

TOWN OF STONINGTON
BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARING MEETING
Mystic Middle School Cafe
Monday, February 25, 2019

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the Mystic Middle School. Members present were Chairwoman June D. Strunk, Secretary Glenn Frishman, Lynn Young, Mike Fauerbach, Tim O'Brien, Blunt White, and Danielle Chesebrough. Also present were the Director of Finance, James Sullivan, Chief Darren Stewart, Captain Todd Olson, Director of Solid Waste, John Phetteplace and WPCA Director Doug Nettleton.

Ms. Strunk called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Strunk took a moment to thank the Board members for their commitment and noted how much time is spent on the budget process making sure every dollar is spent appropriately for Stonington taxpayers.

SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT -Presented by John Phetteplace, Director of Solid Waste

The first presenter was John Phetteplace, Director of Solid Waste.

The Solid Waste Department is projecting a revenue of \$1.6 million for fiscal year 19/20 from commercial fees, tipping fees and yellow bag sales, and a small amount from recycling.

Major budgeted expenditure increases over prior year:

- The town will see a negotiated \$96,000 increase in one of its residential collection contracts. One of the Town's longtime residential haulers sold their business to a large regional firm. The firm agreed to honor the current price through June 30, 2019, but after that date the new negotiated rate will kick in. Mr. Phetteplace indicated that the new negotiated figure is still below the market rate.
- Commercial trash collection is expected to increase \$30,000 due to increase in service to customers not due to an increase in rates.
- Disposal Fees are expected to increase \$14,000 over a prior year due to a projected increase in tonnage.
- Savings in the FY18/19 general operations line item were realized due to two employees having received welding certification allowing for in house repairs on roll-off boxes and fencing.
- Having recently completed major preventative maintenance on machinery and with both loaders in good working order, parts and labor for FY18/20 will see a \$4,000 decrease in expense.

- Diesel fuel has been budgeted with an increase of \$2,000 for FY19/20 based on an anticipated increase in volume but in the new diesel contract April 2019 may yet impact that figure.
- A change in our contract with Willimantic Waste will see revenue from single stream recycling end in September 2019, due to the Chinese no longer importing recyclables making them near valueless. Under the current contract the Town is paid \$5 per ton for recyclables, under the new contract the Town will have to pay \$30 per ton for recyclables hauled away. This increase will not impact the Town directly in FY19/20 as SCRRRA has agreed to pick up this new cost in 19/20.
- The Town is looking into curbside textile recycling which may bring a small amount of revenue to the Town, but more importantly would eliminate the tipping fee on those items which make up a substantial part of waste.
- The Town will also continue to receive a minimal amount of revenue from recycled commercial cardboard and scrap metal.
- It is worth noting that there has not been an increase in the cost of the yellow bags since 1992, with the loss of some recycling revenues and increases to tipping fees, an increase on bags may be warranted to offset these rising costs.

STONINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT – Presented by Chief Darren Stewart, Captain Todd Olson and Lt. Brian Schneider

- Chief Stewart affirmed that his budget reflects the needs of the community and for the police department to effectively and efficiently respond to calls and safeguard our community. With over 3 million visitors to Mystic and 1 million visiting Stonington attractions, this needs to be considered when evaluating future services. The town is growing as can be seen with all the new building projects going on in the Town.
- Highlights in the department this year included the newly installed generator which is up and running, a complete renovation to the radio dispatch center, new mobile radios and replacement of the UPS system. The department oversaw 46 special events, responded to over 2000 medical calls, 110 monthly safety visits to schools and the Youth Officer and DARE program. The department had officers receive awards for assisting in cases from other municipalities and collected over \$10,000 in fundraisers to support youth and other programs throughout the Town. The department also enlisted additional volunteers to the Chaplain Program, expanding from 1 Chaplain to 4 to assist the public and help out with community issues.
- The Police Department derives revenue for the Town by charging out officers and vehicle rentals for road construction details. To date for FY18/19 the Town has earned \$44,000 with expectations of reaching the \$100,000 level by year end. All this revenue goes directly into the general fund. The department also generates about \$12,000 of revenue from parking tickets, mostly handed out by community service officers.

- Large increases on the FY19/20 budget for the coming year include a \$210,000 increase in the retirement contributions to the State of Connecticut Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS), and a projected and recurring \$56,000 increase in maintenance costs on the new radio and dispatch system. In the future, this cost may be adopted by the State as they are potentially looking to cover the maintenance cost of the new towers with 911 money to ensure operability of the State Police communications in this part of the State. There is an uptick in the Officer Salary line item with the addition of a new officer.
- Increases to the budget include an estimated \$180,000 increase in salary expenses for regular officers reflective of salary increases, budgeted at 2.6% and the addition of one additional officer to bring the total officers to 39, along with STEP increases for six of the newer officers.
- A request for \$90,000 for a Technology Specialist was discussed. The Chief relayed the importance of a networking specialist to manage the technology utilized by the department. With the use of online camera surveillance systems, the technology integrated into the police cars and the possibility of body cams in the future, the Chief spoke to the Board about the heavy demand for technology support within the Department, but support he is willing to share as it was noted that other Town departments may also benefit from a dedicated network specialist. Questioned on whether the suggested salary figure was too low, Chief Stewart agreed that the figure was strictly budgetary, but he had reached out and those discussions had given him a starting point for the request.

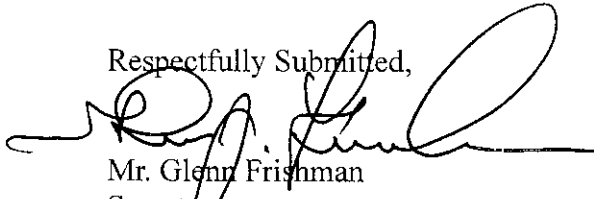
WPCA - Presented by WPCA Director Doug Nettleton

- Mr. Nettleton spoke on the issues the department is currently confronting. With little to no changes in the operating budget of the WPCA, Mr. Nettleton spoke about his department's Capitol Improvement request and the impact future construction projects in Mystic will have on the sewer system. The average flow has been increasing and Mr. Nettleton feels that it is due in part to development coupled with the fact the area is coming off a 3-year drought period, where I&I (inflow and infiltration) was unusually low and is now creeping back up. Another concern was the residential use of sump pumps and their increased impact on the system. I&I was discussed and Selectman Simmons offered his opinion that one could see development in Mystic restricted if this issue isn't addressed, therefore he would like to see this study move forward after the school projects are complete. The additional CIP request for the Mystic to Stonington transfer project was discussed as well as the North Stonington offer to tie in to the Pawcatuck plant.

Budget Calendar

The last item on the agenda was the budget hearing calendar. With 2 nights scheduled for deliberations, Ms. Strunk asked the Board whether an additional night to allow further discussion with regards to Capitol Improvement requests should be considered. The Board agreed and an additional night of deliberations was set for March 22nd at 6:00 pm to be held at the Police department meeting room.

With no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Young made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Frishman seconded and voting was unanimous. **Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Glenn Frishman
Secretary

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