K tuition being left in the revenue stream and asking Social Services Director to review need based tuitions waivers for those seeking help. Also, Park and Rec camp and swimming revenue has been down due to Covid and he is not projecting a full recovery for this summer in the revenue budget. The BOS desires to reduce the Mill Rate 2% year-to-year leaving the budget out of balance by approximately \$300K. This would be covered from the accumulated General Fund balance (surplus). In addition, the BOS favor moving \$900K from the General Fund balance to the CNR for BOE projects- playground and building renovations/repairs/updates.

First Selectman Don Lowe opened up the meeting to the public for questions. None were presented.

At this point, the BOE has been given the floor to present their budget. Chair Kasey Diotte began by thanking the BOS and Treasurer Eric Holub for participating in the school's budget workshops. She went on to quote the school's net budget request at \$9,380,166 which reflects a 0% increase to the Town. She then turned over the presentation to Superintendent Jeff Melendez and his administrative colleagues.

Superintendent Jeff Melendez presented a comprehensive PowerPoint, identifying and discussing the school's primary objectives and costs. Assistant Principal Brian Kalkreuth and Keri Snowden, Director of Curriculum, provided an overview of the steps the school took to manage the educational atmosphere and innovations provided to create a safe and balanced environment for all students. The school administrator's presenting highlighted all the steps they are taking as an administration to provide the best education at no added expense to the residents. In partnership with the BOE, the school provided information specifically targeting the needs and expenses associated with creating a balanced budget.

First Selectman Don Lowe thanked the BOE for their commitment to the Town and families, providing a level of care and intricacy to community. He then opened up discussion to the public for questions. No questions were submitted.

Chair of the BOE Kasey Diotte thanked the BOS for considering waiving tuition for families in need in Sherman. The BOS's proposal to provide a plan for those families in need serves as the intended goal of the BOE to provide universal pre-K to residents. First Selectman Don Lowe commented that the BOS is in process with the Social Services Director to provide guidelines for qualifications.

Lastly, First Selectman Don Lowe took the opportunity to thank his colleagues, Selectman Bob Ostrosky and Kevin Keenan. He also thanked Business Manager Liz LaVia and Treasurer Eric

Holub. He expressed his gratitude for everyone's hard work and ability to work well together. The annual budget meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 24, 2021 at 10am. No other comments.

Motion: The Board of Selectman, acting as the board of finance, accepts the following budgets: Town Budget for \$5,038,141, and the BOE Budget for \$9,380,166 for a combined budget of \$14, 418,307 and bring to Town Meeting at the BOS meeting on March 25, 2021.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Meeting adjourned by First Selectman Don Lowe at 7:55 pm.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on March 28, 2021.