

Town of Sherman  
Board of Selectmen Budget Workshop  
Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2012

**Present:**

Clay Cope  
Chris Jellen  
Andrea O'Connor

Acting Clerk: Ruth Byrnes

Audience of approximately 20

First Selectmen Cope called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Board of Education: Sherman School Superintendent Don Fital, BoE Chairman Bob Gamper, and Vice Chairman Jamie Spannhake presented the 2012 – 2013 Sherman School budget requesting \$8,750,924, a 5.99% increase over last year.

- Additional 20 + students entering high school accounts for 73% of increase in high school budget
- Significant decrease in Federal and State grants
- Unfunded State mandates
- Extension of school day by 40 minutes (Sherman School currently has one of the shortest school days in CT.)
- Special Education outplacement costs can run as high as 70k – 120k per student

Mr. Fital noted the BoE successfully negotiated permanently adding 40 minutes of instructional time to the school day without permanent pay increase for the teaching staff. Teachers will receive a one-time 4% incentive, not to be added to permanent pay rate. A new high deductible health insurance plan will be in place for 100% participation resulting in \$120,000 in annual savings. It was noted that the school will incur an additional hour's salary cost per school day for the nurse.

Selectman O'Connor asked if the LEAP program was now open to every child. BoE responded that it currently serves 15% of the students, but plans are to bring it to 5 – 10 % which is more appropriate.

Park and Rec: Chairman Fran Frattini and Director John Wrenn presented the budget request. Mr. Wrenn stated that the Park and Rec Commissioners discussed adding an Administrative Assistant (new position) to have a "more permanent presence" during the regular work week (T-F). This position would be funded at \$20 per hour for 46 weeks, at 602 hours annually, splitting Saturday office hours with the director. The director's salary would decrease from \$15,000 to \$9,000.

Lifeguards receive 25 cents per hour increase; Camp Counselors receive \$5.00 per week increase; Junior and Senior Camp Directors receive \$340 and \$480 increases respectively due to the large number of extra hours that each put into this position. Informal telephone poll indicate our lifeguard pay rates are in line with neighboring towns.

Pavilion Operating Expense and Maintenance are 2 new line items that will be funded out of the Supplies line. SPARK is expected to stay even, revenues will offset any additional expenses incurred if enrollment increases.

Camp fees are increasing by \$10 for 6 week sign up. Swim lessons and boat moorings fees stay the same. Ms. Frattini asked that the BoS let Park and Rec know if they plan to add \$50 surcharge to the boat dock fees. There is a four year plan for repair of all the dock slips that needs to go to a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Wrenn shared pictures of location at Volunteer Field for an additional soccer field (to the right of the driveway), but did not have estimated cost. Mr. Jellen asked if there was need for another soccer field since several existed at Veterans and Colonial Fields. The Sherman Soccer Club informed Mr. Wrenn that they needed another full size field. Mr. Wrenn also shared pictures of the tennis courts that need to be refurbished

Mr. Cope inquired the status of Beach Office repairs. Ms. Frattini noted that nothing had been done to repair the building. Last year Dan Fox had volunteered his labor as did Marc Audette for electrical work. Windows need to be replaced, electrical panel over the sink needs to be moved, inside needs to be painted. Ms. Frattini believes that paid contractors need to be used to get the work done. Mr. Wrenn asked if insurance might cover the damages done to the building. Ms. O'Connor recollects that it was denied by insurance. Mr. Cope will follow up to confirm. Mr. Wrenn responded to Mr. Jellen that the building is used for senior summer camp.

Estimate for tennis court repairs: 60K to replace both tennis courts, \$900 to service the court. Contractor still has not come out to look at the courts.

Discussion on which software package to use for Park and Rec to track revenues and expenses. Commissioner Stan Greenbaum shared information he had about a couple of different options. One program allows the user to schedule facility use as well as track revenue. Mr. Cope asked Ms. Frattini to meet with him to discuss in the next couple of weeks.

Selectmen: Mr. Cope (referenced having previously discussed this at an earlier meeting) proposed 10 hours per week for STEAP and other grants work (Laura Pettinato), including follow up work on "old STEAP grants" for a full year. Mrs. O'Connor asked what other work this position would be responsible for, and if the hours included covering absences for Ruth Byrnes (Selectmen's office) and Kathy Retter (Assessor's office), further stating that she did not spend 20 hours annually on STEAP grants while she was First Selectman. Mr. Cope stated that Ms. Pettinato is an attorney and primarily provides help for STEAP and other contracts, and that he finds value in her work at \$14 an hour.

Treasurer: Budget request remains flat.

Tax Collector: Mr. Cope read Ms. Werme's letter requesting additional hours for an Assistant Tax Collector. Included in the letter, she referenced the number of hours for her assistant was reduced from 650 to 250 hours per year since the passing of her assistant tax collector (Irene Mannell). The work load has increased dramatically with hours for her assistant having decreased. Ms. Werme requests that the hours be reinstated to 650 at the rate of \$16 per hour. Discussion continued on the number of hours requested, and that taking into consideration maximum sick and personal days, vacation weeks, busy collection times in July and January, and training or conference days, the number of hours requested is 200 hours over what could be accounted for. Mr. Jellen added that the grand levy increasing from 4 million to 12 million did not necessarily mean more work, rather an increase in property assessment. Mr. Cope was concerned with coverage for that office (currently on vacation and having to shut down the office for a week) having an adequately trained person to take over when Ms. Werme leaves, and he cited the high collection rate for Sherman. Ms. O'Connor noted that the collection rate had not declined in the absence of an assistant.

Town Clerk: Budget request remains flat.

Assessor: Mr. Garzi shared that his budget could decrease by 4% (6k) if the field cards were not put on line in 2012 – 2013. He recommends waiting until the next reassessment in 2013, and putting the updated information on line in 2 fiscal years' time. Project will likely cost a lot less then. Recognizing we may be viewed as "behind the times a bit" Mr. Garzi noted that Ms. Retter does a very good job of accommodating customers by emailing and faxing field cards to those who call. The only increase in budget request of significance is for Tax Maps updates and to put them on line. Coverage for Kathy's absence will need to be re-calculated at \$14 per hour.

Building: Administrative Assistant Trish Viola noted that it was difficult to submit an accurate budget with the library expansion starting and permit fees from that project coming in. Fees will pay for the building inspector's increase in salary.

Health: Ms. Viola stated the budget includes an increase in mileage due to the higher IRS rates, and a decrease in water testing.

Wetlands: Budget remains flat.

Planning and Zoning: Chairman Barbara Ackerman presented the budget request for Planning and Zoning. Budget includes printing and distribution of the completed POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development). Ms. Ackerman stated that the commission is very happy with the work of Mark Branse, the land use attorney.

LUEO: Discussion regarding LUEO's education resulting in reduction to \$400.

Historic District Commission: Budget request is 12.96% lower than last year's request at \$4700.

Traffic Safety Work Group: Budget request of \$1000 to cover administrative costs to include contest awards and recognitions, promotional handouts, printed materials (posters, flyers). This group did not have a budget for this current year and funded all its activities from personal and

corporate donations. Selectman O'Connor stated that special consideration be given to this group so that they can work as an official body rather than as an ad hoc group.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Linda Yannone requests an increase in funding from \$1750 to \$2400, to include community outreach materials and energy fair planned for this upcoming year.

Engineering Consultants: Budgeted at \$3000. If needed for road repairs or for Fox Run detention basin.

Public Works: Supervisor Don Borkowski presented the Public Works budget to include a 3% union negotiated salary increase. Included in the request are: additional \$5000 in Public Works Supplies for an oil/water separator and piping, possible wash bay (no estimate available), \$3500 for a sand blaster to take the rust off the equipment for painting and preservation. No change for Road Maintenance. Increase in Vehicle Repairs due to aging vehicles. Mr. Borkowski asked that thought be given to fleet maintenance due to the age of the current fleet. Winter Maintenance budget decrease by \$5000. It was noted that the town will not be using Magic Salt next year. Lastly Mr. Borkowski requested that any unexpended PW monies be set aside for fleet management given the age and cost of its equipment.

Building Maintenance: Business Associate Liz LaVia explained that she used historic data, on the advice of the auditor, to come up with the requested amount. \$2500 for better lighting in the hallway. The telephone system is in need of replacement.

Tree Warden: No change.

Senior Center/Social Services: Discussion on what level of service can be provided to Sherman seniors that is considered reasonable, and at what point it becomes a liability for the town. "Reasonability factor" has been the determining factor up to this point. Mental and physical disabilities have been managed on an individual basis. Beth Trott (Director of Social Services) and Suzette Berger (Senior Center Activities Coordinator) explained that the seniors are the people who built this town. Beth and Suzette do everything they can to be there for the seniors and to meet their needs, and that includes a lot of volunteer work beyond what a senior center provides. Restructuring is needed to continue the services being provided.

Land Acquisition Fund: Acting Chairman Marge Josephson explained that the board has not been meeting every month, and therefore the clerk's budget has not been expended. The Commission requests that the town set aside monies for the Land Acquisition Fund should land become available for purchase or preservation.

Registrars: \$2000 increase in budget for the Republican Presidential Primary.

Emergency Management: Selectman O'Connor explained the Alert Now emergency notification system as something that was being considered (from Capital Non Recurring for initial funding) during the last fiscal year. Given the hurricane and storm that we had in recent months, it will be put back into the budget for discussion.

Fire Marshal: No questions

Public Safety: Selectman O'Connor explained that the Fire Marshal's budget is usually in the Public Safety line, and that the Fire Marshal's budget line was his stipend.

ZBA Litigation: Liz LaVia stated that this new line item was added on the advice of the auditor to break it out of Land Use Counsel Court Costs.

MTH Technology: No questions. Kathy Retter stated that \$1400 was added to this line for My Senior Center (a software program).

Health Benefits: Liz LaVia will look into other plans since it is expected that rates will increase by 14 – 15%. Now that the school is going to a high deductible savings plan, the town will start to shop around for other plans. Selectman O'Connor shared that there is a Municipal Plan through the state that is comprehensive. Liz explained that the budget line includes health benefits for Debbie Thorpe if she were to be full time. Union employees must work a minimum of 24 hours to receive benefits, non union employees must work a minimum of 30 hours.

Selectman O'Connor stated that until this board receives revenue estimates, they cannot make a determination on increasing employee hours. Treasurer Eric Holub will present the revenues estimates on March 15.

Selectman O'Connor recommends that a Capital Non Recurring budget be built for items that need to be purchased short term and long term (SVFD fire truck, PW truck, Park & Rec items).

Selectman O'Connor stated that the Munch Meadow line item is not a recurring expense and should be removed from the budget.

Selectman Cope moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm, seconded by Selectman Jellen. All voted in favor.

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Clay Cope

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Chris Jellen

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Andrea O'Connor