

DRAFT

**MONROE BOARD OF FINANCE
Monroe, Connecticut**

**Budget Workshop
March 16, 2015**

Present: Chairman Michael Manjos
Board Member Debra Dutches
Board Member Carl Ferraro
Board Member John Ostaszewski

Also present: First Selectman Steve Vavrek
Interim Finance Director Ron Bunovsky, Jr.
Deputy Finance Director Heidi Meade

Absent: Vice-Chairman Scott Ownes
Board Member Ted Quinlan

Public Participation-*Steve Kirsch*, Applegate Lane, said the joint workshops between Town Council and Board of Finance were helpful and he appreciated the opportunities for public participation. He felt that improvements could be made in terms of communicating staffing information and that the number of staff should be noted in terms of FTEs and their departments. *Mr. Kirsch* continued that he didn't understand why the Town Council added another positions when neither the Planning Department nor the First Selectman requested it. He added that that he felt that Town Council, the Board of Finance, the Library Board and the First Selectman needed to review the library fund and review what the Town is willing to pay for. *Mr. Kirsch* added that he believed the projector that was proposed for Council Chambers would benefit the Town and he expressed concern over the roads. He requested that the cuts be restored to the budget.

Chairman Manjos reviewed some adjustments the Board has made in several areas including insurance and fuel. *Mr. Schatzlein*, Land Use Director/Town Engineer, provided the Board with an organizational chart on the Land Use Group. He added there are four departments that comprise the Land Use Group; they are each separate but they function as a group and share resources. The current union has a position in for a Town Planner and they are proposing to fund that existing position as Town Planner under Planning and Zoning Department and have the current administrator reporting to the Town Planner. *Mr. Schatzlein* reiterated that they are not creating a new position but rather funding the position the existing position. *Mr. Agresta* provided the Board with some further information on Planning and Zoning including their accomplishments in the past year and the actions that have been taken to improve the level of service. He continued that the focus is on zoning and because it takes precedence, planning is often "kicked down the road." *Mr. Agresta* added that enhanced planning will improve the

zoning process and the department applications will become more streamlined and efficient. *Chairman Manjos* noted there was a significant increase in site development, *Mr. Agresta* replied that prior to 2013, the regulations did not have a site plan process and the regulations have since been changed to have a site plan process.

Patrick O'Hara, Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman, said they are asking for the new position as it is a return on investment; "departments make requests and all those requests are funded through the Grand List; the Grand List goes through the work done by Planning and Zoning." He continued that Monroe is becoming a popular place but the fact there is only one planner hinders development; *Mr. O'Hara* noted that neighboring towns have two planners. It was noted that the regulations have to be amended and the Town needs to "change with the times." *Mr. O'Hara* added that one of the deficiencies of having a separate EDC person is that they do not have any statutory connection to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Chairman Manjos asked about the Southwestern Conservation District for Inlands/Wetlands. *Mr. Schatzlein* said that this is a donation and by donating, the Town qualifies to assistance from them. He added that some of the questions on the applications require third party review. It was stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission have discussed that they wanted to use them more than they have in the past; *Chairman Manjos* asked if there was money already budgeted for consulting; *Mr. Schatzlein* said there is.

EMS-There was a lengthy discussion on EMS including their vehicles, the replacement schedule, fuel costs and the maintenance costs. *Mr. Krize* said that they continue to review the numbers. *Board Member Dutches* reiterated her concern with Parks and Recreation's ability to provide snow removal services on a timely manner; it was noted that Director Cooper was confident that they could adequately perform the services. The Board members left in the part-time position EMS had requested for 19.5 hours. Leave part-time position in at 19.5 hours.

Fire Departments-It was noted that the Board would be taking snow removal and grounds off the Fire Department budgets. Town Council took the increases to 3% across the board for all the fire houses though the Board did make some adjustments and increases. *Mr. Krize* added that there are two major items that impact the department; there is no apparatus funding and nothing in the bonding schedule. In addition, he said there are critical driveway failures at all the stations. He continued that he has spoken with *Town Council Chairman Frank Lieto* about developing standardized reporting mechanisms so all departments are reporting in the same manner. *Mr. Krize* continued that he would like to his the 6% increase they were asking for to be restored. *Board Member Dutches* said if the Town were paying for FTEs instead of volunteers it would be a tremendous cost. She asked about the \$715,000 in balances; *Mr. Krize* explained that they are savings accounts that is completely segregated from Town funds; all the money is from fundraising. *Mr. Bunovsky* spoke briefly about the Cornelia Rogers fund; it was established in 1908 and it has been untouched since the 1950s. There is \$2200.00 in principle and \$69,000 in interest; the interest will be used for some of the requests made for improvements to Council Chambers including chairs and a projection screen.

The Board Members continued their discussion on adjustments including adding \$7500.00 for an EMS vehicle and the position the Planning and Zoning Commission

requested. There were increases to the Fire Departments as well. Reductions and cuts included \$3000.00 in fuel for EMS and the Council's \$1500.00 donation to the Southwest Conservation District.

The roads will be discussed at Wednesday's budget workshop.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Behringer
Board of Finance Clerk