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Board of Finance
Budget Hearing Minutes *REVISED*

Wednesday, March 11, 2024
Waterford Town Hall

Present: Chairman Glenn Patterson, Ronald R. Fedor, Robert Tuneski, David Peabody, Joseph Filippetti

Absent: Clerk Bill Sheehan, Michael Rocchetti

Elected: Robert J. Brule, First Selectman; Susan Driscoll, Chairman of Retirement Commission; Paul Goldstein, RTM

Staff: Kimberly Allen, Finance Director; Christine Walters, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Robillard, IT Manager; Steven Sinagra, Director of Emergency Management; Rebecca Hall, Admin Assistant Finance Office/BOF Recording Secretary

Other: Marysia Koziol, Supervisor School Health & Wellness, Visiting Nurses Association; Paul Mounds, VP Community & Corporate Alliance, Yale New Haven Hospital (L&M)

1. Establishment of a quorum and call to order:
A quorum was established and a call to order was established at 7:00 pm, March 11, 2024.

2. Public comment: none
An opening statement regarding the budget process was made by Glenn Patterson, Chairman.

Standing Motion: A **motion** was made by David Peabody and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to have a standing motion by Robert Tuneski and seconded by Ron Fedor to consider each budget as presented.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

3. **Public Health and Nursing Services:**

Marysia Koziol, Supervisor School Health & Wellness, Visiting Nurses Association and Paul Mounds, VP Community & Corporate Alliance, Yale New Haven Hospital (L&M) spoke on behalf of the Public Health and Nursing Services. Chairman Glenn Patterson opened conversation by asking if the school care providers will now be moved to the home health care side of the nursing services. Mr. Mounds stated some will stay with the school systems and others will utilize the Yale New Haven network to find jobs.

Robert Tuneski asked about the small increase in the budget request this year. Ms. Koziol answered that increases in salaries and benefits for the nurses drove up costs this year.

Before dismissing the spokespeople, 1st Selectman, Rob Brule, acknowledged Paul Mounds for all of his assistance and guidance to him and the Town of Waterford through COVID. He remarked that Mr. Mounds was an essential advocate for the Town at that time and he wanted to publicly acknowledge all of his help.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Public Health Nursing Services budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$26,297**.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

4. Human Resources Budget:

The Director of Human Resources, Christine Walters, began with a brief synopsis of the past budget year and the accomplishments of the department's two (2) employees. HR managed numerous new hiring, the fillings of vacancies, and worked through three (3) collective bargaining agreements this past year. Director Walters told the BOF she will provide an updated organization chart before the Final Review meeting. Also, on page 4, the justification should read "Human Resources Assistant" not "Administrator".

Ron Fedor sought clarification on part time staff. Ms. Walters stated the budgeting formula doesn't specify exact numbers – the department budgets for part time labor are based on hours worked not by position. Mr. Fedor pointed out that a document referenced in the budget was not included in the budget packet. Ms. Walters was able to supply copies to the board at the meeting. This document will be added to the budget book.

Joseph Filippetti asked if the increase in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is based on the turnover of staff. Ms. Walters said the increased costs (noted in the newly supplied document) represents increased rates to match the annual increases in salaries, wages, and benefits per the new Interim Director at Solutions-EAP.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Human Resources budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$264,204.**

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

5. Finance Department Budget:

Director of Finance, Kimberly Allen discussed how her department continues to work on streamlining processes in Finance as well as assisting with other departments in town.

She shared that Finance purchased new software for the Purchasing Agent which allows for more bids to be submitted in a timely manner and they are already seeing an increase in submittals. The Finance Department has also purchased a digital budget book creator. This way the budget will take information submitted from the departments and translate it into graphs, charts, trend scales, etc.

Chairman Patterson noted there may be a discrepancy between the grants section of the budget and summary sheet. Director Allen clarified that the term she uses for grants are those that are "competitive" grants, or those that the town must apply for unlike other grants where the town is simply awarded money for being a municipality.

Director Allen continued clarification of a budget line item indicating that the budget requests to lease one of two (2) leases for items requested by the Print Shop for FY25. Leasing a new paper cutter is the only item requested while the backup shows both items. Additionally, the "Dues, Conferences, & Education" line item has a slight increase so that the new Purchasing Agent will be able to attend training off-site. This line also reflects money being spent for an employee for continuing their education as offered by the Town.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Finance Department budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$767,856.**

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

6. **Retirement Commission Budget:**

Chairman Susan Driscoll spoke regarding the Retirement Commission's budget. She stated that each year the budget is based on contractual obligation of the Town to past employees. She is projecting higher contribution rates in next year's budget – the new rates will be released by the state at the end of March/beginning of April. At that time, she will have new numbers to present to the Town.

Ron Fedor asked if Ms. Driscoll knew of other towns opting out of the state's control of retirement programs. She replied that she doesn't know of anyone actually making that move as there is risk associated. She added that several towns spoke about doing it but the state has responded to rumblings with possible support for towns to "lighten the load" of the acute increases in retirement costs.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Retirement Commission budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$7,760,257.**

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

7. **Insurance Budget:**

Finance Director, Kimberly Allen noted that renewals are done annually in May/June and the budget is based on industry trends. The department has separated the Stop Loss insurance from Anthem due to a better rate with another company.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Insurance budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$4,962,182**.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

8. **Legal Department Budget:**

Glenn Patterson added an editorial comment: The Backup on page 3 "Professional Fees/Legal Fees" talks about FY22/23 and should be updated for correct fiscal years. Director of Finance, Kimberly Allen made a note of this.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Legal Department budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$295,000.**

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

9. **Information Technology Budget:**

IT Manager, Jeff Robillard, gave an opening statement about the IT Department and what the department does on a daily basis. As an example of the magnitude of what the department handles, Mr. Robillard stated that in the first ten days of March, there were over 200,000 attempts by outside sources from around the world to access our database but blocked by our Firewall.

Chairman Patterson pointed out that the overtime budget is projected to be half of what it was in FY24 and questioned why. Mr. Robillard answered by saying they are using more of a flex time schedule to avoid overtime billing for his staff.

Ron Fedor stated that he sees many subscriptions and renewals for software in IT's budget. He asked about the approval and purchasing process if a department wants to purchase new software. Jeff Robillard said that the departments basically research a product and work with other departments like Finance to be sure the product is making things more efficient or that there is a benefit for the Town. Renewals fall under IT but typically the software initial purchase is funded by the requesting Town department. IT discusses the purchase with the department to assess the value of the new product to make sure it is worth the purchase. Mr. Fedor asked if we have a system that will disable the devices that would be physically plugged into our network. Mr. Robillard said they are looking at a new system that some of the largest industries in the country are using. The town is close to purchasing this new cyber security technology. Robert Tuneski inquired about the process to assess the value and need of a software purchase and how departments could quantify it. He suggested possibly having a worksheet of sorts created – a template – where the department could generate the worksheet and submit it to IT for review.

Chairman Patterson noticed a "bulge" in expenses every three (3) years in IT's budget. Mr. Robillard noted that every three (3) years, the town purchases a renewal of a service contract from a hardware company. By making this purchase, the hardware is provided to the town at no cost.

In conclusion, Chairman Patterson mentioned possibly updating the BOF Budget Guidelines to have departments requesting new software justify the cost of that purchase before the BOF. This would be to clarify that justifying new software purchases falls under the purchasing department, not IT. This would apply to requests both in-budget and outside of the budget season. This will be an item for future BOF consideration.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Information Technology budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$1,231,423**.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

10. Emergency Management Budget:

The Director of Emergency Management, Steven Sinagra, opened with an overview of Emergency Management Services. He shared FY24 purchases and projected purchases for FY25. He shared staffing information and associated costs. He shared the number of calls managed by his dispatchers: ~32K for Police and ~20K for Fire and Emergency services (911 calls). Currently, there are eight (8) full time employees in this department plus two (2) part time staffers.

Robert Tuneski asked what a typical day shift looks like in the department. Mr. Sinagra responded saying that there are typically three (3) employees on the day shift and two (2) employees on the other shifts. Friday and Saturday nights usually require three (3) staff members to manage calls.

Ron Fedor questioned the need for one (1) full time Community Service Educator [for $58,000/year] who is shared with Fire Services. Mr. Fedor mentioned that Fire Services, who shares this employee, was questioned about this position and the answer did not justify the need for the position. Director Sinagra responded that the duties of this staff member are beyond that of simply a Community Service Educator. While they travel to various events, this person is vital in the day to day operations of the department. This staff member fills the void of any administrative needs of the department in addition to their community outreach efforts within the 15 hours of weekly work at Emergency

Management Services. After David Peabody asked, Steve Sinagra advised that out of 15 hours a week for this part time staff member in his department typically anywhere between 1-4 hours is spent at community events.

Chairman Patterson asked Director Sinagra about overtime in the budget. Recently, the department asked for a transfer in funds to cover overtime costs but sees a decrease in the FY25 budget for overtime. Director Sinagra stated that the new full time staff will have completed their required training so that other staff will not be required to cover their time for shifts in FY25.

Joseph Filippetti wondered about the decrease in the "Fuels and Lubricants" line of the budget after submittal time. Mr. Sinagra, backed by information from Finance Director, Kimberly Allen, responded that fuel rates were locked in after the budget submission date so the summary sheet reflects the change, but not the original backup.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to tentatively approve the Emergency Management budget request for FY24/25 in the total amount of **$1,196,762**.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

11. Adjournment:

Motion by Dave Peabody and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to adjourn the Budget Meeting of the Board of Finance at 8:21 p.m.

Vote: 5-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

Respectfully submitted

John Sheehan, Clerk

Rebecca L. Hall, Secretary