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TOWN CLERK

## TOWN OF STONINGTON

BOARD OF FINANCE – BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Thursday, March 07, 2024

Board of Education District Office Conference Room

40 Field Street Pawcatuck

7:00 PM

*Special Meeting*

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the District Office Conference Room. Members present were Chairman Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Fauerbach, Ms. Norman, Ms. Young, Mr. Sternberg, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Johnson.

Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairman O'Brien took a minute to explain to those gathered how the Board would proceed in its deliberative process, and noted that there is no public comment period during deliberations.

To start, the Chairman polled the members to determine what their thoughts on the budget are as presented, and to let other members know what their respective budget targets are, relative to mill rate, % increase in taxes raised, % increase in expenditures, etc.

Ms. Young started: Her goal was to get the mill rate down to between 17.87-18.00 mills. % increase in taxes raised down to 3.72-4.61%, and increase in expenditures down to 5.21%. However, she explained these goals would be determined in large part by how much fund balance would be used to balance the budget.

Ms. Norman's goals: To get % increase in taxes raised down to 4.5%.

Mr. Sternberg's goals: To get % increase in taxes raised down to under 4.0%.

Mr. Fauerbach's goals: Was still in decision making process.

Mr. Johnson's goals: To get mill rate down to 18.5 mills.

Mr. Brown's goals: To get mill rate down to just a ½ mill increase over prior year.

Mr. O'Brien's goals: To get % increase in taxes raised down to 4.5% and increase in expenditures down to 5.00%.

There was discussion among the Members and the Finance Director, as to what current and projected fund balance will be currently, and at the conclusion of fiscal 23/24, and how much fund balance the Board should allocate to the 24/25 fiscal budget. No consensus was arrived at, at this time.

The Chairman informed the gathering that the Board would now deliberate CIP budget requests, and it would do so in descending order starting from line of the CIP Budget.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET REQUESTS**

### **General Operations:**

Line #1 – Townwide Computer Technology Upgrade \$75,000 – no comments from members. no change

Line 6 – Data Center Fiber Optic Connection \$10,000

Mr. Roger Kizer explained what this was, but then told the board he is still assessing the need, so this could be put off to a future year. The Board agreed to decrease line to zero.

Line 7 – File Retention and Scanning \$50,000-no comments from members. no change

Line 8 – Datto Backup Hardware and cloud storage \$70,000

The Director of Finance reminded the Board that a new quote was received by Mr. Kizer and that the request could be reduced by \$4,691 to \$65,309. Members approved decrease.

Line 9 – ADA Accessibility – Town Facilities \$20,000-no comments from members. no change

### **Emergency Operations:**

Line 15 – Townwide Radio Infrastructure upgrade \$140,000-no comments from members. no change

Line 16 – Emergency Management Portable Lighting \$15,000

Captain Schneider informed the board that this request could be brought down to zero, as he was able to obtain a light from region 4 DEMHS, that would belong to DEMHS, but would be stored in Stonington, and Stonington would have free use of the light, but would have to share with other area Towns when requested.

### **Police Services**

Line #19 – Fleet Upgrade - Purchase of 4 New Vehicles (\$249,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 20 – Technology Upgrade/Communication Upgrade (\$20,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 22 – Townwide Surveillance Cameras Program (\$20,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 23 – Bullet Proof Vests (\$20,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 24 – Body/Cruiser Cameras (\$82,241) - no comments from members. no change

Line 27 – Records Management System (\$95,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 28 – Handgun replacement (\$25,514)

The Board had questions of the Chief about the remaining useful life of the current guns, and the need to upgrade handguns at this time. The Chief explain why he would like to upgrade early, which was because they want to upgrade optics and move to a smaller weapon, which would make use of guns safer. Mr. Brown was against funding this currently. The Chairman asked the members their thoughts, it was agreed to decrease this line but leave a \$1 in the line for next year.

Line 29 – Fuel Pump Replacement (\$8,263)

Mr. Brown indicated he is against funding this currently, wait until it fails, and police could fill up at DPW while the pump is repaired. The Chairman asked the Boards opinion, it was decided to leave as is.

**Assessor**

Line 32 – Revaluation \$70,000 – no questions from the board, no change

**Public Works – Highway:**

Line 35 – Drainage Improvements Townwide \$100,000

Ms. Young asked about the \$50,000 increase over last year, and if given the funding, does DPW have the capacity to do the work. The Town Engineer explained that drainage is a huge issue in Town, and that they could easily use twice that. Mr. Sternberg said he understood, but they need to start cutting more dollars, so he suggested reducing the request by \$25,000. The Chairman asked the board their collective opinion. For now, the Board left this item as is at \$100,000.

Line 36 – Highway Equipment - Purchase \$600,000

The members asked the Director of Public Works what precisely they would by with \$600,000. The Director and Deputy Director said the request is composed of the following:

- |                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1) Street Sweeper     | \$285,000 |
| 2) Class 7 Plow Truck | \$215,000 |
| 3) PU Truck           | \$90,000  |
| 4) Trailer            | \$10,000  |

Mr. Fauerbach asked the Deputy Director if he were to prioritize items which two would he request, the DD responded Street Sweeper and Class 7 Plow truck, which would total \$500,000. The Chairman asked the members if they were in favor of reducing request to \$500,000, they were. Line item was reduced by \$100k to \$500k.

Line 38 – ADA Public Works Transition Plan (\$50,000) – no change to this line-item

Ms. Young asked how much longer the Town needs to fund this line. Response was indefinitely at this time, as there is so many improvements that need to be made, and past efforts have been rendered useless as standards continue to evolve.

Line 39 – Roadway Safety – \$55,000 – no change

The Deputy Director explained this line is for guard rails.

Lines 40&41 – Road Pavement Major Maintenance & Capital Improvement \$1,000,000 combined

There was discussion between the board and the Director of Public Works about the Town's Road rating and that \$1000,000 is needed to keep the road as a "C" rating. The Chairman suggested cutting by \$100,000, and asked the other board members their thoughts.

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting \$100k

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting \$100k

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting \$100k

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting \$100k

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting \$100k

The Chairman noted that there are enough votes in favor of reducing by \$100k so he asked the Director of Finance to make the adjustment.

The Director of Finance reminded the Director of Public Works that he needed to specify for the record what specific projects he would be doing this year because the Town is going to submit a LOCIP project to the State for approval after the budget is passed. The Public works Director said they would use LOCIP funding for Washington, School, and Lincoln Streets paving, to include paving, curbing, road preparation, and minor drainage adjustments, estimated to be about \$700,000 of work.

Line 43 – Automated brine machine (\$10,000) - no comments from members. no change

Line 44 – Equipment Garage/Shed Spellman Park (\$20,000) – Mr. Brown was in favor of zeroing out. no change

Line 45 – Bridge Replacement and Structural Improvement Fund (\$100,000) –

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting \$25k

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting \$25k

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting \$25k

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of cutting \$25k

Request was reduced by \$25k to \$75k

### **Public Works – Engineering:**

Line 51 – Bridge Engineering and Design Fund \$50,000

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting \$25k

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting \$25k

Line item was left at \$50k

Line 55 – Alpha Avenue Bridget Reconstruction \$600,600

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Johnson was in favor of cutting to zero

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting to zero

This item was cut to zero, in anticipation of bonding for the project instead.

Line 60 – 4rth district drainage \$206,000

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting to zero

Line-item was cut to zero.

Line 61 – White Rock Bridge Repairs \$840,000 – it was noted that Westerly will reimburse the Stonington for half of the cost of the bridge, item was left at \$840,000.

**Public Works - Facilities Management – CIP:**

Line 67 – Levee Gate Repair \$50,000 – it was commented that this item posed a liability to the Town of not funded, item was left at \$50k.

Line 69 – MS4 Projects \$25,000 – no action taken left at \$25k

Line 70 – Match funding for Clean Water Grants - \$130,000

Mr. Brown asked the First Selectman if a specific grant has been identified. Ms. Chesebrough responded yes, and that the Town has applied for a grant and it is currently waiting to hear if it will be awarded.

Mr. Brown was in favor of reducing by \$30k to \$100k.

Item was left at \$130,000.

Line 72 – Roof Repair to Fleet Facility Garage \$25,000 – item was left at \$25k.

**Solid Waste - CIP:**

Line 79 – Trash Compactor \$15,000 – no change funding left at \$15K

Line 80 – Wheel Loader – \$100,00 – no change funding left at \$100k

Line 81 – Roll Off Truck - \$80,000 – no change, funding was left at \$80k

Line 82 – Pickup Truck - \$15,000

Jill Senior the solid waste manager indicated that with repairs made to their current vehicle they can put off replacing this vehicle for another year.

Item was cut to zero.

Line 83 – Zero Turn Mower - \$10,800 – no changes item was left at \$10,800.

**Building Dept. - CIP:**

Line 87 – Additional Inspection Vehicle - \$15,000

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting to zero

Line-item was cut to zero.

**Planning Department - CIP:**

Line 93 – Engineering and Construction of New Sidewalks \$200,000 -

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting by \$50,000

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting by \$60,000

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting by \$60,000

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting by \$60,000

Line item was cut from \$200,000 to \$140,000.

Line 94 – Complete Streets \$20,000 -

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of cutting to zero

Line item was cut to zero

Line 95 – Plan of Conservation and Development \$48,175 - no cuts, item was left as is.

Ms. Young recused herself from voting on funding for this item

Line 96 – Zoning Regulation update \$12,500 -

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ was in favor of cutting to zero

Item was cut to zero.

Line 99 – Inspection Vehicle \$15,000 - it was noted that the planning department will receive a vehicle from the police department, that it was going to trade in for \$8,000, so this line-item was cut to \$8,000 to reimburse the PD.

Line 108 – Contribution to open space fund \$100,000 -

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting by \$25k

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting by \$50k

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of cutting to zero

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting by \$25k

After some discussion line-item was cut by \$25k to \$75k

**Climate Change Taskforce - CIP:**

Line 111 – Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation Program \$500,000 – line item was cut by \$500k to zero

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Fauerbach and Mr. Johnson were in favor of leaving as it.

Line 112 – Electric Vehicle Charging Station \$20,000 – line item – item was cut to zero

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero

Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting to zero

**Outside Agencies - CIP:**

Line 121 – Mystic & Noank Library – WIFI Extender \$10,440 – this item was cut to zero

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero  
Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting it to \$5,000  
Mr. Johnson was in favor of cutting it to \$5,000  
Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting to zero

Line 123 – COMO – LED Lighting Upgrades \$2,000 – this item was left at \$2,000

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Line 124 – COMO – Resiliency Study \$6,000 – this item was cut to zero

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting to zero

Line 125 – Town owned “orphaned” cemeteries restoration - \$16,000 – this item was left at \$16,000

Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Line 126 – Stonington Cemetery West Field Development \$8,000 – this item was cut to zero

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Sternberg was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of cutting to zero  
Ms. Norman was in favor of cutting to \$5,000

Line 127 – Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce \$10,000 – no changes this item was left as is

Ms. Young was in favor of cutting to zero  
Mr. Brown was in favor of cutting to zero

Line 131 – LOCIP Grant Funding \$160,574 – The Director of Finance informed the BOF that the LOCIP grant revenue line needed to be reduced by \$142.



### **For Stonington Public Schools – CIP Requests**

Line 143 – Security System and Cameras (\$50,000) – no changes to line -item left as is

Line 142 – District Wide Phone System \$10,000 – no changes line left as is

Line 141 – District Computers One-to-One – Purchase \$115,000 – no changes to line-item left as is

Line 139 – Computer Systems Infrastructure (\$250,000) – no changes line-item left as is

Line 140 – District Wide Staff Computers (\$110,000) – no changes line-item left as is

Mr. Brown asked why it increased by \$50,000 from last year. Chris Williston responded that the BOE is going to refresh computers district wide one year earlier than anticipated due to technology concerns.

Line 160 – Audio/Video Systems – (\$565,000)

There was discussion amongst the BOF and Chris Williston as to possible phasing of the various audio-visual projects. Mr. Williston was asked how much he would need for the next phase, he indicated he could get the next phase done for \$280,000. The Chairman asked the members, who was in favor of reducing this line item by \$285,000, down to \$280,000.

Ms. Young was in favor of reducing to \$280,000

Mr. Brown was in favor of reducing to \$280,000

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of reducing to \$280,000

Ms. Norman was in favor of reducing to \$280,000

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of leaving at \$565,000

Mr. Johnson was in favor of leaving at \$565,000

Line-item was reduced by \$285,000, down to \$280,000

Line 163 – Custodial Equipment – (\$13,000) – The new BOE Facilities Director indicated this was not needed at this time, he wants to take time to assess the school departments needs and assets before making this request. Item was reduced from \$13,000 down to zero.

Line 151 – Special Ed Van – (\$55,000) – item was left as is

Line 158 – Turf Replacement – (\$250,000) – Item was reduced by \$220,000 to \$30,000

Mr. Brown was in favor of reducing to \$30,000

Mr. Sternberg was in favor of reducing to \$30,000

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of reducing to \$30,000

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of reducing to \$30,000

Line 155 – High School Gym upgrade– (\$20,350) – item was left as is

Line 146 – Flooring Repair SMS (\$50,000)– Item was reduced by \$30,000 to \$20,000

Mr. O'Brien was in favor of reducing by \$30,000 to \$20,000

Mr. Fauerbach was in favor of reducing by \$35,000

Ms. Young was in favor of reducing by \$30,000 to \$20,000

Ms. Norman was in favor of reducing by \$35,000

The Chairman asked for a consensus, it was agreed to reduce the line-item from \$50,000 down to \$20,000.

Line 159 – High School Roof Repair – (\$250,000) - this item was discussed and consensus was that this item would have to be bonded so item was reduced to zero.

Line 148 – SMS cafeteria door replacement – (\$12,000) – The BOE Facilities Director informed the Board that this item has already been completed and funding no longer needed. Item was reduced to zero.

Line 162 – SMS Parking Lot repave – (\$30,000) – no change to line item, left as is

Line 150 – Maintenance Truck Replacement – (\$17,500) – request no longer deemed necessary item was reduced from \$17,500 to zero.

At 10:02pm the Chairman concluded deliberations.

At 10:03pm the Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Ms. Norman and seconded by Mr. Fauerbach. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

James Sullivan, Director of Finance