

Board of Selectmen
Budget Hearing Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2008

Present:

Andrea O'Connor
Ed Hayes
George Linkletter

First Selectmen Andrea O'Connor opened the continuation of the Budget Hearing on March 12, 2008 at 7:05pm.

Public Works- Don Borkowski reviewed the Public Works budget. An allowance has been made for the contractual stipends for employees doing work out of their job classification. While most lines remain the same as last year, additional allocations are sought for Contracted Services, Overtime, Town Gas and Oil, and Winter Maintenance. The allocation for Part-Time Help is reduced. Costs for the operation of the Garage are relatively stable..

Tree Removal/Tree Warden- Don Borkowski requested an increase in the tree removal budget from \$5,000 to \$7,500 to continue the preventive maintenance activities.

Senior Center: Beth Trott reviewed the budget request for the Senior Center as well as Old Town Hall. She requested additional funds for the newsletter, indicating that she hoped to do a monthly mailing to active seniors reminding them of events. Overall, costs are increasing due to increased use of Senior Center services. The Commission on Aging budget also shows an increase to help to pay for a planned symposium on technology. Maintenance of the renovated Old Town Hall will increase that budget. Supplies will also increase with the addition of a water cooler.

Health Department – This budget remains the same as the current year except for an increase in the allocation for water tests. Building Department – This budget remains the same as the current year except for an increase in the fees to the State, which are recaptured through our fees. Planning & Zoning Commission - Dave Hopkins presented this budget indicating that although applications are down, he preferred to maintain the same budget as the current year. As part of his budget request, Dave suggested that the Board consider appointing an assistant for Ron Cooper. Andrea indicated that she had discussed the matter with both Ron and Tom Zinn, Chairman of the Wetlands Commission, neither of whom believed an assistant was necessary. It was agreed, however, that additional hours might help with the work load. LUEO Supplies & Equipment - Ron Cooper submitted a budget outlining his proposed expenses and suggesting that the Town purchase a vehicle for use by him and other departments. Zoning Board of Appeals – This budget is remaining the same as the previous year. It is difficult to estimate the number of variance applications that will be considered in a given year.

Wetlands Commission - No projected changes

Land Use Consultants - Have been funding Northwest Conservation District at \$1,150. HVA is requesting support in the form of membership. Regulation review consultation is being used by P&Z primarily at \$10,000 per year, but can decrease to \$5,000 per Dave Hopkins. Engineering consultants to remain the same at \$20,000.

Conservation Commission – This request is \$1,750, the same as the current year.

Land Acquisition Fund – The request for \$1,030 is down from \$1,226. Nothing is being added to the actual Fund because of the bonding in place for land acquisition.

Historic District Commission - Operating budget takes care of the costs of the Commission's clerk, with the remaining \$4,000 directed to support projects. Janet Hopkins, Chairman of the Commission, outlined the projects the Commission is considering for the coming year.

Memberships:

HVCEO - Dues will remain at \$3,372.

COST (Council of Small Towns) – This is an advocacy group – dues are \$725.

CCM (Conference of Connecticut Municipalities) - This is an advocacy group that provides a different level of services, with dues at \$2,013. Andrea recommends that we attempt to fund COST. George and Ed both agreed.

Health & Welfare: This constellation of budget items includes Vital Statistics (births, deaths, marriages), funding of Women's Center activities in relation to domestic violence, Visiting Nurse, Mental Health, Child Advocacy, Elderly Nutrition, and the Veterans Center. WeCahr, an advocacy group for the disabled doesn't currently provide services for Sherman. Literacy volunteers asked for funding, amount not indicated.

Parade Committee – The budget request is an increase of \$300 up to \$1,800. Ed reminded the Board that there would be costs associated with a town-sponsored event to honor volunteers.

Probate Services – Andrea allocated \$800 for Probate Services based on New Fairfield's published budget amount of \$2,400. There has been an on-going dispute about what Sherman's share of the costs should be, with New Fairfield seeking an amount to cover the space used by the Court. Andrea consulted with the Town's attorney on this matter, who indicated that the town hosting the Court has certain advantages related to convenience of access by residents and that the host town should absorb the costs related to space, charging other towns in the court's jurisdiction for a fair share of services based on the statutory formula. Both George and Ed expressed concern that we not enter into a dispute with New Fairfield, but try to negotiate a fair share of overall expenses. Andrea indicated that nothing has been received to date. George will ask the New Fairfield First Selectman to send a request along with a rationale.

Cemeteries - Vets have been taking down flags and re-using, cost is same at \$100

The Board also considered Naromi's request for support for planned work on its trails. There was an interest in asking Public Works to provide services if these did not interfere with regular duties, but no funding at this time. The greatest interest was in the construction of a parking area near the Strauss Preserve.

Andrea plugged in a flat 2.5% wage increase for all non-union positions. There are still some figures that need to be determined, such as audit costs.

Ed moved to continue the hearing until adjourn the meeting at 8:40pm. George seconded and all voted in favor.

Next regularly scheduled BOS meeting to be held on Thursday, March 27, 2008 at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hollis

Board of Selectmen

Andrea O'Connor

Ed Hayes

George Linkletter