



Town of Sherman
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Mallory Town Hall
Pre Budget Meeting
Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Attendees:

Clay Cope, First Selectman Andrea O'Connor, Selectman Chris Jellen, Selectman

Call to Order:

Meeting is called to order by First Selectmen Cope at 6:00pm conference room Mallory Town Hall.

I. Planning and Zoning: Barbara Ackerman, Chair Planning and Zoning Commission

- Mrs. Ackerman stated that their budget is pretty straight forward. She clarified that they have \$15,000 for attorney's fees and believe they will need that for changes in regulations, etc. It's not different from what was proposed last year.
- First Selectman Cope asked about counsel/court ongoing showing an increase.
- Mrs. Ackerman stated that they have an ongoing lawsuit and they do not know if that's going to end or not.
- Mrs. Ackerman asked if she could address the Regulation Review/Plan of Conservation and Development. She was allowed to, please see item XXI.

II. Senior Center: Beth Trott and Suzette Berger

- Mrs. Trott started with wanting to move the whole salary for the Director of Social Services under Health and Welfare to allow the Senior Center to be totally separate. To increase the SS assistant's hours and to change her title from clerk to assistant.
- Mrs. Trott stated there is a change in the title of the Senior Activities Coordinator, to Senior Center Coordinator. This was approved at the last BOS meeting.
- She stated that they are increasing the supply line because everyone who uses the building uses the supplies, they are not locked up.
- Mrs. Trott stated they are reducing the newsletter because they are no longer using the bulk rate. They have been sending out to everyone in Sherman and have been getting a lot of positive responses.
- Mileage they kept the same.
- Got rid of cell phone because everyone uses their own cell phone.
- Trip expenses went up because we are increasing transportation quite a bit.
- Mrs. Berger is requesting an increase in trip expense because she is having trouble getting all the activities covered by volunteers. It would help with some of those expenses. They have never asked for a program fee and the seniors have been donating but are having a tough time covering it. She has to contact others to help cover the expenses.

- Mrs. Berger: Driving hours, because of her new job description, it does not include driving the van. The Senior Center is losing someone who drives 10 - 12 hours a week.
- Mrs. Trott stated that is why we need to increase that. Either there could be one driver who does all the driving and then Suzette could accompany her when two drivers are needed or we could hire two drivers to take up the slack. We need both Suzette and a driver with the job description change.
- Mrs. Berger commented on the usage of the Senior Center, just in March alone there were 17 groups using it. Inevitably they are using the supplies even though they are supposed to be bringing and using their own.
- First Selectman Cope asked about computers. Mrs. Trott stated that they were fine and that if something were to come up that there were grants available.
- Mrs. Trott stated that the only thing that they needed before the end of this budget year is privacy. She asked for blinds for the two windows in her office, this will allow confidentiality to her clients.
- Mrs. Berger also brought up the Senior Center Assistant. They have been sharing the assistant but they are not getting the 50/50. It's more like 20/80 with Beth using her more. Now there is more of a gap with Beth moving out of the Senior Center.

III. Women's Center

- First Selectman Cope asked about this line reducing \$1500 to \$500.
- Mrs. Trott stated the reduction is because there do not seem to be enough cases after talking with the State Trooper and the people who call her. She stated that she usually deals with these cases and does not believe they can justify sending them that much money.
- Mrs. Trott stated that she would like to propose that she would write a grant for a lot of the health and welfare budget. There is a lot of money out there for these organizations.

IV. Visiting Nurse

- Mrs. Trott stated that the reduction is because of a new law in January, Medicare will pay retroactively to 2011. Several agencies sued the federal government for people who are in custodial care, no changes but they have MS or whatever the case may be and they now can have access to physical therapy or nursing care even though it is for maintenance. Medicare is covering more of what a visiting nurse association does. They do come monthly for visits for blood pressure screenings.
- It has been suggested to use volunteers again, but our reasoning for keeping the VNA is that it is an outside person, they don't have to feel self conscious, it's someone they see every month and a nurse would ask the appropriate questions.

V. Mental Health

- Mrs. Trott stated that they have not requested anything that she knows of.
- First Selectman Cope stated that Nancy Astor-White is reporting to him and is very active in that.
- Selectman O'Connor stated that Northwest Regional Health is asking for \$398. Mrs. Trott stated they are asking for \$5.00 more than last year then.
- First Selectman Cope stated that she had \$393 in her rationale. Mrs. Trott stated that is what it was last year. First Selectman Cope stated they would bump that up to \$398.
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VI. Child Advocacy

- Agency no longer exists. This can be taken out of the budget.

VII. WeCAHR

- Mrs. Trott stated that she would be happy to research that. First Selectman Cope stated he would give Mrs. Trott a copy of the letter he received.

VIII. Elderly Nutrition

- Mrs. Trott stated that they are not sure about this because it keeps changing. The state keeps reconfiguring what they are doing. No one is on Meals on Wheels and she is not sure if they bill for Senior Dine. Will have to ask Liz if she has received any bills.

IX. Board of Education: Don Fiftal, Superintendent of School, Bob Gamper, Themis Enright and Joe Keneally

- The BOE had a PowerPoint presentation and handed out packets to follow along with.
- Mr. Fiftal discussed the development of the budget. The recent budget history has been 0% to this past year of 2.79%. This is representative of the economic times we are in and this has strained the budget.
- Mr. Fiftal stated that the BOE's increase is 4.55%. He had contacted six of the neighboring schools in the region: Bethel - 3.24%, Brookfield - 4.62%, Danbury - 5.98% (this may go down by 3% because they are due for a healthy bump up of state assistance, which is not available to Sherman), New Fairfield - 3.25%, New Milford - 4.65% and Sherman - 4.55%.
- With regards to the security monies that were generously voted upon by the community, it is not represented in the budget. Mr. Fiftal hopes that it is not held against the budget that is being presented. Also, in the budget they have earmarked more than just the \$75,000. They believe to do the job properly will cost more than that.
- The sequester looks like it will persist. They have been told to reduce by at least 9%, up to 15% their expectation on state grants.
- Mr. Fiftal spoke about the achievements and community: scholastic art awards, spelling bee, celebration of American education, read across America, etc...
- Accomplishments and Challenges:
 - A Implementation of student success plans for grades 6-8 this was our first year.
 - A Strengthened the anti-bullying campaign, PBIS and Rachel's Challenge.
 - A Common Core State Standards, long term process.
 - A Report Cards, a committee is at work to improve.
 - A Longer instructional day, there has been work to institute this. This involves and changes over the school year.
 - C School Security
 - C Planning and training for CT educational reforms.
 - C State assessments are changing from CMT's to Smart Balanced Assessments. This can be more individualized for the student. This will be done through technologies, so there need to be technologies at the schools.
 - C Building Maintenance issues, it has been 13 years since items were last addressed at the school.
- Budget limitations, cost containment. Higher level for a few more years with regards to the High School Level. These numbers will not lower until the current 5th grade year goes to high school.
- Significant Special Ed needs, this year is a predictable bump up.
- Unfunded mandates; handouts were given out.
- Aging infrastructure, needing to start catching up on that.
- Last year was a hard freeze with regards to pay raises. First time, maybe in Sherman's history with a freeze. This year is a contracted 2% for each of the next 2 years. Currently negotiating with the paraprofessionals union, could be an increase there. Health Insurance, the BOE moved to a high HSA last year. There could be an increase of 14% or higher.
- Staff Reduction: There are reductions in this budget, but you do not gain a dollar for every reduction. Potentially there is unemployment that needs to be paid.

- Containing deficits. Current budget was created on a deficit budget because in January that budget looked fine but by June it was not. So it is a little tight right now. The BOE and Superintendent's office is working closely on this.
- Declining enrollment moving from fifth grade to sixth grade. One full-time position there and propose three support staff. Some reduction in the Knights program.
- Proposing a shift to an intramural sports program. There would be about a \$20,000 savings there.
- Eliminated the summer school director position.
- Pre-School Tuition has not been increased over the last 18 years. They will be phasing in an increase over two years. This is a Town revenue source.
- There are no administrative staff increases.
- Health program is a foot in the door program when started. This needs to be fully supported to be a truly developed program. Proposing a half time health teacher and allow the PE and Technologies teachers to go back to their classes full-time.
- Pre-K - 8th budget increase of \$312,000, 5% increase. High School increase of \$28,000/\$29,000, transportation increases about 1%. Overall is a 4.55% increase. Looked at a 5 year history of the spending. Maintenance, they have been robbing Peter to pay Paul to cover these costs. Actual budget increase is at 3.9%, but is a spending increase of 4.55% because of decrease in grant funding.
- The BOE appreciates the support of the community and the BOS.
- Selectman Jellen wanted to thank the BOE for allowing him to attend their meetings and appreciates all that was put into this budget.
- Selectman O'Connor really appreciated the overview. It really helps to understand the reasoning for the increases.
- First Selectman Cope also thanked the BOE. He then asked about the second elevator that has issues.
- It is on a list of areas that they want to attend to along with the phone system. The phone system is probably a higher priority because of security reasons.
- No spending that is going on now without Mr. Fiftal's approval first.
- Eric Holub asked about the grants. Mr. Fiftal does not expect any new grants and is hoping that existing grants do not tank too badly. He is not opposed to having a process through the treasurer's office with regards to the grant monies, if there is extra grant money.
- Mr. Holub asked about the Pre-School tuition. What is the increase? The increase will be \$150 to \$225. Currently enrolled students will continue to pay \$150, but new students to the program will be paying \$225.
- Mr. Fiftal also stated that another item he is looking at is a facilities use fee. Currently there are no costs to people/organizations that use the building. There is already an agreement with Parks and Rec for the summer program.

X. Selectmen: Clay Cope, First Selectman and Michael Saraceno, Resident State Trooper

- First Selectman Cope stated that there is an increase in the Business Associates hours. He would like to propose a 3% increase across the board in all non-union positions. That would include Carol Havens request for a raise. This is not reflected in this budget because he wanted to run that by the BOS before he put that in.
- Selectman O'Connor stated that this should be discussed later under salaries and wages.
- First Selectman Cope stated that the Trooper would like to make a presentation about adding a constable.

XI. Treasurer: Eric Holub

- No changes/No comments

XII. Tax Collector

- Submitted request for the hours for the assistants position to be returned to 650 hours.
- No questions/No comments

XIII. Assessor's Office/BOAA: Al Garzi, Assessor

- Mr. Garzi stated there were not a lot of line items.
- Supplies reduced from \$200 to \$150.
- He stated that the tax map updates is \$4500, that is not a necessity, so if you are stretched if you need a place to save this would be a place.
- Believed the Town should get the field cards online first.
- Reevaluation: \$11,065 is our contractual obligation.
- Publication: This is for MV pricing guides and PP pricing guides. They have expended all \$300 this year and will need it again next year.
- Continuing Ed: Most of this amount is expended in June at the end of the fiscal year. We will need this again next year. Assessor's Assistant needs this to continue her certification.
- Mileage: \$1320, keeping the same.
- Clerical: \$3125, a person to help with the reassessment, sick time, vacations, etc.
- Mr. Garzi stated the software for the online field cards has been reduced from \$15,000 to \$2,300. He is trying for this July but must likely it will be July 2014 when they will be up.
- Mr. Garzi gives an overview of the reevaluation: We currently bill out \$12.2 million from the current Grand List and he is expecting a 15% - 20% reduction in the next GL. There will be a breakeven point. He doesn't expect anyone to go up. We'll still see supplemental real estate activity increases, such as prorates, etc.
- Mr. Holub just wanted to clarify this Grand List will not be affected. Mr. Garzi stated that was correct.
- Mr. Holub asked about the Governor's proposal for eliminating the car tax. Mr. Garzi doesn't understand that because the state doesn't gain anything from it. It would be a huge loss in revenue to the Town. He doesn't see it happening. He suggests that maybe they are trying for a statewide mill rate on cars. Basically it would cause less people to pay more as it would have to be made up in real estate.

XIV. Building Department

- Trish Viola submitted a worksheet. No changes/no comments.

XV. Health Department

- No comments.

XVI. Inland Wetlands

- No comments.

XVII. Zoning Board of Appeals/LUEO

- Selectman O'Connor asked, that much in appeals?

XVIII. Historic District Commission

- Issues need to be addressed: ground cover fixed, scout house broken window frame, bathrooms. Grant from STEAP for windows and bathrooms?
- Selectman O'Connor stated that if the money is not used it will go away.
- Selectman O'Connor suggested that the veterans take care of the repairs to the memorial wall in front of Old Town Hall.
- The crabapple tree discussed with the tree warden
- The lamppost has been approved by First Selectman Cope for \$3500 for repairs.

- Further discussion on Thursday.
- XIX. Conservation Commission**
- Continued amount from the year before.
- XX. Regulation Review/Plan of Conservation and Development:** Barbara Ackerman, Chair Planning and Zoning Commission
- Mrs. Ackerman stated that they have used the budgeted \$10,000. The Plan is finished. Jason with Plan Metrics is going to send a disc and then it will go to the BOS. She also stated that they do not expect any cost.
 - Mrs. Ackerman stated that they will try to do the printing at the Town Hall through the Planning and Zoning supplies.
- XXI. Housing Commission**
- \$2500, discussion for Thursday. Have been running \$1500 in the past.
- XXII. Engineering Consultants**
- Per project. Line 14-28 not funded. Does this hurt us/should we?
- XXIII. Land Acquisition Fund**
- Selectman O'Connor spoke to this.
 - First Selectman Cope stated that they would discuss this more on Thursday.
- XXIV. Registrars**
- No questions/No Comments; decrease in legals/education and increase in voter machines.
- XXV. Emergency Management**
- Asking for same/no changes
- XXVI. Fire Marshal**
- Asking for same/no changes
- XXVII. Public Safety**
- 911 contract: 4.27 rational is based on our expanding population: 3574 for 2010, 3618 for 2011.
- XXVIII. General Government**
- No questions/comments
- XXIX. Counsel and Court Costs**
- Line 11-29: A decrease of 28.57% in ongoing fees for active litigation. No questions/No Comments.
- XXX. Buildings**
- 020-02 10% increase - heating oil. Phone increase.
 - Supplies - Locked cabinet and locked filing cabinet for Senior Center. Increase to Senior Center Supply Line.
- XXXI. Reserve Fund for Capital Expenses**
- Need to build, discuss on Thursday. Need to show how we build this fund.
 - Dock replacement, bathrooms, phone systems at MTH.
- XXXII. Debt**
- \$1,335,445 total debt service for 2013/2014. Up \$98,000 for the Library coming online.
- XXXIII. Miscellaneous**
- The same at \$5,000.
 - First Selectman Cope asked about petty cash instead of Miscellaneous.
 - Mr. Holub stated he does not like the idea of petty cash.
- XXXIV. MTH Technology**
- Need to change \$15,000 to \$2,300 for field cards.

XXXV. Insurance/Employee Expense

- There is an email from James Nguyen. He suggested that the Town lock it in at 14% increase. Selectman O'Connor stated that we are not a group of 50 when we became a union. First Selectman Cope stated that we are a combined group. Selectman O'Connor believed we lost that group rating and stated that we should keep it fluid because of adding positions, etc.
- Mr. Holub asked about the defined benefit plan. Selectman O'Connor stated \$47,929 was last year and \$48,157 which is nowhere near where we need to be. Mr. Holub stated that the last report from actuary was \$58,130 July 2012. He stated that a 20% increase should be considered to improve our credit rating. It needs to go to \$58,000 and then add an additional amount.

XXXVI. Salaries and Wages

- New Positions: Business Associate, Facilities Manager, Police Officer, Senior Center Assist Help/Driver.
- Contract negotiations at the end of June.
- First Selectman Cope suggested that Liz plug in 3% to see how it would affect the budget.
- Selectman O'Connor stated that she would like not to get everyone's hopes up by putting it in and really believes that it should be saved for discussion in executive session.

General Discussion:

- CCM - page 2, 013-30. It was plugged in.
- Justification for Animal Control Budget. FSC has not been able to reach Bill Stuart. Will try again and have something on Thursday.

Adjournment:

Adjournment for the special meeting was called by First Selectman Cope at 8:12pm; all in favor.

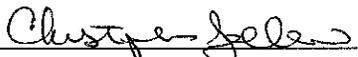
Respectfully submitted by,
Tabitha Fazzone, Clerk



Clay Cope, First Selectman



Andrea O'Connor, Selectman



Chris Jellen, Selectman