TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION BUDGET COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW DAY ONE FOR FY2019-2020 BUDGET
MINUTES
Cone Meeting Room - 9:00 A.M.
Monday, February 4, 2019

Present:

Committee: Leslie Moriarty, Chairman; Michael Mason, Jeffrey S. Ramer, Leslie L. Tarkington

Staff: Benjamin Branyan, Town Administrator; Richard Feminella, Manager, DPW Water Waste Division; Angela Gencarelli, Finance Analyst, Finance Department; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Robert Kick, Ass’t Chief, Fire Department; Blaise Levant, Business Analyst, OFS; William Marr, Building Official, Building Inspection; Jim Michel, Assistant Commissioner, DPW; Alan Monelli, Superintendent, Building Construction & Maintenance; Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Joseph Roberto, Director, DPW Highway Dept; Larry Roberts, Deputy Chief Training, Fire Department; Amy Siebert, Commissioner of Public Works; Peter Siecienski, Chief, Fire Department; Joseph Siciliano, Director, Parks & Recreation

Board: William Drake, Andreas Duus, Karen Fassuliotis, Debra Hess, Beth Krumeich, Jill Oberlander (BET Board Chair), Anthony Turner, David Weisbrod

Selectmen: Peter Tesei, First Selectman

Other: Tracey Schietinger, Director, GEMS; Ken Borsuk, Reporter, Greenwich Time; Reporter, The Greenwich Sentinel

RTM: Candace Garthwaite, D6, BOC; Lucia Jansen, D7, BOC; Roz Nicastro, D3 BOC

Ms. Moriarty called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M. She welcomed the audience and began the Hearing.

Office of the First Selectman

First Selectman Tesei provided an overview of his recommended FY2019-2020 $442,307,977 Budget, an increase from the prior year of 3.85% and resulting in a Mill Rate increase of 2.99%. The Operating budget was over the BET Budget Guidelines driven by contractual obligations, increase cost of water services for the Fire Department, bank fees for Parks & Recreation Department, and a new public safety dispatch system that will upgrade response capabilities for the Police, Fire and Greenwich Emergency Medical Service (GEMS) calls. Mr. Branyan pointed out that an $897,000 reduction would have been necessary to reduce the Mill Rate to within the BET guidelines of 2.25% to 3.25%.
Ms. Moriarty asked the First Selectman what areas could be explored for possible reductions. The First Selectman responded he explored but rejected reductions in the fire marshal staffing, police marine division staffing, DPW challenges with recycling costs and tipping fees, the parks' unique users. He also thought that opportunities might exist in consolidation of back-office staffing but they might require Charter changes. Mr. Tesei encouraged the Committee to evaluate budget changes as a series of judgments and commented that in response to the Town's third annual resident service satisfaction survey, responses were almost evenly split on the question of an across the board reduction, targeted reductions or raising taxes.

**FY2019-2020 Budget Initiatives** - Mr. Tesei commented that the recommended budget was designed to invest in both capital and operating budgets for the Town's long-term fiscal stability while maintaining level-services with essentially a flat headcount.

- Dorothy Hamill Skating Rink
- Eastern Greenwich Civic Center
- Northwest Greenwich Fire House
- Board of Education Master Plan
- Continuation of Lean Six Sigma Training

Mr. Tesei praised recent community partnerships developed under the auspice of the First Selectman's Economic Advisory Committee - November 2018's Greenwich Economic Forum that attracted national financial industry leaders, *Think Greenwich* raising awareness of Greenwich as a pre-eminent community, *Experience Greenwich* focusing on the Town's retail, dining and entertainment assets. He highlighted the YWCA Domestic Abuse program's service to the community. He referenced the training of 93 employees in Lean Six Sigma, and progress towards a residency database with a universal card for identification for Town services. He referred to the planned April 2019 roll out of Municity which will allow online scheduling of inspections by the end of the year. Mr. Tesei applauded the Town's triple-A financial rating status that afforded low borrowing interest rates.

The Committee reviewed Town and BOE Open Capital items to compare year-over-year improvement of closing-out projects. Mr. Branyan noted that the remaining 40% of the Open Capital items were related to housekeeping close-out details, while 60% were still part of an active project backlog.

**Department Of Public Works**

Commissioner Siebert advised the Committee that DPW was requesting an overall operations budget increase of 0.5%. She credited the department's staff for controlling costs. The key variables continue to be uncertainty around the amount needed for snow removal and ice control and the increasing cost of recycling and solid waste management. In response to a question about a 1% budget reduction, she indicated she would perform more services, like leaf collection or snow plowing or removal, during the business day which would impact residents.

**Highway Division** – In response to a question about the overtime budget, Ms. Seibert and Mr. Roberto explained that the Town’s retail environment and commuter parking required snow removal and ice control at night and paving projects frequently required extended hours. In the discussion of Capital Maintenance, Mr. Roberto was asked about the cost of granite curbstone versus concrete or asphalt, the maximum annual paving allocation that could be executed, and the feasibility of installing bicycle lanes. The closing-out of encumbered funds was questioned and the amount of highway reimbursement from the State was considered.
Bridges – The Committee asked Mr. Michel for an explanation of open appropriations and encumbered funds and was advised that the typical road project took 3-5 years from inception to design, construction inspection documentation and retainage before close-out. Seasonality was also a factor in delaying a close-out completion. DPW indicated that open projects were ongoing, and two additional ones are proposed. The Committee asked for an update on the Greenwich Avenue Streetscape project. Seasonality was also a factor in the closing out of the Sound Beach Avenue and Church Street projects. Bailiwick Bridge is expected to be opened this summer.

Stormwater – Focus is on maintenance of infrastructure and meeting the requirements of the MS4 (Clean Water Act) permit for stormwater quality.

Northwest Fire Station
Mr. Tesei explained the steps being taken to satisfy the RTM’s Sense of the Meeting Resolution in support of a Northwest Fire Station. The presentation included information on call frequency by location, firefighting standards, trends in development and population, water supply and emergency response times. The ability of existing station locations, Round Hill and Glenville, to meet the needs were discussed. Capital cost for a new Fire/GEMS station is estimated to be $8 million for a construction start date in FY 2022-2023 with annual operating costs of $2-$3 million, including staffing cost of 15 firefighters, was projected. A variety of suggestions, solutions and recommendations were discussed.

Fire Department
Assistant Chief Kick and Deputy Chief Roberts were asked about fire fighter recruiting and volunteer fire fighters’ contribution. Deputy Chief Roberts, as Chief for fire fighter training, noted that town-wide there are 97 volunteer fire fighters with 23 red tagged (trained for exterior fire control and driving trucks, and 74 white tagged for interior fire fight. He remarked that volunteer fire fighters were concentrating on each volunteer company gaining experience in a specific specialty such as Fire Patrol, Brush truck, water supply, and ladder deployment. In response to a question about how the department would implement a 1% budget reduction, Assistant Chief Kick indicated he would review Fire Marshal staffing, although they would have difficulty in meeting regulatory requirement for inspections, and/or reduce overtime. Assistant Chief Kick enumerated the Fire Department’s budget drivers as contractual salary increases, special stipends for Certifications, training and water/utilities including Aquarion charges for the Town’s fire hydrant system.

Capital – Assistant Chief Kick described capital costs for volume purchases of oxygen bottles due to shelf-life expiration every 3-years; the purchase of volume protective equipment at the end of their 5-year use cycle and the purchase of iPads for use in field work. A member of the Committee recommended the purchase of an identity card reader that would track volunteer participation. The Committee asked that the Fire Department continue to pursue STEAP Grants for the development of additional dry hydrants and cisterns in northern Greenwich.

Mr. Ramer followed up on the BET conditioned release of renovation funds for the Round Hill Volunteer Fire Station questioning the status of the BET’s requested for a legal opinion, the Department of Health sign-off and the OFS being recognized as the custodian of funds during the renovation process.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,