

**Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance  
MINUTES  
Budget Deliberations  
Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:00pm  
Via Zoom Teleconference # 849 6771 7914  
(646) 558-8656**

COPY RECEIVED  
DATE: 3/10/2021  
TIME: 2:44pm  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

**Members Present:** Bettyann Peck, Richard Demko, Beverly Kennedy, Bill Sawicki, Kristyn Haniewicz, Jim Cretella, Zani Imetovski; Grace Brangwynne, Jessica Nunez (alternates)

**Members Absent:** Gary Popielasz (alternate)

**Others Present:** Monica Dimon, Doug Thomas, Annmarie Drugonis, Jean Falbo-Sosnovich, Robert Findley

**Item #1 – Call Meeting to order**

Chairman Bill Sawicki called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

**Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item #3 – Public Comment**

None

**Item #4 – Deliberation and Discussion of 2021/2022 Budget – First Selectwoman's Office**

Bill Sawicki asked if anyone on the Board has any questions, please run them through the Chair.

First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis presented her Budget for 2021/2022:

**Total Budget is \$59,145,708**

- Annmarie Drugonis has been the First Selectwoman since October of 2020 and has been working non-stop since then to learn the ins and outs of and working to improve the processes in Town. I have been on the Board of Selectmen since 2007 (and two years as Deputy First Selectwoman). It is still different sitting in the First Selectman's seat. I have a background in Environmental Health & Safety and will use my strengths to move the Town forward. Please bear with me, this is my first budget. This was a TEAM effort. I will do my best to answer any questions tonight and if I cannot, I will get back to Bill Sawicki with the answers.
- **Current year overview with General Fund Analysis.** This has been a year of unprecedented challenges due to COVID causing shortages in some areas and overages in others. For example, the Community Services costs are down due to decreased programming, but so are the revenues. The Community Center is closed, and we cannot have any events. The projection shows that we are trending very close to our budget.
- Our Health Insurance is a big cost for us. We started out with a 13% placeholder and negotiated it down to an 8% rate. Chris Pelosi (HR Manager) was largely responsible for this working with Doug Thomas. Retirements are up due to COVID. We realized the savings that leads to Retiree Healthcare. Retirement costs are set by the State and continue to increase annually.
- The Police Accountability Bill led to more unfunded mandates by the State driving costs up.
- Residential garbage collections are up, and commercial garbage collections are down.
- Our Fund Balance has gone down. But the budget is used for prior years and that was as planned.
- We still have not received the \$300,000 reimbursement from the Chatfield LoPresti School Project; Doug will speak to Sherry (Holmes) tomorrow.
- Recreations costs were down due to not having a Summer Camp this year. Interest Revenues are lower than anticipated due to the Market.

- Economic Development, Public Works, Recreation, and Police Department all have recurring surpluses.
- Our **Debt Service** remains low after years of work. Our current profile allows us to feather in debt as necessary. Bear in mind the budget reflects contingencies moved last year by this Board due to COVID. We put a spending freeze and took that money out. We are trending down on our debt profile.
- **BUDGET – REVENUES** – before the revaluation was currently at 36 mil – now our Grand List is at 34.74 mil for real estate. This is down 1.75%.
- **Board of Finance** – same
- **Selectman’s Office**
- **Economic Development Commission** – we hope to fill the Director position. There is \$45,000 in that line item. That is for a part time position. Businesses are starting to open up. More people shopping downtown. The Board of Selectmen will be discussing hiring of a part-time EDC Director. We may ask for a full-time position down the road. We can hire a part-time person under 20 hours (no benefits) or we can go through the NVCOG and use as a regional person like we do with the Town Planner.
- **Town Planner** – is through the NVCOG. We have been using more hours – currently at 50 hours. Working with the EDC on open properties looking to see if they can be used for mixed use/commercial or industrial/commercial use, residential use to make Seymour more attractive to them. The best part about the NVCOG covering our Planner as well as our EDC is that we do not have to pay them benefits. This is a savings to the Town.
- **Technology** – we now offer free wi-fi in the Community Center and Library parking lots. This is a pilot program from the State – it’s for a year and does not cost the residents or the Town anything. We continue to improve and focus on investments and overhaul. We have a new phone system in Town and including all the schools which was a vast improvement and less expensive. This was a huge undertaking, and every year will yield savings and increased productivity. This is all Rob Dyer’s doing! He is constantly looking for ways to improve and use his services throughout the Town. There is fantastic collaboration between the Board of Education along with other shared positions. Tim Connors is our Facilities Director and Rob Dyer is our I.T. Director. By hiring Tim Connors and Rob Dyer to do cross functions between the Board of Ed and the Town it has saved the Town more than their salaries combined. We have saved by not having to hire outside contractors. Our new website is close to completion. We are now able to post meetings and Zoom links and post the packets before the meetings. This will help environmentally by not having to print everything.
- **Capital** – we have moved recurring costs out of the Capital Budget. A five-year lease for copiers or printers is going into the department budget. We are purchasing things through the Board of Ed on their bid list. It is cheaper to purchase some things through the schools.
- **Infrastructure investments** have improved. The reliability & resiliency have improved. The internet used to go down frequently, but now does not. Efficiency has improved now that we are all connected. For example, when a permit is entered in the system, it automatically goes to the Assessor. The system is constantly being updated in real time.
- We continue to be a model to other municipalities, especially in the I.T. and shared services area.
- **Police Department** – you will see that there is an increase in the Deputy Chief’s salary. Right now, the Police Commission is looking to replace the Chief and bring on another Deputy. We hope to have the Deputy that is coming in step under the Chief and learn his role and help in going forward when the new chief comes in. The new Deputy Chief will be at a lower salary. We are instituting a “comp time” policy. If someone comes in on overtime, after 40 hours of accumulated time, they can use that as comp time thereby saving us on the overtime costs.
- **Fire Department** – first time we are including them in Capital Plan discussions. We are working to connect them to a Strategic Plan so we can better plan Capital Investments for them. They had a surplus this year so we will use that and put their requests into next year’s Capital Plan.
- **Public Works** – the Selectmen took over the cemetery on Derby Avenue, so we had a request for increase in Seasonal Help to take care of the extra work there.
- **Highway & Maintenance** – road lining was not included; needed to add.
- **Streetlights** – first year of maintenance costs – costs exceeded our estimates due to some storms and a need to replace lights. It is still a savings overall from what costs were.

- **Board of Education** – I cut their bottom line so they would be more responsible with their discretionary spending. Due to the uncertainty we are in, I cut the budget by \$190,000. This makes their budget at the same increase (2.5%) as last year. I wanted to mention that they are receiving over \$1 million in COVID funds from the State and are in line to receive another \$500,000 for COVID relief.
- **Long-Term Capital Plan** – we held off on Capital Projects due to the COVID. The Tax Revenue was good so we will begin to move forward with some projects. If you remember, we had a spending freeze on. Everything was on hold. There are things that we need to do from our Capital Plan in order to move the Town forward. We continue to invest in our DPW fleet with a new dump truck. The Gas Boy is the gas tank system at the DPW and is used for all our municipal vehicles. The software is obsolete and barely functioning. The price is for the software and the tanks. Right now, we are just looking to do the software. We are going to have the tanks hydro-tested so we may be able to save some money there if they are ok. We received \$128,000 in a Grant for the DPW Storage Building. The estimate is about \$200,000. We will use \$18,000 allocated for this last year and allocate another \$50,000 this year to cover the costs. The police body cams are coming in. We are unsure of the costs, so we put \$90,000 in there. We need to purchase them by July. Any savings from the Gas Boy will be used to cover the difference.

## **DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS**

- Bill Sawicki asked Doug Thomas to move the \$300,000 for Capital Projects on Page 25 under Bond Purchase to Page 24 under Department #530 (Town Capital Non-Recurring & Other) because we did not go out to Bond for any of the expenses listed.
- Jim Cretella asked if the Police Chief is leaving? Annmarie Drugonis said she could not comment on that at this time.
- Jim asked about the scale at Public Works Transfer Stat– this was budgeted for last year for \$40,000 and this year for \$40,000. Will it be installed this year? Annmarie said yes, there is a meeting tomorrow about this. It will be installed this year and will give us true and accurate readings of what is coming in from the trash haulers and what is going out so that we can match to billing.
- Annmarie Drugonis said that the revaluation is REQUIRED every five years. Some residents' taxes went up, some went down, and some stayed the same. Looks like the bigger assessments have been on raised ranches and ranches and smaller homes as that is what people are looking to purchase these days.
- The school has received funding from the State for COVID expenses. We are not allowed to tell them how to spend the money. They did send us a list of how the money was spent.
- **Revenues from the Town:** The Police Department said that the Pistol Permit Revenues have been up considerably. Unfortunately, since COVID hit about a year ago this week, and we were not able to offer Summer Camps or have any programming at the Community Center, their Revenues have been way down. Hopefully, things will begin opening soon and this will change.
- Bill Sawicki asked Doug Thomas under the 410-530 department (Capital Non-Recurring) Page 24 to please move the Community Center Newsletter \$15,000 to the Community Services (Recreation) Department. Also, please move the Annual Ambulance Payment of \$25,000 to the Town Contributions Line.
- Bill Sawicki asked what the *Town Contingency - Payroll Accrual* line item is for? Annmarie Drugonis said that they are in the middle of contract negotiations for Public Works and Parks Union so we put what we thought the increases would be.
- Bill asked under the *Finance Department – Part-time Payroll*, the Department Request was \$28,100 and First Selectwoman's Budget is \$24,265. Was that due to timing of anticipating filling the position? Doug Thomas said that no, he had asked for more hours, but the number was reduced to 19.5 hours; plus, her Cost-of-Living increase is in there.
- Bill asked under the *Tax Collector - Regular Employees*, the Department Request was \$55,978 and First Selectwoman's Budget was \$50,523. Was this the same reason for reduction? Annmarie said no, the former Assistant Tax Collector resigned, and we will be bringing in someone new at a lower level.

- Bill asked under the *Town Buildings – Operations – Salary – Regular Employees*, the Department Request was \$169,361 and the First Selectwoman's Budget was \$188,997. Was that increase due to the additional Seasonal Employees? Annmarie said yes. **4 Full-time Seasonal Employees** should be on that line. We use them throughout the year.
- Bill asked why the Boys & Girls Club number went from \$15,000 down to \$5,000. Annmarie Drugonis said that they will no longer be at the Community Center. They decided not to open back up.
- Annmarie Drugonis said that under the *Police Department - Crossing Guard*, in speaking with Chief Satkowski, he feels that we can save the money for the Crossing Guard at Chatfield/LoPresti School if we have all the students bussed. Apparently only a few students are using the crosswalk. For Bungay School we cannot do this because of Balance Rock. Can we please reduce that line by the amount for the Chatfield/LoPresti Crossing Guard?
- Annmarie Drugonis said that the *Police Department* increased their *Supernumeraries* and between that and the new Comp Time Policy this should reduce the amount of Overtime needed.
- Bill Sawicki asked about the reduction in *Police Department - Education Meetings/Seminars Training*? Annmarie said that we are not sure what the Grant applied for will cover. Some of what was requested may be covered by the Grant.
- Bill asked under the *Fire Department – Machinery & Equipment* – they have requested \$44,120 and you have it down to \$39,500. Is that because you put it in the Capital Plan? Annmarie said that they had a surplus this year and so were able to purchase one piece of equipment. They need to share one piece of equipment and took it out of the Capital Plan. We need to get the body cams and dash cams for the Police Department. We have one extractor at one of the Fire Houses, not needing to duplicate equipment and have at both Houses. Bill Sawicki asked what the cost of one extractor? Annmarie said \$17,500.
- Annmarie said that the Capital Plan is approved by the Board of Selectmen.
- Bill asked under the Office of Land Use & Building Compliance – Salary Development Code Enforcement Admin – they asked for \$20,000 and you are giving them \$15,585. Annmarie said that they asked for more hours, but if we give them more hours, we will need to make them full-time.
- Bill asked under Highway Wages – Regular Employees (10) – are these people coming in at a lower step? Annmarie said yes.
- Bill asked under Public Works if the staffing is expected to go up (other than the new Seasonal Help)? Annmarie said she is not sure. They will be starting contract negotiations soon. This is holding the line pending the contract negotiations.
- Bill Sawicki asked about the reduction in *Highway Wages – Trees* from \$100,000 to \$75,000. Annmarie said that we have money in Parks & Recs that we can also use for Trees. We are also holding Eversource accountable for cutting down trees that they are supposed to cut down.
- Bill asked about the *Community Services – Recreation Services Manager* – they have asked for \$61,000, but you have them the same as last year. Annmarie Drugonis said that Zack is a Union Employee so we cannot increase his salary. Same situation for the *Community Services Assistant*.
- Bill said that under *Parks – Trees* they asked for \$20,000 and you have them down to \$15,000. So, the total available for Trees is  $\$75,000 + \$15,000 = \$90,000$ . Bill asked if this was a reasonable estimate? Annmarie said yes. We have had some big storms over the past few years that have taken down some trees. We will work with Eversource and may cut down some through them.
- Bill asked regarding the Library – Regular Employees – is this a Union position also? Annmarie said yes, and we are not replacing the Children's Librarian at this time. We are putting money in for the lower step.
- Bill Sawicki asked if we have settled the Health Insurance? Yes. Annmarie Drugonis said we put a 13% placeholder in but negotiated that down to 8%. The \$2,481,204 is at 8%.
- Bill asked – under Police Department – Retirement – there is about a \$41,000 difference. Doug said that this is due to a \$90,000 drop in salary and the new Deputy. **Bill asked Doug Thomas to double check that that number is correct. Bill said that the contribution rate is 21%. Bill asked Doug to check that again. It doesn't look right.**

- Jim Cretella asked about the *Town Engineer – Bulky Waste Landfill Inspections* – Annmarie Drugonis said that this falls under their MSR Inspections which falls under their Stormwater Inspections which falls under their Transfer App Inspections. Because they are a Transfer Station they need to be inspected where they store their bulky waste or roll offs, they need to be inspected for groundwater roll offs. Jim also asked what the *Town Engineer - Purchased Engineer Services* is for. Doug Thomas said that we have a contract with Bryan Nesteriak to be our Town Engineer for all his engineering services for all the projects he is working on for us.

Bill Sawicki asked that everyone go through the questions and answers that have gone out and would like everyone to bring their questions Wednesday night. On Wednesday, we will go through the Budget again. Bill asked Doug to reprint the Departmental Budget and put Page #'s on the report and send out to everyone for Wednesday.

**Item #5 – Adjournment**

Rich Demko made a motion to reconvene on Wednesday which was seconded by Jim Cretella.

Motion: Richard Demko                      Second: Jim Cretella  
Vote: Yes: 7          No: 0          Abstain: 0

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Submitted by:

**Monica Dimon**  
**Recording Secretary**

