

**TOWN OF STONINGTON**  
**BOARD OF FINANCE SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Virtual Meeting/Stonington Police Dept Meeting Room**  
**Tuesday, March 16, 2021**  
**7:00 PM**

The Stonington Board of Finance held a virtual/hybrid meeting on this date at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook live and was available via audio on a conference line. The Board of Finance members will discuss and deliberate FY21/22 budget requests amongst themselves and may inquire of the First Selectman, Department Heads and Representatives from the Education Department as to requests and may direct the Director of Finance to make adjustments to certain budget line items. There are no public comments during this meeting, however, there will be a public hearing in the coming weeks where the public may weigh in and direct comments and/or concerns to the Board of Finance.

Chairman Tim O'Brien and Mr. Glen Frishman were present at the Police Department Meeting Room. Mr. Mike Fauerbach, Ms. Lynn Young, Ms. Deb Norman, and Mr. Bob Statchen were present remotely. Finance Director Jim Sullivan was present remotely. Mr. Dave Motherway was absent.

Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

The Chairman addressed the Board members noting that this budget was one of the most challenging, not in terms of fiscal issues but in all of the moving parts and revenues that are taking place this year. Chairman O'Brien stated he would like to get a sense from the other Board members of the budget target they would like to see and then work with Director Sullivan for any changes. The Chairman noted there may be a need to postpone some of the discussion until more information from Congressman Courtney's office regarding the funds coming into the Town and their potential usages as it is unclear to everyone what the restrictions are.

Chairman O'Brien opened the discussion up to the Board members to express where they feel the budget should be for the taxpayer.

Mr. Glenn Frishman expressed a ½ mill increase to the taxpayer for FY21/22

Mr. Michael Fauerbach also suggested a ½ mill increase noting the challenges ahead with contractual salary increases and an increase in capital improvement requests. Mr. Fauerbach inquired about the ability to fund some projects over multiple years and advocated removing the \$500,000 line item for COVID expenses.

Ms. Lynn Young agreed that ½ mill would be a good target.

Finance Director Jim Sullivan indicated that \$5,500,000 would need to be cut from the current First Selectman's budget (V.8.0) to obtain a ½ mill increase to taxpayers.

Mr. Bob Statchen mentioned the remaining WPCA CIP funds, the current COVID funding in the budget and the unknown status of the funds available through the CARES Act and how those funds could be distributed.

Chairman O'Brien also recognized the increase in contractual expenses and the cuts that were already done. Suggesting a ½ mill increase would be favorable, the Chairman stated the Board will have challenges in obtaining that rate.

Chairman O'Brien queried the Board of anyone not in favor of removing the \$500,000 Contingency for COVID-19 Line Item #54 under the Board of Finance budget. Hearing no objections, the Chairman asked Director Sullivan to remove the \$500,000 from Line Item #54.

Line Item #54 - Contingency for COVID 19            \$0

The Board moved to the Capital Improvement portion of the Budget.

**Capital Improvement Requests:**

**General Operations:**

- o Line Item #1 - Town Wide Computer Technology Upgrade    \$65,000
  - o The Board members suggested reducing the amount to \$50,000, IT Director Roger Kizer was agreeable to the reduction. The Board agreed to reduce the request to \$50,000
  
- o Line Item #2 - Orthophotography Updates                    \$1.00
  - o No Changes
  
- o Line Item #3 - Video Security System Town Hall    \$19,500
  - o Board members suggested reducing the amount to \$10,000. IT Director Roger Kizer stated the project could be revisited and the amount would be the bare minimum with an increase next year. The Board agreed to reduce the request to \$10,000
  
- o Line Item #6 - ADA Accessibility - Town Facilities    \$25,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien suggested reducing the amount by \$5,000, Mr. Frishman suggested reducing the amount by \$10,000. Human Resource Director Patti Burmahl stated by doing that the needs would be prioritized and difficult to complete the projects they have identified. First Selectman Chesebrough stressed the urgency of the work and the need to actively taking on projects. The Board reduced the request by \$5,000.

**Police Services:**

- o Line Item #16 - Body/Cruiser Cameras                    \$500,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien stated his most recent conversation with Lt. Bryan Schneider has confirmed that with qualifying State reimbursements and front loading the purchase, the request could be reduced to \$136,226.40 with the out years coming in at \$82,240.35. The Board reduced the request to \$135,000 with the intent that the balance due be transferred from another computer/IT Line Item.

- o Line Item #12 - MDT Replacement \$19,000
  - o Lt. Bryan Schneider pointed out that due to the units not having the proper operating system to support the new body/cruiser camera outfitting, the request will be increased to \$50,000.
- o Line Item #10 - Technology/Computer Upgrade \$20,000
  - o Mr. Fauerbach suggested reducing the request to \$1.00 as the fund account presently has \$42,000 and the new equipment is covered under another account. Chief Stewart pointed out the account will have only \$36,000 remaining after a purchase of (1) MDT will take place this fiscal year. The Board concurred with reducing the amount to \$1.00

Assessor's Department:

- o Line Item #20 - Town Revaluation \$20,000
  - o No Changes

Public Works/Highway Department:

- o Line Item #23 - Drainage Improvements Town Wide \$50,000
  - o The Board suggested reducing the request to \$25,000. Public Works Director Barbara McKrell noted the department request is what is needed to complete anticipated projects. First Selectman Chesebrough noted that should the amount be reduced, based on previous conversations, the Board recognizes the Department will come back to ask for additional appropriations for projects such as the Williams Street and Allyn Street drainage projects. The Board was in agreement, the request reduced to \$25,000.
- o Line Item #24 - Highway Equipment \$474,000
  - o Mr. Frishman recommended the request be reduced to \$230,000 to cover the purchase request of a new payloader. Director McKrell noted that \$1.67 million of the department equipment is past its useful life which is 37% of the fleet. Expressing that the equipment is stable right now, Director McKrell warns the Town could be looking at millions of dollars of equipment replacement in a couple years. The Board reduced the request to \$230,000.
- o Line Item #27 - Roadway Safety \$25,000
  - o Ms. Young, noting the Board needed to reduce many requests to keep the mil rate low, suggested the request be reduced to \$1.00 based on the fund was intended for guardrail replacement. The board concurred and the request was reduced to \$1.00
- o Line Item #28 - Road Pavement - Major Maintenance \$300,00
- o Line Item #39 - Road Pavement - Capital Improvements \$600,000
  - o The Board agreed to leave the (2) road paving items for further discussion later.
- o Line Item #30 - DPW Radio Replacements \$41,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien inquired if the project could be completed incrementally and the request reduced. Highway Supervisor Tom Curioso stated he had looked into the Board's previous suggestion of portable

radios and he did not feel that would make enough difference without having the mobile units in the trucks. Mr. Curioso expressed his opinion that it would be better to defer the project rather than try to complete it in pieces. The Board reduced the request to \$1.00

- o Line Item #31 - ADA Ramps/Compliance Improvements \$100,000
  - o Director McKrell noted that of the 464 Ramps in Stonington, 377 do not meet ADA compliance. Each ramp replacement costs approximately \$4,500. Director McKrell stated that she has in the past moved paving funds to the ADA compliance fund. Mr. Frishman suggested reducing the request to \$50,000 and move funds from the paving plan. The Board concurred and reduced the request to \$50,000
- o Line Item #32 - Bridge Replacement Fund \$100,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien notes per discussion with Town Engineer Chris Greenlaw, the request can be reduced to \$29,000. With the Board in agreement, the request was reduced to \$29,000.
- o Line Item #35 - North Stonington Bridge Project \$1.00
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #38 - Pawcatuck Pumphouse Roof Replacement \$1.00
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #40 - S Anguilla Road Bridge Project \$1.00
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #45 - Washington St Drainage Replacement \$18,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #46 - Coogan Blvd Culvert Rehabilitation \$1.00
  - o No Discussion
- o Line Item #47 - Lantern Hill Bridge Project \$1.00
  - o No Discussion
- o Line Item #50 - Willow Street Drainage \$25,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #54 - Town Hall Parking Lot Replacement \$1.00
  - o No Discussion
- o Line Item #55 - Town Hall HVAC Improvements \$190,000
- o Line Item #56 - Human Services HVAC Replacement \$ 31,700
  - o The Board will leave this for further discussion once it is clear how the CARES funding can be utilized.
- o Line Item #57 - Pumphouse Fire Suppression Line \$25,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien suggested reducing the request to \$1.00. Board members concurred. Request was reduced to \$1.00
- o Line Item #58 - West Broad St School Repairs \$50,000
  - o Director McKrell noting \$19,843 currently available in the fund, suggested to the Board the amount could be reduced by \$20,000. The

Board agreed. The requested amount was reduced to \$30,000. Ms. Young asked for a breakdown of the anticipated expenses. First Selectman Chesebrough said there should be a future meeting to further discuss the future of what the Town has done and what will be completed.

- o Line Item #59 - Donahue Park Security Lighting \$10,000
  - o Chairman O'Brien suggested reducing the request to \$1.00. Hearing no objections, the request was reduced to \$1.00.

Solid Waste Department

- o Line Item #69 - Front Wheel Loader \$5,000
  - o No Changes

Human Services

- o Line Item #77 - Tennis Court Rebuild \$441,000
  - o Pursuant to a suggestion from First Selectman Chesebrough, Chairman O'Brien suggested to the Board that the funds be taken out of the unused COVID-19 contingency line item. Mr. Frishman agreed, noting the project would benefit the district as well as the school. Human Services Director Leanne Theodore did bring the Boards attention to the present quote may increase slightly and she will have updated numbers in the next day or two. Finance Director Sullivan stated Line Item #77 would reduce to \$1 and the funds in Line Item #54 - Contingency for COVID-19 would line-item transfer to this CIP account this fiscal year.

Planning Department

- o Line Item #80 - New Sidewalks Engineering & Design \$822,000
  - o Finance Director Jim Sullivan noted the revised request after conversation with Director Sue Cullen. The Board made no changes to the request.
- o Line Item #83 - Bicycling and Walking Greenway Plan \$1.00
  - o No Discussion
- o Line Item #84 - Plan of Conservation & Development \$5,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #85 - Wayfinding Signs Plan \$1.00
  - o No Discussion
- o Line Item #86 - Comprehensive Plan Update - Zoning \$75,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #88 - Permit Tracking \$15,000
  - o No Changes

- o Line Item #89 - Climate Change Adaptation Program \$30,000
  - o Mr. Frishman suggested the line item be reduced to the prior years level. Board members concurred. Line was reduced to \$10,000
- o Line Item #90 - Pawcatuck River Greenway \$1.00
- o Line Item #91 - Pawcatuck River Pedestrian Bridge \$1.00
- o Line Item #92 - Hurricane Barrier Study \$1.00
- o Line Item #93 - Stillman Mill Environmental Study \$1.00
- o Line Item #94 - Stillman Mill Brownfield Remediation \$1.00
  - o No Discussion on all above items
- o Line Item #95 - Inspection Vehicle \$6,000
  - o It was the Boards consensus that the request be reduced to \$1.00 with the assumption that the Department will come to the Board to request funds for a new vehicle when the time comes.
- o Line Item #96 - File Retention \$75,000
  - o Ms. Young questioned the request changing to an urgent priority. First Selectman Chesebrough stated the change was due to the recognition of changes the request would bring to the departments with regards to automation, paper reduction and easier access for residents. Director Burmahl informed the Board that a company that is on the CT approved vendor list is performing an assessment that will provide insight on cost and benefits. The Board will discuss further once the assessment is complete.
- o Line Item # 98 Circus Lot Acquisition \$10,000
  - o Ms. Young suggested reducing the request to \$1.00. Director Cullen advised the board that even a small investment could result in the ability to create a concept plan of development between the parcels which would be making an investment in downtown Pawcatuck. First Selectman Chesebrough stated that there may be matching grants available that would provide the funding to secure drawings and design ideas for the area. Selectman Chesebrough advised that a \$3,000 investment may be enough seed funding that could be leveraged to move forward on the project. The Board funded the account at \$3,000.
- o Line Item #102 - Open Space Acquisition Fund \$25,000
  - o The Board suggests reducing the request to \$1.00. There were no objections. The fund was reduced to \$1.00
- o Line Item #105 - Electric Vehicle Charging Stations \$2,000
  - o Members of the Board suggest reducing the amount to zero. With some members suggesting \$1.00 in case opportunities present themselves from Statewide programs which are supportive of these types of programs, the Board changed the request to \$1.00

Outside Agencies:

- o Line Item #117 - Stonington Historical Lighthouse Restoration \$50,000
  - o Board members agree to show support for the important landmark and designate \$5,000 for the project.

Board of Education: Stonington Public Schools

- o Line Item #128 - District Computers and Peripherals \$400,000
  - o No changes
- o Line Item #129 - Staff Laptops \$20,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #130 - One to One Computer Purchases \$195,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #131 - District Phone System \$1.00
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #132 - District Wide Security System \$75,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #134 - Roof Ladders and Cables \$107,800
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #135 - SMS AC Upgrade \$1,950,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #140 - SMS & SHS Interior Paint/Repairs \$20,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #146 - SMS & DO Upgrade Bldg Mgmt Sys \$157,700
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #147 - AC Upgrade DO and Classrooms \$229,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #150 - Locks & Keys - District \$20,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #153 - Flooring Repair \$20,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #155 - Two New Maintenance Trucks \$65,000
  - o No Changes
- o Line Item #157 - Classroom Furniture - District \$20,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00
- o Line Item #160 - SHS Generator Upgrade to Elec Panels \$45,000
  - o The Board reduced the request to \$1.00

Mr. Statchen asked Chairman O'Brien to clarify that Board of Ed representatives were requesting that the Board of Finance proceed in this manner of reducing many of the requests to \$1.00 so that they (BOE) could coordinate COVID funding and determine whether they could apply anticipated funding towards these projects. Chairman O'Brien confirmed and noted that it was understood that should the BOE be unable to utilize the funding for certain projects they will come back to the Board of Finance for requested funding.

General Operations Budget:

Town Clerk:

- o Line Item #98 - Clerical Salaries \$114,391
  - o Finance Director Jim Sullivan notes an increase of \$3,308 due to contractual and position changes. The amount to be funded will be \$117,699

Human Resources:

- o Line Item #58 - Health Insurance \$1,996,000
  - o Director Burmahl advised the Board that the current renewal advise suggests the request should reflect an increase of \$34,000. The Board funds the request for \$2,050,000
- o Line Item #59 - Life Insurance \$27,400
  - o Director Sullivan stated the recent renewal reflects and increase of \$985. The Board increased the request to \$28,385

Tax Collector:

- o Line Item #25 - Clerical Salaries \$118,281
  - o Director Sullivan notes and increase of \$3,312 due to contractual and position changes. The amount to be funded will be \$121,593

Board of Finance:

- o Line Item #51 - OPEB Plan Contribution \$110,000
  - o Director Sullivan states upon receiving the OPEB report last week he can reduce the request by \$5,000. The amount to be funded will be \$105,000
- o Line Item #54 - Contingency for COVID-19 \$500,000
  - o Discussion regarding the fund had all Board members in favor of reducing the fund to zero.
- o Line Item #60 - Property & Liability Insurance \$720,000
  - o Director Sullivan acknowledged the increase includes the LAP policy and cyber insurance. The amount to be funded will be \$731,000

Police Services:

- o Line Item #50 - Retirement Fund \$991,000
  - o Director Sullivan states that based on the final MERS contribution rate the request can be reduced. The amount to be funded will be \$970,000

The Board moved to approve a bid waiver request from the Police Department for Axon Enterprises in the amount of \$136,366.40 for body cameras and dash cams per contract. Mr. Frishman motioned to approve, Ms. Young seconded. All members were in favor. Motion carried.



Finance Director Jim Sullivan requested to the Board that the bid waiver include the full purchase amount of the body cameras and dash cams. Mr. Frishman retracted his previous motion.

Mr. Frishman motioned to approve a bid waiver to Axon Enterprises in the total amount of \$464,187.80 for a 5-year contract of which \$135,000 will be funded in the FY21/22 budget and the remaining funded in succeeding fiscal years pending approval during the budget process. Ms. Young seconded. All members were in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Fauerbach motioned to approve a resolution appropriating up to \$9 million for the purpose of debt refunding and refinancing of 2013 and 2014 General Obligation Bonds. Mr. Statchen seconded. All members were in favor. Motion carried.

Returning to budgetary discussions, the Chairman inquired if any members had questions or concerns about any line items in the Budget. The Board discussed the following:

Police Services: Line item #20: Police Support Specialist \$75,000

- o Mr. Fauerbach inquired if in accepting the \$75,000 for the new position that Line Item #5 - Salary of Regular Officers could be reduced by the \$75,000. Chief Stewart stated he fully anticipated filling the vacant (5) regular officer positions, requiring the full salary request, and instead suggested structuring the Specialist to begin in January 2022 instead of July 2021, saving \$37,500. Board members were in favor of this change. The amount to be funded will be \$37,500.

Human Services: Line Item #7: Community Outreach Specialist \$40,040

- o Ms. Young inquired if the position could be funded by CARES monies since the pandemic has a direct relationship to the request. First Selectman Chesebrough noted that Director Theodore was passionate in her request for an Outreach Specialist and that one has been needed for sometime and will continue to be needed post-pandemic. The Selectman expressed hesitation using a one-time infusion to fund the program and hoped to see a permanent addition to the department's budget.

Director Theodore informed the Board that the department averages around 6000 contacts per year related to social services, family services and mental health which is a lot for one full-time person. Over the years, the department has restructured duties with two part time individuals but still the work load can be overwhelming.

Director Theodore stated the new position would work with the Police and First responders and create strong connections within the community and assist residents during challenging times in their life, whether it's due to financial hardship, domestic violence, or other situations that require assistance.

Mr. Frishman commented that he does not see the Town's responsibility in providing this service and would rather provide the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center with additional funding to support such a specialist.

Director Theodore stated the Human Services Department already provides these services.

First Selectman Chesebrough noted the importance of the position and informed the Board that during the last Board of Selectman's meeting, Selectmen June Strunk and Deborah Downie graciously donated \$10,000 each from their salary line items to assist in funding the position as they recognized the urgency of the request.

Chief Stewart added that as part of the Police Accountability Act there is a feasibility study that each community will provide a social worker interacting with the Police Department to assist them in the mental health calls, such as domestic violence, suicide, drug overdoses and dependency.

Mr. Statchen stated he appreciated the Chief's comments and his perspective on the matter was very valuable. Mr. Statchen noted he felt there was support from the Board to fund the position and if Director Theodore was given the additional support she would utilize it effectively and efficiently. Mr. Fauerbach concurred with Mr. Statchen's remarks as did Ms. Norman. Ms. Young was not against the idea of the new position but would like to find creative ways to pay for it using other funds such as the CARES money. Ms. Young pointed out the budget keeps growing and exceeding people's ability to pay for it in a time when a lot of people in the Town, as evidenced by Director Theodore's work, are in trouble.

Chairman O'Brien supported the position but also agreed with Ms. Young's position regarding funding the position. The Board will leave the request as is and leave it open for further discussion.

Information Systems: Line Item #27: Technology Support Specialist \$68,096

- o Ms. Young noted the department's request for a new Technology Support Specialist. All members were in favor and the request was unchanged.

Finance Department: Line Item #18: Financial and Technical Services \$35,000

- o Director Sullivan stated he was prepared to remove the request from this budget as the funding was previously earmarked to assist in bridging the gap with the changeover in the Finance Department staff. Line Item #18 was reduced to zero. Funds currently in the account would be line item transferred to assist the department with a MUNIS upgrade.

First Selectman: Line Item #2 & #3: Second & Third Selectman Salary \$14,295

- o Based on the last First Selectman's meeting, the Second and Third Selectman offered \$10,000 each of their salary to support Director Theodore's request for an Outreach Specialist. Each line item was reduced to \$4,295

Based on the discussed changes the current mil rate is at 23.98 mils, a .62 increase in the mil rate.

The Board agreed to further discuss the budget on Thursday's meeting.

With no further discussion this evening, Mr. Frishman motioned to adjourn, Ms. Norman seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jill A Senior

Recording Secretary Board of Finance