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TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUDGET MEETING
January 10, 2012
Meeting Room B, Town Hall

PRESENT: William Brennan, Harold Clark, Ted Hoffstatter, Richard Dubow, James Saxe

ALSO PRESENT: Sandy Dennies, Police Chief Michael Lombardo, Deputy Chief Robert Crosby, Police Commissioner Chris Weldon, Kathy Leeds, Judy Higby, Bob Kelso, Sarah Taffel, Rich McArdle, Neil Gluckin, James Barker, several members of Library Trustees and Friends of Ambler Farm

Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., making the following remarks. A significant effort goes into putting a municipal budget together and we have a lot of cooperation from all of our departments. Sandy Dennies, CFO, has done an excellent job in streamlining the process. In brief, the challenge comes from the expenses that we can't control, i.e. wages, benefits, utilities and fuel. We have to strike a balance by being mindful of taxpayers, and at the same time realizing that town employees are also dealing with cost of living increases and this year, we have four union contracts being negotiated.

The Board of Finance is looking at a 1.75% target mill rate increase and our departments have done their best to keep their budgets flat. Meeting that goal may mean personnel reductions, which also means reducing services.

Police Department Budget

Commissioner Weldon began by stating that they have already had reductions in jobs, which increases the need for overtime to cover the necessary services, 24/7. This budget is as tight as possible.

Chief Lombardo advised that the goal in preparing this budget was to continue to keep the highest level of service. One way they have found to reduce costs is by

regionalization of accident investigation and the Emergency Response Team, which also provides more resources for each of the participating towns.

The need for services continues to increase, with traffic on Route 7 still being a major concern; the need for rapid response to medical calls, especially those where a defibrillator is critical; rapid response to the increasing amount of domestic violence calls; and the need for a police presence in town to help deter crime.

Major Variances –

- 1) Overtime - up 16% due to fewer officers, as well as unfunded state mandates.
- 2) Training – up \$2,000 due to unfunded state training mandates. We are trying to regionalize training needs to save cost.
- 3) Armory Supplies – up 28% - The increase is for equipment for the Emergency Response Team, with the cost being divided among the five towns in our regionalization effort.
- 4) Vehicle Fuel – up 2.5% - This is due to a decrease in revenue for extra duty after completion of the Route 7 construction.

All other items have slight increases or decreases in some cases. Mr. Hoffstatter asked where would further reductions be made if necessary? Chief Lombardo answered that we would have to release at least one officer. The newest officer just completed ten months of training, so we would lose our investment of approximately \$75,000, for training, equipment and uniforms.

Capital –

- 1) Vehicles – There are no more Crown Victorias and the new Ford Interceptor vehicles being used by police departments are priced \$6,000 higher. In addition, the six vehicles being requested would need to have the normal equipment upgrade at an additional cost.
- 2) Computer software – Mobile Data Terminals to be installed in vehicles.
- 3) Radar Equipment for School Road – \$7,000 – Signs that flash the speed cars are traveling, taking the place of an officer sitting in a vehicle.

Mr. Brennan suggested that the Commissioners look at the vehicle replacement schedule again. Regarding revenue, it was noted that there are fewer speeding tickets on Route 7. Chief Lombardo advised that this is due to having fewer officers available for traffic duty.

Mr. Brennan asked for data comparing Wilton to a sampling of other towns in number of officers, salaries etc.

Library Budget Request

Kathy Leeds, Director; Judy Higby, President; and Bob Kelso, Treasurer each gave a presentation on the FY 12/13 budget request. The request represents a 3.1% increase over FY 11/12, with no decrease in staffing, services or hours. The request does include a 2.5% salary increase for staff, who did not receive any increase last year, similar to Town employees. Library employees do not have step increases, only percentage increases when approved. Health insurance costs are estimated to increase 15%, however, firm numbers will not be available until June.

Mr. Hoffstatter asked where decreases would be made if the budget had to be reduced? Mr. Kelso and Ms. Leeds agreed that reductions would have to be made in staff and/or salaries. Library employees are not on the self-funded insurance plan for Town employees, but they did change to a high deductible plan that resulted in some savings.

Ms. Leeds stressed the fact that Library employees went above and beyond during the lengthy power outages following the two recent storms. Many people, including those from surrounding towns, came to the Library to power up their electronics and to spend some time. Each storm increased the utility costs by \$8,500.

Ms. Leeds was thanked for the excellent job she has done at the Wilton Library over the past twelve years and wished the best in her retirement.

Ambler Farm Budget Request

Mr. Neil Gluckin, President and Mr. James Barker, Treasurer gave brief presentations. The operating budget requested is small and the Friends will be attending the next Board of Selectmen meeting to discuss a capital request. Mr. Gluckin noted that the main interests for Ambler Farm are organic agriculture, sustainable land use, and historic preservation. Membership, number of visitors, and number of programs are at record levels. Their goal is to become financially self-sufficient and they are making progress each year. The main variance in this year's request is the painting of the red barn which has not been painted in ten years and is beginning to deteriorate.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Jan Andras
Recording Secretary