

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET MEETING
February 21, 2024
Meeting Room A**

<u>Present:</u>	Norman Needleman	Maria Lucarelli
	Stacia Libby	Robert Bibbiani
	Bruce Glowac (virtual)	Beebe Miller
	Tracey Celentano	DG Fitton
	Kelly Sterner	

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

Public Comment: None

BUDGET REVIEWS:

Major Budget Drivers:

First Selectman Norman Needleman and Finance Director Tracey Celentano reported that the Major Budget Drivers for fiscal year 2024 – 2025 are salaries, fringe benefits, health care costs, pension, outside service contracts, debt service, support to outside organizations, and the capital and sinking funds. The Town budget is currently showing a 3.97% increase.

The Selectmen went through the budget page by page.

Mr. Needleman reported that there are some changes being proposed for 2024 – 2025 budget.

1. Selectmen's Budget – increase due to the Administrative Assistant/Secretary was moved up 2 levels and 1 step in January 2024 and the Special Appropriations was increased an additional \$500 to bring the allocation for the Town's annual contribution to the pumpout boat program to \$5,500.
2. Assessor – General wage and J.D. Power subscription increase.
3. Central Services – general wage and step increases. Other small increases included phone, electric, trash, and water bills. Also included was an additional \$5,000 to purchase a new postage meter, but the Selectmen requested that be removed from the budget and suggested using ARPA funds.
4. Centerbrook Meetinghouse – newly acquired donated building to town. There was discussion the electricity was thought to be approximately \$125/mo, but the first monthly invoice for 1/11/24-02/09/24 is \$420.12, so the \$6,000 budgeted costs are a good estimate.
5. Elections – Stipend and part time salaries increased due to mandated early voting initiative.
6. Probate Court – minor increase
7. Tax Collector – general wage increase
8. Town Clerk – minor decrease due to the new Assistant Town Clerk is starting at a lower step.
9. Finance – general wage and step increase. Decrease in overall budget is due to removal of the Part-Time Payroll line of \$19,530.
10. Fringe Benefits – increase is due to increased participation in health insurance and a 4% Health Insurance Cost increase. Increase in the Retirement line due to amended Merit Service Plan. Increase in consultant's line is because of the expected costs to do a valuation on the pension plan this year.
11. General Insurance – 3% increase to workers' compensation and an increase of 5% to liability insurance, plus an increase due to adding the Centerbrook Meetinghouse. There was discussion of going out to bid for insurance next year. Stacia Libby would assist with the process.
12. Legal Services – the Selectmen decreased inland wetlands from \$5,000 to \$4,000.
13. Public Restroom Facilities – the budget remained flat.
14. Technology – budget decreased due to removal of \$19,530 from the part time payroll.

15. Board of Assessment Appeals – decreased due to removal of automobile expense line and decrease of \$50 from office supplies.
16. Board of Finance – increase due to audit fees.
17. Conservation Commission – slight increase
18. EDC – general wage and step increase for board clerk
19. IWWC – increase due to State of Connecticut fees.
20. Land Use – general step and wage increases and longevity for additional employee.
21. Planning & Zoning Commission – increase due to State of Connecticut fees.
22. Park and Recreation Department – increase due to general wage and longevity.
23. Park and Recreation Commission – no change
24. Tree Committee – no change
25. Zoning Board of Appeals – no change
26. Ambulance / EMT Services – DG Fitton presented to the Selectmen Essex Ambulance Association’s possible trajectory and assumptions of the future of the association. Budget drivers are due to the mortgage, payroll, and fringe benefits for the employees. The original request submitted was for \$105,000. The Selectmen placed \$75,000 into the budget and stated this can be revisited later.
27. Animal Control Appropriation– budget increased from \$15,000 to \$46,000 this year due to ACO position going from part time to full time which includes fringe benefits. ACO is shared by 3 towns. Plus, the addition of a part time assistant.
28. Building Department – decrease due to building official going from full time to part time.
29. Emergency Management – no change
30. Emergency 9-1-1 - a projected 4% increase estimated for Valley Shore.
31. Fire Department – general wage increase and \$13,717 allocation increase
32. Fire Marshal – Auto expense increase due to fuel expenses.
33. Water – an increase of 5% per CT water plus the addition of hydrants on Essex Glen Rd.
34. Harbor Patrol – an increase in the budget for increase in fuel costs
35. Police Services – general wage and step increase.
36. Resident State Trooper – decrease due to change in fringe benefits.
37. Estuary Transit – requested a 3% increase.
38. Health Department – general wage increase
39. Transfer Station & Recycling Center – general wage increase, tipping fees increased.
40. Social Services –Robert Bibbiani, Executive Director of Tri-Town Youth Services and Beebe Miller were present. Mr. Bibbiani presented their budget request to the Selectmen. They reported they are awarded grants, but the grants primarily fund salaries. They applied for the Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act (STOP Act) Grant but were unsuccessful. Mr. Bibbiani reported there are no clinical physicians. First Selectman suggested hiring an executive director who could also do clinician work. Bruce Glowac stated everyone realizes the need is getting greater, we must figure out a way to fund it and this is a necessary service. Mr. Bibbiani reported he will do his best to seek additional grant funding. He will also look at cutting back on things such as non-essential training, and to keep the focus on children and their focus would be to stick with prevention and positive youth development.
41. Visiting Nurses – The Selectmen requested more information from VNA.
42. Public Works & Highway Department – general wage and step increases, and longevity. 2 steps and level change for Administrative Assistant/Secretary.
43. Principal & Interest – a decrease of 7.95%
44. Libraries – a general 3% increase to both libraries
45. Capital and Sinking Funds – decreased due to Selectmen transferring \$10,000 to Essex Ambulance general fund.

Public Comments None

ADJOURNMENT at 7:42 pm

Respectfully submitted, Maria Lucarelli