

BOARD OF SELECTMEN PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING #1
Monday, February 26, 2024 - 10:00 am
Via Zoom & In-Person in the
First Floor Conference Room, Independence Hall
725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT 06824

A recording of this meeting can be found here: [BOS Public Budget #1 2/26.2024](#)

Backup documents for this meeting can be found here: [BOS Budget #1 Backup Packet 2/26/2024](#)

FINAL MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: First Selectman William A. Gerber, Selectman Christine Vitale, Selectwoman Brenda L. Kupchick

OTHERS PRESENT: Building Manager Bill Hurley, Police Chief Robert Kalamaras, Deputy Police Chief Eddie Weihe, Dog Warden Paul Miller, WPCF Superintendent John Bodie, Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn, Interim CFO David Becker, Budget Director Frank Mangeri, FairTV, members of the public

1) Call to Order / Roll Call

First Selectman Bill Gerber called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and the roll was called.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

Engineering Manager Bill Hurley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) First Selectman - Budget Summary Presentation

First Selectman Gerber presented the Town of Fairfield budget. \$370,129,270 – approximate Mill Rate increase of 1.81%

Budget Drivers:

- Expanded staff in First Selectman’s office.
- Implementing new software systems
- Adding Commissions to support the community
- Catchup in Collective Bargaining
- Adding Natural Resource Specialist – Conservation
- Adding Teen Librarian – Public Library
- Adding New Director – Regional Emergency Center
- BOE increase in Salary/Benefits although Health Care cost will not increase as originally thought.
- Grand List growth low Non-Tax Revenue increased through PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) state grant

Mr. Gerber thanked Department Heads the Interim CFO, and Budget Director for all their hard work.

- 4) Budget Hearings – Town-Side
5070 Engineering – pages 181-186 \$1,080,350 – Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Not many changes from last year’s budget
 - Increase in Seasonal Payroll-1 seasonal last year, requesting 2 this year.
 - Added FT Administrative Secretary - \$76,642 (shifted from ROV to Engineering)
 - Capital Outlay – Surveying equipment – Replacement and upgrade of equipment.

There was a discussion about the elimination of the position in the Registrars of Voters Office. This position receives Longevity bonus through THEA which has also been added to Engineering budget. Mr. Marsilio expressed a need for increased space for the department.

- 4070 Street Lights – pages 155-156 \$530,068 - Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Increase in price of electricity.
 - 4,206 unmetered street lights, 122 unmetered decorative lights, 38 other metered individual lights.

- 130 WPCA – pages 250-257 \$10,232,994 - Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Added FT staff person
 - Added person for Call Before You Dig
 - Added person for implementation to FOG (Fats, Oils, and Grease) program.
 - Assistant WPCA Manager position in Contingency

- 5011 DPW Administrative – pages 163-166 \$402,962 - Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Budget remains mostly the same.
 - THEA Secretarial contractual increases
 - Other contract settlements (PETA) in contingency

- 5030 DPW Operations – pages 169-174 \$13,394,968 - Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Decrease in budget due to surplus funding in electric utilities. New equipment efficiencies.
 - Contracted services that are going or have gone out to bid: catch basin cleaning, snow removal, combined custodial cleaning services.
 - Tree removal and maintenance on Town side is also paid through DPW Operations

There was a discussion about the need for more space for added staff and meetings.

- 6070 Solid Waste – pages 198-202 \$3,753,785 - Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Assistant DPW Director John Cottell
- Increase in tipping fees from haulers. Contract was recently negotiated.

There was a discussion about the fees, hauling companies and the future of the transfer station.

The meeting recessed at 11:22 am. The meeting resumed at 11:32 am

4030 Police – pages 142-149 \$17,906,151- Police Chief Robert Kalamaras, Deputy Police Chief Eddie Weihe

- Largest increase to absorb cost to hire Fairfield County Regional Dispatch Center (FCRD) Captain to reorganize and achieve appropriate staffing.
- Decrease in OT due mostly to relocation SWAT team to regional location and will drive down annual cost of in-house training.
- Decreased vehicle maintenance line to be funded mostly by outside job vehicle fees.
- Increases in OT, IT, Fees & Professional Services, Communications and Training
- Overall proposed increase is 3.8%.

Discussion about the Outside Jobs fund which is funded by officers hired by outside vendors who pay for the officer and pay an additional fee for the use of the car. The car fee goes into the outside job vehicle fund. Eight Police vehicles were purchased in 23-24 with this revenue.

4050 Animal Control – pages 150-154 \$405,548 – Dog Warden Paul Miller, Deputy Police Chief Eddie Weihe

- Increase in payroll due to new FT employee.
- Increase in OT due to lack of the FT employee and need for investigations for animal cruelty cases.

Animals removed from homes need to stay in the shelter while the case is being investigated. There was a large increase this past year.

123 ECC – pages 258-263 \$3,959,441 - Police Chief Robert Kalamaras, Deputy Police Chief Eddie Weihe

- Transition of the role of the Captain to a FT civilian Director to oversee the facilities operations.
- OT replacement for OT caused by vacancies of staff.

The meeting recessed at 12:30 pm. The meeting resumed at 1:30 pm

4010 Fire – pages 132-141 \$17,375,343 - Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn

- Significant increase in payroll due to bargaining agreement settlement
- Increased manpower by hiring 4 firefighters.
- Payroll increased through promotion and no additional head count.
- Additional funding requested for Apparatus maintenance, additional training
- Capital budget increases for a staff car and turnout gear

Chief McCarthy spoke about increased in calls for service, multiple calls cause delay in response times and OSHA regulations, as well as onboarding for new employees.

There was a discussion about apparatus gear. Budget Director Frank Magneri went through arbitration and other items that increases.

4110 Emergency Management – pages 159-162 \$157,240 - Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn

- Received \$34,000 from the State of Connecticut
- Reunification training program for Fairfield Public Schools to learn best practices for evacuations and other emergencies.

126 Regional Fire Training School – pages 264-268 \$425,000 - Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Chief Kyran Dunn

- Revenue – state grant to run the RFTS \$70,000. Chief McCarthy trying to get the grant to around \$125,000. It will offset capital needs for this building.
- Training fees break even for the most part. Program fees intended to cover the cost of the school 100%.
- Fire School benefit to Town of Fairfield – resource to the Town, Town meetings, HR interviews and more.
- Revenue fees are usage for the facility

Other regional fire schools in CT operate as no-profit centers. Two others operate under their towns. Interim CFO David Becker also spoke about the budget.

5) Public Comment

- Meghan McCloat - 2815 Redding Road – Wished meetings weren't during the day. She's not alone in feeling indebted to first responders. She is disappointed the station study hasn't happened and was put on hold. Has questions about raising payroll on some, but not doing the safety study.

6) Adjourn

First Selectman Gerber adjourned the meeting at 2:38 pm.

All discussions can be heard in their entirety by listening to the full meeting recording here: [BOS Public Budget #1 2/26.2024.](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary