

TOWN OF STONINGTON
BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING
Stonington Police Dept Meeting Room
Friday, March 1, 2019

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the Stonington Police Department meeting room. Members present were Chairwoman June D. Strunk, Secretary Glenn Frishman, Lynn Young, Tim O'Brien, and Blunt White. Michael Fauerbach and Danielle Chesebrough were absent. Also present were First Selectman Rob Simmons, Director of Finance, James Sullivan, Director of Human Services Leanne Theodore and presenting Outside Agencies.

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman June Stunk started the meeting with a brief history of the budget hearing process. Previously the Board had 2 or 3 budget presentations and now have increased their meetings to 4. Also, in the past Outside Agencies did not have the opportunity to speak but this policy was changed last year as the Board felt that any agency asking the taxpayers to fund their request or project should be given the opportunity to speak to provide more information and clarity. Ms. Strunk assured that each request is reviewed thoroughly and that the First Selectman being the CEO of the town gets to have a say on whether or not he thinks a request is appropriate or not in light of the overall needs of the town. The Board of Finance then reviews the First Selectman's requests, resulting in a process that has several layers of checks and balances, so each individual request does not lie with just one person, and it is the Boards goal to look at each request with the First Selectman's assistance with an eye to determining how the funding of each request best benefits the entire town. The Board is the fiduciary and it is the taxpayers that are supplying the funding.

Human Services: Presented by Leanne Theodore, Director

Ms. Theodore remarked that she was thankful for the great turnout and that the Outside Agencies would be able to speak on behalf of the outstanding work they're doing for the town. Providing a snapshot of the community, Ms. Theodore said the main things she continues to see, in regards to social service's needs, is energy assistance, food insecurity, housing and homelessness, healthcare and transportation. A couple of the big issues in the last fiscal year that Human Services has had to deal with are issues with healthcare in regards to Medicare and the different changes to the programs that have been implemented and the need to keep counselors on staff that are able to meet the needs of residents that are either entering the Medicare system for the first time or need to make changes to their plan. Also, the department began to explore different options for transportation for the elderly and disabled should the SEAT service be defunded. Working closely with the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, riding the bus to get a sense

of its use and need, and conducting surveys, the department was pleased to find out that the bus was actually being utilized much more than realized.

Working closely with community partners, specifically the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, the Warm Center, Always Home, TVCCA and the United Way, Ms. Theodore spoke about food insecurity and the dependence that some residents have on the mobile food pantry, which provides for clients and assists residents enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. There are a lot of seniors and individuals with disabilities in subsidized housing in town, with frequent home visits and outreach to those facilities, however, many of the individuals seen by the department for the first time either from a job loss or extenuating medical circumstances, are assisted one time, and then don't get seen again. Ms. Theodore pointed out that the whole basis of assistance is promoting self-sufficiency and putting the resident back in a better place where they can sustain on their own. The unduplicated total number of individuals seen last fiscal year was 2509. Those are all unique individuals. The town does not have any welfare programs. There is a small general assistance fund that the department is very cautious and frugal with when reviewing clients that are asking for financial help.

Ms. Theodore discussed the revenue generated by divisions in the department. This revenue is generated through programs, private donations, and grants. All the funds received are directly put back into the community. A great example is through the recreation division and the Borough playground, which needed to be replaced due to rotting footings of a nearly 15-year-old structure. Also, through recreation, security cameras were installed at the park area and investments in different pieces of equipment were realized.

Speaking to the department's budget items, Ms. Theodore explained the decrease in postage expense. Previously the line item was to support the mailing of the quarterly Events Magazine and currently the vendor has sold enough advertising space to produce the booklet and the mailing for free. This results in a \$1,500 decrease.

A \$5,000 increase to the Recreation Administrator salary was requested to bring the salary in line with the standard in the region with a similar population. In addition to Mr. Rich Ward doing a phenomenal job, the programs have grown astronomically. There is an 18% increase in program registrations just from one fiscal year to the next and the revenue generated is up 70%. Ms. Theodore wanted to be sure that they were producing enough value from the position and having determined that they are, proposes a \$5,000 increase for the 19/20 budget with another \$5,000 increase in the succeeding year to bring funding for the position to a level in line with other similar positions in neighboring towns. Ms. Theodore is petitioning the Stonington Public Administrators Association as well to implement those changes.

Outside Agencies:

Westerly Public Library:

Brigitte Hopkins – Executive Director

Bill Lancellotta – Assistant Director

Rob Holland – Board of Trustees President

- Requesting \$93,000 – 4% of the anticipated FY19/20 operating budget
- Additional funding municipality – Town of Westerly (\$415,000)
- 23% of the 15,000 cardholders are Stonington/Pawcatuck/Mystic residents
- Hope to increase services and staff in the near future
- Increasing utility rates is a concern
- Endowment \$20 million

Stonington Free Library:

Belinda De Kay – Executive Director

Micayla Hall – Assistant Director

Allegra Griffiths – Board of Trustees Co-President

Denise Eastern – Board of Trustees Co-President

- Requesting \$211,667 (44% increase)
- Additional funding received from Stonington Borough (\$24,000)
- All programs and collections are free to the public, has outreach programs at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, Human Services, the COMO and schools
- 70,404 visitors to the Library last year, 3353 cardholders
- Funding in last year's budget was less than requested which resulted in the Library having to cut operating hours, current request will allow hours more in line with other local libraries, programs and services cut last year would be reestablished and additional hours of service could be added
- Endowment of \$3.2 million

Mystic & Noank Library:

Karen Wall – Library Director

Roberta Donahue – Assistant Director

- Requesting \$88,230 (2% increase)
- Additional funding municipality – Town of Groton (\$86,500) *note: a transcription error in Groton's budget minutes resulted in a large decrease in funding from Groton for 18/19 budget year.*
- 101,724 visitors to the Library last year, 6800 cardholders, 41% from Stonington
- Increase in funding will assist in covering increased operational expenses, employ and keep a committed well-trained staff of 15 (6 FT; 9 PT)
- Outreach programs at Masonicare, StoneRidge and anticipated homebound delivery program, downloadable services, workshops and group meetings

- Endowment of \$5.7 million

Stonington Historical Society:

Elizabeth Wood – Executive Director

Chelsea Ordner – Director Woolworth Library & Research Center

- Requesting \$5,000 (25% increase) Budget is \$300,000
- Offers school outreach programs, works with SHS history classes
- Historical record repository, also has the archives, manuscripts, objects and artifacts belonging to the Town of Stonington
- Outreach services to Masonicare and Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center and offers veteran coffee houses at these facilities
- Supports Blessing of the Fleet
- Endowment of \$900,000

The Chorus of Westerly Summer Pops Program

Did not attend

- Requesting \$3,500 (75% increase)
- Funds a free concert, attended by approximately 20-25,000 each year, now in its 38th year
-

Visiting Nurse Assn of Southeastern CT:

Mary Lenzini – Chief Executive Officer

- Requesting \$22,500 (25% decrease due to other funding received from the United Way, grants and lower requests for assistance)
- Funding from other municipalities – Groton, N Stonington, East Lyme, Waterford, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook. Some municipalities request a more direct return on investment (I.e. blood pressure clinics, senior center services etc.)
- Provides healthcare assistance for uninsured or low insured elderly who wish to remain in their homes for as long as they can and patients recovering from surgery or illness, new mothers, schoolchildren, and the homeless.

Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center:

Susan Sedensky – Executive Director

- Requesting \$194,250 (5% increase)
- Anticipating purchase of a new service van (Food Pickup) and a transportation van
- Provides basic need requests as well as job search assistance, senior programs and transportation, VNA clinics and social services
- FY17/18 729 eligible Stonington residents signed up to be clients
- FY17/18 Provided heat assistance for 125 families and rental/mortgage assistance for 13 families preventing homelessness
- 433 Lbs. of food was distributed at the PNC, Brookside Village, Stonington Arms, Mystic VFW and the Edythe K Richmond Housing

- 80 families (134 children) participated in the backpack food program
- Keeping Babies Warm & Well program had over 600 visits from Stonington residents, additionally, the Free Pet Food Program had over 1000 visits.
- Collaborated with other organizations such as the TVCCA, Safe Futures, Volunteer Tax Assistance Programs, United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern CT, the Frank Olean Center of Westerly, CT Woman's Education & Legal Fund
- 4 FT Staff, 3 PT Staff and 349 Volunteers

Stonington Community Center

Beth Ann Stewart - Executive Director

- Requesting \$82,500 (32% increase)
- Social programs, youth programs, preschool, summer camp and athletics
- Before/After school care on a sliding scale
- Offered \$30,000 in program scholarships
- Community partnerships with discounted or complimentary space/equipment rental
- Administers 6 college funds up to 30 Stonington youth annually
- More than 4000+ volunteer hours donated on an annual basis
- Updated campus security and ADA compliance funded by USDA loan, but loan will require an additional \$2,000/mo. in debt service payments
- Experiencing heating issues in building that need to be addressed
- \$1 million-dollar endowment

Always Home (Mystic Area Shelter & Hospitality)

Jeffery Anderson – Executive Director

- Requesting \$5,000
- Addresses the needs of the area's homeless and imminently homeless families
- FY2018 provided support to 231 homeless and at-risk families, 98% of which never had to enter the emergency shelter system, 45 of them Stonington residents
- Assistance with rent, security deposits and past-due utilities
- Implemented Wheels to Work Program, resolving emergency transportation issues allowing continued employment
- Provides short term childcare solutions for working parents

WARM Center (Westerly Area Rest Meals)

Russ Partridge – Executive Director

- Requesting \$6,000
- Run 9 programs that are focused on meeting the needs of the community
- Help people struggling financially or with homelessness or hunger
- Shelter assists 3000 per year, Last year 216 from Stonington
- Supportive services, Case management, Attire for Hire, help rebuild independence
- Provide lunch and dinner 7 days per week, about 35,000 meals per year, the only soup kitchen between RI border and New London, CT
- Paid staff of 14, 200 Volunteers

- Additional funding municipalities – Westerly, RI \$22,000

PACE RI – Adult Day Center of Westerly

Jennifer Young – Day Center Manager – Westerly

- Requesting \$10,000 (25% increase)
- Comprehensive adult day services, dementia care and medication management
- Currently assisting 9 Stonington residents with a dementia all in their 80's
- Full time RN, full time medication technician, CNA's on staff
- Increase in request is due to level of need required
- Purposeful engagement of clients, day trips, supervised programs
- Receives rent of the building from Town of Westerly

Community Vocational Services (Olean Center)

Did not attend

- Requesting \$4,000
- Providing residents with developmental disabilities with supported employment, day program services, residential homes and individual day support.

TVCCA (Thames Valley Council for Community Action)

Eugene Theroux – Director of Nutrition Services

- Requesting \$8,000 (700% increase)
- Meals on Wheels served 9,400 meals last year in town to homebound residents
- Other social services include energy assistance, WIC, Section 8 and case mgmt.
- TVCCA reimbursed 33% less than cost of service
- Wellness checks and socialization provided to the resident
- 50 Stonington seniors receive food 5 days a week
- The cost to provide service to Stonington residents is \$62,000 year

Stonington Prevention Council

Kristen King – Dept of Youth & Family Services Administrator on behalf of the Council

- Requesting \$1,000
- Funding will support educational materials and information to increase community knowledge and focus on establishing a safer community with regards to mental health awareness, prescription drug, heroin, and alcohol abuse and vaping
- Development of public service announcements such as billboards along Rt 1 in Stonington and before movie previews at the Stonington Regal Cinema

New London Homeless Hospitality Center

Barbara Montrous – Development and Communications Manager

- Requesting \$2,500
- Increase in request is to assist in expanding efforts with securing shelter, treatment programs and mental health programs
- Over 700 people last year were served, 541 of those provided with shelter, 200

individuals utilized the daytime hospitality center where they received assistance in rebuilding their lives to become self sufficient

- In the winter months provide a warming shelter November thru April

Safe Futures

Katherine Verano – Executive Director

- Requesting \$2,000
- Safe Futures saves lives, restores hope and changes the future for those impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and trafficking in southeastern Connecticut.
- Served over 7,000 individuals last year, 193 from Stonington
- 24 Hr. hotlines and Lethality Assessment Program with Stonington PD
- ADA accessibility and the ability to allow pets
- Additional funding municipalities: Norwich, New London and contributions from other towns

Stonington Cemetery

Lynn Callahan – Chairman of the Board of Directors

- Requesting \$10,000 (new request)
- Revenue is from the sale of plots and burial services of approximately \$35,000 per year and the support from the community in the form of donations of approximately \$30,000 per year. The Historical Society does not donate.
- Much of the work of maintaining the grounds, financial management, record keeping, and public relations is performed by volunteers. Paid contractors are responsible for regular grounds maintenance, bookkeeping, and burial services
- Road maintenance, Tree removal and trimming, mowing and snow plowing are the greatest expenses
- On the National Register of Historic Places
- Endowment \$250,000

Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

- Did Not Attend
- Requesting \$5,000 (67% increase)

Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce

Carlene Donnarummo

- Requested that the Board increase the initial request of \$2,000 to \$2,500
- Referred to the wayfinding signs, the planters, the duck race and the support provided to local businesses

Mystic Flag Committee

Eric Garofano - President

- Requesting \$1,000 - 1-time request
- Maintains the 117' Liberty Pole and the adjoining Liberty Square seating area in downtown Mystic in addition to the 110 flags displayed by the Boy Scouts on

- Funds will be used for cost sharing of 2 bronze plaques providing the history of the flagpole and the Liberty Square, flag maintenance and insurance

Stonington Volunteer Ambulance Corp

Nishant Sahoo – Vice President

- Requesting \$38,500 (3% increase)
- 26 Volunteers, 2 paid staff
- 555 Calls last year
- 70% of revenue is from billing, Medicare pays approximately 50%, Medicaid even less
- Small amount of revenue generated from increased community events and CPR classes for public awareness

Mystic River Ambulance Association

Jonathan Wilson – Member Board of Directors / EMT

- Requesting \$50,000 (33% increase)
- 35 Volunteers, 3 FT Staff, 6 PT
- Approximately 1000 calls last year which included Masonicare and StoneRidge.
- Concerns with reimbursement from Medicare/Medicaid shortfalls

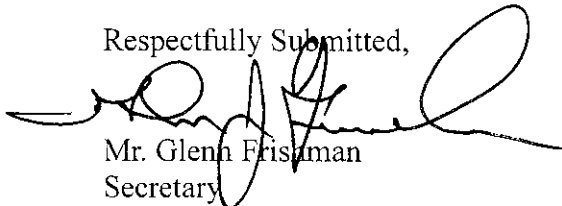
Westerly Ambulance Corp

Ken Richards – EMS Administrator

- Requesting \$70,000 (87% increase)
- Facing the increases in low income and elderly housing in Pawcatuck which are typically Medicare/Medicaid of which the shortfalls have been discussed
- Have worked to streamline operations and cut costs
- Provided 1022 calls last year to Pawcatuck
- Funding municipalities: Westerly

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 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mr. Glenn Frishman
Secretary

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