

Board of Selectmen

Budget Hearing

Saturday, March 8, 2008, Mallory Town Hall

Present: Andrea O'Connor, George Linkletter, Ed Hayes, members of the audience and press

The hearing was opened at 10:07 a.m.

Treasurer Eric Holub provided an overview of anticipated revenues for the 2008-2009 budget year, along with a series of scenarios at various levels of mill rate increase. Mr. Holub's projections were supported by historical data for various components of the revenue budget.

The projections estimates a 1.3% increase in property tax revenues calculated on the 2007 Grand List and using the existing 16 mill tax rate.

Investment income is anticipated to be 25.5% below the previous year's estimate, due to the economic downturn. Mr. Holub will be seeking information from the First Selectman concerning anticipated expenditure of bond revenue to further refine this forecast.

Departmental revenues attributable to licenses and permits are expected to fall by 6.6% below the current year's estimates, based on year-to-date information. Revenues from fees and service charges generated by the Town Clerk's office and Park & Recreation are anticipated to drop by 24.5% below the current year's estimates, again based on year-to-date information and an anticipated slow down in economic activity in the area.

State formula education grants are anticipated to be 1% above the current year, based on projections provided by the State. The current year's estimate was below actual since the State budget was approved after the Town's budget had been approved. Similarly, State formula grants for town operations will be 2.9% above the current year's estimates.

Miscellaneous revenue is projected to fall from an estimated \$3,600 to \$1,000 (72.2%), again based on year-to-date information.

In summary, an expenditure budget of \$11,677,748 can be supported without raising the tax rate.

The Park & Recreation Director, John Wrenn, presented the Commission's proposed budget. Supplies will be kept flat at \$16,700. Most part-time workers will receive about a 3% increase in compensation with the following exceptions: an increase of \$1.00/hour is recommended for Life Guards as it is increasingly difficult to fill these positions and an increase may enable Sherman to remain competitive; the Waterfront Supervisor position will be filled by a new person in the coming year, so the salary remains the same at \$2,025; a new position of Assistant Director will be paid for through a reduction in the Director's salary, to \$12,000, at no additional cost to the town. There are no proposed additional increases in other operational lines with the exception of utilities, which is increased to \$2,400 to accommodate the cost of air conditioning at the school

for summer camp. Revenue projections are \$3,550 above the previous year's projections. The boat mooring fee will increase from \$700 for the coming season to \$750 for the following season. The fee for junior camp will increase by \$10 to partially offset the cost of air conditioning. A new \$30 fee for use of the canoe rack is added. The Capital Improvements budget totals \$27,500 with provisions for replacing the main window in the beach office, a project that was deferred in order to fund replacement of insulation in the CLA building; replacement of the swim boom; and replacement of the Town Park pump and water tank, necessary both because the system is inadequate and also to provide service to the pavilion. This \$2,500 item may be partially funded through the pavilion STEAP grant.

The Capital Improvements budget also contains \$20,800 for replacement of four dock fingers and ramps with Trex. A question from the audience concerned the life expectancy of the material as compared to aluminum docks. A 20-year life expectancy is assumed with the Trex product, which also has the advantage of not buckling and not transmitting heat. Buoys will be replaced at the same time the fingers and ramps are replaced.

The Candlewood Lake Authority presented its request for support of its proposed budget increase of \$1,496 over last year's request, a 3% increase. There was some discussion of the proposed boat sticker program and its potential impact on the amount paid by the five lakefront towns to support Lake Authority activities.

The Sherman Volunteer Fire Department provided a detailed discussion of the components of its request for \$81,300 for operating expenses. This represents a 10.4% increase over last year's budgeted amount, but only a 2.9% increase over the prior year. When asked what might be cut from this request if required, Chief Matt Heinz and Ambulance Captain Kathy Grant indicated that replacement of AEDs could be deferred for a savings of \$5,000 and \$1,000 might be cut from fire supplies.

The State of Connecticut projects the cost of the Resident State Trooper at \$97,431.29 for the coming year. This does not make any provision for overtime. Mrs. O'Connor indicated that when Jay Festa retires, it is possible that a less experienced, hence less costly trooper will fill this position, resulting in some possible savings to the Town. She asked the Board to consider providing some % of this fixed cost for overtime, since the Town calls on the Resident State Trooper to provide services for certain Town events.

Litchfield County Dispatch, which provides 911 service to the Town, has not finalized its budget for the coming fiscal year. LCD indicated a marginal increase of 1%, to \$41,207, if any. This number will be finalized once their budget is approved.

Sherman participates in a Regional Paramedic Service program. The Town's share of the costs of this service is based on population, and will be \$22,952 for the coming year, a 0.009% increase over the prior year.

Emergency Management Director Guido Tino presented a \$12,575 request for 2008-2009, which includes office supplies, CEMA dues, and travel reimbursement for emergency management activities as well as a provision for the constables. The SVFD will be paying for outfitting the

Office of Emergency Management when the ESF is completed. Mr. Tino indicated that the State-requested alpha-numeric pager, at a cost of \$468 yearly, could be cut from this budget request if necessary.

In the absence of Fire Marshal Ernie Winkler, Mrs. O'Connor reviewed his budget request, which totals \$3,050. Mrs. O'Connor noted that, when the Fire Marshal was placed on a stipend rather than hourly rate, mileage was included in that figure. She stated that she was adding a "Public Safety Supplies" line to the budget that she would like to be used for supply items and education for the Fire Marshal, Emergency Management Director, and Constables. In the current budget year, Mr. Winkler has spent approximately \$323 for such items, which were charged to General Miscellaneous. She also indicated that she had permitted Mr. Winkler to take a Town-owned computer home when he retired from the land enforcement position, a practice which she believes should not be continued. Mr. Hayes agreed that any computer provided for the Fire Marshal should be kept in the office so that it could be accessed by a deputy when Mr. Winkler was not available. Mrs. O'Connor further suggested that Mr. Winkler use the digital camera purchased for the Land Use Enforcement Officer when needed; Mr. Linkletter suggested that a disposable digital camera might be a reasonable compromise on this item. The Selectmen agreed to ask Mr. Winkler to attend a future hearing to explain his budget request.

The final budget request was for the regional Animal Control program in which Sherman participates. This request, which is based on population, is for \$14,835, a \$104 or 1% increase over the previous year.

Mr. Linkletter moved and Mr. Hayes seconded to continue the hearing to Wednesday, March 12, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea O'Connor

Andrea O'Connor

George Linkletter

Edward Hayes