

**Town of Sherman**  
**Board of Selectman Budget Workshop**  
**Wednesday March 10, 2021 at 7pm**  
**Via ZOOM Teleconferencing**

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

**Member's Absent:** None

**Audience & Invited:** Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, and residents from the community

**Clerk:** Margaret Beatty

Meeting began at 7:02 pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky reiterated his customary public service announcement, reminding listeners to remain on mute and forward any comments or questions to the chat.

The meeting began with conversation addressing open budget line items that were tabled during the Monday March 8, 2021 budget workshop meeting.

**Planning & Zoning: LUEO Mileage-** Business Manager Liz LaVia read a letter submitted by the Town's Land Use officer request to increase his mileage budget. In his letter, he gave an in-depth justification ranging from increased vehicle maintenance to the increased need for Town inspections. He also suggested the purchase of a shared Town vehicle that would alleviate the use of his private vehicle for Town work. The Board will circle back to the topic later in the meeting. BOS revisited the request and unanimously denied the increase citing in part, mileage calculation of existing stipend equating to +3500 miles per year. In addition, Selectman Ostrosky pointed out that using his own vehicle was the understanding when Mr. Cooper took the job.

**Emergency Services: ESF Contracted Services** line item will be renamed as ESF Facilities Management. The position will no longer be considered an outside service position but as an employee managed department.

**Social Services: Social Services Clerical Wages-** Business Manager Liz LaVia read a letter submitted by the Social Services Director illustrating the need for the wage increase, highlighting the extensive work entailed in the position. The Director also highlighted that the position is not clerical, the position involves interacting with the public on confidential and sensitive issues daily. Lastly, the Social services Director added that the position should be titled administrative assistant rather than clerical. All Selectman were in favor of 6% increase and amendment of job description to follow.

First Selectman Don Lowe provided an update regarding the surrounding lakes Towns acceptance of the CLA budget. He reported that he was able to get a response from 2 of the Towns, New Milford and Brookfield, and commented that both Towns were in agreement with the budget presented. He also provided an update regarding the possibility of splitting the General Fund and the Happy Acres trust fund to pay for operating expenses and contracted Services. The opinion of the Town attorney stated that the farm manager can be paid out of the Happy Acres restricted fund.

First Selectman Don Lowe added that the Commission on Aging was concerned that their budget was reflected in the Senior Center's budget and not as its own entity. Topic will be discussed later into the meeting. Topic revisited and the BOS left the decision up to the Business Manager who was not in favor. She noted that all expenses incurred by the COA are completely independent of the Senior Center and vice versa, and that long time reporting in this manner would be cumbersome to break out and change. The COA is unique from other Commissions in that their mission supports the Senior Center ( a regular operating department of the Town).

**Discussion:** The Board began discussing the open budget items.

**LUEO Mileage-** The Selectman decided to keep the mileage at the current \$2000 stipend.

**Social Services Clerk-** The Selectman were all in agreement in keeping the wage increase at 6%.

**ESF Contracted Services-** The Board agreed with the renaming to ESF Facilities Management.

**CLA-** The Selectman agreed to fund the CLA General fund at \$99,281 and \$40,000 in the Capital Plan. The Selectman also were in agreement to follow up with the CLA and confirm that with the requested budget that services are being provided.

**Insurance/Employee Benefits-** The topic of employee contributions to the non-union health premium was tabled from the prior meeting. First Selectman Don Lowe commented that it should stay funded as is at 14%. The Board agreed.

Business Manger Liz LaVia added that she is still waiting for the numbers from CIRMA for the cyber policy so the budget line under insurance remains open until the figures are added. She also raised concerns on the possibility of utility increases from Eversource, the Town budgeted conservative electric rates that might not reflect the possible utility increases.

**Commission on Aging-** The commission was concerned that the funding provided to them would be shared with the Senior Center activities. The Selectman decided to keep as a line item in the Senior Center and confirm with the commission that their budget would stay strictly for them.

Business Manager Liz LaVia took a moment to inform the Board that in the near future the Town will have to begin transitioning 30% of their heavy duty trucks, buses to electric by 2030 as per the Zero Emissions Vehicle memorandum.

**Happy Acres:** The Selectman, Treasurer Eric Holub, and Business Manager Liz LaVia engaged in discussion on how to pay the Farm Manager's salary and operating expenses at the farm. All parties agreed that the expenses would be split, salary for the farm manager of \$35,000 would come from the Happy Acres trust, the operating expenses for the farm would be covered by the T-Mobile cell payments at \$26,000, and the cell payments from AT&T would go into the general fund. All predicated on approval at a Town meeting.

The Board began discussion on the Board of Education budget which was discussed at the last budget workshop meeting.

**Board Of Education-** Board of Education Chair Kasey Diotte was present during the meeting and spoke briefly of the budget. The Board was in agreement to keep the standing present budget. The school requested budget will remain flat at \$9,380,166.

Treasurer Eric Holub did comment on whether the Fire Marshal wages line was settled. The Selectman each replied that the sample report provided by Business Manager Liz LaVia helped them settle any questions related to the line.

**Capital Fund Plan:** The budget will stay funded at \$500,000. The Board, Treasurer, and Business Manager deliberated about the wish list/ projects that would be funded by the plan in this current year:

**Public Works:** 1) Kubota tractor \$15,000

2) chipper \$40,000

3) trailer \$6,000

4) mower \$6,000

5) F550 truck \$70,000

6) refurbish tanker \$28,000

**ESF:** 1) replace tile in Charter Hall \$14,000

And in the 2021/2022 Fiscal Year the following projects are slated:

**Public Works:** 1) replace International 4700 truck \$200,000

**ESF:** 1) Painting of interior of Charter Hall \$15,000

2) repair divider \$3,000

3) replace sanitizer \$8,000

**SVFD:** 1) purchase tri-band radios \$20,000

2) replace SBCA packs \$32,483

**BOE:** 1) repairs and renovation \$550,000

2) playground \$350,000

**Misc:** 1) CLA- boat \$30,000 and misc \$10,000

2) bridges under 20ft certification \$7,000

All projects are subject to change and would need Town approval at referendum.

Treasurer Eric Holub also added that the Town has a healthy surplus in which he suggested putting some of the funds to buy down the Mill Rate. First selectman Dom Lowe suggested reducing the Mill Rate by 2% which would in turn translate in lower taxes for residents. All Selectman were aligned.

Business Manager Liz LaVia suggested moving up the next budget hearing to March 24, 2021 as opposed to March 31<sup>st</sup> so that the budget can be moved to the BOS monthly meeting so that it can ultimately be moved to referendum. All parties are able to meet March 24, 2021 at 7pm. The BOS regular monthly meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2021 at 7pm. Nixles will be sent warning meetings.

Selectman Kevin Keenan moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm.

**Motioned by:** Selectman Kevin Keenan

**Seconded by:** First Selectman Don Lowe      **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on March 17, 2021.

