

**SHERMAN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES
April 5, 2012**

Present: Clay Cope - First Selectman Chris Jellen - Selectman Andrea O'Connor - Selectman

Call to Order: First Selectman Cope calls the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Agenda: Continuing with the proposed budget for fiscal year 2012/2013

First Selectman Cope opens the workshop with a presentation by the Board of Ed Chairman Bob Gamper, who comments on the grant pertaining to Special Ed. Program. Mr. Gamper mentions after the state studies Special Ed expenditures and students, they provide additional revenues. Mr. Gamper says the good news is that after several emails with Eric Holub (Town Treasurer) they believe they can increase the grant proposal figure. Superintendent Don Fiftal joins the conversation, saying this is very favorable news. He mentions that for whatever reason the past couple years tracking of the excess cost grant was something he could not find a record of. So when they inherited grants for this year, the finance office kept saying that grant did not apply. His past experience said the grant should apply in. So he researched back 10 years, and sure enough in 2004, 2005, 2006, there is a record of the excess cost grant, and a crediting in the budget for its existence. He has had considerable contact with Eric Holub, and Eric's final email said they should apply that grant on to the bottom line of this budget, as an increased deduct, knocks 1.18% off their budget, which brings it down, and this may help the Town as well. He is very pleased with this. He would like to reformat their budget for the public hearing, to make it more user friendly to read. Liz LaVia (Business Associate) gave the Selectmen the document Don brought in. All three Selectman are pleased with this development.

First Selectman Cope says he reviewed the budget again after this development, and changes are now marked in yellow for the other Selectmen for ease of interpreting changes in the document.

Regarding line 101, First Selectman Cope says there is a 0% increase across the board in salaries that are not union salaries. If they can come up with a reduction in Health Care, that can change. But for this workshop, it is zero across the board.

Regarding line 2728 – Public Works, First Selectman Cope says he spoke with Don (Borkowski) regarding the rental vs. purchase of a sandblaster, and Don said it is expensive to rent. First Selectman Cope left the sandblaster in this budget, and notes there are other cuts in this department.

Regarding line 2802 – First Selectman Cope says he kept a 20% increase for supplies for the pipe and oil water separator

Regarding line 2820 – First Selectman Cope notes this was taken down, based on the latest number from the state on paving

Regarding p. 6, 3601 – Park & Rec Director salary, First Selectman Cope says this was left the way it was, and supplies reduced slightly On p. 7 – the concert series was reduced to \$1,500. First Selectman Cope believes all the Selectmen are in agreement on how they want Park & Rec to be structured.

Regarding Tax Collector Assistant, on p. 1, line 362 – First Selectman Cope comments he would like to have the Tax Collector's Office open one Saturday per month, and these hours mirror the Assessor's hours. This provides additional service to the public. The other Selectmen like the idea of the office open one Saturday per month as well.

Regarding p. 5 – Health Director Salary – First Selectman Cope notes that although there is no change at this time, he left in the request for the additional clerk

Regarding p. 6 line 3001 – First Selectman Cope says there is no change, but they did include the clerk.

On p. 7, line 3926, First Selectman Cope says there is an increase in the senior trip expenses, basically for adding additional meals. The coordinator stays at that figure, because she is unionized. Regarding the Senior Center leased vehicle, First Selectman Cope mentions that friends of the Senior Center would like to raise money to purchase a second-hand vehicle, which would be safer than the existing vehicle. Liz LaVia mentions the insurance will be transferred from the Taurus. A local mechanic says he will do the maintenance as a gift to the Senior Center.

First Selectman Cope says he is still waiting for additional numbers for the Health Care. If a significant amount could come off, it would enable the Town to do some other things that were cut. Liz LaVia mentions she is waiting for numbers from the State, and it is vague as to whether they will accept the Town as a group. First Selectman Cope says he reached out to Tobin Insurance, and provided information on the 16 employee situation. Liz says Anthem says mid to late April, they can come back with some figures. Don told Liz their range went from 13% to 16%, and when Liz called them and gave them the town demographic, they told her 15%.

First Selectman Cope winds up his comments saying that on page 8 of 8, it is at 3% for the town, 2.79 for the board of Ed., and a combined 2.86% increase. George Linkletter asks if this is 3% on the nose, and First Selectman Cope responds "yes".

Selectman Jellen thought it would be good to go back through the budget from the beginning, group by group.

Selectman's Group: Selectman O'Connor says she still has a problem with the additional Selectman's Assistant, because First Selectman Cope has not provided a job description as to how that position will be used, and she does not think that is

appropriate. (First Selectman Jellen requests to address this topic again later in the meeting). When the conversation resumes: First Selectman Cope says he sees great value for the Town in the researcher, not just for possibly obtaining \$500,000 in STEAP grants, but for other grants as well. He notes that competition for STEAP grants is fierce, and Sherman was fortunate to have received a \$150,000 STEAP grant in the last round. He points out that the Town does not have the money to fix the problems at the playhouse without the STEAP, and he is also seeking a STEAP for the antique portion of the library. He notes that support for him with these STEAP grant proposals is support for the whole Town. Selectman Jellen says he is OK with this.

Treasure Group: All Selectmen in agreement.

Tax Collector: (See discussion, above)

Town Clerk: No changes.

Assessors: First Selectman Cope notes no changes.

Board of Assesment Appeals, Building Dept., P&Z, ZBA: no changes on any of these.

Inlands/Wetlands: First Selectman Cope says they were to reduce this even more.

Court Costs – Selectman O’Connor asks if First Selectman Cope knows where this case is now, as she saw a bill for this. First Selectman Cope says they said it will be through September. Liz Lavia inquires if the Selectmen are OK with a separate line item for this issue, so that it is not confused with regular, customary legal fees – she did not want that line to appear inflated. Selectman O’Connor says Liz can just call it ongoing. First Selectman Cope says once that change is made, it is good.

Registrars Dept. – No comments, all OK.

Memberships – First Selectman Cope notes this was discussed at the last meeting, all OK.

Consultants – Selectman O’Connor does not think the town gets great value out of HVA, and says they can drop that one because they only worked with the town once. First Selectman Cope comments he has had no contact with them, and he will send them a letter saying they will not be participating this year.

General Government & Town Hall Operations: First Selectman Cope comments “good with that” for both.

Buildings – Line 2020, First Selectman Cope notes the person is here around 10 hours per week. He added up the number of hours x the number of weeks per year, and came up with \$33.00 per hours. Selectman O’Connor thinks this reasoning misses the point of what the facilities manager proposal is all about, and they need to think about the

market value of this position. She thinks there is more to the position than making a judgment based on what is seen now. She thinks the Town could get a solid person for less than \$50,000. She points out that another advantage of a full-time person is that they don't squeeze you in between other things. First Selectman Cope says if the Town shares this person with the school, the school has a larger facility and greater need. He felt with the budget being tight this year, let the school do what they need to do. Selectman Jellen recalls hearing Glen Kiefer making some commentary about making sure it is someone with detailed knowledge, and it is not a matter of calling up a person to fix something. He thinks it can potentially save the Town money if there is someone who has more intimate knowledge of the system. First Selectman Cope feels he is being generous with 10 hours. Selectman O'Connor mentions that Dave Raines did a presentation about building management software, a system being looked at for the school, a system that needs to be put in place for the firehouse. She thinks leaving it to the firemen is wrong, it will end up costing more money, and that this is a penny-wise pound-foolish cut. Selectman Jellen comments he agrees with Selectman O'Connor on this, and he sees real value in the facilities manager. First Selectman Cope says they will put the number back in.

Public Safety – 2243 is the Alert Now System

SVFD – First Selectman Cope says he left that grant flat, and the other grant to the library flat, putting them back at 115 from 120. Still have utilities line and maintenance line. Liz Lavia says she has been tracking every nickel on the utilities line.

Candlewood Lake Authority – First Selectman Cope says they are leaving this flat.

Animal Control – Liz Lavia says Bridgewater says 2% increase, but this is an assumption at this time. First Selectman Cope thinks this is safe, and is OK with that.

Collections and Recycling – First Selectman Cope notes a decrease there.

Public Works – First Selectman Cope note this was touched on earlier in the meeting.

Health & Welfare – Having listened to Beth (Trott) and Suzette, Selectman O'Connor is concerned about the woefully inadequate salaries in these positions, because these are highly dedicated and underpaid people who serve an increasing population. She is sympathetic to their situation. First Selectman Cope notes the problem with Suzette is with the Union. Selectman O'Connor comments that Suzette hasn't been properly advocated for in contract negotiations. First Selectman Cope feels that all departments in town are of value, and it is not fair to single out one department for an increase. First Selectman Cope feels it is in fact vital to have a clerk in the Senior Center, and maybe things will be different in the next budget cycle. Liz Lavia notes that if health insurance premiums come in at a lower rate, that might provide something to look at. Selectman Jellen is fine with this.

Insurance Employment – line 3253 – compensated absences. First Selectman Cope thinks they should be OK with this.

Reserve Capital expenditures – First Selectman Cope thinks if it can go from 175K to 200K, maybe by next cycle will be even better. Selectman O'Connor thinks 25K increase a good one.

Land Acquisition Fund – First Selectman Cope thinks they need to absorb and digest the expenditures made.

Library – First Selectman Cope took this back down to \$115,000, because if they do move then that is where that came from. Selectman O'Connor questioned why the same budget would come in, assuming the move. Last year, they recognized they might not be ripe for a move and brought it up to the \$115,000. First Selectman Cope comments the "great unknown" is whether or not they will actually break ground

Historic District – First Selectman Cope thinks this should be fine.

Tree Warden – Liz Lavia notes that Don (Borkowski) Don dropped it 1,000 based on usage and historic data.

George Linkletter inquires as to when First Selectman Cope and Liz Lavia will compute the new bottom line number. Liz says she wants to verify a few things, and there are not a lot of changes. Liz says she will get the document ready tonight, and will send it to the printer. Selectman O'Connor mentions that the public has not seen this, there has been no mention of the budget making process in the papers. Veronica Scheer needs a new budget. George Linkletter suggests that First Selectman Cope call the Danbury NewsTimes. First Selectman Cope says he will work feverishly to get this information out there, and Selectman O'Connor suggests putting it on the website. Selectman Jellen thanks both First Selectman Cope and Liz Lavia for their work on the budget. Selectman O'Connor says that Liz Lavia's notes were very helpful. She also says the budget isn't finalized until there is public comment on it. They won't vote on it until Thursday.

Liz LaVia recaps a few changes: 1129 – will rename that, 1401 – to zero, 2020 - \$15,000 leave alone, still waiting on the health insurance.

Adjournment: First Selectman Cope moves to adjourn the CC the April 5, 2012 budget workshop at 5:51, Selectman Jellen seconds, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura J. Pettinato, BOS Clerk

Clay Cope

Chris Jellen

Andrea O'Connor