

Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing #1
Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 7:30 pm
Via Webex & In Person
At BOE Conference Room 295 A/B
501 Kings Hwy E., Fairfield, CT 06825

A recording of this meeting can be found here: [BOF Budget #1 3.8.2023](#).

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Lori Charlton, Vice-Chair John Mitola, Secretary Sheila Marmion, Craig Curley, Mary LeClerc, Kevin Starke, Jack Testani, James Walsh

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christopher DeWitt

OTHERS PRESENT: First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, CAO Tom Bremer, CFO Jared Schmitt, Budget Director Frank Magneri, Town Clerk Betsy Browne, Conservation Director Tim Bishop, Health Director Sands Cleary, Assistant Director of Health for Public Health Nursing Jill Mitchell, Human and Social Services Director Julie DeMarco, Tax Assessor Ross Murray, Tax Collector Dave Kluczowski, IT Director Dave Kelley, Janney Montgomery Scott LLC Advisors Guy Lebas & Carolyn Frzop, Town Librarian Scott Jarzombek, Deputy Town Librarian Jan Fisher, Registrars of Voters Matt Waggner and Cathy Politi, FairTV, members of the public.

1. Call to Order

Chairwoman Lori Charlton called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Charlton led the Pledge of Allegiance and Jack Testani requested a moment of silence for the late Retired Fairfield Assistant Chief Chris Tracy.

3. Q&A on Summary Budget Presentation by First Selectwoman

First Selectwoman Kupchick thanked the team who put the budget together and then began her budget presentation. She discussed the following for Fiscal Year 24: increases in salaries from union contract settlements, inflation, energy costs, employee health insurance, tipping fees that doubled, and recycling costs. She said the BOE has a \$7.7 million increase. She said the budget as presented has a Mill Rate increase of less than 1% (.98%) from last year. First Selectwoman Kupchick said the BOE budget was reduced by \$500,000. She noted the BOE has since received a COVID reimbursement grant of \$350,000. First Selectwoman Kupchick addressed questions from board members and there was a discussion about the BOE reduction and grant. The paving plan was also discussed which will cost \$4 million this year and \$3.8 million next year. The slides from the presentation can be accessed here: [First Selectwoman's Budget FY 24](#).

4. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

Department Heads discussed highlights from their department budgets.

Administrative & General:

1030 Town Clerk – The revenue is on page 19 and expenses are on page 45 of the budget book. Town Clerk Betsy Browne said Conveyance Fees are less in the budget due to less supply of homes and the market has slowed down since the COVID years.

Ms. Browne said that as of today, Conveyance fees are at \$1.4 million. She said recording fees are up, as are Certified Copies fees due to the electronic Death Registry. She said funeral homes are using the feature. Ms. Browne has also had personnel increases due to contract settlements and said her advertising fees are up.

James Walsh through Chairwoman Charlton asked the Town Clerk for a follow up on Conveyance and Recording fees from last year at this time.

1230 Conservation – Mr. Walsh recused himself from this part of the review because he said he works with the Conservation department on legal issues outside of BOF. Conservation Director Tim Bishop said the Conservation Commission has a meeting scheduled to vote on a few changes on Wednesday. He said the revenue was left flat because he doesn't anticipate any increase or decline. Expenses are on pages 68-69 of the budget book. Mr. Bishop said the only item he added to his proposed budget is \$55,000.00 for a new dump truck. He said the truck the department currently has was being towed as the meeting was taking place and it has broken down before.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Walsh rejoined the meeting.

Health and Welfare

6010 Health – The Health Department revenue is on page 15. Health Director Sands Cleary said there are no significant changes. He said revenue for permits/fees will go up as the rental housing increases and will have an impact on the fees. He said the Food Supervisory Certification is down because it is offered in more places. The Health Department expenses are on page 172. Mr. Cleary said there were increases to fees and professional services and due to the salary and contractual obligations, payroll was up as well. Assistant Director of Health for Public Health Nursing, Jill Mitchell, is requesting additional staff for school nurses. She said since 2019, there has been a 262% increase in mental health issues. She said there is also an increase in medical treatments that some of the nurses provide. Ms. Mitchell said some schools have more nurses than others. Mr. Walsh said he would like a follow up by school, without naming the school, of the overall number of utilization of the school nurse's office and how many schools have increased utilization. There was a detailed discussion about needing the Health aid and PT nurse who handle different issues. Chairwoman Charlton said if there were additional questions regarding this issue, board members can email Mr. Cleary and he will provide information.

6050 Human and Social Services – Human and Social Services Director Julie DeMarco said there is new revenue for membership and fees. She said this is the first year membership is being charged. The expenses are on page 178. Ms. DeMarco said the payroll increase is contract driven and the part-time payroll increases were requested by the Social Workers and Therapists. She said Bus Drivers also received increases of \$2.00/hour. Ms. DeMarco said there is also a newly developed Disabilities Commission, and its secretary is getting paid. She said now that her department is fully staffed, office supplies have gone up. She said there is also a program increase and she would like to use that income to pay the instructors. Ms. DeMarco said the motor vehicle fuel and lube went down because the new bus uses regular gasoline. She said the Center is getting better gas mileage as well.

Craig Curley asked for a follow up on fuel calculation and utilization.

There was no public comment.

Finance:

3050 Assessor – Chairwoman Charlton asked Tax Assessor Ross Murray to start with expenses on page 108. Mr. Murray said there is an increase in IT/Software due to renewal increases. He said there is a large increase in Fees & Professional Services as his office prepares for the 2025 revaluation which will be a full revaluation that will require visits to all homes in town. Mr. Murray said there is a reduction in the anticipated costs for the Superior Court appeals. He said appeals are down to 28 cases from the revaluation performed in 2020. Mr. Murray reviewed the breakdown of the \$150,000 allocated for the 2025 revaluation. The details are in the narrative on page 108. Chairwoman Charlton said she would like the breakdown put in the supplemental backup. There was a discussion regarding the revaluation. Mr. Murray said revaluations are performed every five years with house visits every ten years. Mr. Walsh said he would like to have clarification on the BOF role in the revaluation. Mr. Walsh said he would like to have a full update and presentation before any contracts are approved and signed. He said he will speak with the Town Attorney. The revaluation process was discussed.

Chairwoman Charlton made a motion to move to Department 3010 Finance and then move to 7010 Library, and then go back to the regular schedule. Jack Testani seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3010 Finance- Revenue related to Finance is on page 13. This discussion started with Dividend/Interest Income and Change in Market Valuation. CFO Jared Schmitt gave background because he said the Finance Department is taking a different approach to what has been done in the past. Mr. Schmitt said they are constrained by State Statute and also by the Town Investment Policy. He said investments were spread out with different advisors and he thought it was better to have one advisor handle all of it. He said this went through the RFP process and had 8-9 responses. Mr. Schmitt said Finance narrowed it down to three firms, interviews were performed and the bid was awarded to Janney Montgomery Scott LLC. Budget Director Frank Magneri directed the Board to page 27 of the budget book to see the investment numbers. Janney Fixed Income Director Guy Lebas explained what he and Carolyn Frzop will be doing for the Town. Mr. Lebas went through his backup sheet on page five of the posted backup. Mr. Lebas said he will provide descriptions of the acronyms on the backup sheet. There was a discussion regarding predictions for FY24. Chairwoman Charlton asked for a monthly breakdown sheet.

Mr. Schmitt and Chairwoman Charlton let both the Tax Collector 3090 and the IT Director 3110 leave the meeting and they said if any BOF member had questions about the Tax Collector or IT budgets, the questions would be submitted to them.

Culture and Recreation

7010 Library – Revenue for the library is on page 15 and Expenses are on page 185. Town Librarian Scott Jarzombek and Deputy Town Librarian Jan Fisher went through the budget beginning with Revenue. The presentation is for both libraries combined. Mr. Jarzombek said there is an increase in fines because when there is an increase in circulation, there will be late returns. He said there was a 43% increase in circulation last year and a 13% increase in cardholders.

Mr. Jarzombek said the library is also requesting an increase in pay as compared to other libraries in the State. He went through the many accomplishments for the Fairfield libraries as compared to other libraries in the State. The review continued through the revenue and expenses and Mr. Jarzombek answered questions from the Board. There was a discussion about keeping the libraries separate or together in the budget as they are separate in Munis, but presented together in the budget. Jack Testani through Chairwoman Charlton asked for a breakdown of the request for \$450,000 in library materials to put in the supplemental backup. A discussion continued about the need for different forms of media that is available and how Mr. Jarzombek thinks it is important to keep these materials in the library.

7011 Library - Fairfield Woods Branch – This was discussed in the above library budget discussion.

10030 Debt Service – This will be discussed at another budget meeting.

2020 Fund Balance– This will also be discussed at another budget meeting.

There was no public comment.

Administrative & General:

1070 Registrars of Voters – Registrars Matt Waggner and Cathy Politi went over their budget. There was an increase in payroll for the Registrars’ Deputies. There was also an increase in education and membership to keep certifications. Mr. Waggner requested separate budgets. There was a very long and detailed discussion about the office and the budget. Mr. Curley asked about the increase in payroll, but not Social Security. Mr. Magneri acknowledged this was a mistake and he will have the correction shown in the supplementary backup so the BOF has the information before voting on the budget. For the full discussion, please access this link: [BOF Budget #1 3.8.2023.](#)

There was no public comment.

5. Adjourn

Mr. Testani made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Walsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:54 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O’Brien
Recording Secretary