

FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2886



PHONE: 860-442-0553
www.waterfordct.org

Board of Finance
Budget Hearing

Wednesday, March 13, 2024
Waterford Town Hall

Present: Chairman Glenn Patterson, Ronald R. Fedor, Bill Sheehan (via telephone), Michael Rocchetti, Robert Tuneski, David Peabody, Joseph Filippetti

Elected: Robert J. Brule, First Selectman

Staff: Kimberly Allen, Finance Director; Bigi Ebbin and Patricia Waters, Registrar of Voters; Paige Walton, Assessor & Board of Assessment Appeals; Alan Wilensky, Tax Collector; David Campo, Town Clerk; Paul Goldstein, Representative Town Meeting; Rob Brule, Board of Selectmen; Rebecca Hall, Admin Assistant Finance Office/BOF Recording Secretary

1. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:
A quorum was established and a call to order was established 8:07p
March 13, 2024.

2. Public comment: none

An opening statement regarding the budget process was made by Glenn Patterson, Chairman.

Standing Motion: was made by Michael Rocchetti and seconded by Joseph Filippetti to tentatively approve the budget requests for FY24/25.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

3. **Registrar of Voters Budget:**

Opening comments were given by Bigi Ebbin. The Registrars are in the process of starting Early Voting. They received a grant in the amount of \$10,500 grant from the State to help cover costs of staffing and equipment necessary for Early Voting. New training is required of the registrars and poll workers will also need additional training.

Chairman Glenn Patterson asked how the money from the grant will be used. Ms. Ebbin replied that most will be used for staffing. Another portion will be used for new supplies like scanners and label makers that are required to conduct Early Voting. Chairman Patterson asked how many stations will be set up in Waterford for Early Voting. Ms. Ebbin said one (1) station will be set up in the Appleby Room at Town Hall. Kimberly Allen, Director of Finance, added that in preliminary budget meetings with the registrars it is clear that the \$10,500 will not cover all costs.

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Ron Fedor asked about normal hours of work for the registrars. Ms. Ebbin said they typically work 15 hours per week but during election time will be more like 10 hours per day.

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Registrar of Voters budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$96,525**

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

4. Assessor Budget:

The Assessor, Paige Walton, began discussions by sharing that the Grand List, as of the end of January, is \$4.51 billion which is a slight decrease from last year. The department had been streamlining how they conduct business by going almost completely paperless. Manual data entry has been minimized by synchronizing inter-departmental software programs.

Chairman Patterson asked about the difference between the Assessment Aide vs Administrative Assistant position. Ms. Walton said the Aide's job mostly backup clerical work and does not require specific training like the Administrative Assistant.

Bill Sheehan questioned how the department reaches elderly residents who are not online, do not seek access to online services, and do not attend the town's Senior Center. Ms. Walton said they could run ads in the paper or, by the suggestion of Ron Fedor, have an article written about the department by a local newspaper for more exposure. Ms. Walton stated that the department sends information to Senior Services to forward out in their newsletter as well.

Chairman Patterson requested a 5-year trend analysis report to be included with next year's budget request.

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Assessor budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$287,213**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

5. Board of Assessment Appeals Budget:

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Board of Assessment Appeals budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$1,742**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

6. Tax Collector Budget:

The Tax Collector, Alan Wilensky, shared that his department has collected 99.2% of this year's Grand List. Last year at this time, tax collection was at about 98%. The department has collected approximately \$6.5million this year up 6.83% from last year. The Tax Collector will be working in conjunction with the town's attorney to ramp up collections. Mr. Wilensky foresees collecting about \$1.5million by the end of the FY24.

Members of board commended the Tax Collector on his accomplishments through this past year. Ron Fedor questioned if there were other companies the town could utilize other than Quality Data Service (QDS). Mr. Wilensky said there are very few other businesses that do what QDS does so the town is limited in options. Given another choice of businesses to use, the Tax Collector prefers QDS and appreciates the relationship they have established.

Corrections to the budget backup documents were suggested as the board members noticed discrepancies between the summary page and paperwork. Mr. Wilensky will be sure corrections are made as the budget passes to the next board for review.

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Tax Collector budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$232,331**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

7. Town Clerk Budget:

David Campo, Town Clerk, began discussions by thanking his staff for their consistent and eloquent response to the town's concerns as the first level of contact with residents. He stated that they try to run the department as lean as possible with marginal increases after some reorganization (like storage management) in the office this past year.

Bill Sheehan congratulated Mr. Campo and his assistant for being certified town clerks in the State of Connecticut.

Ron Fedor asked if Mr. Campo was aware of the new Cyber Security System being looked at by IT for the Town. Mr. Campo had indicated his department utilizes thumb drives for data storage and the firewall of the new security program may render that type of storage useless. The Town Clerk was certain they would work out a system compatible with IT's new security program and has backup systems in place if the thumb drives are no longer permitted.

Glenn Patterson asked and received clarification from the Town Clerk that the Avenu Equipment Rental line was a renewal of an existing contract that included an increase in rates for certain supplies/features.

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Town Clerk budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$264,849**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

8. Representative Town Meeting Budget:

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Representative Town Meeting budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$18,903**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

9. Board of Selectmen Budget:

1st Selectman, Rob Brule, spoke about new staffing in his department. An additional administrative assistant will be added when the Executive Administrative Assistant is absent. This ensures that the office does not stop working.

Bill Sheehan asked how many people represent the cost in the Administrative section as no detail of number of individuals is present in the backup. 1st Selectman Brule stated that one administrative person is working at a time, not both. Mr. Sheehan stated it is in the Budgetary Guidelines to present this information to the Boards.

Mr. Sheehan continued his questions by asking about the status of the State of Connecticut closing the project on Cross Road. Mr. Brule answered that the state is working on closure but is waiting for certain aspects of the job to be signed off as is typical of any state work. Mr. Sheehan asked about JR Consulting and if they had any experience with municipalities when Mr. Brule decided to use them. The 1st Selectman said he used them several years ago and knew of them from his previous job. Mr. Brule added that training has been added to his budget. Mr. Sheehan inquired about The Rise Group and if this has been "given up on". Mr. Brule answered that he never gives up on anything and he meets with them regularly.

Chairman Patterson noted that a correction needed to be made to line 53020 – the summary sheet says \$1500 but the backup says \$800 on page 3. This was noted by the 1st Selectman and he said corrections will be made for next Board review.

Bill Sheehan made a comment that he made last year as well: He said the entire budget could use more detail. He stated that this budget from the 1st Selectman was the sketchiest of all budgets. It does not give a good understanding of how the office spends money. Mr. Sheehan shared his disappointment that this was not done and mentioned that the 1st Selectman's budget should set the example to all other departments' budget presentations.

Motion by Michael Rocchetti and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to approve the Board of Selectment budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **\$206,405**.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

10. Adjournment:

Motion by Robert Tuneski and **seconded** by Ron Fedor to adjourn the Budget Meeting of the Board of Finance at 9:01 p.m.

Vote: 7-0-0

Motion: Passed

Respectfully submitted



John Sheehan, Clerk



Rebecca L. Hall, Secretary