



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

MICHAEL J. PURCARO
Chairman

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DAVID J. OLENDER
Vice Chairmen

BOARD OF FINANCE

PEGGY A. BUSSE
JAMES F. FAY
DOUGLAS B. HARDING
BARRY C. PINTO

Budget Hearing – Board of Selectmen/Boards and Commissions March 14, 2023

MINUTES

Members Present: Michael Purcaro -Chair, David Olender, Peggy Busse, James Fay, Douglas Harding.

Members Absent: Barry Pinto

Others Present: Lori Spielman – First Selectman, Tiffany Pignataro-Finance Officer/Treasurer, Ken Radziwon-Department of Public Works Director, Jim York – Deputy Fire Marshal, John Rainaldi – Town Assessor, Kristen Harp – Youth Services Director, Lois Timms-Ferrara – Registrar of Voters, Mary Blanchette – Library Board of Trustees Chairman, Melinda Ferry – Board of Selectman, Michael D’Averso – Deputy Chief, Miriam Underwood – Board of Education, Pete Hany – EVAC President, Rebecca Stack – Elderly Outreach, Rob Edwards – Ad Hoc Services Committee, Sheila Grady – Senior Center Director, Susan Phillips – Hall Memorial Director, Susan Danseyar, Aaron Fliss – Director of Technology, Cheryl Chamberlin, Robert Smith – Deputy Chief, Dustin Huguenin – Park and Rec Director, Lisa Houlihan – Town Planner, Jack Rich - Chief, Jean Burns – Crystal Lake Association Board Treasurer.

Call to order

Chairman Michael Purcaro called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Citizens Forum

No one came forward.

Budget Hearing – Board of Selectmen/Boards and Commissions FY2023-2024

The chairman thanked everyone for joining tonight’s meeting. He stated Mrs. Pignataro will present a charter-required budget hearing. This will present the current budget that was approved by the

administration, finance, and the Board of Selectman now to the Board of Finance for review, deliberations, and adjustments.

Mrs. Pignataro shared a Town of Ellington BOF Budget Presentation for the fiscal year 2023-2024. She shared a quick budget overview: this budget is a continuation of funding for the essential local government services that our residents rely upon. We are currently in difficult economic conditions with minimum wage increases and increased costs of goods and services. She stated that zero-based budgeting has yielded a comprehensive budget plan for moving Ellington forward allowing the Board of Finance to prioritize budget proposals based on taxpayer return on investment. Mrs. Pignataro stated the town credit rating with S&P Global has improved with a stable outlook. She reviewed FY2023-24 budget highlights including a proposed increase of 2.8 to Mill Rate FY2023-2024. Mrs. Pignataro stated we are spending about a million more than we are bringing in which means we need to dip into our savings with this proposed budget. Expanding the end fund budget just shy of \$5 million.

Looking at total revenue the FY2023 adjusted approved budget is \$63,696,991 and the proposed budget for FY2024 is \$68,616,403 which is a 7.72% change. Property taxes \$4,490,006 net increase, State and Federal Grants \$287,154 net increase, Investment Earnings \$230,000 net increase other income \$87,748 (combined net decrease). Due to a slight decrease in departmental income (\$22,384) year over year due to slowed activity projects in Town Clerk and Building Departments.

Looking at total expenditures FY2023 the adjusted approved budget was \$20,847,907 FY2024 the proposed budget is \$21,618,225 which is a 3.69% change. General government \$205,374 (a 9.83% increase), Board of Selectmen \$79,616 (a 19.58% net increase), Tax Assessor \$67,930 (a 28.95% net increase), Town Counsel \$40,000 (a 38.10% net increase).

Boards & Agencies \$7,270 (a 5.90% net increase), Registrars and Electors \$6,750 (9.27%), Permanent Building \$2,370 (a 135.43% net increase).

Public Safety \$61,145 (a 1.72% net decrease): Center Fire \$19,268 (a 7.48% net decrease), Public Fire Protection \$31,200 (a 7.74% net increase), Emergency 911 \$17,881 (a net increase of 33.38%), Police \$121,296 (a net decrease of 8.90%), EVAC \$17,074 (a 4.48% net increase).

Recreation \$131,367 (a 21.41% net increase): Summer playgrounds \$94,703 (a 151.24% net increase), Water Front \$16,188 (or a 24.97% net increase), Crystal Lake Water Monitor \$20,000 (a 50% net increase).

Library \$38,265 (a 5.06% net increase), Full-Time and Part-Time staff \$27,954 net increase, and Remaining Budget Lines \$10,311 net increase.

Human Services \$40,752 (a 4.67% net increase), Youth Activity Programs \$19,823 (or a net increase of 8.67%), and Senior Center \$14,203 (a 4.80% net increase).

Debt Service \$488 (a 0.02% net increase) due to retirement of debt and savings with prior bond refunding. Mrs. Pignataro stated overall debt projections remain level year over year which will help with stabilization efforts.

Fixed Charges \$53,207 (a 1.47% net increase): Social Security \$26,440 (a 1.47% net increase), Insurance \$20,826 (a 0.70% net increase).

Miscellaneous \$152,539 or (a 21.57% net increase): Salary Adjustment \$8,889 (a net decrease from the prior year's approved unadjusted budget).

Mrs. Busse asked about the request for the new Paylocity HR modules and the offset. Mrs. Pignataro stated currently everything is done via paper and this system would help the department to do everything online. Allowing for a lot of timesaving since the HR department is one employee. Mrs. Pignataro stated there are hours a week being spent on items that can be done with a click of a button.

Mr. Harding asked why we're seeing an increase in new employee physicals. The first selectman stated physicals are recurring for driver licenses, CDLs, and standard spring physicals. Mr. Harding asked since we hired a new town clerk does that line need to be adjusted? Mrs. Pignataro stated it will need to be adjusted.

Mr. Radziwon presented the fiscal year 2023-2024 Public Works Budget. He stated the department prepared a budget under the guidance of the Board of Finance Zero-Based Budgeting framework. The Public Works Budget requests a 4.51% overall increase to the 400 accounts, which equates to a total of \$230,289. He provided a budget overview: the department consists of 25 employees, and oversight of the community's 110 miles of roadway, parks, fields, nine facilities, the brush center, and recycling center.

Total proposed expenditures: 410 General Town Road \$129,148 (a 5.90% net increase), 415 New Equipment net neutral budget from the previous fiscal year, 420 Equipment Maintenance \$16,300 (a 6.11% net increase, 425 Town Garage Maintenance \$2,500 (a decrease of 3.36%), Street Signs net neutral budget from the previous fiscal year, 435 Grounds Maintenance BOE/Parks \$10,000 (an 8.33% net decrease), 439 Town Road Air – Winter \$49,210 (a net increase of 23.66%), 440 Town Road Aid – Materials net neutral budget from the previous fiscal year, 450 Sanitary Landfill \$7,710 (a net increase of 1.16%, 451 Municipal Solid/Bulky Waste Curbside Collection \$52,175 (an 8.32% net increase), 455 Sanitary Recycling \$10,836 (a 2.45% net decrease), 470 Street Lighting \$5,000 (a net 5.75% decrease) 470 Street Lighting \$5,000 (a 5.75% net decrease), 480 Engineering & Inspections net neutral budget from the previous fiscal year.

800 Accounts Town Building: The Public Works Department also manages town properties that are funded under the 800 code including the Town Hall, Arbor Commons, Pinney House, Hall Memorial Library, Senior Center, and the Old Crystal Lake School House.

Mr. Purcaro thanked Mr. Radziwon and Mrs. Pignataro for putting together the presentation. He stated the Board of Finance's goal is to meet with more department heads and understand the work they do and the return on investment. He thanked the Board of Finance for the review implemented with Mrs. Pignataro's numerous streaming that has resulted in an on-time/clean audit, removing the town from the state's financial watch plan, and implementing zero-base-budgeting along with shared services. He stated a 2.8 million mill rate is not affordable. We need these opportunities to meet with our department heads. He is not in favor of reducing budgets across the board and this is where Collaboratory discussions will be key.

Mr. Olender asked Mr. Radziwon how Sam is going to benefit the town. Mr. Radziwon stated what Sam is doing is taking costs out of our tonnage. He stated they have saved \$15,000 so far. Mr. Purcaro stated he sees the value in Sam's work but would like to see more of the costs saving side. Mr. Olender asked

what savings we will see on the winter account due to the warm winter we've had. Mr. Radziwon stated he expects to see a lot of savings but there still can be storms.

Mrs. Busse asked Mr. Radziwon if we are looking at unit efficiency since town offices are now closed on Fridays. He stated there will be upgrades in the future with new cost-saving ways. Mr. Harding asked if the library's electricity has increased because of their solar. Mr. Harding asked if there's the possibility to expand solar in the future. Mr. Radziwon stated there is more area to put on more solar panels.

Mr. Olender asked what the plan for the Pinney building is. Mr. Radziwon stated he'd like to walk away from the building. Mrs. Busse asked what happens to the building if we shut the heat and electricity off. Mr. Radziwon stated there wouldn't be any negative impacts. Mr. Purcaro asked him to further look into it and see if we can make the reduction. The first selectman stated she talked to the town attorney, and the town has no obligations to keep going with the Pinney building. She stated there's mold, it's an old foundation and it would take millions of dollars to reconstruct it.

Mrs. Pignataro thanked everyone for their time and corporation throughout the process. If any departments have any suggestions for anything town-wide to explore potential efficiencies, please reach out to Mrs. Pignataro or Mr. Purcaro.

Adjournment

MOVED HARDING SECONDED OLENDER AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Phelps".

Elizabeth Phelps, Recording Secretary