

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP DELIBERATION MINUTES
March 26, 2025**

Present: Michael Pelton-First Selectman, John Dillon, Michael Hernandez, Robert Hetrick, Jr., Tim Lavoy, Rick Sharr, Jim Tripp

Others Present: Members of the Staff, Public and Media

1. FIRST SELECTMAN CALL BUDGET WORKSHOP TO ORDER

First Selectman Pelton called the Budget Workshop Deliberation to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Buck-Foreman Community Room located at 265 Main Street, Portland, CT. Michael went over recap of last night's changes.

2. Budget Deliberations

Q. Michael Hernandez re bond. Thinks \$300,000 for HS-Middle School if can't do \$450,000. From Govt to BOE. Bob Shea: He gave roof-top costs, work off of \$300,000 would be able to get 8 rooftops and he needs 17. That's a nice chunk. Doesn't include reimbursement. Grant we first went for is no longer available. Discussion re the surplus.

Ryan O'Halpin: Gave breakdown for sidewalk projects including grants. Re sidewalks, Main St., we have 55,000 in cap. nongrant. and 50,000 allocated and 612,000 connectivity grant to complete Main St. Phase 3. He told where the moneys will be used. There is a 3rd project they want to apply for High St. Jacobson is starting to do the concept plan. If we get the grant, the final design, bid and inspection, using the Main St. grant, it is \$70,000. That takes up all the funding, Highland, Homestead, Main St. thru Waverly and High St. if we get that grant. Tom refreshed on what was taken from the supplemental appropriations for this year that used up a great deal of the surplus.

Q. for Capt. Cunningham: Why can't we get 1 police car this year and one next year. Scott stressed the importance of getting the new cars. It's been a few years since they got a car. They put 20-25,000 miles per vehicle per year. They are all reaching the point of a hundred thousand. Some are not usable now because of the equipment requirements. Systems, like lighting are starting to go and they are expensive to repair. If anything, he'll cut the cameras not the cars. They have to have cars.

Q for Dr. Britton re BOE Van: Can you pay vendor to transport students rather than purchase a van? It saves them about \$15,000 on operating budget. They saved by not having to pay outside companies to provide the transportation. Van is a long-term cost saver.

Q. on Phone System: Bob Shea: Most of the stuff he thinks is critical.

Rick Sharr thinks maybe they were too lenient in handing out money last nite. Example: Sr Center increase. Concerned about those on fixed income, retirees. Hetrick explained why he thought it appropriate to raise it to \$38,000. Jim Tripp asked if they want to go back and look at what we did last night? Prefers not to go higher. Rick Sharr is not comfortable with the increase. Lavoy not comfortable going up to 5.1.

Rick Sharr questioned re the Library part-time position. A. (J. Billingsley) It's not a new position; it's restoring a position. Sharr thinks library used to be open more hours. Jenn showed current statistics and compared to other libraries, we are in the population of 5-10,000 range. The average is 6 part-time employees. Jenn showed statistics that showed the Portland use is almost double what State libraries do.

Dr. Britton response re reduction in BOE budget. Last year was really tough. About \$1M deficit; put them in tough spot. Had students with disabilities move in; and State reduced the amount. Discussed layoffs, cancelling programs, and things that would get people upset. They froze the budget. They emptied their supply cabinet. And thanks for the supplemental the town gave them. That affected the whole school district. Does not expect to ask for help this year. They have a small surplus. There are two things on his radar: Unfunded mandates. They got a little bit more. Doesn't know what is happening in Wash. D.C. Get about 1.5M from fed. govt. If they don't get the funding, they will have to get it somewhere, maybe ask for a supplemental. We have to have money in case something unknown fails. If they are reduced, it comes out of either people or things. It's a very complicated year.

Michael Pelton said we will have a re-evaluation next year. Also, the new businesses will generate more income and will add to the tax basis. Michael continued that he is not in favor of reducing the part-time library position.

Michael Hernandez thinks we need to cut another \$200,000. The BOE changes were made during the development of the budget but not at this point. John Dillon said until we get more businesses in the town, it is hard to hold the line if it includes budget increases for our employees. Dr. Britton said the budget is the BOE budget not his. If they cut the budget, he has to go back to BOE for them to cut. If the cut is \$100,000, he hopes no boiler blows up and no new students move in. He doesn't know how many kindergarten students he's getting; there are just some things they can't predict. Dr. Britton addressed what if they close Valley View, could they make it? A. Yes, but only for the short-term.

Ryan O'Halpin responded to the funding in the capital budget for sidewalks. We could not apply for the grant and significantly reduce it by maybe \$50,000. It's just an idea. It isn't guaranteed that we'd get the funding anyway. It would be for the continuation of High Street. It would save on today's budget. We could apply and if we get the budget, we could come back to the BOS for the engineering.

Tom Robinson said maybe we take \$25,000 off and get the design moving and then maybe come back if we need more. We could still apply for the grant and get the design going through next year. Tom continued regarding the funding for the security cameras but if you push it down the road more, that would be \$20,000 on the list.

Capt. Puida said regarding the Fire Department on P. 138, he could reduce the Hurst tool replacement to \$120,000 instead of \$125,000. He could also push the AED equipment replacement out till next year. When asked, Michael Lastrina said they could cut some money from the excavator.

After getting the input above and much deliberation, the increases and reductions are as follows:

Revenue Increases:

\$3,000 - Added to Prop Tax - Prior Year Acct. 00011

\$4,500 - Added to Prop Tax - Interest and Liens Acct 00012

\$10,000 - Added to Prop Tax - Sup. Motor Vehicle Acct 00013

\$17,500 Total Increases

Reductions:

\$50,000 - BOE Overall Deduction

\$ 2,000 - Tree Removal/Replacement Acct 36003

\$ 2,500 - Grounds Supplies Acct 61004

\$ 725 - Health Fuel Acct 62004

\$16,000 - Open Space Acct 90008

\$ 5,000 - Capital Hurst Tool Replacement

\$ 2,500 - AED Replacement

\$25,000 - Sidewalk Reconstruction Non Grant

\$20,000 - Security Cameras

\$123,725 Total Reductions

Michael Pelton said the next meetings will be Wednesday, April 2nd; May 5 will be the hearing in the Middle School Cafeteria; and the referendum will be on May 12.

3. Adjourn Budget Workshop

John Dillon made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Tim Lavoy, all were in favor; the meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hoy

Sharon Hoy, Board Clerk