

TOWN COUNCIL
Town of Trumbull
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

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FINANCE COMMITTEE
FY 2020-2021 BUDGET HEARING
MINUTES
MAY 7, 2020

Call to Order: The Chair called the virtual meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

The clerk recorded the roll as follows:

Present: Chairman Lisa Valenti, Vice Chairman Dawn Cantafio, Kevin Shively, Michael Miller, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, Tony Scinto, Mary Isaac, Alternate.

Absent: Donna Seidell, Alternate

Also

Present: First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Town Council Chairman Mary Beth Thornton, Chief Administrative Officers Kathleen McGannon, Cynthia Katske, Chief of Police Michael Lombardo, Assistant Chief Glenn Byrnes, EMS Chief Leigh Goodman, Director of Public Works George Estrada, Town Engineer William Maurer, Labor Relations Director Thomas McCarthy and Finance Director Maria Pires.

The Chair explained this is a working meeting with various department heads to give the Town Council the opportunity to ask budget questions and voice concerns.

Kevin Bova, Town Purchasing Agent was on the agenda but will not be joining. Based on a conversation the Chair had with him his concern was that he is currently doing all the purchasing for the Town including Stern Village and BOE. He understands the budget constraints and would like to seek a stipend from the BOE in the future.

02 Public Safety
Police 01022000

Chief Lombardo was present and indicated everyone lives have changed with COVID-19 and extended his best to anyone who is suffering or has lost someone to this disease.

01022000-581888- Capital Outlay - Car Reductions -The BOF reduced to three (3) cars. The last four years they had five (5). They understand budgetary constraints due to the pandemic. When we are in a better situation they will ask for a car or two to offset what is lost this year.

01022000-567702 -Trans/Vehicle Repair - Older patrol cars are used at construction sites and the contractors are charged a per hour fee for those cars. The older cars with high miles are used, but they have to be maintained too. This pushes the repair costs up. He is grateful they generate revenue from the cars and that they are able to purchase cars with the special detail account. He asked they keep this in mind with regard to repairs, noting those costs may increase.

01022000-501105-Salaries-Overtime - The overtime costs have decreased due to the pandemic. They brought back the three (3) school resource officers while school is closed and used them to cover patrol. Due to the pandemic not many people are asking for vacation time, when society does open up again he would expect that they will ask for a lot of their vacation time before they run the risk of losing it. We are saving now but this may cost later.

01022000-501101-Salaries-FT/Permanent – There are two (2) recruits that have been offered to start in March, but the department can't find classes to send them to, the classes are cancelled. They are hoping to get a class in mid-June. The recruits go to the academy for six (6) months and return to the department for three (3) months of training. They haven't been hired to date because they didn't want to put them on payroll, since they can't work alone or go out in the field.

Pandemic & Safety Protocols - The Chief explained for the Committee due to the pandemic they have tried to restrict the contact the police officers have with the public in the following ways:

- If they don't need to go into a house or business they are taking reports over the phone.
- Dispatchers have asked the people to step outside to meet with the officers
- When they do go to the houses they do wear masks.
- They are doing as much social distancing as possible.
- Most people have been very compliant. They have not had a single incident where they had to issue a ticket for violation of executive orders.
- Parks are a new challenge, much of their time is spent there. There are two (2) bicycle officers and an officer with a quad. There are parking considerations from the neighbors so they are constantly looking at that. There is a lot of temporary signage throughout with regard to parking.
- Parking violations have been issued, but many, approximately 65 in the last two months. The park rangers have done a good job since the two (2) parks have opened and the police were there to assist in entering and exiting the parks.
- There has been concerns with the crosswalk at Route 111 & Old Mine and have assigned an officer there in the daytime on Saturday and Sunday.
- Officers in the common areas of the department wear masks.
- Custodian is doing the frequent cleaning of the building and touchable surfaces. This is almost all he does.
- For those of them in the building they have changed the way they work, cleaning cars at shift changes, along with PPE to wear as well.

They have worked well with EMS Chief Goodman. EMS has been fantastic in keeping the officers' exposure to a minimum. He was very happy to report that they have not had one officer or civilian employee test positive for the COVID-19. We did have a couple quarantined due to exposure but did ultimately tested negative.

The Chief explained for the Committee the Emergency Management Director is the Town Fire Marshal and there is a part-time Deputy Director of Emergency Management. This is a full time job for the Emergency Management Director on top of her Fire Marshal during this pandemic, many of the supplies the police department can't get they've received through Emergency Management through Region 1. At this time the Police department has enough equipment, it's inventoried every day.

First Selectman Tesoro reported to the Committee there was a meeting earlier in the day with the mall to discuss their reopening. They are national company, this will be a well-researched and developed plan to protect the customers, employees and everyone. A date has not been picked for the reopening yet.

The Chair asked that discussion pertain to the budget.

Potential Savings - The Chief explained they expect to cover the overall budget within the existing budget, he doesn't anticipate having to ask for a supplemental. They do expect to get to back to business. At this time they can't send the officers to training during the pandemic, they will have to at a later date. This creates a savings now, but moving forward people will go to training and take their vacations. The Chief explained in certain circumstances per contract the Chief can allow them to extend the vacation time so they wouldn't lose it. There have been some instances where this was denied for various reasons. This is not a liability they want the Town to carry. He is open to discussion regarding carrying over vacation time. This health emergency is new to everyone, the pandemic wasn't something considered during negotiations. The contract caps the amount of people who can take vacation at the same time.

Retirements- The department has thirteen (13) officers on the force with 25+ years in the department, which is normal retirement time. Another eight (8) have 20 years in the department. Several years ago they had many more approximately thirty (30), they have since retired. This created some of the shortfalls in the last few years. They have had trouble recruiting, which is a national trend.

Special Detail – Ms. Pires explained they are currently looking at the \$150,000 to see if this could be increased and expects to have that number next week.

02 Public Safety
EMS 01022600

Pandemic & Safety Protocols - Chief Goodman explained they are doing very well with the infectious disease which is a very unpredictable landscape. They have been very aggressive with sourcing and vetting PPE and workforce augmentation, taking aggressive steps keeping their workforce safe. They took steps to request waivers from the agency they work under with regard

to their medical control as well as the state, (i.e. bring people from another town or state). So far they are in good shape, they have made many changes to support a town-wide effort. They are able to protect the scene for law enforcers as best as they can to minimize exposures.

When you are in an infectious landscape there is no such thing as zero risk, it's a low risk to high. They have been in this since January and the past seven (7) weeks have been intense. They have been able to maintain 100% low risk exposure for all of their employees. They lost 32% of their workforce due taking a leave of absence either because they were high risk, (28% of the 32%), some were lost because they are in health care and their full time jobs asked them not to put themselves at risk with cross contamination. Realistically the budget was written prior to this event and they have had some increased costs for cleaning equipment and other items and expect those to be on-going for the remainder of the year. They have worked with the Finance Department and the Emergency Management Department in such a way that if they can they will apply for whatever stimulus funding or other funding might become available.

Training has stopped only some is being done online, and expect for the next two-three years all will be done on-line. They are looking at online options and their costs. It may come from somewhere else in the budget that can't be done at the time. This is a budget that may be impacted. We are all working hard to make sure to stay on top of the ever changing environment. There are portals, and grants to apply for. This isn't the time for an aggressive collection effort as everyone is trying to survive this difficult time.

Chief Goodman stated they are looking at contingency planning to make sure they can keep their ambulances on the road and for staffing if there was to be a surge after this current dip in transports. Some of this will impact the security of their organization and requested Executive Session to discuss security.

Moved by Cantafio, seconded by Rosasco-Schwartz to enter into Executive Session to discuss security. VOTE: Motion CARRIED unanimously.

The Finance Committee entered into Executive Session at 7:51 p.m. with the following people present:

Chairman Lisa Valenti, Vice Chairman Dawn Cantafio, Kevin Shively, Michael Miller, Lori Rosasco-Schwartz, Tony Scinto, Mary Isaac, Alternate, First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro, Town Council Chairman Mary Beth Thornton, Chief Administrative Officers Kathleen McGannon, Cynthia Katske, Chief of Police Michael Lombardo, EMS Chief Leigh Goodman, Labor Relations Director Thomas McCarthy and Finance Director Maria Pires.

Moved by Shively, seconded by Cantafio to end Executive Session. VOTE: Motion CARRIED unanimously. The Finance Committee ended Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

03 Public Works - Public Works Director George Estrada was present and extended his gratitude to the Committee for the opportunity. He had hoped to meet each member in their district to hear their concerns and/or hopes for their district but due to the health crisis he has not been able to, hopefully in the not too distant future that can be done. He looks forward to hearing all the

different nuances of each of the districts. It's been a pleasure since he arrived late January, but we all have been saddled with the current medical emergency. Public Works has been able to maintain services, and are developing plans now to bring everyone completely back on board hopefully in the next week.

Residents are able to make appointments for the Bulk Trash program. This has been a very busy scheduling week as this is a very sought after service in Trumbull. Mr. Estrada commended those that are key members working at the Transfer Station, they have been incredibly overwhelmed with the number of visits. Although they have limited the visits to once a day, two days ago they had 960 visits in one day and have been averaging 600-700 per day. The biggest concern is social distancing is lost when you are overrun like that. He thanked the team at the Transfer Station and noted they are doing an incredible job. Tensions and nerve endings are raw on both sides at this time. There have been complaints, but when they talk it through with the residents they do understand.

08 Recreation and Parks

Tree Warden 010808000

522205 Program Exp. - Mr. Estrada explained they are within the overall budget at this time, but are over budget on some items. He anticipates by the end of the fiscal year to be within budget.

Trees have been one area of concern, as the Ash tree situation has created substantially more activity in the tree service area and is trying to address as much as they can in this fiscal year utilizing some of the areas they had a surplus, (i.e. snow removal).. He has worked closely with the Director of Finance on this and will bring this to the boards at the appropriate time. Within that area they budgeted \$123,000 and are currently \$41,000 over budget, which will be done a transfers. The challenge with the tree service is that it's an on-going 12-month per year situation. An Ash tree can die off quickly creating a hazard.

The power company is going through and removing what is in the right-of-way. This is a financial relief for the Town. Today there were calls from residents with concerns of removal and severe pruning of trees affecting the character of their neighborhoods. This is not something we have jurisdiction over. That is governed by the governing agencies of the utilities. The Tree Warden works with the pruning assessment team to try to advise and protect the character of the neighborhood as best as can be. The utility has the right to remove anything that overhangs a wire and there is a set back from the wires of 8'-10', by the time you cut that box it sometimes severely affects the aesthetic of the tree which results in concerns from the neighborhood.

Mr. Estrada had requested an increase in the tree service account because they are seeing an escalation annually to remove the trees within the parks and right-of-ways. He did suggest the account could be trimmed back to \$123,000, but as the Committee to recognize if there are emergencies that drive this beyond that number we would have to have a conversation at the appropriate time in the coming year. They will do what they can to live within the allocation. In order to cut costs they have been leaving the trunk of the tree as opposed to cutting down to the ground. This is more than prudent to do for the financial situation we are in. This can only be done for so long as this will become unsightly

The budget was more than 90% complete when he arrived. It is a solid budget, he did have feedback before he arrived in Town and had a lot of information shared with him by the previous Director of Public Works.

01030000-501101 Fulltime-Salaries - A final job description has not been developed. It will be developed in the Labor Relations department and addressed with the unions.

The emphasis for this position are the following three areas.

1. Energy Program Initiatives - On the Town side we have little to no energy monitoring or a sustainability program, both are important to strive for as a town. The BOE has implemented substantial projects. These projects don't cause savings for the first 2-3 years and then perpetuate savings onward, usually the savings are used upfront to pay for the initiation of the program. This position will spearhead energy improvements. He would like to see what the BOE had done and begin to integrate on a town-wide basis.
2. Town Recycling and Transfer Station - In 2019 the expenditures was \$2.1 million, this year it is \$2.5 million. We have been averaging a 6% increase annually. Everything was bid correctly, they tried to negotiate better prices, and has sat with everyone. They have really done everything to achieve a cost effective operation at the site but recyclables today are segregated and are picked up and brought to a site in Shelton. The projections for the coming year rate increases will \$100-\$125 a ton. This is a discussion with towns in the area. If the recyclables were in our garbage and went to the burn site it would cost \$89 per ton, a delta of \$400,000 to \$500,000. The reason for that is because the markets of where the recyclables were going, some overseas, have gone away. There are new technologies being developed in the U.S. and a couple in CT where they are looking for permitting. They anticipate there will be markets again for the recyclables in a couple of years. There is a lot of work to be done in this area. There is an organized group of Public Works Directors in the region. We need to spend time looking at the entire operation and the recycling expenses to find ways to economize that.
3. Aging facilities in Trumbull - Town Hall and Senior Citizen Center as well as others. We need thorough assessments and come up with maintenance schedules and programs to preserve what we have because we are not going to be in a position to advocate for all new facilities at one time.

There are various other responsibilities that will be included in this position including in Mr. Estrada's absence to be able to step in, whether it would be as an interim or on a permanent basis.

Mr. Estrada explained the new position represents the exact head count we have today, it's a reorganization. They are taking one position by attrition and adjusting another. There are great opportunities energy management by pursuing grants and opportunities with U.I. where they support initiatives to improve energy efficiency. The university he had worked at had implemented a fuel cell and that provided a tremendous energy savings over the first three years. He wants to pursue all technologies and see how we can attract partners that can help with these developments that will afford saving on the near term. We have to organize and spend time on the transfer station. With the environment we are currently 90% of the day his time has been COVID related. He has the benefit of having the Emergency Management

Director, the Chief of Police and the EMS Chief who are extremely talented and respected. We are eating, sleeping and drinking emergency management and does not see that letting up in the immediate and will be something for the next year or two. The other areas that provide improvement and benefits for the town can't sit on a shelf waiting for this to subside a year or two out. This has not been done for some time and there are near and long term benefits involved with the responsibilities this position will take.

Mr. Estrada confirmed for the Committee that the opportunities are there, regardless of the current situation and it's a matter of having the resource in place that can pursue those. The recycling side of it alone, if legislative discussions have to be pursued and advocate for changes in the short term to give municipalities relief from some. To pay some \$30-\$40 a ton more for what we can dispose of ourselves doesn't make sense. In that environment municipalities have to find sources of financial relief. Even if they were to give us an option until the other markets emerge. That in itself would pay for this position 3-4 times over. This would involve legislation at the state level, and pursuing this at a regional basis because all of the towns are feeling the financial pressures and are searching for relief valves. This potentially, with the support of the state, could potentially be it. Recycling is currently an unfunded mandate because of the loss of the market. Relief on that for a year or two would be a substantial for municipalities. That is one example of an absolute opportunity to pursue aggressively.

Building Maintenance

522203 - Mr. Estrada explained this was bid two (2) years ago. Years one and two of the contract were \$117,000 and in years three and four it goes to \$142,000. They held the cost for the first two years, this covers the contractual requirement.

578802 Maint./Equipment

Mr. Estrada explained this area directly reflects the conversation on aging facilities. They initially proposed an increase to \$190,000 and reduced it to \$165,000. The \$190,000 is a five year average of an actual spend. The \$165,000 is higher than the current budget, they were trying to be more realistic. This correlates back to on-going building maintenance, (i.e. HVAC controls at Town Hall). This is in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Estrada confirmed for the Committee the savings from lockdown are built into the budget, he inherited a budget for a department that was built on a lean budget there is no fat whatsoever. It's amazing how much gets done with the staffing levels we have. The efficiencies are already built into the budget. Public Works has operated at 95% if not 100% throughout this emergency. The team that First Selectman has selected for the permit process led by Rina Bakalar and the Town Engineer hasn't missed a beat. We have delivered everything that had to happen to continue development in Town. This has been done on a virtual level, transmitting what is required. When paper copies are required by statute they partnered with the library utilizing their book drop off locations for submittals. The permitting process has not been interrupted the details of such are found on the website. Developers can completely continue to conduct their business with Trumbull. Safeguards are in place for the sanitizing of the hard copies and the handling. This is something you can be proud of, in the way this has been implemented and the services have been delivered. We haven't missed a beat.

At Public Works they staggered personnel to separate them so if we did have someone become ill we wouldn't lose the whole department, even the Bulk Waste Pick-Up program was done for existing appointments and have been able to bring the program back for new appointments after implementing safe guards for the staff.

The Committee extended their gratitude to Mr. Estrada for attending and spoke to the importance of both the Council and the community hearing from him as to what he is trying to do for the community and the level of detail you do to make sure every dollar is spent in the most responsible way especially during a time when people are hurting.

MSW Tonnage Numbers - Mr. Estrada explained he has not been made aware of contractors bypassing the transfer station. There has been such significant activity at the transfer station he expects the numbers will be higher than anticipated. Driver's licenses have been required since before he was with the Town, and also partner with Monroe and Easton. We need to identify where it's coming from,

Ash Tree – Mr. Estrada stated he doesn't anticipate this to slow down and may escalate in the next few years. We will see the ash tree disappear, there are thousands out there and we can't predict when, it will be on-going. They are preserving safety first.

Weighmaster- The weigh master is the licensed person which is a state requirement and is required to be there on the Saturdays and holidays.

The Committee extended their gratitude to Mr. Estrada noting how knowledgeable he is and up to speed so quickly.

The Chair extended her gratitude to all who participated

There being no further business to discuss and upon motion made by Cantafio, seconded by Shively the Finance Committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Margaret D. Mastroni
Town Council Clerk