

**Board of Selectmen's Meeting  
February 03, 2009**

Present: First Selectman Woody Bliss; Selectman W. Glenn Major; Selectwoman Gayle Weinstein; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito, department heads and residents.

**This meeting was recorded and video taped and the tapes are available in the Selectmen's office and the Building Department, respectively, for further reference.**

Mr. Bliss called the meeting to order at 7:32pm

**Board of Selectmen reviews First Selectman's Budget.**

Mr. Bliss made a presentation and stated that there was a surplus of \$251,200 in revenues and a deficit in expenditures of \$167,390. The net difference of \$83,810 would be put back into the general fund. The fund balance forecast for June 30, 2009 is \$7,593,841.

Account 100- Salary adjustment of \$39,000. Mr. Landry said that was for the new collective bargaining unit and it had not been negotiated with them yet.

Longevity of \$1,900 was for Ron Parenteau who is in the dispatchers union and is in addition to \$50,763 requested for salary.

Mr. Major asked about Mr. Landry's and Mr. Darling's salaries because they were both greater than what was budgeted for last year. Mr. Darling said the adjusted figures shows what they were making as of when they attained the next step in the classification plan. He said he would get a step increase in April so over the course of the year his actual salary would be less than that. Mr. Major said what he thought they approved was the salary in the column that said approved not the adjusted.

Mr. Landry said that on July 1, 2009 his salary is less than the \$121,538. In December he will get a step increase which is a number higher than \$121,538. He said if you take the number of months at the lower rate and the number of months at the higher rate then you come to \$121,538 but he would end that year at a higher rate of pay. That is the prorated amount and that should be the same for Mr. Darling. Mr. Major asked if that was done last year and Mr. Landry said it was.

Mr. Darling said he needs to check the timing of when the step increases were supposed to happen and then prorate that amount over the year. He believed the numbers that are showing is what that next step was for each individual with out prorating back to the older salary. Mr. Major said that means when we approved a total salary column of \$662,950, we are not approving the right number. Mr. Landry said yes you are. He said right now he is paid \$117,335 on an annual rate and that is what the 2008-09 adjusted numbers is. Mr. Major said it should not be the adjusted number carried forward as the adjusted number. Mr. Major asked if the number under adjusted is the number that we pay out over the course of the year. Mr. Darling said that it should be.

Mr. Darling said that they can go back and correct that. Instead of reflecting the top step that the person attains in the classification we will prorate it as we have done in the approved budget. Mr. Major asked if the 2009-2010 requests of the numbers in that column, the actual numbers that are going to be paid out during the fiscal year. Mr. Bliss said yes. Mr. Landry said it should be.

Ms. Weinstein said that she had issues with salaries throughout the budget and she wanted to move that discussion to the end of the night.

Mr. Major said that in light of everything that is going on that there should be no increase in the Commission for the Arts budget. Ms. Weinstein agreed. It was decided to leave it a flat budget.

Account 110- Tree Warden and Veteran Day were both cut \$500.

Account 130- Registrars- Mr. Major said that there are new people coming in and he felt that salary and wages should be kept flat.

Account 142- Treasurer- Ms. Weinstein asked if we should bring this to the Board of Ethics to be sure it was not a conflict to have the Finance Director also be the Treasurer. Mr. Bliss said that it was not an ethics issue, but it was a question of checks and balances. He had checked with Town Attorney and he said he saw no problem with that.

Mr. Major felt that we should have a separate and distinct conversation at a regular selectmen's meeting about the concept. He asked what checks and balances do we give up and what skills do the treasurer need to bring to the table. Mr. Major said we should defer this to the next meeting as an agenda item. Mr. Darling said that they contacted the auditor to get his feedback but they have not gotten back to them yet. Mr. Major said we should get something from Bond Counsel, and we should have a letter on file from Bond Counsel signing off on that arrangement.

Account 143- Assessor- Ms. Weinstein asked about the money for the GIS mapping training and did we currently have the system or were we going to purchase it. Mr. Whitman said that they were going to purchase it, but it has been cut out of the budget so that would be reduced by \$300.

Account 144-Tax Collector- Mr. Bliss said that we have collected 95% of the taxes owed as compared to 92% for the same time last year. We still have \$2.9 million dollars to collect and there are five months between now and June to collect.

Account 150- Legal Fees- Mr. Major said that their industry is not anticipating a 3% increase. The budget will reflect a flat rate for both. Mr. Bliss said that he had been negotiating a rate with Cohen and Wolf and he would report back. He also mentioned that Cohen and Wolf write off a considerable amount under the retainer fee. (Later, the final negotiation was a 1% increase on the retainer and the hourly rate.)

Account 170- Planning and Zoning- The .2 FTE change is moving someone from the Conservation budget to the Planning and Zoning budget.

Account 195- Building Committee- Mr. Major said that he understood the need for the secretarial services this year, but he did not see this going forward, because the committee would be pretty much out of business by the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Landry said he did not agree, because they have on going projects.

Account 220- Volunteer Fire Department- Ms. Weinstein asked about the equipment going up 8.4%. Mr. Pokorny said that they had some big replacements this year. Mr. Major said that they should change the wording of line 242 because the terminology was confusing. Mr. Major said in light of the expenditures that the Town has taken on in relation to the fire department and the Lyons Plain building, the Lyons Plain Fire House will be out of commission for a year and he did not see that the numbers came down to reflect that there is not a building there. Mr. Ogiba said outside of heat and a few other expenses, the expenses of the Lyons Plain Fire House are absorbed by the fire department benevolent fund. Their budget also reflects that the secretary will now be getting paid for Town Hall holidays.

Account 250- Animal Control- Ms. Weinstein asked about the part-time person, and if there was anyway that it could be combined with another town and do a reciprocal agreement. Mr. Harper said each Town has there own employment regulations, and we have never had a mutual aid agreement with any of the surrounding towns.

Account 260- Communications Center- Mr. Major asked why the salary and wage increase in this department was greater than any other department. Mr. Landry said one of the four dispatchers in the bargaining unit gets a step increase and the other three do not. The person not in the contract was hired at a rate higher than what his predecessor was making. Ms. Weinstein asked if there was any way to control the overtime in this budget. She asked that they be conscious of it and take a look at it over the next year.

Account 264- Emergency Medical Community Service- Mr. Landry said the number for 2008-09 was an error. We contract with them for a second service and that is to do medical instructions when they have a call. The dispatcher cannot be there talking you through it, so they patch you through to them. We pay about \$3,200 for that. In the budget last year he missed the second piece.

Account 280- Police Services- Mr. Major said that from what we approved last year we did not use \$13,000 of that money. He said when looking at budget and projected we do not reflect that. We did not hire a third sergeant, the captain's position has not been filled and the Chief is being paid a different amount and the differential is not reflected. The overtime does not reflect the fact that we have an additional officer.

Mr. Bliss said we had budgeted a third sergeant and had none. We did not budget for an extra officer and had one. He said if you subtract one from the other you are close to the

difference in the totals. Mr. Major said the projected should be less. Mr. Landry said you also have one officer who is not on road.

Chief Troxell said we get grants for the DUI enforcement, which initially pumps up the overtime for the months, but we are reimbursed that month. One officer is on light duty and cannot fill a regular shift; she works a floating shift and is not actually a third person on squad. Her being out is problematic because she does not fill in the gaps. Officer Palmiero is also out on line of duty injury, and he has been out since mid December. Mr. Major wants to segregate out officer Palmiero salary because that is not to be spent, if he should at some point retire. Mr. Landry said the salary was segregated out.

Chief Troxell said when they approve the sergeant he will possibly be taken out of patrol and will not be working midnights. He said taking that into account, we are not sure about officer Palmiero's situation and officer Phoenix is not planning on being able to come back until July 1, 2009. They may have an open position for patrol officer especially through midnight shifts. He said he was planning to use officer Phoenix, but if she is not available they would have five weeks of midnights that need to be filled with a patrol officer on overtime.

Mr. Major asked about the Mile of Safety. Chief Troxell said that they are splitting the total cost with school in the fall. The split will be a 60% for the school and 40% for the Town. The difference this year is the police department is going to manage the process so even though the percentage is the same, we bring the number down on the school side and there is no reduction on the Town side.

Account 300-Highway Department- Mr. Lametta was not at the meeting so they would revisit that when Mr. Lametta is available.

Account 410- Solid Waste- The bottom line number of \$142,060 should be changed to \$151,000. All the contracts for next year are new. Mr. Landry said when Mr. Lametta did the budget he projected a couple of hundred tons more than he thinks will actually show up now. He said next year we are looking at a tipping fee of \$77.38 and the current year is \$10 more. The budget they have now is about \$9,000 more of general fund subsidy for that.

Account 510- Westport/Weston Health District- Mr. Bliss said that they have made a request for a flat budget. Mr. Major said we need the back-up.

Account 515- SW Regional Mental Health- Ms. Weinstein asked if we utilized this service. Ms. Hillman said she gets emails from them, but she does not utilize them. Ms. Weinstein asked that we find out if this is mandated by the State. Mr. Major asked that we get a letter from them telling us how they serve the Town of Weston specifically.

Account 550- School/Town Water Supply- Mr. Major asked what happened with contractual service this year. Mr. Darling said that an item was charged there that should

have been charged to capital. The projected item will go back down close to budget. There will be an updated page.

Account 600- Human Services- Ms. Weinstein said she would like to see some money in this budget for a social services fund. Mr. Major asked Ms. Hillman where the concept of the \$10,000 fund came from. She said that Westport and Darien work with their Social Services Directors on regional bases. They both get funding from their towns. Mr. Major asked if there were criteria in place for the distribution of the funds. The Directors of Social Services control those funds in the same way that she controls the social services funds. Mr. Major said to him the only way that this kind of a line item gets funded is if there is a program in place with criteria already vetted and agreed to.

Ms. Hillman said that if she asked for \$10,000, because she annual raises a minimum of \$20,000 and this would help her to devote more of her time to her case load which has tripled as opposed to fund raising. She said the Warm-Up fund has agreed that \$500 per household per year for people who need is the general fund. She said that is why she is asking for \$10,000 as opposed to a higher figure.

Mr. Bliss said that this started in the wrong place. It needs to start with a documented need and a proposal for how to spend it. Mr. Major said that based on what Ms. Hillman was saying that maybe what we should be doing was changing her employment to full time status instead of \$10,000 to help a handful of people. Ms. Hillman said that her time is frozen at the moment due to union disagreement. Mr. Major said we should leave the budget as it was requested for purposes of moving the whole budget process forward.

Mr. Major asked about the salary increase for Suzanne Friedman. He said that there have never been merit increases since he has been on the Board, and we should not start now. Mr. Landry said it was not for how well she does the job, but the fact that she is doing more things at a higher level. Ms. Hillman said her position title has not changed, but her responsibilities have increased, and what she does on a daily bases has changed because she needs the case work support. Mr. Major said that was a dramatic shift on how things are handled, and he feels that we open ourselves up to all sorts of issues with other employees. Mr. Major said that if the job description changed then we have to go through the process of changing the job description.

Account 913- Middle School Pool- Mr. Landry said that we had come through a period of paying nothing for heating oil for the pool to paying 60% of a \$55,000 bill.

Account 970- Capital Budget – Mr. Bliss said that this has not been reviewed by the Capital Budget Committee. Mr. Major asked if we have to have the fire truck next year. He said by deferring it a year we save \$250,000. Ms. Weinstein asked about all the Town vehicles and the mowers. She asked if these were wants versus needs. Mr. Major asked if we could move the whole line one year out. Mr. Landry said yes, but they were asking for trouble. The Capital Budget Committee will meet on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Weinstein said that a lot of people are upset and concerned. They see a lot of employees in Town Hall getting increases, when their own salaries are being cut. She said unemployment in Fairfield County has gone up from 4.6% in January of 2008 to 5.9% in December. She is concerned about what is happening with the people in the Town. This is the first year that people are not saying to her protect the school budget at all cost, which is what she has heard in the past. People are now saying you have to look at all the numbers and you have to decide what it is we can afford. When you look at the makeup of our budget, salaries is one of the big increases. She said we need to reconsider some of the increases that are proposed and consider a freeze for some of the employees so that we can make the adjustment a little bit easier for those who live in Town.

Mr. Major said that he agreed with what she said, but the one problem as a Town that we are faced with when it comes to salary increases is we can not penalize those employees that are not in a union when we are obligated to give salary increases. Ms. Weinstein said if we adjust the salaries to a 2.5% increase and when the contracts are signed make it up in a salary adjustment. Mr. Major said we have to budget for it. Mr. Major said a 4 day work week is a fairer way of addressing the situation. Ms. Weinstein said we could stop having increases if your salary is at a certain level. Mr. Major said that that would only work for the people without a union contract.

Mr. Landry said the reason he used 2.5% and 3.5% among the groups is because he did not know where the market was going. If you look at arbitration decision they are coming in at 2.5%, they are doing more than that. He said what we budgeted is irrelevant to what the arbitrators will award. There are over 400 employees that work at the school that are getting substantial raises. Ms. Weinstein said she cannot control that. Mr. Landry said do not start with us. He said if you are doing that to provide tax relief for the residents then that is not the way you do that. You either cut back services that we do, eliminating bodies as we have done. He said in a budgetary sense the 2.5% or 3.5% are responsible numbers.

Ms. Weinstein said it was a question of what people are feeling and perceiving right now. Mr. Major said that he disagreed and that there was an element of tax relief. He said if we kept salaries flat this year our budget would either be flat or a negative. Mr. Landry said that he felt that we were entirely responsible, and have lead the way in a number of ways. He said that you cannot take a group and treat them separately from everyone else. He felt that the Board has set a double standard with the school. He said whatever number we use in next year for salaries in the budget that number is reflective of what your negotiating strategies will be.

Mr. Landry said ultimately whatever percentage increase you decide to include in this budget and if we do not get there because they are not reflective of the trend then we are going to have to do something about that at that later date. He said you then have two choices either going back for more money or throwing people out the door. Mr. Major said that this conversation should be done in executive session. He said in order to make a decision on what they end up doing and have it be an informed decision as far as the board is concerned they do have to talk about negotiation strategies.

The Selectmen will have a Special Executive Session on February 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm.

At 11:15pm Ms. Weinstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Major seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito  
Administrative Assistant  
Approved 03/05/09