

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 18, 2020

5:30 p.m.

Town Hall Meeting Room
11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT. 06016

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS - WORKSHOP

Meeting Minutes

*** *These Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting* ***

Board of Selectmen:

Jason E. Bowsza, First Selectman
Marie DeSousa, Deputy First Selectman
Alan Baker, Selectman
Sarah Muska, Selectman
Charlie Nordell, Selectman

ATTENDANCE: Board of Selectmen: Jason E. Bowsza, First Selectman; Marie DeSousa, Deputy First Selectman; Alan Baker, Selectman; Sarah Muska, Selectman; and Charlie Nordell, Selectman.

ABSENT: All Selectmen were present at this Budget Workshop.

PRESENTERS: Town Services and Associations: Broad Brook Fire Department: Thomas Arcari, Chief; Gregory Bancroft, Assistant Chief; James Bancroft, Deputy Chief; Broad Brook Library: Paul Anderson, President; Warehouse Point Library: Lois Hiller, Librarian; Elyse Spielberg, Chairman, Library Board, and Cheryl Ward.

GUESTS: Members of Boards, Committees, Commissions, or Town Entities: Board of Finance: Tom Lansner, member; Warehouse Point Fire District: James P. Barton, Chief.

Public: D. James Barton and Tom Lansner.

Press: No one from the Press was present.

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TIME AND PLACE OF BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING:

First Selectman Bowsza called the February 18, 2020 East Windsor Board of Selectmen's Budget Presentation Workshop to Order at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT.

ATTENDANCE: See Page 1.

PRESENTATIONS/(Fire Services) Broad Brook Fire Department - 511000:

The total Budget request for the Broad Brook Fire Department for FY 2020 – 2021 was \$1,159,000, which results in a 149.78% increase.

The following members of the Broad Brook Fire Department joined the Selectmen for discussion: Thomas Arcari, Chief, Gregory Bancroft, Assistant Chief, and James Bancroft, Deputy Chief.

Chief Arcari noted the part-time salary line has increased due to their request to add 2 more fire fighters for 3 more night shifts. The incentive line is also increased because once a volunteer fire fighter becomes a paid employee then he can no longer be paid out of the incentive line (see additional discussion regarding salary vs. incentive pay on page 3). They have requested small increases in supplies and equipment, education and dues, and physicals; professional services stayed the same. First Selectman Bowsza questioned that the department gets its insurance coverage through VFIS? Assistant Chief Bancroft concurred, but noted they in the process of getting quotes from another carrier.

Chief Arcari reported they get calls at night for fire alarms, lock-outs, medical calls; the volunteers don't respond as much as they previously did, although if it's a bad accident or a fire they all respond. The department is trying to be able to fund coverage for 5 nights.

Deputy First Selectman DeSousa questioned how many calls they get for Park Hill? Chief Arcari indicated they get calls to Park Hill at least 4 to 5 times a month. Assistant Chief Bancroft noted they also respond to mutual aid calls to Warehouse Point for 235 Main Street (Spring Village), and they get calls to Mill Pond Village; Chief Arcari noted they respond to mutual aid for the Receiving Home as well.

First Selectman Bowsza questioned how the department was doing on volunteer recruitment? Deputy Chief Bancroft indicated they've picked up 2 more volunteers. Assistant Chief Bancroft reported they have applications for a couple more people but they're waiting on the background checks to come back from the State. Chief Arcari indicated the Police Department does background checks in East Windsor, while the State will do the background checks for the entire state. Assistant Chief Bancroft noted they try to get a State background check on all applicants; he indicated the turnaround time could be 2 to 3 weeks by the time they submit the application and check in.

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First Selectman Bowsza questioned the number of members. Deputy Chief Bancroft indicated he recently completed a report which indicated 57 members, 21 are active fire fighters, 8 are active reserve members, 9 limited members (some are EMS or fire police who don't want to do the firefighting but want to volunteer), 4 junior fire fighters, and 15 part-time paid staff.

Selectman Muska questioned that the department currently has 2 paid positions 2 nights per week? Deputy Chief Bancroft responded Friday and Saturday. Selectman Muska questioned if they were having problems filling the shifts; if so is it due to the volunteers sometimes getting paid? Discussion followed regarding the ramifications of the State labor laws regarding pay for part-time fire fighters for fire services vs. incentive pay as a volunteer, the restriction on the number of hours a volunteer can work as a part-time paid fire fighter, and the method for monitoring the number of hours worked. Treasurer O'Toole suggested they can't volunteer for the same job they're already being paid for.

Selectman Baker questioned that the paid active fire fighters for the Broad Brook Fire Department are part-time employees of the Town, while the part-time fire fighters for Warehouse Point are employees of the District? First Selectman Bowsza suggested the model works; we just need to work out details. Chief Arcari clarified that the paid daytime fire fighters are all career fire fighters in other departments, the ones at night are volunteers.

Selectman Muska questioned Chief Arcari, Assistant Chief Bancroft, and Deputy Chief Bancroft if they had any suggestions as to how you'd like to see the double taxation issue solved? First Selectman Bowsza questioned if there was a consensus opinion among the Broad Brook Department? Assistant Chief Bancroft indicated the membership is split, with a slight majority against an additional district, but the resolution is really up to the taxpayers – whether you put them back in the budget the taxpayers have to come out and vote that budget in, or if you create a new district or expand it it's all up to the taxpayers. His personal opinion, not as a chief, is we need to fix the problem; if it were reversed he would be upset to be double taxed. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa cited concern for Facebook comments; she can't get straight answers regarding how the Broad Brook Fire Department feels about the "merging", because Broad Brook is incorporated and if the Board were to force you to merge.....Chief Arcari felt the Board couldn't force the merger, it would be up to the taxpayers. Deputy Chief Bancroft feels people don't want to see the 2 departments merge - personally he felt probably one district under one fire commission but you would still have the two departments operating the way they're doing now. Deputy Chief Bancroft suggested people are too skeptical now on passing a district and the money will come out of the Town budget; discussion continued regarding the need to get "the word" out.

Chief Arcari suggested the other thing is change doesn't come easy. Broad Brook has been the same way for almost 125 years, and to change our whole way of doing things scares a lot of people. The District has been a district for 100 years; they're not going to change much. Broad Brook has never been a district; for the most part we've been by ourselves. Up until the 60s we got nothing from the Town; we funded ourselves, our first fire truck from the Town came in 1980, until then we funded our own trucks through carnivals.

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Deputy First Selectman DeSousa questioned if Warehouse Point goes back in and Broad Brook is funded as it has been, plus the school, do you think the taxpayer will pass a 21% increase? Chief Arcari noted it's a \$1 million budget through the Town or through the District, it's still \$1 million to the taxpayers. Selectman Nordell agreed; it's up to the taxpayer. Selectman Muska felt it does start with this Board, the Board will be hearing Warehouse Point Thursday night, it doesn't set a good precedent if the Board funds Broad Brook and gives Warehouse Point nothing. Selectman Nordell felt they worked hard to write the charter for the both departments, he felt it was fair to both sides and really only joined the Commission which he felt was the right way to go with it and it shocked him that it was turned down the way it was; he thought it was fair for both sides.

First Selectman Bowsza questioned if the process moves forward without the acquiescence of the Broad Brook Fire Department how does that leave the governance, because the Board isn't adopting the charter; the Board is either discussing the establishment of a Special Fire Services District or an expansion of the Warehouse Point Fire District. The inter-department issues won't be resolved by the voters. Selectman Baker reiterated the discussion by the attorneys that the second meeting of the "new" district is setting up the directors, which would be voted by the people at that meeting and they have the say of who they want to run the show so that should give the people some comfort. Assistant Chief Bancroft felt it would be better for the citizens if it was an expansion because everyone shares in the costs of both departments. First Selectman Bowsza cited you're not guaranteeing the funding reduction; that's a confidence in government thing and we can't guarantee that because the Board doesn't ultimately have control over that.

Selectman Nordell questioned if the funding request for gas in the Public Works Budget included fire trucks and police cars; Selectman Muska felt that was the case. Treasurer O'Toole clarified they all get charged out, the police and the two fire departments get charged out, everything else in the DPW gas budget is Town property (vehicles).

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Board for questions; no one requested any additional information.

PRESENTATIONS/(Libraries) Broad Brook Library - 710300:

The total Budget request for the Broad Brook Library for FY 2020 – 2021 was \$25,000 which results in a 150% increase.

Paul Anderson, President of the Broad Brook Library, joined the Board.

Mr. Anderson noted his request for the FY 2020 – 2021 is \$25,000.

Mr. Anderson indicated he's no longer asking for assistance with repair of the bathroom, as that work has been completed. He noted an Eagle Scout is working on plans for installation of a ramp on the driveway side entrance.

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They are planning various events to celebrate the Library's 100th Anniversary; someone from East Hartford has a portable World War II museum which they hope to bring in to attract more people.

Mr. Anderson reported they're still not paying the librarian minimum wage.

He's secured a 2 year fixed rate plan for Frontier services; the Chamber of Commerce pays for internet service in exchange for office space.

The Library hasn't been able to provide a computer for the public's use, although most people bring their own equipment with them. They have equipment to provide copying and printing services.

Mr. Anderson reported they continue to purchase books to update the Library's collection; students assist sorting the books returned to the Library. Books that are not useable are donated to the Veterans' Administration.

Mr. Anderson also noted they accept donations.

Selectman Baker noted the estimated cost of the roof replacement vs. the amount reflected in the roof fund. Mr. Anderson indicated replacement of the roof is a goal; they have no plans to undertake repairs at present.

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Board for questions; no one requested any additional information.

PRESENTATIONS/(Libraries) Warehouse Point Library - 710300:

The total Budget request for the Warehouse Point Library for FY 2020 – 2021 was \$290,107,000 which results in a 6.13% increase.

Lois Hiller, Librarian; Elyse Spielberg, Chairman of the Library Board, and Cheryl Ward joined the Board.

Ms. Hiller reviewed various programs available online to the patrons, from children's books to adult novels, and online job search programs. She reported the Library had planned to replace 8 windows in the older part of the library but had to delay that renovation as they unexpectedly had to replace a portion of the foundation to address water entering the basement; they also had to replace the heating system in the newer addition. Additional money was taken from the investments to fund those repairs.

Ms. Hiller noted they use The Library Connection, which is a consortium of 42 libraries, to be able to provide online catalog services for patrons. They use the Connecticut Library

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Consortium to purchase books at a discount. The Connecticut State Library also provides various databases for public use through the Connecticut Education Network. Tech Soup provides technology resources via grants; they have also received grants through the East Windsor Lions Club, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving/Schortman Fund, which is specifically for children's books.

Ms. Hiller reported they are asking for a 6% increase, as they would like to start meeting the standards for the State of Connecticut. Ms. Hiller provided graphs to illustrate the Library's ranking compared to State standards— She noted the annual per capita operating revenue for Warehouse Point Library was \$33.54 vs. \$44.75 for the chosen average (libraries chosen by Ms. Hiller which are libraries serving a comparative population to East Windsor), vs. \$55.06 for the state average. Ms. Hiller suggested the library is weighted with regard to funding, East Windsor/Warehouse Point is 164th out of 176 public libraries – the bottom 10% - for funding. Ms. Hiller reported Warehouse Point receives municipal funding at 70%, vs. 83% for the chosen range vs. 86% for the state average.

Ms. Hiller then referenced the graph reflecting the community commitment for various libraries throughout the state. The lowest funding standard is 1% of the municipal revenue. Ms. Hiller noted the Warehouse Point Library is receiving .85%, less than 1%, of municipal funding, vs. 1.08% for the chosen group vs. 1.39% for the state average. Ms. Hiller also referenced a document entitled "Best Practices in Connecticut Public Libraries"; the document cites 3 benchmarks for essential library services: \$50/capita, \$3 for materials/capita, and 1% community commitment. Ms. Hiller noted they do meet some of the benchmarks for essential services but they would like to bring the community commitment up to the 1% level. Ms. Hiller also noted the last page of this document indicates the library is in compliance with requirements for fiscal procedures for using their funding judiciously. Ms. Hiller indicated that because the funding is below the standard municipal level the library has only 1 full-time person vs. 3.4 full-time employees for a town with a population of 11,500, Warehouse spends \$1.38 for materials vs. \$4.72 for the chosen group, and wages for the full-time employee in Warehouse Point is \$15.48/hour vs. \$26/hour for the chosen group.

First Selectman Bowsza referenced the per capital expenditures referenced by Ms. Hiller, he questioned where the remaining \$18 went? Ms. Hiller suggested those funds go towards building expenses, heating, electricity, etc. First Selectman Bowsza questioned that comprised more than half of the budget; Ms. Hiller concurred.

Discussion continued regarding patron usage, and the effect of funding on the availability of materials.

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Board for questions; no one requested any additional information.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

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ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Muska moved/Nordell seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell
(No one opposed/No abstentions)

Respectfully submitted

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Board of Selectmen