

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Budget Workshop
Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Present: Michael Pelton-First Selectman, John Dillon (zoom), Michael Hernandez, Robert Hetrick, Jr., Tim Lavoy, Rick Sharr (joined meeting at 8:14 p.m.), Jim Tripp

Staff: Jennifer Billingsley (Library Director), Andy Dionne (Parks & Rec), Sarah Elliott-Caratasios (Senior Center), Rob Puida (Fire Chief), Tom Robinson (Finance Director), Michael Lastrina (Public Works), Ryan O'Halpin (Former Public Works Director), Ray Sajdak (Fire Marshal), Bob Shea (BOE), Michael Tierney (Town Clerk)

1. Call Meeting to Order

Michael Pelton called the Budget Workshop to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Buck-Foreman Community Room located at 265 Main Street, Portland, Connecticut.

2. Departmental Budget Workshop

- **Public Works and Other Related Funds**
- **Grounds Maintenance Division**
- **Parks & Recreation**
- **Long-Range Capital**

Tom Robinson went through the budget with the following comments:

Page	Comment
57 - Public Works	2 Employees, Director and Admin. Asst. Director resigned in 2024, still vacant but Ryan O'Halpin still assists. Increase is for contractual obligations.
59 - Highway Dept.	9 full-time employees. Service contract increase for fire alarms, overhead doors; road materials increase; eqpt. supplies. Increase of 3.98%
61 - Vehicle Maintenance	Mechanic and asst. Change in personnel. Bump in payroll. Slight increase in eqpt. repairs. Increase of 1.56%.
63 - Town Engineer	Director does great job. Grants are coming thru that we utilize. Miscellaneous items for upfront work on grant re riverfront access (more challenging than expected). Lot of early-on project work. Slight jump of 4.66%
65 - Street Lighting	Eversource continues to raise prices. Well documented this year in distribution. Increase of 4.13%.
67 - Grounds Maintenance	4 full-time employees. Salary increase and for equipment. Increase of 3.32%

69 - Town Buildings Maintenance	Increased rates. Very high. Continue to work with Frontier. Electricity will see increase. Continue to review contracts. Increase of 5.50%
71 - Snow Removal	Dependent on year; probably this year due to overtime. Continue to increase it for overtime. Salt went up substantially. Tried to keep it within 5%. Increase of 4.90%
107 - Interfund Transfers Out	Park & Rec increased by \$32,038 due to operational costs. Increase of 34.38%
115 - Sewer Dept.	Electricity went up. Utilities; increase in municipal insurance. Service contracts up to \$120,000. Expected cost increase. Salaries and benefits possibility of change in personnel (retirement). May need to increase fees. 4.36% increase.
117 - Water Dept.	2 full-time employees and 1 part-time. Some things were not budgeted for. Jump in overtime. Possible \$50,000 increase on negotiated contract.
116 - Water Dept.	Continual cost increase in supplies. Increase in meter charges. Did prework on well. Some costs are in general fund. Increase of 12.21%.
122 - Town Aid Road Fund	Money to pave roads. Definitely improvements to High Street, Freestone and William St., and Dogwood and Perry. Some funded by grant.
127 - Resource Recovery Dept.	Some adjustments on revenues to bring into line. Bulky waste needs better containers. By time for transport out, it becomes as heavy as what it weighed in at. Work toward funding for that. Not in this budget but should improve the revenue and the outlet which is almost too high. What is going out is heavier than coming in. Had change in personnel. Some savings in salary. Service contracts was increased and we need to watch. Bags and stickers increased because of the cost of bags. Don't have the proper covering for bulky waste.
130 - Bldg. Maintenance Fund	Shared. 0% increase
132 - Parks & Rec	Increase in transfers. Since Covid trying to bring back revenues to the normal level. Increase in summer playground fees. Creeping in some other areas. Program fees are challenge and increase in min. wage. Increase in some of the payrolls. Overtime when they run projects. Contractual services for software. Irrigation and splashpad affect costs. Signage for advertising.

135 - Capital Improvement	Capital Plan Some funded by general fund. Some to BOE. Cost saver is transporting of children on transportation costs. Numerous HVAC issues. Total Transfer in General Fund. Town \$813,000 & BOE \$970,000.
137 - Cap Improvement Plan	<p>Grounds Maintenance replaced vehicles.</p> <p>Library - copier bought some years ago. It can generate some funds for library. About 10 years old.</p> <p>Police Dept. purchased cruisers. \$60,500 to equip cars. Traffic cameras. Policies and procedure continue to move that process forward. Computer replacement for laptops. Operating systems are phasing out.</p> <p>Bldg. maintenance HVAC Town Hall, Buck-Foreman bldg. expensive. Set money aside for some of the bigger ones. Some panic alarms have been requested.</p> <p>Excavator didn't put enough money in last year. Asking for more money for excavator job. Sidewalk reconstruction. Money for development anything relating to sidewalks that's not in the grant.</p> <p>Town-wide computers; continue to upgrade for various depts. Backup appliances are required. This is a re-evaluation year coming up. Estimate. Phone System for everything on town side. Increased like 9 years ago. The whole system is aged out. This is the initial estimate to get the project going. Different technology now and it's more expensive. Security cameras is a catchall title. Town Hall has some areas where prefer to have cameras that aren't presently there. Trying to work on Buck-Foreman improvement.</p>
Page141 - Water & Sewer	<p>\$380,000 in sewer for plant system improvements. Water \$90,000 for system upgrades. \$10,000 for storage tanks. Galvanized lines putting money aside for that; could be substantial requirement. Replace mainline valves. Remote read meters; phasing them out.</p>
<p>Ryan O'Halpin answered questions regarding galvanized service lines. Q. re Library roof replacement. 10-year warranty and issues came up after the warranty. Did job patching-up roof. Roof put on in 2011 and should be in good shape but exposure to sun and elements has made it deteriorate.</p> <p>Q. Chip Sealing: Did chip sealing and paving last year, did lot of sideroads, also some paving. In discussion re what should be the priority. Issues re chip sealing contract.</p>	

Priority to move to pave some of the roads. Maybe explore hiring someone to mill. Looking into both.	
Page 5	Ed.cost sharing grant increased. Emergency management lower. Veteran exemption lower. Other Revenue State money interest is tricky one.
Page 6 - Housing Authority	PILOT Housing Authority & Telecommunications down. Increase in property rental. Vital statistics dropped. Increase in private duty. Structural Permits dropped down.

Michael Pelton then opened it up for questions. He talked about opportunities for additional programs that could increase revenue. One challenge is paying people to run summer programs.

Q. for Michael Lastrina, Public Works: What is your estimate for material and labor for storms? A. For Sunday and Holiday, it is all double time. Probably about 150 ton of salt; overtime for personnel. Still have half a shed left at this point plus liquid. Pot holes not bad. How fast to get excavator attachment? Should be pretty quick per Ryan; maybe 2-3 months so should be ready for winter season. Snow removal: Beginning of Feb. 1, had \$42,000 available. March 16 negative \$28,000. Experienced freezing temps at night and ice that lasted a long time.

Q. for Sarah, Senior Center: Regarding van driver stipend, are we turning anyone away. Would you be able to schedule more rides. A. Yes we turn some away every day because we are running out of money. She will report numbers later.

Q. for Nate Strycharz re Rt. 17 Park: How much extra work does it take to handle the work. A. We all work on it at different times. There are different kinds of cuts after which we trim. We get there early. We check the splash pad once or twice a day. It's a lot. Someone is there every single day but it is worth it.

Q. for Ray Sajdak, Fire Marshal: When will firetruck be in? A. We haven't paid a dime. We were told between April and August; could be in winter. He hopes to have it earlier. It is inside at this time. His concern is that they aren't using the contract. With today's conditions, you can't hold them liable. They'll say it is materials and labor. The money is getting interest so we haven't paid anything at this time. He still plans when it comes in, to have the older one as a spare. Q. How old is ladder? A. About 15 years.

3. Adjourn

Jim Tripp made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Robert Hetrick, all were in favor; meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Hoy
 Sharon R. Hoy, Recording Clerk