TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
REGULAR MEETING – BUDGET COMMITTEE
CONE MEETING ROOM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2005

MINUTES

PRESENT:

COMMITTEE: Valeria P. Storms, Chairman
Jara Burnett, Larry Simon, Stephen Walko

BOARD: Peter Berg, Janice Gardner, Kathryn Guimard, Michael
Mason, Alma Rutgers, Peter Tesei

BOARD EX-OFFICIO: First Selectman Jim Lash

STAFF: Peter Mynarski, Roland Gieger, Finance Department; Ed
Gomeau, Town Administrator; Maureen Kast, Sherry
Krieger, Department of Human Resources; Betty Linck,
Fleet Director; Caroline Baisley, Director of Health; Dr.
Sue Wallerstein, BOE

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

PW – 1 FIRST SELECTMAN/DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS –
Additional Appropriation - $2,181,850
Request for an additional appropriation:
$2,181,850 to Z301 – 59800 Land Acquisition
$2,181,850 from Reserve Fund for Capital Non-Recurring
Expenditures

Mr. Gomeau reviewed the application for purchase of property at 180 Mason Street. The purchase price is $1,985,000. An additional $44,000 is being requested as payment to the property owner for costs he incurred. Another $152,350 is being requested for site work that includes a contingency of $13,850. The site work includes demolition costs. The building will be demolished, the tank removed and the site cleared.
Ms. Burnett inquired as to how reliable the environmental estimates were. Mr. Gomeau said that the only unknown was the location of the tank. He said that evidence of hydrocarbons is lessening.

The agreed upon purchase price of $1,985,000 is higher than the two appraisals done by the Town, but lower than the appraisal done by the owner. Mr. Gomeau said that it was an equitable solution to a problem that had to be solved in order to proceed with the construction of the new public safety facility. Mr. Lash has signed the contract subject to funding.

Mr. Walko requested a copy of the agreement. Mr. Gomeau said that he would see that members of the Budget Committee receive copies of the contract.

The committee voted unanimously to approve this additional appropriation and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a non-routine application with the understanding that members of the BET receive copies of the contract.

FL – 1  FLEET DEPARTMENT – Additional Appropriation - $125,000
Request for additional appropriation:
$125,000 to A380 – 53500 Motor Lubes & Fuels
$125,000 from Contingency

Betty Linck reviewed the application, referring to the attached diagram. She said that she had budgeted for 232,000 gallons of gasoline at $1.10 per gallon, but that the cost per gallon for the first 6 months of fiscal ’05 was averaging $1.57, with a projected budget shortfall of $59,926.95. Similarly, $.97 per gallon had been budgeted for diesel fuel, while the six-month average was $1.29 per gallon, with a projected budget shortfall of $65,177.38. She said that the Purchasing Department had set up these fuel contracts at variable pricing in 2004. Ms. Linck said that going forward fixed pricing would be used.

In response to a question from Mr. Walko, Ms. Linck said that the new pumps and the software (the software is located at the Fleet Department) were up and running and that new hardware has been installed at all three sites, which enables continued use of the Holly Hill Lane site in spite of the poor condition of those pumps.

A discussion ensued between Mr. Walko and Ms. Linck regarding limitations on the use of the Holly Hill Lane site at the Transfer Station. Mr. Walko expressed his concern about use of the site, saying that promises made to neighborhood residents about short-term use of pumps there should be kept. Ms. Linck said that all three sites are needed. Mr. Lash said that when the pumps break down, fuel will have to be shipped in because the Town is not going to shut down the Holly Hill Lane site.
Ms. Storms suggested that Mr. Walko, Ms. Linck and the neighborhood residents get together to work out a solution. Mr. Walko said that he was “sure there was some middle ground in this.”

The committee voted unanimously to approve this additional appropriation and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a routine application.

L - 1

HEALTH DEPARTMENT – Approval to Use - $15,000

Request for approval to use:
$15,000 to F4031 – 53251 Laboratory Supplies
$15,000 from State Bio-terrorism Grant Funds

Ms. Baisley reviewed the request to accept $15,000 in state bio-terrorism grant money through the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health to use in achieving and maintaining the Department of Health’s laboratory at Level A. A Level A Laboratory is a Hospital or Public Health laboratory that has low-level bio-safety facilities, for example the capability to handle anthrax exposure. Greenwich has one of only five Public Health laboratories in the state, and of these, only Greenwich and Stamford are capable of performing Level A screening procedures and are eligible for this grant money. Greenwich currently has a Level B Laboratory. This grant money provides an opportunity to enhance the laboratory. The funds will support proficiency, testing, supplies and equipment that are approved by the State of Connecticut. This is a one-time grant, not an annual one.

The committee voted unanimously to approve acceptance of this grant money and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a routine application.

L - 2

HEALTH DEPARTMENT – Transfer - $20,700

Request for transfer:
$5,000 to F187 – 52300 Payments Temp. Service
$ 300 to F187 – 51010 Legal Adv. & Public Notice
$1,000 to F187 – 52110 Mileage Allowance
$3,000 to F187 – 52150 Office Services
$ 100 to F187 – 52950 Misc. Services NOC
$ 800 to F187 – 53010 Office Supplies
$1,500 to F187 – 53300 Wearing Apparel
$1,500 to F187 – 53500 Motor Fuels
$ 500 to F187 – 53550 Mech. Supplies &
This is a request to transfer funds from the Reserve Restricted Receipt Account F187-35024 (Shell Fish permits) to the current appropriations in the F Fund, Department Code 187 (Shellfish Commission) to cover the regular operating expenses of the Shellfish Commission.

Mr. Simon said that he would like to see the balance and the revenues in the Reserve Restricted Receipt Account. Mr. Mynarski said he would provide this information.

Mr. Mynarski said that the account is set up according to state statutes and by charter and is intended to be self-contained.

The committee voted unanimously to approve this request for transfer and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a routine application.

PD – 1  POLICE DEPARTMENT – Approval to Use/Appropriation - $8,000

Request for approval to use:
$3,000 to F213 – 51420 Veterinary Maintenance
$5,000 to F213 – 53950 Canine Purchase

$8,000 from Gift

Police Chief James Walters requested permission to accept a gift of $8,000 from a local resident:
- $5,000 for the purchase of a new police dog
- $3,000 to pay veterinary bills for Shilo, the current police dog who will be retiring

Chief Walters said that he will remove $5,000 for the purchase of a new dog from the '06 budget request. He said that the handler will purchase Shilo for $1 and that the Town would continue to pay the vet bills from the $3,000.

The committee voted unanimously to approve use of this gift subject to RTM acceptance of the gift and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a non-routine application.
POLICE DEPARTMENT – Approval to use - $5,715

Request for approval to use:
$5,715 to F213 – 53070 Forensic Computer
$5,715 from F213 – 35018 Federal Assed Forfeiture

Chief Walters said that this was a request to appropriate $5,715 from the Federal Asset Forfeiture Fund to purchase a forensic examination computer. He said that this was necessary for detective work.

The committee voted unanimously to approve this request to use Federal Asset Forfeiture money to purchase a computer and forwarded the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a routine application.

BOARD OF EDUCATION – Request for an Interim Appropriation - $587,000

Request for an interim appropriation:
$587,000 to Z6800792 – 59560 North Street School
Boiler & Pipes
$587,000 from Reserve Fund for Capital Non-Recurring Expenditures

Dr. Wallerstein reviewed the request for an interim appropriation of $587,000 for replacement of the North Street School heating system.

The school has had hot water pipes burst causing computer damage and requiring evacuation. URS was requested to conduct an on-site inspection last fall to provide advice regarding the urgency of completing this project in light of safety concerns.

The current budget contains a $600,000 appropriation for this project. The BOE did not have the resources last spring to do the engineering work to come up with a solid figure. The bid specifications were not completed until December 2004. The project was bid on January 27, 2005, and Bismarck, the low bidder of three respondents, came in with a bid of $1,147,000, which was $587,000 more than the amount remaining from the original appropriation.

In response to a question from Ms. Storms, Dr. Wallerstein said that the project entails replacement of the entire heating system, pipes, ducts, motors and mechanicals.

Mr. Lash pointed out that the system never worked properly as there was air in the system from the beginning. He asked if the system has been redesigned to eliminate this problem. Dr. Wallerstein said that this had not been done, to her knowledge. Mr. Lash
said that if all this work is done and there still is air in the system, “then we have a bad outcome.”

Mr. Simon inquired as to the timetable for this project. Dr. Wallerstein said that it would go into the 05–06 school year with plans to finish in the summer of ‘06, assuming a head start on the asbestos abatement. The asbestos abatement must be done first, but the Town must commit to Bismarck as soon as possible in order to get lined up to have the work done.

Members of the Budget Committee suggested that the BOE utilize the money that is appropriated in the current budget to do the asbestos abatement and put the heating system replacement in the ’06 budget as a Pay As You Go project. They suggested that there be two separate contracts. Mr. Lash said that if the North Street School heating system was being moved into the ’06 budget, this must be presented in time for the Budget Committee’s Consolidation Day. Dr. Wallerstein said that she would get the information to the Budget Committee this week.

The committee voted unanimously to approve this request for an interim appropriation and forward to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a non-routine application, with the understanding that this application may be withdrawn from the agenda.

ED - 2 BOARD OF EDUCATION - Additional Appropriation - $7,374

Request for an additional appropriation:
$7,374 to Z6800892 - 59560 Well Water Improvement Parkway School

$7,374 from Reserve Fund for Capital Non-Recurring Expenditures

This project was originally part of a Town of Greenwich DPW project involving renovation of the Art Barn on Lower Cross Road for use by GEMS. The BOE handled the well replacement because the well was on the grounds of Parkway School.

Dr. Wallerstein said that a mineral content different from what was anticipated was encountered during the drilling. This required the installation of a chemical filter treatment system. Cost overruns are due to the installation of this treatment system and additional retaining walls required by Planning and Zoning.

Dr. Wallerstein said that the well has been drilled, and she believes it is connected to the school. The school district is waiting for final approval from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health.
The committee voted unanimously to approve this interim appropriation and forward the application to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for consideration as a routine application.

HEALTH CARE TRENDS – HEALTH CARE BUDGET

Ms. Storms said that health care costs are an important part of the budget that needs to be understood. She introduced Bill Carew and Carol Constant from Ovation Benefits Group, LLC to give an overview of these costs.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by Ms. Burnett, seconded by Mr. Walko, the Budget Committee voted 3–0–1 to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 11, 2005, with Mr. Simon abstaining because he had not attended the meeting.

Upon a motion by Ms. Burnett, seconded by Mr. Walko, the Budget Committee voted 4–0–0 to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 24, 2005.

OTHER BUSINESS

Upon a motion by Mr. Simon, seconded by Ms. Burnett, the Budget Committee voted 4–0–0 to have a short discussion on the 2005–2006 budget.

The discussion focused entirely on the Schools budget, with Mr. Simon calling for the creation of a model with benchmarks, target reductions and a phase-in plan that would reduce the growth of the Schools budget over time. He discussed the impact of staffing reductions and said a 5% increase in class size would reduce staff by 27 teachers.

Mr. Lash cautioned against talking about increasing class size, saying that the Superintendent of Schools would need a reason to do this “other than to make the BET happy.” Mr. Lash said that it was time to stop thinking about the '06 Schools budget and instead develop a plan that considers budgets over the next 7 to 10 years in light of enrollment changes. He said that there needs to be a more positive conversation about the Schools budget. He said that the Schools need to have reasons for their numbers based upon educational objectives.
Ms. Gardner said that it was a sensitive issue to talk about increasing class size and that we should rather look at where we are out of line with the comparables.

Mr. Lash agreed with Ms. Gardner. He said that we should not talk about class size, but rather about such things as variability and programs. He said that the budget discussion needs to be framed in positive terms. Mr. Lash said that a multi-year target should be set to get to the benchmarks and that the Superintendent of Schools should think in terms of using the money that will be saved to reach the BOE’s stated educational objectives.

Mr. Simon said that we should be talking about reaching benchmarks over a period of time. He said that we should also be charging grant money with overhead and that the Budget Committee should say “no” to the BOE’s proposal in the ’06 budget to keep revenues from the rental of school facilities.

Upon a motion by Mr. Walko, seconded by Ms. Burnett, the Budget Committee voted 4–0–0 to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alma Rutgers, Recording Secretary

Valeria P. Storms, Chairman