

DRAFT

**MONROE BOARD OF FINANCE
Monroe, Connecticut**

**Budget Workshop
March 10, 2015**

Present: Chairman Michael Manjos
Vice-Chairman Scott Ownes
Board Member Debra Dutches
Board Member Carl Ferraro
Board Member John Ostaszewski

Also present: First Selectman Steve Vavrek
Tax Collector Manny Cambra
Interim Finance Director Ron Bunovsky, Jr.

Absent: Board Member Ted Quinlan
Deputy Finance Director Heidi Meade

There were representatives from several departments present at tonight's workshop.

Tax Collector-*Mr. Cambra* stated that Town Council had made reductions to his budget including office expenses and the budget for the Deputy Tax Collector. He continued that he and *Ms. Lombardi* will need to begin interviewing for that position in June. *Mr. Cambra* requested that the Board reinstate the \$5000.00 that was cut for the position as he stressed it would be difficult to find a competent and qualified individual to accept the position at \$50,000. He continued that the Deputy Tax Collector's job description is essentially the same as his and continuity in his office was crucial. *Mr. Cambra* stated that the revenue budget he presented is not projection but actual numbers. To make the revenue budget, he said he needs to collect \$900,000 in current levy, \$132,000 in prior year, \$70,000 current interest and \$63,000 interest prior year. He added that he will make budget and expects to come in at 100.21%. *Mr. Cambra* stressed that a fair percentage of prior and current year personal property does not exist and he can take DBAs to court to try to collect though there is nothing further that can be done with LLCs. He continued that the budget is very finely tuned with no room for error and that during a title search of a property the Town was foreclosing on it was determined that one of the properties had not listed the Town as a creditor when they filed bankruptcy in 2011. This has resulted in a shortage of \$60,000. *Mr. Cambra* continued that the Town has been very aggressive on foreclosures and that there are real people attached to the properties and that they are not just numbers. He asked the Board of Finance to reduce the supplemental, the interest and the prior year tax by a total of \$100,000. There was a discussion of prior year taxes and *Mr. Cambra* reiterated there are very few past debts to collect on and stressed he is not in favor of issuing liens.

Town Council-*Town Council Chairman Lieto* and several Council Members including *Mr. Kellogg* and *Ms. Martin* attended tonight's workshop. The Town Council adjustments to the budget included:

- \$5000 reduction to the Certified Municipal Collector in the Tax Department
- The elimination of the Office Assistant (new position) for the Senior Center
- The addition of a Senior Planning and Zoning Administrator
- The elimination of an additional Dispatcher for the Police Department
- The addition of a Part-time Salary Director for EMS
- The addition of a Part-time Office Assistant for the Fire Marshal
- The addition of a Health Director, Part-time Office Assistant, Chief Sanitarian, Administrative Assistant, and Nurse for the Health District
- The elimination of a custodian and office assistant at the Senior Center
- The elimination of a Recreation Supervisor in Parks and Recreation
- The addition of a new Park Maintainer
- An upgrade to the Part-time Administrative Assistant in the First Selectman's Office
- Restored Part-Time Clerical in Public Works

Mr. Lieto continued with a discussion on the 3% increase for the fire stations, the defeat of the request for a part-time Economic Development person and the request for a Senior Planning and Zoning Administrator. *Town Council Member Martin* said that the request was made by the Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman and that the Council did not hear of any particular need from the Planning Department. *Town Council Member Kellogg* provided the Board with the Town Council's recommendations for the Health Department. As a member of the subcommittee, he said the goal was to build a department that would "keep us flat relative to the current line item of the contribution to the District."

Assessor-*Mr. Laskey* said that he was proposing the Deputy Assessor because they are having difficulties in finding an assistant appraiser. The salary range of the position is \$55,000-\$81,000. He added the goal is to grow the Grand List and he added that he anticipates there will be several challenging appeals of the reval.

Police-*Chief Salvatore* and *Captain Flick* were present at tonight's meeting. The biggest driver of their budget is the salary for unionized police officers; *Chief Salvatore* added that the officer who was half funded this year will be fully funded next year and that due to high turnover in personnel, the bargaining unit received a significant raise to make the Town more competitive with other towns. There was a discussion on overtime, training and the need for an additional dispatcher due to the next generation communication system.

Public Works-*Chris Nowacki* from Public Works requested a full-time position to handle the increased work load; the new town app has increased the number of requests the department receives; currently there is one full-time clerk and the number of on-line requests are over 2000. In addition, there is no clerk at the yard and he asked for that

position to be reinstated. *Mr. Nowacki* continued the tree warden's hours were cut by Town Council but he said that they really needed a full-time warden. In addition, there was a discussion on the need for a fixed line for vehicle replacement, maintenance and repair and fuel costs. *Mr. Nowacki* continued that he is concerned with the department's capability to perform their duties next winter. He added that he appreciated the dialogue regarding trucks and stated that next year's budget will have the line item. *Mr. Nowacki* stressed that the condition of the trucks is imperative to public safety.

Parks and Recreation-*Frank Cooper* said he had proposed a restructuring of the budget in such a way that it would allow the department to service the community better and also get manpower in the office to utilize their allocated funds more efficiently. He requested that the Recreation Supervisor/Program Coordinator position be reinstated as it is currently being manned "by any number of people and if we bring that in house we don't have to rely so heavily on people who have other responsibilities" *Mr. Cooper* continued that the money was put towards a maintainer. There is an understanding that the Town will be taking on some of the responsibilities from the Fire Department and the maintainer position would allow Parks and Recreation to do some of the work that is currently being contracted out by the fire departments including the snow plowing, grass cutting and landscaping at the fire stations. *Mr. Cooper* said that he is confident that they can do that work more efficiently than the current process. He continued that the Recreation Supervisor can help create new programs and he would like to see that position added. *Mr. Cooper* continued that they are looking for how they can fund positions from within the existing budget so it is budget neutral; he will forward a spreadsheet to the Board with the details. He added that he wanted a \$7200 upgrade for a member of the office staff and again, it would be budget neutral. The tennis courts at Wolfe Park were also discussed; it is part of the Town's capital project and *Mr. Cooper* said that their condition doesn't warrant any further money being spent on them. The cost for the whole project is approximately \$500,000 though there is the opportunity to do half of the work now and the other half at a later date.

The workshop concluded at 9:40 p.m.