

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Budget Workshop Minutes
March 12, 2025

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

Staff: Tom Robinson (Finance Director)

Others Present: Members of the Public and Media

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:

- General Government
- Finance: debt, fringe benefits, liability insurance, transfers to other funds and all other budgets
- Library
- Board of Education

Dr. Britton addressed the following questions on the BOE budget:

Question: Cost Sharing, P. 5, regarding Actual Revenue, which jumped up each year. A: We are getting an increase of \$221,435. It is set by the governor.

Regarding salaries, why was \$40,000 taken out of the budget last year? A: It is covered in other places. The increase is larger this year.

Question: the huge jump in technology hardware. A: They were purchasing the Chromebook with grants and that is going away. Dr. Britton explained how Chromebook will be distributed. They come with a 4-year warranty. New ones are given to grades 9-12. When new ones are available, they are collected and are rotated to other students in the lower grades. They are used all day, every day and also for homework.

Question: Special Ed: The budget contains 22 outplacement students.

Question: Medical Insurance: Are all the numbers firmed up and are we under contract for that? A: Our current vendor came in high. It is based on usage. It was a significant increase and so we went out for bid. We chose the lowest bidder. The number is based on the number that are actually taking insurance. Sometimes, you don't have as many teachers taking insurance because they are on their parents' insurance. We asked each teacher what their plans were. The number is unpredictable. We budget for what we anticipate.

Why was the van purchased? A: They looked at outplacements and if it was worth getting another van. Over time, the vans will pay for themselves. It made sense to use the vans instead of the minibus. We are seeing real savings with the vans now. The drivers are

fabulous. We have 22 outplacements. They are going to different towns, 2 hours in morning and 2 in the afternoon. The vans also drive for field trips.

What are noncertified salaries? A: Examples include: Paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, van drivers, non-union board members, security guards. It jumped because of the drivers we had to add and the additional paraprofessionals.

What is the substitute teacher charge? A: When a principal is out, there are substitutes for the principal. If available, Sarah or Dr. Britton will cover the building because they aren't comfortable without one. Sometimes they need multiple coverages. Stephanie explained how she cut it.

Question: Workbooks: They had a grant to cover a portion of them but they had to cover the rest of the charge. It was a State law. They are for the elementary kids.

Regarding Special Ed Budget, can we bring some of those services inhouse? Would that be something that will have an impact on the budget? A: All of the schools have specialized programs. A: It is harder for us because we are so small. If you have a couple of students it might make sense to outplace them but if you have more, then you bring it inhouse. They watch the numbers closely. It doesn't always work out the way they would like.

Tom Robinson went through the budget with the following comments:

| Page | Comment |
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| 19 - Board of Selectmen | Increased program services to cover cost of recording and online access to meetings. |
| 21 - First Selectman | Two employees. Change from R. Curley to M. Pelton. Slight increase of .41%. |
| 23 - Ethics Commission | Slight increase in miscellaneous for PO box. 3.57% increase. |
| 24-25 - Probate Court | Decrease re cost for file cabinets not included. 11.11% probate |
| 27 - Elections | New tabulation machines; increase in maintenance costs. 4/61% decrease. Don't have early voting for primary. |
| 29 - Finance Dept | 4 full-time employees, one part-time. 33% of director's salary included in BOE budget. Increase in contracts. Increase of 4.6%. |
| 31 - Collector of Revenue | Water & sewer clerk paid out of W&S budget. .02% increase |
| 33 - Assessor | Increase in service contracts for software programs. 4.06% increase |
| 35 - Bd. of Assess. Appeals | Increase in stipends & payroll. 26.37% |
| 37 - Counsel | Ongoing legal matters. 4.60% increase |
| 39 - Town Clerk | 1 full-time town clerk and one full-time assistant. Increase due to indexing and recording. 8.12% increase. |

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| 41 - Central Services | Minor increase in postage; advertising in Courant and Middletown Press. Increase of 1% |
| 43 - Tech. Dept. | 2 full-time 1 part-time and cost of town tech students. Computer network maintenance and licensing software. 18,000 for permitting license, \$3500 Tighe and Bond License. Increase of 8.68% |
| 45 - Fire Dept. | Asst. chief and captain of training position funded in this budget. Training increased by \$2,000. Annual stipend per member is \$1,800. Increase of 3.56% |
| 47 - Fire Marshall | 1 Fire Marshal & 2 Dep. Fire Marshals. Need fire inspector 4 hr per week. Increase of 12.76%. |
| 49 - Emergency Dispatch | Includes Mdn. dispatch, fire alarm monitoring & regional medic dispatch agreements. 5.71% Increase |
| 51 - Police Dept. | 13 officers. Process of filling detective position. Conferences and mtgs increased due to more training for officers. Increase of 7.04% |
| 53 - Emergency Management | Not much change. 1.35% increase |
| 55 - Bldg. Dept | 1 full-time bldg. official and 1 full-time admin. asst. Bldg. official also serves as blight enforcement. increase of 3.79% |
| 73 - Planning Dept. | Town Planner and Admin Asst. (shared with BO) Addnl. responsibilities due to staffing needs. Increase of 8.92% |
| 75 - Zoning Enforce Dept. | ZEO position filled in 2024. Increase of 10.43% |
| 77 - P&Z Commission | Every 5 years a new natural hazard mitigation plan is required. Increase of 30.90% |
| 79 - Zoning Bd. of Appeals | No change |
| 81 - Inland Wetlands | Increase in activities & costs. 14.10% increase |
| 83 - Conservation Comm. | No Change |
| 85 - Economic Dev. Comm. | Slight change for marketing. 1.72% increase |
| 87 - Capital Expend Comm. | No change |
| 89 - Health Dept. | Based on per capita rate per Chatham Health. Increase of 2.17% |
| 93 - Social Services | Increase to Red Cross Dial-A-Ride & Rural Transit Program. Increase of 2.19% |
| 95 - Senior Center | 1 full-time Dir., 1 admin asst. & 1 part-time clerk. Electricity has increased. More program offerings for seniors. Service contracts went up. Increase of 3.76%. |
| 97 - Mun. Agent for Elderly | Increase in van driver stipends. Depends on # & lengths of rides. Increase of 5.90% |
| 99 - Library (Presented by Jenn Billingsley) | Increase in electricity of \$3,950. Increase of contractual plus an addnl part-time librarian at 15 |

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| | hrs./week. Had reduction of staff hours. Service contracts increased by \$2,550 due to price increases. Increase of 8.25%. |
| 101 - Employee Fringe Benefit | Town pension plan increase based on defined benefit valuation. Increase of 4.97% |
| 103 - Risk Management | 0% Increase |
| 105 - Debt Service | Considerable drop of 36.45%. Chromebook lease was reduced. |
| 107 - Interfund Transfers Out | Animal Control increased by \$4,762; \$58,750 for water dept.; Park & Rec increased by \$32,038; \$50,000 to Air Line Trail. Increase of 34.38%. |
| 109 - Town Contingency | 0% |
| 119 - Animal Control | Struggle for replacement. Increase of 12.21% |
| 124 - Youth Services | Resource Center Fees \$2,500. Also contribution revenue. Increase of 8.44% |

Michael thanked Tom Robinson for the great job he does and the hours invested in developing the budget.

Capt. Scott Cunningham gave a report of the police department. Another officer has been hired who will graduate on March 26. He needs field training yet. It is a long process. On March 28, a new certified officer will be coming in, a retiree from East Hampton. At that point, they will be fully staffed. Our town is always safe but we still rely on Middletown to help us out. Scott explained that traffic cameras are to be installed, mostly at intersections. Installation of equipment for a police car is about \$12,000. Ron Milardo still helps with training.

3. Adjourn

Jim Tripp made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tim Lavoy, all were in favor; meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hoy

Sharon R. Hoy, Recording Clerk