1. BET Budget Comm. Dept. Review Day 5 Documents

Documents:

SUB_TO_APP_0BET_BUDGET_DEPT_REVIEW_DAY_5_MINUTES_02-18-15.PDF
APPROVED_BET_BUDGET_DEPT_REVIEW_DAY_5_MINUTES_02-18-15.PDF
Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M.

First Selectman’s Office – Mr. Tesei provided an overview of the office and described how its functions of town administration, labor relations and business analysis support the town through outcome based budgeting and process improvement. He noted that the department’s headcount was 9 people.

Mr. Johnson noted that the First Selectman’s Office FY16 budget showed a 1.1% increase in comparison to its FY15 increase of 7.7% over FY14 actual. Mr. Tesei cited the additional cost
of a labor attorney for arbitration and mediation of contracts, the annual rental fee for the 911-emergency phone platform and annual software service costs to be among the items causing the difference. Mr. Crary commented that there had been no change in staffing, but that step raises were affecting the salary line.

Ms. Kiernan asked for feedback on the ADP implementation and suggestions on how to accelerate its implementation. Mr. Tesei responded that he was fully supporting the new payroll system and emphasizing its benefits at every staff meeting. He noted the town’s decentralized governmental structure and cultural attitude were among the challenges to implementation. When asked by Ms. Kiernan if he favored a temporary expenditure for enterprise-level expertise to accelerate implementation, Mr. Tesei replied that it would be a wise investment. Ms. Tarkington asked for his opinion of an operating department where IT Technical Solutions would support HRIS as well as future system rollouts.

Mr. Johnson expressed his thanks to Mr. Crary for his contributions during his career with TOG.

Mr. Tesei asked that the Budget Committee authorize $25,000 for expenses related to the Town’s 375th anniversary. There was discussion as to which department would hold and release the funds.

**Tax Collector** – Mr. Laudonia described the positions and responsibilities of the Tax Collector’s Department staff and commented that although seasonality compressed 94% of the tax collection activity into two months of the year, the 18% interest rate on outstanding collections created an incentive for visits to the Tax Department at other times during the year. Mr. Laudonia commented that the state government was considering reducing the penalty interest rate to 12%. Ms. Tarkington asked if this penalty reduction would significantly affect the department’s projected income for the FY16 Budget.

Mr. Johnson asked why full-time salaries were up 2.9% and Temporary salaries up 6.7%. He asked Mr. Laudonia to look for departmental savings and adjust line items to meet the Budget Committee’s request for 2% overall department increases.

Ms. Kiernan asked if alternative departmental configurations or consolidating customer service and counter tasks with Assessor’s Office staff might be considered in order to gain operating efficiencies.

**Land Use** – Ms. DeLuca offered the Committee background information about departmental activity including recent increases in P&Z applications. Her overall goals for the department included preserving the quality of the town and improving the customer permitting process. She commented that record scanning had freed up physical office space and that technology was enabling her department to increase its services. She anticipated overall revenues would be up 11.2% in FY16. The Planning and Zoning Commission is in the process of developing a fee schedule for permits based on the value of the work being permitted rather than the type of working being done. Mr. Heller and Ms. DeLuca recommended considering an update to the Plan of Conservation and Development, which would include a waterfront study to ensure public access while planning for waterfront business zones and consideration for additional workforce housing.

Mr. Johnson asked if P&Z could provide the public with an easy way to understand recent changes to codes and requirements. Ms. Kiernan asked if TOG’s IT department could be of assistance formulating the land use departments’ workflow process in order to make it more
consumer-friendly. Mr. Ramer asked if additional sources of revenue might be derived from expert fees and studies during customer projects’ design phase.

Ms. Tarkington asked that because back-country fire suppression was a critical issue, could regulations be supplemented to require dry hydrants and cisterns for larger homes. Ms. DeLuca also commented that she looked forward to working with an IT enterprise-level consultant to optimize either use of Citiview, which has a lot of capabilities that the Town does not use and which has been an enormous failure because of the Building Department never converting, or possibly converting to OnBase, which is the Town’s document imaging system. Ms. Tarkington asked Ms. DeLuca to include the Assessor’s Office in the discussions as it is a major user of the systems.

**Wetlands and Conservation** – Ms. Savageau and Mr. Rutherford (Conservation), and Mr. Chambers and Mr. Harris (IWWA) discussed how their two departments were looking for efficiencies such as staff consolidation and other opportunities to work together. Consistent with the BET’s efforts to streamline government, Mr. Crary pointed out that Mr. Chambers’ resignation offered an opportunity to explore how these two departments could be integrated. A group meeting of P&Z, Wetlands, Conservation and DPW is being planned to review the permitting application process to prepare for seeking enterprise expertise from IT’s proposed Enterprise Solutions position.

The Committee asked for additional information about the decrease in Wetlands’ application fees. Mr. Chambers explained that applications, violations and disturbance fees were budgeted to be increased in FY16.

Ms. Savageau responded that her department was advisory to Planning and Zoning and had no billable fees for services. However, the Conservation Department pursued grants that brought in substantial funds to the Town. The Conservation Commission was launching an initiative to catalog an Open Space Plan and Natural Resource inventory so that backcountry water problems could be addressed.

**Parking** – Ms. Azrelyant offered the Committee her departmental organization chart describing the responsibilities of the 18 staff members and stated that her objectives were green management, increasing revenues and public education. She saw opportunities to internally and externally automate activities. Although her FY16 budget projected a loss of $747,000 due to expenses and upgrades, FY17 revenues were planned to be positive. The Committee learned about the revenue split with the state on state-owned parking lots adjacent to railroad stations and how for the first time, the Parking Department would be deducting the cost of maintenance that it provides prior to forwarding parking fees that it collects for Railroad Fund.

Ms. Tarkington asked if DPW employees currently allocated to the Parking Department should be relocated back to DPW.

In discussing goals for the upcoming year, Ms. Azrelyant mentioned internal reorganization of responsibilities, instituting “pay by phone” metered parking, reducing costs by deleting smartcard software and removing electronic meter stations. Among FY16 expenses, she foresees operating costs to pave and waterproof the Town Hall garage floor as well as paving parking lots. Two new vehicles and a license plate scanner were requested under Capital Improvements.
Fleet – Mr. Domeseck presented an overview of his department’s operations budget that was 3.9% less than previous year. He attributed some of the savings to reduced fuel costs and the automation of some administrative tasks which allowed for the reduction of a full-time administrative position to part-time. The departmental CIP budget included replacing Fire, Police, DPW, Parks & Recreation and Parking Services vehicles that were being rotated out of service due to excessive mileage and wear, and the installation of automated fueling dispensers that would monitor vehicle mileage and fuel utilization.

Mr. Mason asked Mr. Domeseck to explore frequency and methods of cleaning and maintenance to prolong service-life of vehicle under-carriage and truck-beds now deteriorating rapidly from rust. Ms. Kiernan asked Mr. Domeseck about his department’s conversion to ADP, and he replied that the new payroll system worked well for his staff and is helping his department become paperless.

Sewer Maintenance Fund – Mr. Feminella spoke about projects currently underway and encumbered funds for anticipated improvements. He gave the example of appropriated Pump Station upgrade funds remaining in 2011, 2012 and 2013, which were just now in the process of being applied.

Ms. Tarkington asked if some of the requested Maintenance Fund appropriation were actually improvement projects, which should be not be classified as “pay as you go” projects rather than Improvement Fund or as the Holly Hill Master Plan capital project. Ms. Seibert commented that Greenwich had 185 miles of sewers and that approximately $5 million was spent annually on rehabilitation. Whereas improvements under the Holly Hill Master Plan, (relocation of sewer piping and reconfiguration of scales, buildings and road access), and Grass Island waste water disposal and sewer pipe rehabilitation were qualified as capital improvements, some of the increased costs were attributable to the state’s new regulations on storm water testing, boring and lab analysis to evaluate environmental risk.

Ms. Seibert reported that the GHS Soil remediation project for FY ’16 would be reduced from $4 million to $2.5 million due to the scope of work permitted for FY ’16, and that some funds leftover for this project from FY ’15 would be used in FY ’16.

Byram Park Pool Project – Mr. Monelli and Mr. Siciliano were asked to explain how the project estimates had escalated from the original concept of $7.5 million to $11.4 million. The Committee asked for recommendations on how to reduce the scope and price of the project.

The Committee asked about the recreational public pool standard that was being used for comparison and if the estimates based on the current 30% design drawings would change significantly on the completion of 70% to 95% architectural renderings. Mr. Monelli commented that the challenge of the site, soil remediation, current building demolition and new building construction were factors that were responsible for his cost estimates. The Budget Committee, respective caucuses and the full BET would be discussing the plan further because they shared a concern about the length of time the swimming facilities would need to be closed, the tight project timetable and the length of TOG’s decision-making and approval process.

Ms. Kiernan asked Mr. Siciliano about the operating costs for the park. Mr. Siciliano replied that the current operating costs were approximately $85,000 per year and after renovation, he projected that cost to rise to approximately $130,000 per year.
Mr. Johnson and other BET members present thanked the Junior League for its ongoing interest in a public/private partnership to bring the project to fruition. It was acknowledged that their fundraising pledge might be contingent upon a vision that could be jeopardized by budget constraints.

**Nathaniel Witherell** – Mr. Ormsby, who was not present at the earlier TNW review, was asked to address the Committee. He advised the Committee on fundraising efforts made by Nathaniel Witherell’s Friends organization and commented that payment on pledges and other donations were not as strong as anticipated. The realization of the historic tax credit that would result from a state grant and actual fundraising of close to one-million dollars were still insufficient to balance the FY15 budget because of lower than expected patient census, insufficient state and federal reimbursements, labor related expenses and debt service. Mr. Brown predicted that unless higher occupancy and a better patient mix was achieved, a budget shortfall would still be expected going forward.

Ms. Weissler asked what solution strategies Nathaniel Witherell was proposing and if an alternative resource for a capital infusion existed other than TOG. Ms. Tarkington and Mr. Ramer commented on the town’s sense of obligation to its elderly. While expressing a desire to work with Nathaniel Witherell to close its revenue gap, they also asked how the amount requested could be reduced.

The meeting adjourned at 5:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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