

Town of Sherman
Board of Selectman Budget Workshop
March 7, 2022 at 7 pm
Mallory Town Hall

Member's Present: First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Bob Ostrosky, and Selectman Joel Bruzinski

Member's Absent: None

Audience & Invited: Treasurer Eric Holub (joined via ZOOM), Business Manager Liz LaVia, BoE member Kasey Diotte and Tim Laughlin, and spokespersons from the Library.

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

The meeting began with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance Followed by First Selectman Don Lowe calling the meeting to order at 7:12 pm.

First Selectman Don Lowe opened the meeting by confirming the meeting is a workshop to discuss the budget of 2022/2023. He then turned the meeting to Treasurer Eric Holub to discuss revenue.

Treasurer Eric Holub began by confirming the Town's revenue situation is very good all driven by the real estate market. He noted the Grand List increased by 4.3% which is driven by the increase in the property's value creating supplemental income tax. He also noted that permits will be over budget by \$150,000, \$132,000 are building permits, as well as property tax over by \$262,000. He projected that Town Clerk will be over budget by \$182,000, a result of large real estate transactions and conveyance tax. He concluded that a tremendous real estate market is driving the revenue. He also commented that the Town was given \$70,000 in FEMA grants which has contributed to the increase in revenue, the Town does not budget for FEMA grants.

Selectman bob Ostrosky asked if the conveyance was attributed to one large property or a bunch of properties. Mr. Holub replied that it was a combination of many large properties.

Treasurer Eric Holub used input from this year's estimate, input from departments, the state's formula that the Governor's budget publishes, 5 year averages to estimate what the projected revenue would be for the following year. He concluded that the Mill Rate would be calculated by the new Grand List and a 99.5% Town collection rate, resulting in a preliminary Mill Rate of 18.150% which is a reduction of 2.63% from last year.

Mr. Holub noted that the BOE is discussing moving the Pre-K tuition revenue out of the revenue budget and use as an offset to their spending along with the tuition generated by children attending the school whose parents are educators.

Board of Ed member Tim Laughlin added that the school wanted to streamline the revenue generated from both Pre-K and students whose parents are faculty members and have it reflect

in the schools budget. Kasey Diotte also commented that the revenue generated from Pre-K tuition was a line budget item under the school budget the money could then be used to fund for more exploratory programs offered to students, such as PEEPS.

Mr. Holub outlined that the revenue generated from the AT&T tower supplements the General Fund and that T-Mobile revenue supplements the Happy Acres Operating Fund to pay for property manager.

Total income generated for the Town is split between property taxes and non-property taxes. A healthy revenue reserve help keep taxes low especially with current high inflation rates.

Library: The library requested an increase in budget to accommodate an increase in staffing. Covid deterred in-person fundraising contributing to an increase in budget request. Selectman still pondering increase, will revisit later in workshop.

Selectman's Office: Due to the abrupt resignation of the Town's auditor, there will be an increase in expenses under audit line of the Selectman's office. Business Manager Liz LaVia is in works of contacting auditing companies. The school will split the fees incurred of the auditor with the Town. The salaries line increases 3%.

Treasurer: Lines stays flat other than 3% salary increase.

Tax Collector Office: Mostly flat, increase in line for Dues/Meetings.

Town Clerk Office: No changes except for salary increases, keeping request of fees for meeting in anticipation for more in-person meetings.

Assessors Office: No changes other than 3% salary increases and increase in required field work/meetings.

Board of Assessment Appeals: No change.

Building Department: Increase in building Inspector salary, which is offset by revenue, and 3% increases in salary for department Administrative Asst. The rest of the budget is flat.

Planning & Zoning Department: Land Use Enforcement Officer requested a 5% increase in salary to be more in-line with other salaries but will be filled at 3% to be in-line with typical union increases, increase for state mandated training. Board is entertaining increase for mileage stipend due to increase in price of gas but will eliminate the \$40,000 for a requested new vehicle. The Selectman will revisit stipend gas mileage for other departments that receive a gas stipend.

Zoning Board of Appeals: Increase for continuing education line, as well as legal notice.

Inland Wetlands Department: No changes except for 3% salary increases for administrative assistant.

Counsel & Court Costs: Town Court is flat, Land Use requested an additional \$4000 in anticipation of POCD review, and Counsel & Court Litigation requested an additional \$6000 due to litigation in appellate court. The Board agreed to keep the budget line flat under Land Use and Counsel & Court.

Registrars Dept.: Increase in salaries line because of new registrars, increase in training and fees.

Memberships: WestCOG requested a \$4.00 increase, COST and CCM are flat.

Consultants: HVA requested a \$50 increase, Northwest Conservation District no change, POCD requested \$8,000 for a 10 year updated plan, Engineering Consultants no change, stays at \$5000.

General Government: Increase in supply line for QuickBooks/envelopes/toner/misc. Postages and Legal Notices stays flat.

Town Hall Technology: 3% salary increase for administrator, increase in contracts due to the requested GIS system which would replace the field card system at a cost of a \$1300.

Facilities: Increase in heating oil/utilities costs, increase in phone expenses due to increased rates, and no change in maintenance.

Public Safety: Fire Marshal requested a \$3000 increase in expense line, major increase in Paramedic Intercept due to new contracts, Resident Trooper salary increase due to wage step increase and factor in overtime and fringe benefits, salary increase for Fire Marshal.

ESF Operating: increase in utilities expenses because of rise in heating oil, facilities maintenance increase of \$5000 to offset any problems.

SVFD Operating: Increase due to contracts/dues/supplies/IT/tuition/vehicle service needs, and an increase in insurance due to additional equipment including the new Tanker/boat.

CLA: Increase in water testing, overall increase but First selectman will reach out to neighboring Towns to discuss what they plan on budgeting.

Economic Development: No change

Animal Control: Decrease due to population estimate share changes.

Collections/Recycling: 1.7%, \$636 increase to cover costs and t-shirts for volunteers

Public Works: 3% salary increase, \$1000 increase for landscaping expenses, increase in gas/oil, overtime \$1000 increase due to wage increases, winter maintenance can be reduced by need.

Health Department: 3% salary increase, decrease in sanitarian wages because hours were reduced, and potential bonus for health Director due to work relating to Covid. Discuss will be saved for executive session during a regular BOS monthly meeting.

Health and Welfare: 3% salary increase for Director, increase in supply line due to an increased number of clients, Elderly Nutrition will be moved to Senior Center budgeting.

Debt Services: Decrease due to scheduled debt interest repayment.

Insurance/Employee Exp: Driven by payroll, life & medical is anticipating an increase in CT Partnership, no exact figures yet. Increase in compensated absences driven by holidays, and a reduction in Workers Comp.

Reserve for Capital Expense: No change

Land Acquisition: No change on operating, no funding for Land Acquisition Fund.

Library: Discussed at beginning of meeting but Selectman wanted to further discuss the requested \$26,580. Selectman agreed to fulfill \$17,000 of the initial \$26,580 requested and encourage the Library to make up the difference with strong fundraising events.

Park and Recreation: 3% salary increase, requested a \$250 increase for lifeguard recruitment, part-time wages increases due to the increase in minimum wages, \$1000 request for capital improvement to fix storage shed, and another \$1000 for additional concerts. Selectman agreed with asks but reduced the concert line by \$500.

Celebrations: No changes made.

Probate Services: An increase of \$76.

Senior Center: Minor adjustments to education training, Commission on Aging requested an additional \$1000 for media regarding the proposed new Senior Center. An increase in wages/hours for the clerk, making the position 22 hours, up from 18. Elderly Nutrition will be under the supervision of the Senior Center.

Historic District: Increase of \$300 dollars going from \$300 to \$600 to cover clerking meetings.

Decedent Expense: No changes.

Cemetery Flags: No change.

Tree Warden/Removals: Slight increase of \$200 to maintain diseased trees in Town.

Miscellaneous Expenses: No change.

Conservation Commission: No changes.

Housing Commission: At this time the commission is without quorum so there is no funding.

Business manager Liz LaVia brought attention to ZOOM fees and noted that expenses were covered under Covid relief but no longer applies. She asked the Board if the media should be under IT expenses, which the Board did agree for the expense line to be moved under IT. She also included in the ESF utility line an expense of \$82 to cover the new internet line.

Expenditures: Business Manger Liz LaVia noted a preliminary \$232,000 increase to town spending with a few outstanding figures such as audit info, as well as some outstanding financials from the school. The BOE will provide additional info at the next workshop scheduled for Monday, March 14, 2022 at 7 pm located at Mallory Town Hall.

Capital Plan: Current projects proposed are as followed: painting of the interior of Charter Hall, SVFD hydraulic tools and headsets, stairs for Veteran's Field, split rail fence for Munch meadows, and Town Park seawall which would take place in the fiscal year of 2024/2025. Note: none of the projects have been voted on/approved but up for discussion for possible expenditures.

The March 14, 2022 workshop meeting will finalize the proposed 2022/2023 budget. Changes can/will be made if necessary during final discussions.

Review: Business Manager Liz LaVia provided a review of the meeting most notable changes, she summarized that Land Use Officer salary was changed to 3%, as opposed to the initial 5% requested, and the mileage request from \$40,000 to \$2500 (a 25% increase over current stipend to cove increased fuel prices). The Assessor and Health Director mileage stipend will increase by 25% as well, Land Use Counsel went from \$10,000 to \$6000, ongoing Counsel & Court went from \$12,000 to \$ 10,000. IT eliminated field card system but added ZOOM fees, the library request was reduced from \$26,580 to an even \$17,000 (funding at a 10% increase from prior year), and Park & Rec concert series will be funded at \$2500. First Selectman Don Lowe will seek other towns input on CLA funding. The Town is waiting on cyber policy, crime policy, and auditor. The BOE will provide more info at the next workshop.

First Selectman motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Joel Bruzinski **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on March 18, 2022.

