



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

DOUGLAS B. HARDING
Chairman

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MICHAEL J. PURCARO
Vice Chairman

BOARD OF FINANCE

KEITH R. DURAO
DAVID J. OLENDER
BARRY C. PINTO
JOSEPH E. WEHR

BUDGET DELIBERATIONS APRIL 15, 2021 MINUTES

Members Present: Douglas Harding-Chairman, David Olender, Barry Pinto, Michael Purcaro, Joseph Wehr, Keith Durao*

Others Present: Tiffany Pignataro-Finance Officer/Treasurer, Lori Spielman-First Selectman, Selectmen David Stavens and John Turner, Dr. Scott Nicol-Superintendent of Schools, Brian Greenleaf-Dir. Finance & Operations BOE, Timothy Webb-DPW Director, Board of Education Members Elizabeth Nord and Miriam Underwood, Peter Hany, Sr.-Pres. EVAC, Katherine Heminway, Peggy Busse, Dustin Huguenin*-Dir. P&R, Mary Bartley*-Asst. Dir. P&R, Melinda Ferry*-Selectman, Sgt. Brian Santa*, Lisa Houlihan*-Town Planner, Joy Hollister*-Dir. Human Services, Felicia LaPlante*-Asst. Finance Officer, Mary Blanchette*-Library Bd. Chair, Jennifer Dzen*-BOE Chair, EVFD Chief Jack Rich II*, James York*-Fire Marshal, Sue Phillips*-Dir. Hall Memorial Library.

*Via Zoom

Call to Order

Chairman Douglas Harding called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Budget Deliberations

Mr. Harding stated that tonight the Board would make the budget changes and that Tuesday night the final motions will be made. He started a list of changes to the proposed budget. The first were required adjustments. Add \$58,000 to trash for increased tipping fees, add \$133,355 to the Debt budget to account for the new fire truck, and add \$12,000 to the 810 electricity account. He then asked the other members of the Board for their suggestions.

Mr. Purcaro proposed a return to the Town from the Board of Education in the amount of \$45,000.

There was discussion regarding the salary adjustment account. The Board of Finance cannot direct what the merit increases will be but can set the funding level. Mr. Purcaro felt that the administration should know the Board's logic behind any reduction to the account. These are difficult financial times and the Board should set the right example to reflect this. There was discussion regarding setting the salary adjustment account at 3% or 2.75% which would be the high range for increases. Ms. Pignataro stated that giving the First Selectman the account at 3% would enable her the opportunity to award merit increases according to the personnel rules. Mr. Wehr recommended setting it at 2.75% which is the same as last year. The final decision was to set it at 2.75% which results in a reduction to the salary adjustment account of \$29,544 and a reduction in fringe benefits of \$2,260.

Regarding the Health Insurance account, Mr. Purcaro asked for an explanation of how this line item's figure was determined. Ms. Pignataro stated that they know the cost for the first 6 months of the year to 12/31/2021. The second half of the year, January-June is a projection. The projected increase of 15% is lower than in the past. Mr. Purcaro stated that historically funds in this account have been turned back at the end of year. He asked what the broker's compensation rate is. Ms. Pignataro did not have that figure tonight but she will get it to the board. She is also going to work with the broker to change the insurance year to the fiscal year. She stated that the Town has been working with Willis since 1997. Ms. LaPlante stated that they consult with Willis when they determine the projected increase. Last year there was a 0% in the dental, and a 3.75% increase in health insurance cost, mostly due to good experience and an increase in the deductible. She stated that in the past two years the claims have gone down. Connecticutare knows the Town's history. Mr. Purcaro does not feel that the account will come anywhere near a 15% increase since it is in such a good position. This budget figure is not accounting for any vacancies at this time. Mr. Purcaro recommended setting the increase for Health Insurance at 10%. This results in a reduction of \$29,140.

There was discussion to add back the Tractor for Public Works that was taken out of the Capital Improvements Budget. Mr. Olender had a quote for the tractor on the State bid with additional accessories for a total of \$42,562. The accessories are not part of the State bid but the vendor is offering a 10% discount on them. Mr. Olender is happy with this firm price which is less than originally asked for in the capital budget. There was discussion regarding the timing of the purchase in order to have it on hand for this summer and it was decided to check with the vendor to see if he will hold the price until the budget is approved, July 1. By consensus \$42,562 will be added back into the budget.

Public Safety Coordinator. The position is budgeted at \$47,050. Mr. Purcaro would like to cut the funding on this position. He is proposing to eliminate the position and add into the salary adjustment account \$20,000 to use or enhance existing positions with additional funding to do some of these duties. There is an extensive job description and he does not want to eliminate the duties but use existing staff to perform some of these duties. Mr. Harding pointed out that the EVAC contribution would go away. Mr. Hany endorsed the position in that they would work to bring in outstanding collections that have not been paid. Mr. Hany stated that they use a service to collect the fees and follow up with three letters, then they stop if no payment is made. The EVAC does not feel it is good business to hound people over and over. Mr. Hany agreed that the Ambulance charging fund would contribute \$10,000 to this proposal. Ms. Pignataro stated that the outstanding balances are not written off, they are still there so the Town knows who still owes money. Mr. Durao questioned whether the amount collected is worth the time spent to collect. Ms. Pignataro will get the figures of how much is uncollectible monthly. Mr.

Purcaro stated that a presentation to the Board would be advantageous at some time during the year to get a handle on it.

Jennifer Dzen, Board of Education Chairman, stated the rationale as to the \$45,000 contribution by the Board of Education to the Town as opposed to the \$113,000. They would like to maintain \$68,000 to apply to lost learning efforts.

Adjournment

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (WEHR) AND PASSED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Lori Smith, Recording Secretary