

**TOWN OF STONINGTON**  
**BOARD OF FINANCE SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Virtual Meeting/Stonington Police Dept Meeting Room**  
**Tuesday, March 2, 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. Chairman Tim O'Brien, Mr. Glen Frishman and Mr. David Motherway were present at the Police Department Meeting Room, Mr. Michael Fauerbach, Ms. Lynn Young, Mr. Bob Statchen and Ms. Deb Norman were remotely present.

Finance Director Jim Sullivan was present remotely. Chairman O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

New Business:

Budget Presentations:

Solid Waste Department:

Mr. John Phetteplace, Director of Solid Waste, introduced himself to the new members on the Board and thanked the Board for allowing the remote presentation.

Director Phetteplace noted the most significant change in the department is beginning in January of this year, all of the MSW (municipal solid waste) is no longer delivered to Preston, but now delivered to the Wheelabrator plant in Lisbon, CT where the Town has secured a 10-year contract. Director Phetteplace recognized the trash disposal crisis in CT and informed the Board that due to this contract, this crisis will not affect Stonington for 10 years. Director Phetteplace stated the tipping fee starting in January is \$69/ton, but Stonington will pay \$58/ton due to the regional trash authority SCRRRA (Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority) subsidizing the additional amount, which the Director feels may increase slightly next year. The \$58/ton is the lowest in the State. In addition, Director Phetteplace noted the Town receives approximately \$750,000 in subsidies from SCRRRA, for transportation, hazardous waste collection and tub grinding services. SCRRRA subsidizes the tipping fee in the single stream market as well.

Regarding the SCRRRA subsidies, Director Phetteplace, who is also President of SCRRRA, said the authority is in good shape, and operates from a stabilization fund which benefitted from the sale of electricity to the electric company and the Authority will be able to continue subsidies for the next 10 years. The goal now is to find ways to make that subsidy last longer than 10 years.

Director Phetteplace relayed to the Board that steps are being taken to reduce or remove food waste from the mix and anticipates a substantial savings should be realized if this could be implemented. SCRRRA has a site ready to go at the Stonington Transfer Station to test commercial composting while focusing on finding a local facility to start commercial and residential separation. Director Phetteplace stated this will save Stonington money, save the Authority a lot of

money, and hopefully making that stabilization fund last longer. Director Phetteplace explained the looming crisis in CT is mainly because of loosing the MIDCOMP plant probably in 2024. Currently there are 50 towns that are signed up with MIRA through 2027 which means if the waste-to-energy plant is no longer operational, MIRA will have to figure out what to do with that trash. Waste will need to be shipped out of state, and Director Phetteplace reiterates that Stonington will be set for the next 10 years but that second 10 year contract will be challenging. Recycling markets are somewhat depressed but improving. The Director states scrap metal is up to \$150/ton from \$80/ton last year at this time.

Director Phetteplace was pleased to announce that the newly implemented textile recycling collection has been very successful and he feels that the pay-as-you-throw program supports the textile program's success. The textile recycling program began last April 2020, and the Director contributes the COVID lockdown to the initial wildly successful start. With everyone asked to stay home, Director Phetteplace felt everyone cleaned their closets and while he was informed the Town should see about 60 - 80 bags in the first few weeks, the Town of Stonington recycled 400 - 500 bags. That number has dropped to 80 -100 bags of textile recycling per week, saving the Town approximately \$6,000 - \$8,000 in tonnage fees. This comes at no cost to the Town, with the contracted hauler picking up the pink bags and leaving replacements. The hauler receives pennies per pound from Simple Recycling as part of the commitment.

The Director noted that as far as departmental revenues, the revenues collected are covering close to 75% of program costs. Most of the revenue is from commercial and residential collection programs, the sale of yellow bags and on a smaller scale, revenue from recycling.

Director Phetteplace mentioned in regards to residential collection, when the Town contracted with F.E. Crandall there was a \$100,000 increase for 2 years and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year no increase. Therefore, the Town will not see an increase in the residential collection rate this year. The Director feels the Town could possibly see one more year with no increase, and the Town is in the third year of a four year contract. Supportive of the service provided by F.E. Crandall, the Director pointed out it has been a difficult year with many private roads, lots of snow and inclement weather, but to Crandall's credit complaints have been at minimum.

On the budget Line Item #30 - SCRRRA Receptacle Costs, Director Phetteplace noted that bag costs will remain steady as part of a 3-year contract, however, he does anticipate needing to order a larger quantity of bags next year. Commercial trash is down but residential collection is higher.

Line Item #25 - Commercial Collection & Rental is up a contractual 3%. The Director noted this will be the year the Town will be negotiating a new contract. He does anticipate the Town going out to bid and indicated it was advantageous for haulers to bid on the contract for the stability in payment and not having the expense of accounts payable and money collection.

Line Item #14 & #15 - Fuel Costs. Director Phetteplace attributed the decrease in fuel prices primarily due to the figures used last year were calculated before the contract was set and ended up being higher than the contract. The figure was able to be reduced even with the increase in additional miles required to drive to Lisbon.

Line Item #19 - Parts & Labor has been reduced by \$5,000 since the Director does not anticipate any major scheduled service this coming year.

Line Item #23 - Disposal Fees has been reduced by \$32,000 to reflect a drop in waste generation. Total waste generation has decreased even with an increase in residential waste generation. The Director estimates a reduction of approximately 1000 commercial tons and an increase of 360 tons for residential. The figure also includes \$30,000 for emergency storm event response.

Director Phetteplace is requesting an additional \$4,600 in his general labor line item to cover the cost of a seasonal employee. Recognizing that the Transfer Station remains steadily busy, the Director pointed out that weekends have proven difficult to efficiently direct and oversee the large volume of traffic coming through the Station with just three employees. This new 14 hr/per week gate tender would assist with the larger weekend volume by assisting the gate house and supervising the drop off area. Director Phetteplace pointed out that the traffic concerns, the mishandling of recyclables or trash by the resident, and all in all the safety of those utilizing the self-drop off areas really require an attendant on hand to safely monitor those areas and be sure a steady safe flow of residents are able to use the Transfer Station.

Mr. Frishman inquired to Director Phetteplace if the proposed food waste composting program would accept all food waste. Director Phetteplace spoke about the proposed program, noting that currently there is a large black pipe at the Transfer Station near the leaf composting area where the Director expects 30 yards of food waste to be delivered in the immediate future. This food waste will be mixed with carbon, wood chips and leaves and composted for up to 60 days to create a product. Hopefully this product will demonstrate to the CT DEEP the capabilities of the program and successfully continue here in Stonington and regionally. SCRRRA is absorbing the cost of the program with the intention of reducing waste in the future. Director Phetteplace noted that the program in full effect would be curbside and businesses. All food, meat, bones, greens, would be accepted. Currently Stonington generates approximately 390 pounds of waste per person which is significantly lower than the 730 pounds per person regionally. Director Phetteplace would hope to lower that figure even lower to 250 pounds per person should a food waste program be implemented.

#### **Capital Improvement Request:**

The Solid Waste Department is requesting \$5,000 to be set aside for a new piece of equipment, a front-end loader, which Director Phetteplace states is a key piece of equipment at the Transfer Station. Traditionally the purchase has been financed over 5 or 6 years and the Director is requesting funds be put aside for the anticipated purchase. Adding that should the line item be reduced; the Director asks that Board members be aware of the need and budget accordingly.

Director Phetteplace informed the Board that he had requested \$5,000 for foam filled tires, a necessity at the Transfer Station and this would have been the second year of a three year ask. Suggesting that the department has surplus funds in this year's budget, the Director inquired if he could move the request out of CIP and purchase the tires with the surplus funds. Chairman O'Brien stated he felt, without polling the Board, that members would be supportive. Director Phetteplace stated he would come back to the Board with a request for a line-item transfer request when he was ready to purchase the tires.

## Budget Presentations:

### Public Works Department:

Director Barbara McKrell presented an overview of the Department of Public Works and outlined the primary services, facilities maintained and top goals of the department. Director McKrell pointed out that the department's highly skilled team is able to adapt and change quickly from working both as a team and independently to get work done. Every job is important to the department, from picking up trash, cleaning restrooms, maintaining fields, executing pavement rehabilitation, responding to resident's request to create rich preservation programs, and creating clean water through the MS4 program.

Director McKrell pointed out that Line Item #17 - Sidewalk Repairs \$150,000 was a much needed but in her opinion insufficient amount to efficiently maintain the sidewalks in the Town. The Town maintains nearly 34 miles of sidewalk and based on the inspection completed in 2019 there is a backlog of \$4.3M of repairs. Director McKrell warned that failure to maintain this infrastructure puts the Town at risk.

Line Item #24 - Tree Trimming - \$20,000 an increase of \$3,000 from previous year. Director McKrell states that the Town is facing an environmental crisis of diseased trees. Additional resources are needed to help deal with the fallout of infested trees. If the trees are left in place, they will create a hazard of falling trees and limbs.

Line Item #25 - Catch Basin Cleaning - \$35,000 and increase of \$3,000 from previous year. Director McKrell explained this is a mandated MS4 measure. The additional funds will allow the Town to increase the number of catch basins cleaned, address any increase in costs and protect the surrounding Town water resources.

Director McKrell briefly spoke of the gas and oil usage of the department. Noting that amounts in categories were modified due to changes in equipment and fuel type needs. Due to last year's light winter, the department usage is not a typical yearly usage. Therefore, a small increase is requested to address any increase in unit costs.

Line Item #29 - Bridge Maintenance - \$75,000. Director McKrell noted that the Town has 16 bridge structures with a replacement value of over \$20M. The department has recently engaged in a high-level study of all structures. Director McKrell acknowledged that this has revealed several low condition ratings, demonstrating various stages of deterioration. The Director feels this is a result of neglect due to the lack of a Bridge Preservation and Safety Program. This requested funding will allow the initiation and execution of a program. Town Engineer Chris Greenlaw addressed the Board stating that the monies requested would fund operations and maintenance of bridges. This would be non-structural items such as sidewalks, metal guide beams and such. Additional monies requested through the CIP account would be for specific bridge repair.

Line Item #37 - Street Sweeper Repairs & Maintenance - \$14,000. Director McKrell informed the Board that MS4 mandates sweeping of all Town roadways annually. As part of the permit, the Town is required to report a financial level of effort to support the mandates. The Director has separated these costs into a new line item

which will allow more transparency.

Director McKrell pointed out that several line items have been increased to support inhouse work addressing failing drainage systems. For example, the costs for a new catch basin top is approximately \$400 and this year the department has replaced 46 tops which would cost \$18,400 for materials. This would not include piping, blocks and concrete.

Line Item #51 - Snow Removal Labor - \$130,000. Director McKrell stated that the fund has approximately \$15,000 remaining and is hopeful that we are at the end of weather related snow events.

#### Engineering Services:

Town Engineer Chris Greenlaw addressed the Board outlining some of the highlights of the present year operations. The Willow Street drainage project has successfully gained both DEEP and local Inland Wetland approvals. The project documents are being prepared for bidding with construction anticipated in the spring/summer months.

A Town Wide bridge inventory was conducted, an important first step in the planning of future bridge repairs and/or replacement accordingly. An evaluation of this inventory will be the guide to determine which bridges undergo further testing.

The West Broad Street School project entailed renovations to include masonry repairs such as repointing and joint sealing on windows.

The Town Hall HVAC upgrade request for bid has been advertised and the project is moving forward.

Mr. Greenlaw noted that the department has been managing various ongoing storm water initiatives required to maintain compliance with the Town general permit for its municipal stormwater collection and conveyance system.

With regards to budget changes, Mr. Greenlaw pointed out a decrease in the department's line item #3 - Flood Plain Manager of \$14,000. This is in accordance with SPAA contractual language and core FEMA regulations being managed by Planning and Building.

Line #7 - FEMA/Community Rating System Requirements shows a decrease of \$3,600 also in accordance with SPAA contractual language and core FEMA regulations being managed by Planning and Building.

Line Item #2 - Part Time Engineer (Intern) is a new line item with an ask of \$6,300. Mr. Greenlaw stated that the ideally, the new position would be filled by a college intern with an engineering background or environmental concentration. The position would assist with many administrative tasks associated with MS4 and DPW municipal project design. The seasonal position would be in May, June and July for a period of 12 weeks at 35 hours per week.

Line Item #10 - Furniture & Equipment is a new line item with an ask of \$1,950. This money would fund a department laptop to assist remote access to the server

for meetings and tasks associated with GIS and DPW asset management.

Facilities Management:

Director Barbara McKrell noted that the Facility Management is now run by the Highway Supervisor and has one full time and one part time Building Maintainers responsible for custodial and semi-skilled maintenance repair work. Major maintenance of the facilities is completed by external contractors managed by the Facilities Manager with the assistance of the Building Maintainers. The Building Maintainers provide custodial services at five (5) Town Facilities and general maintenance at all Town owned facilities.

Director McKrell stated line item #15 - Janitorial/Maintenance Salary has been increased by \$30,086 to provide funding to support a new 20-hour per week part time employee. This new position will provide needed support required for proper maintenance of all Town facilities, assist with addressing deferred maintenance which has resulted from being short staffed and provide support to seasonal recreation restroom facilities.

Capital Improvement Requests:

Line Item#23 - Town wide drainage improvements - \$50,000. Given only \$1 last year Director McKrell pointed out drainage concerns that need immediate attention. Mr. Frishman inquired if there was a priority list of projects, which there is not, but Director McKrell noted Williams Street drainage issues are a current concern along with projects that were not tended to last year.

Line Item #24 - Highway Equipment - Purchase \$474,000. Highway Supervisor Tom Curioso addressed the board, noting the priority purchase would be to replace the 1999 Loader for \$230,000. At over 22 years old and with 8,500 miles on it, Mr. Curioso noted that the loader is a main piece of equipment for the department. A new Loader would be outfitted with a load-right type scale system which would give the ability to weigh salt, sand and other demolition debris being loaded into the trucks which would prevent overloading and unnecessary wear and tear on the trucks. The Department currently has two (2) loaders, the 1999 and a 2003, both John Deere. The 1999 would be traded in on the purchase of the new equipment and Mr. Curioso anticipates \$10 - \$15,000 trade-in value.

The second priority would be \$198,000 to replace a 2003 6-wheel dump truck. Mr. Curioso noted that over the last several years request for a truck replacement have been unsuccessful.

Thirdly, \$46,000 would fund the purchase of a chipper that would replace a 1995 chipper. Mr. Curioso did state that of the equipment requests the chipper would be the least priority as the current piece of equipment is functional and not used on a daily basis.

Line Item #27 - Roadway Safety 25,000. Director McKrell states the funding would be used to replace failed noncompliant guide rail systems within the Town. Mr. Frishman questioned the A status of the request although it appears to be a first-time request. Finance Director Jim Sullivan noted it had been a regularly scheduled item that had previously been funded as a plan of roadway safety but it

had received no funding in the last two years.

Director McKrell discussed the department's request for \$900,000 in Road Pavement (major maintenance and capital). An evaluation of the pavement conditions was completed which showed an overall decrease in the condition of the pavement due to not meeting the annual funding need of \$1.2M. The current rating is 76.5, down from the 2016 rating of 78.01. Director McKrell noted an annual contribution expected from the State for \$295,000 which would bring the fund to the amount necessary.

Mr. Fauerbach inquired about Director McKrell's department summary and noted she states that minimal funding for current year pavement projects will limit seasonal pavement repair for this coming Spring and most work would only consist of preparation for pavement maintenance in 2022. Mr. Fauerbach suggested the possibility of phasing the funding differently than the request, allowing Director McKrell to complete some road repair this Spring. Director McKrell will provide to the Board a priority listing of the top three (3) road projects and the associated cost with each. The Board will rediscuss during deliberations.

Line Item #30 - DPW Radio Replacements \$41,000. Mr. Curioso advised the Board that the purchase is being phased over a 2-year period, with a \$41,000 ask each year. The project would include the replacement of 34 radios in vehicles and equipment that are compatible with to the Police radio system. Mr. Curioso expressed the difficulty with the current equipment reaching other operators while out on the road during storm conditions and having to resort to calling personal cell phones for condition reports or communication with First Responders. The funding would support a radio in every truck.

Ms. Young inquired about procuring the same type of handheld radios used by the Police Department and if this would have the same results as an in-truck radio but for a lesser cost. Director McKrell will reach out to Chief Stewart and inquire about the handhelds and ask if the department may have a few to loan to the department to test them in their environment.

Line Item #31 - Right of Way ADA Compliance \$100,000. Director McKrell noted that upon the request of Administration Director Burmahl, the fund request has been given its own line item to show transparency that the Town is funding ADA Improvements.

Line Item #32 - Bridge Replacement & Structural Improvement Fund \$100,000. Town Engineer Chris Greenlaw informed the Board that the initial request could be reduced by \$71,000 due to the line-item transfer requested and approved by the Board last month. Ms. Young inquired what the \$100,000 could provide for the program and Mr. Greenlaw stated the funds would be used to perform bridge analysis and load ratings, and the development of an asset management plan. Ms. Young suggested it would be helpful to have a asset listing of the bridges and from a planning and budget perspective the amount of funding that will be required and when.

Line Item #45 - Washington Street Drainage Improvements - \$18,000. Mr. Greenlaw states that the Town's stormwater drainage system is severely compromised by an existing AMTRAK culvert and a filled-in tidal marsh ditch. This has resulted in stormwater backing up into the Town's drainage system and onto private property. The project scope will be spread over multiple years (1-3) depending on the condition, authorization and nature of improvements required on the AMTRAK culvert. The project design is at 90% completion.

Line Item #50 - Willow Street Drainage \$25,000. Mr. Greenlaw stated the project is a modification to install a tidal valve within the drainage system at the 4<sup>th</sup> District Voting Hall with a goal to reduce flooding in the downtown Mystic area. In addition, the project will provide downtown parking and support MS4 goals. The funding will support obtaining a CTDEEP COP permit and a local inland wetlands permit. Construction documents will be developed in preparation for spring/summer construction activities for the tidal valve.

Line Item #55 - Town Hall HVAC Improvements \$190,000. Mr. Greenlaw stated a mechanical evaluation of the Town Hall HVAC system was completed in 2020. The report identified several deficiencies and recommendations for addressing the building needs. The most critical deficiency is the lack of fresh air ventilation on the second floor of the Town Hall, followed by the boiler, which is at the end of its useful life. Loss of the boiler would result in no heat in 2/3 of the building and potential closure of the building. In addition, a significant number of the condensers for the AC system use R22 refrigerant which is no longer readily available.

Line Item #56 - Human Service HVAC Improvements \$37,700. Mr. Greenlaw advised the Board that Phase I - replacement of the boiler has been completed. Phase II will entail replacing the cooling system components, control panel and other related upgrades to the remainder of the system.

Line Item #57 - Pawcatuck Pump House Fire Suppression Line Abandonment - \$25,000. The cost would facilitate the underwater investigation of the piping. There are two different fire suppression systems that penetrate the earthen dike and flood wall. The Army Corp of Engineers have indicated that any penetrations through the system are considered a threat to the overall integrity to the dike system and must be abandoned in place. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$150,000.

Line Item #58 - West Broad Street School Repairs \$50,000. Director McKrell notes that in accordance with the Indenture of Lease dated April 29, 2020 between St Michaels Church and the Town of Stonington, the Town is responsible for any capital repairs to the structure of the building, and not required to exceed \$50,000 in any given year. The 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of repairs approved last year included masonry, interior plaster and roof leader repairs. The next Phase will include roof repair. Addressing these items will assist in maintaining the exterior of the building and extend its useful life.

Mr. Fauerbach suggested a breakdown of the anticipated repairs and the associated costs vs. a general fund for repairs. Other Board members were in agreement. Director McKrell will put together a summary of anticipated repairs for the Board.

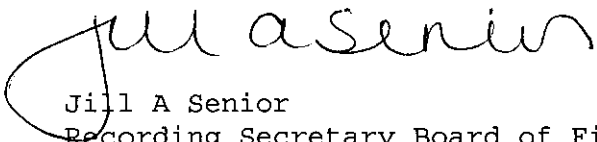


Line Item #59 - Donahue Park Security Lighting - \$5,000. Director McKrell relayed to the Board that the Town has received community concerns regarding the lack of lighting in the Park area. The funds requested will obtain a consultant to review existing lighting levels and installation of new fixtures or replace existing fixtures as needed to improve safety.

On a final note, Ms. Young expressed the importance of prioritizing the needs of the departments, whatever they should be, so the Board can plan accordingly knowing what actual expenses lie ahead. Inquiring if any unused funds remain in the WPCA CIP account, Mr. Sullivan responded there is \$400,000 available, since bond monies are now funding the WPCA projects. Mr. Fauerbach added that these funds could be transferred and may assist the DPW and Director McKrell with paving projects that could begin as early as this Spring.

With no further discussion, Mr. Frishman motioned to adjourn, Mr. Motherway seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jill A Senior". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Jill A Senior  
Recording Secretary Board of Finance