

TOWN OF GREENWICH  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION

BUDGET COMMITTEE  
FIRST SELECTMAN'S BUDGET PRESENTATION  
MINUTES

Town Hall Meeting Room  
February 1, 2006

Present:

Committee: Stephen Walko, Chairman  
Edward Krumeich, Michael Mason, Larry Simon

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Ed  
Gomeau, Town Administrator;

Board: Nancy Barton, James Himes, Arthur Norton, Alma Rutgers, Robert Stone,  
Leslie Tarkington, Peter Tesei

Board Ex Officio: James A. Lash, First Selectman

Other:

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 P.M.

Mr. Lash made the presentation of the First Selectman's Budget to the Committee. For the first time in years, the Education Budget is going up less than 4%, and the Town Services or Operating Budget is going up 5.96 %. This reflects a decrease in school enrollment patterns.

The Capital Budget is up 28.6%. The new Grand List is not reflected in the Capital Budget number, but is expected to produce a reduced mill rate.

Fixed Charges increased 18.32%. This number does not reflect revenue offsets. The most dramatic example of this is that the actuarial calculation for the amount needed to contribute to the Retirement Fund this year is about \$3.9 million, and last year was less than \$700,000.

DEPARTMENTAL BUDGETS:

General Government:

Headcount: While headcount has not increased, new categories of personnel have been added while others have been reduced. Seven civilian dispatchers have been added, down from the forecasted 10, the remaining 3 will be added in the FY2007-2008 Budget. This will bring the Police and Fire Departments along with GEMS together for the first time into a single dispatch function run entirely by civilians. There will be a total of 16 positions. The calculations done a year ago indicate that the cost of the civilians was substantially lower than the cost of the police

and fire personnel they were replacing, creating an offset. There will be a cost increase created by putting more police and fireman on the streets. The process will free up 4 firefighters and 12 full time equivalent police officers. Of these 12, 10 police officers will go back on patrol and 2 positions will be eliminated. Of the 10 going back on the street, 3 are being established as sergeant's positions, allowing 3 sergeants on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which the department was unable to do before.

A provision in the 2005 contract allows, for a short period of time, police officers to retire and come back as civilian dispatchers, while drawing their pension from the town. This results in civilians that are experienced as police dispatchers.

Also added are 2 Building Inspector positions. With the 6 existing inspectors, a delay of anywhere between 2-14 days may exist when sick time or vacations are taken into account for building inspections. By adding 2 or 3 part time inspectors, a few days a week, the delay rate dropped to 2 or 3 days. The fees charged for the inspections more than cover those additional salaries.

#### Department List:

**Fire Department:** There is an increase in the overtime allocation. The town had worked with the fire department union to give the firefighters a desirable work schedule. In exchange for this, the firefighters agreed to reduce the amount of sick time being taken. The implication was that sick time was being used for personal reasons. The average was 14 days per year, and they agreed to reduce that number to 9, considered average. There is a poor record of implementation, and it was back up to 14 again this year, and the overtime budget was used up more rapidly than this year's budget allowed for. Whether sick time is being abused is being investigated.

**Police Department:** The primary activity is the move toward civilianization of dispatch. The Chief continues with the Community Resource Officer program, the first 3 of whom are about to graduate the program. This program is designed to put more officers in the field, interacting without being in patrol cars, in a more personal way with neighborhood associations and business groups to identify issues before they become general problems. During the current year, additional police officers were rotated into the Traffic Division, and the consequence of that was an increase in traffic enforcement, resulting in an increase of 300% in moving violations written. Data processing has also been upgraded.

**Public Works:** There has been a large impact wherever energy is concerned. This includes fuel/diesel/oil costs, tire costs, and asphalt.

**Fleet:** Again, an impact for fuels cost is reflected.

**Health Department:** Nothing of note to report.

**GEMS:** After a study commissioned by GEMS, it was found that staff was being under compensated compared to other public safety personnel. GEMS began a seven year program to raise salary scales for their personnel. As the end of this sequence approaches, an increase in salaries can be seen. The town and the BET support this. Another challenge is their retirement

program. Lifting and carrying are a large part of this position. This type of physical activity leads to an earlier retirement age. The proposed retirement plan involves a defined employee contribution, which will allow more competitive recruitment of qualified personnel. A plan to build a combined GEMS Fire House at the King Street location is in the beginning stages. The major cost for this project is not the building or the equipment, but the staff.

**The Nathaniel Witherell:** TNW will present to the Budget Committee separately as part of the Departmental Hearings. Being in a regulate industry, their reimbursement rates and the rates they can charge to private pay patients are not completely under their control. Their revenue is expected to improve, and they are working to control their costs.

**Department of Social Services:** The Board adopted the recommendations of its consultant, which called for re-organization of staff into teams with team leaders, eliminating a management layer.

**Board of Education:** The BOE will present to the Committee after Mr. Lash makes his presentation. The budget reflects a more thoughtful approach to funding education.

**Libraries:** Doubling the size of the Byram Schubert is being funded 15% with State funds, 60% through private funds and 25% with town funds. Heavily utilized with a multi-lingual clientele and staff, the need for more service in the community is recognized by the Board.

**Parks and Recreation:** This department is within guidelines and reflects only minor program changes. Last year operating money was taken out of this year's budget for the Western Greenwich Civic Center, because it was going to be closed and assumed to re-open part way through next year. Some of the expected revenue was to come from a daycare center. There has been ongoing discussion with several day care providers about using that facility for several years. The United Way had offered a \$100,000 incentive to help initiate the process, but finding a provider to operate the facility has been difficult.

**Sewer:** Nothing of note to report.

**Parking Fund:** In the current years budget there was money allocated to hire a firm to evaluate 5 sites in the downtown business district for a parking structure that will produce between 200 and 400 more spaces. The site that is recommended is at Benedict Place, behind Greenwich Avenue. This site will net approximately 211 additional spaces. The next step is to take the \$600,000 already in this year's budget to do the architectural work to design that structure. It is recommended that this not be done until the new head of the Parking Department does a study of parking utilization in the Benedict Place vicinity. A similar study was done by a consultant, who also recommended Benedict Place as a realistic location. The objective is to improve the ratio between long term and short term parking spaces. Currently, full time employees are using short term parking areas on the Avenue, when they should be using long term parking spaces, typically between 9AM-5PM.

The Parking Fund has been depleted due in part to using some of the money for day to day operations in the town (the Police Officers who direct traffic on the Avenue, the Traffic

Engineering Division, etc.). This may result in the general fund contributing to the cost of a parking structure.

Mr. Lash feels that the budget overall fits the guidelines that taxpayers can absorb, and raises taxes in line with the rate of inflation.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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Valerie Zebrowski, Recording Secretary

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Stephen Walko, Chairman