TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Monday, March 2, 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 this evening.

PRESENTERS: <u>Town Staff:</u> <u>Treasurer:</u> Amy O'Toole, Treasurer.

GUESTS: <u>Members of Boards, Committees, Commissions, or Town Entities:</u>

Board of Finance: Barbara Petano, member; Tom Lansner, member.

Warehouse Point Fire District: James P. Barton, Chief

Public: Ruth Ann Lansner.

Press: No one from the Press was present.

TIME AND PLACE OF BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING:

First Seletman Bowsza called the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting/Budget Workshop to Order at 5:31 p.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT.

ATTENDANCE: See Page 1.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Everyone stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

BUDGET DSCUSSION AND VOTE:

First Selectman Bowsza noted the following pending items open for discussion and action:

- ➤ Warehouse Point Fire District funding request
- ➤ Department of Public Works vote on final budgeted amount
- Broad Brook Fire Department discussion in relation to the Warehouse Point Fire District.

(DEPARTMENT OF) PUBLIC WORKS – 610100:

Treasurer O'Toole reworked the full time salary line to adjust the requested amount due to the deletion of the request to fund a new position for a facilities maintainer. The revised total budget for the Department of Public Works is \$943,456 which reflects a 0.72% increase in the full time salary line. First Selectman Bowsza noted that negotiations have just begun for DPW; that salary line doesn't reflect any negotiated increases.

MOTION: To ACCEPT the total FY 2020 – 2021 budget for the Department of Public Works – line 610100 – in the amount of \$943,456.

Baker moved/Muska seconded/*DISCUSSION:* None.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell

(No one opposed/No abstentions)

First Selectman Bowsza updated the Board on his research regarding bifurcated budget questions regarding the Town budget, the Board of Education (BOE) budget, and the funding of the Warehouse Point Fire District, should the Board of Finance (BOF) choose to do so. He reported that discussions with the Town Attorney have resulted in the determination that the current Charter language prohibits that option.

Selectman Nordell questioned the possibility of exit polling; he felt the BOF doesn't get information as to why the people voted as they do. The BOF doesn't know if the people voted no because the Warehouse Point Fire District wasn't included in the budget, or that the BOE budget was too high. Selectman Nordell felt the exit poll would give the BOF some direction. First Selectman Bowsza indicated he'll discuss the option of questions on the ballot, or the exit poll, with the Town Attorney. He suggested the language of the questions couldn't be leading.

Deputy First Selectman DeSousa noted House Bill #05138 – "Án Act Requiring the Study of the obstacles to merging and consolidating municipal fire districts or municipal fire departments" came out of committee last week. The bill relates to merging municipal fire departments, Deputy First Selectman DeSosua questioned what this bill would do to other towns if it's passed? First Selectman Bowsza referenced the bill – House Bill #05138 - noting it's a study bill which requires OPM to do the study; the outcome of the study would be at least 2 years away from considering any actual action.

Deputy First Selectman DeSousa was also concerned that putting the Warehouse Point Fire District back into the budget will create issues with the percentage rate of the budget, and it doesn't do anything with regard to the inequities if both departments don't march together. Now that we know you can't separate the budget questions, by returning the Warehouse Point Fire District to the budget the total increase of the budget will be 14%. Treasurer O'Toole indicated the budget percentage increase would be 5.10% without returning the Warehouse Point Fire District to the Town budget. When you put in capital improvements and debt service and the BOE at a 6.19% FY 2020 – 2021 increase the mill rate increase will be 1.98 and the total budget increase will be 5.79% without adding the Warehouse Point Fire District back.

Discussion continued regarding returning the Warehouse Point Fire District to the Town budget at an amount equal to the funding for the Broad Brook Fire Department - \$502,000. Discussion continued regarding the funding inequity if a lump sum is considered for the Warehouse Point Fire District, as the Broad Brook Fire Department also receives assistance with building maintenance (on Town owned buildings), dispatching costs, and other costs associated with Town property. Treasurer O'Toole cited the difficulty in breaking out the additional costs of building maintenance – the heating, the lights, etc. - because the Broad Brook Fire Department shares the same building as the Senior Center. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa noted the Broad Brook Fire Department also gets funding elsewhere in the budget for physicals for firefighters; after review of the line items for the Fire Services/Broad Brook Fire Department category it was clarified that a line item for "fire – physicals" was already included in the \$502,000 requested total. Warehouse Point Fire District Chief Barton, speaking from the audience, noted they also pay for dispatching and the fire marshal. Treasurer O'Toole noted dispatching is a shared cost with the ambulance. Treasurer O'Toole suggested returning the Warehouse Point Fire District to the Town Budget at \$502,000 would raise the overall increase to 6.84% overall, resulting in an increase of 2.51 mills – a budget increase of 7.33% for adding back the Warehouse Point Fire District.

First Selectman Bowsza suggested the issue is parity, so for true parity what you give to one you give to the other. He suggested the Board should look to the Grand List and weigh the values of properties both within the district and outside of the district, which proportionately is something like 53% vs 47% on the Broad Brook side. First Selectman Bowsza suggested considering population density as also an option. Treasurer O'Toole recalled that last year the Board of Selectmen originally put in \$464,000 for Broad Brook and Warehouse Point, but the numbers

were horrendous because if you only have \$700,000 to put in as an overall increase to add another \$400,000 makes a big difference. That's how they went to \$232,000 for Warehouse Point, which was what the BOF put forward in the first referendum. Discussion continued regarding passing a 7.33% budget increase on to the BOF, what actions they could take, and the taxpayers' response to a 7.33% budget increase.

Selectman Nordell suggested the people on the Warehouse Point side are looking at an additional 1.8 mill increase in addition to the budget being proposed by the BOS. Discussion continued regarding the mill rate being considered by the Warehouse Fire District; Warehouse Point Fire District Chief Barton suggested the additional mill increase would be closer to 1.7; Treasurer O'Toole cited that mill rate represents a 21% increase by the Warehouse Point Fire District. District Chief Barton suggested the dispatching fees (\$21,000+/-), the (Town) fire marshal fees (\$17,000+), and the FICA costs don't come out of the \$502,000 allocated to Broad Brook. Selectman Baker suggested the voter looks at the rate of budget increase when voting on the budget; he recalled that the budget was voted down three times last year, and funding reverted to the 2% annual increase.

The Board also reviewed the Insurance and Pension line, noting the Town is already facing a 11% to 18% increase in health insurance, First Selectman Bowsza reported they're investigating options for health care insurance and pension benefit plans. Debt service is what the Town needs to have the capacity to bond.

DEBT SERVICE – 910800:

MOTION: To APPROVE Debt Service - line 910800 - at \$1,007,865 for FY 2020 - 2021.

Muska moved/Baker seconded/DISCUSSION: Nothing additional.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell

(No one opposed/No abstentions)

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS – 910700:

Treasurer O'Toole cited the Town is 5 or 6 years into the lease/purchase agreements for the Town Hall air conditioning and two DPW trucks; the Town is obligated to pay the budgeted amount for lease/purchases of \$94,000+. The CIP allocations are discretionary but have already been trimmed; nothing has been funded for additional appropriations.

MOTION: To ACCEPT the Capital Improvement budget – line 910700 – at \$1,014,668

for FY 2020 – 2021.

Baker moved/Nordell seconded/*DISCUSSION:* Nothing additional.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell

(No one opposed/No abstentions)

FIRE SERVICES/BROAD BROOK FIRE DEPT – 511000/WAREHOUSE POINT FIRE DISTRICT (currently no line number assigned):

Treasurer O'Toole cited the Broad Brook Fire Department requested funding in the amount of \$60,000 to provide 2 additional paid fire fighters for the weekend night shift; that amount has already been cut to \$30,000; an additional \$5,000 is tied to that request for incentive payments. She suggested the only other budget increases for the Broad Brook Fire Department are two or three \$1,000 requests.

Selectman Muska indicated she's in favor of giving the Warehouse Point Fire District \$502,000. Noting there are other options under consideration, Selectman Muska felt this is the Board's opportunity to say we appreciate the services and the public safety they provide to the residents on that side of town. Selectman Nordell agreed with Selectman Muska, he suggested that although there may be other options he felt this is the Board's only opportunity; they should continue until all those options are resolved. First Selectman Bowsza questioned what happens if the Town can't resolve any of the proposed options? Selectman Nordell didn't know, but he felt at least people couldn't say the Board didn't live up to supporting the Warehouse Point Fire District.

Selectman Baker cited he agrees with the sentiment but is reticent to send a budget to the BOF who then decides the overall budget is too high and begins cutting. He felt there's confusion regarding the percentage increases, and who supports what part of the budget; he felt all of that was a major part of the budget failing last year. Selection Baker suggested he felt people know he's all for supporting a losing proposition based on principle only, which is basically what's being asked at this point. He questioned if that's where the Board wants to go, or do you want to try to get a budget passed that's more than 2%? He noted that once the budgets start to go down they always go to 2%. Does the Board want to go forward based on principle, or do you want to focus on going forward knowing this is far too big? Selectman Baker suggested as much as he supports the Warehouse Point Fire District he is leaning towards not including the Warehouse Point Fire District in this part of the budget process but following through on resolving the issue through the other options proposed. Selectman Baker noted the Board is not considering at this point how the Town will handle the capital ask (the new fire truck), which doubles this ask. First Selectman Bowsza cited he needs more clarity on that issue. He cited there is case law that's been established on districts that exist within municipalities that are not funded by the municipalities that might be limiting on the municipality's ability to support capital requests of a district in circumstances where the district is not getting support from the municipality. Our circumstance for 40 years was the district didn't levy a tax; the Town funded them. There does seem to be the possibility of established case law that says if a district is taxing then the municipality can't support capital aspects of it - such as building an addition on a building we

don't own or buying a truck we don't own; he cited C.G.S. 7-301 which requires additional study. First Selectman Bowsza suggested the capital request is not part of the district general funding request.

MOTION: To add the Warehouse Point Fire District lump sum back into the Fire Services budget in the amount of \$502,000.

Muska moved/Nordell seconded/<u>DISCUSSION</u>: Selectman Baker indicated he supports the Warehouse Point Fire District but he would like to have seen them stay in the budget in the beginning. He felt if the Board adds them back into the budget it dooms the entire budget because the numbers are too high, and people will vote no. Selectman Baker indicated he fully supports the Board rectifying the fire services issue. Selectman Nordell suggested no matter what the BOS do the BOF will change the numbers; Selectman Nordell indicated he can't conscientiously send a budget to the BOF that doesn't include the equal fire safety. Ms. Petano, of the BOF, noted that makes the BOF the bad guys. She noted that 4 or 5 years ago the Warehouse Point Fire District was carved out of the budget; where did that money go? First Selectman Bowsza indicated the money went to the school side, which is a decision for which the BOF has jurisdiction. Ms. Petano suggested the Board can't sacrifice all the other departments; she indicated she didn't feel we look at this as a business decision. First Selectman Bowsza noted the BOF only has the ability to impact the bottom line of the BOE budget; it has no line item authority. He felt the Town side of the budget is pretty lean; we have departments with 3 or 4 employees with a budget of only \$200,000 including salary. Discussion continued regarding further review by the BOS. Treasurer O'Toole ran various figures for the Board. Including the Warehouse Point Fire District at \$502,000 increased the overall budget to 8.6%, while reducing the Warehouse Point Fire District to \$250,000 increased the overall budget to 6.55% for a 2.24 mill rate. Chief Barton suggested the Warehouse Point residents are paying 1.4 mills for fire protection in Warehouse Point, while the residents in Broad Brook are maybe paying 1 mill for fire services. Selectman Baker agreed, noting that was the long term problem the Board was trying to fix.

The Board reviewed the CIP budget again, but made no additional cuts.

The Board reviewed the DPW budget, noting the new facilities maintainer position has been requested at \$80,000 plus an approximate \$30,000 additional in benefits. Treasurer O'Toole indicated the Board can't cut salt and sand, as everything saved in that line goes to the Storm Emergency Fund. The Board made no additional cuts at this time.

First Selectman Bowsza raised the option of using the Building Permit fees to fund the Building Department; he requested Treasurer O'Toole explain Special Revenue Funds. Treasurer O'Toole suggested Special Revenue Funds must be an outside revenue source — non-government money. Government money is money raised by the Town through the general fund; we can't send money to the Special Revenue Fund. Building fees are a regular general fund source of revenue; we bill for Building Permits which is part of the general revenue. She cited Parks and

Rec has a Special Revenue Fund which is money raised by selling the camp sessions, but they pay all the counselors that go with the camp sessions from that fund. Treasurer O'Toole indicated the Town couldn't fund the Building Department through the fees charged for Building Permits.

Deputy First Selectman DeSousa felt at the end of the day the Board's job is to put forth a realistic budget; she indicated she couldn't support a budget that doesn't fix the underlying problem.

Treasurer O'Toole cited the increases in medical and health insurance; First Selectman Bowsza noted they're working on reducing those costs but don't have concrete numbers at this point.

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Board for additional discussion; hearing no requests to raise additional comments he called for a vote.

VOTE: In Favor: Muska/Nordell

Opposed: Baker/DeSousa

First Selectman Bowsza <u>voted against the motion</u> to break the tie; the motion

failed.

After the failure of the motion above the Town budget going to the BOF is 4.72% on the Town side, and 6.1% on the BOE side, for a total budget increase of 5.6%. Selectman Nordell was concerned that percentage increase was still too high; Selectman Baker felt this was a fairly responsible budget, although it didn't include Warehouse Point. Selectman Nordell questioned the mill rate associated with this budget; Treasurer O'Toole indicated the mill rate would be 1.98%. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa noted the BOE budget doesn't include any staffing reductions. Discussion returned to funding for the additional staffing for the Broad Brook Fire Department for night shifts.

Selectman Baker cited he's voted against several staff increases, not because they aren't necessary but because the funding isn't there; he noted a couple of new positions remain in the budget. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa felt the new position in the Police Department will save money, and possibly cut overtime, because the officers can concentrate on law enforcement. Selectman Baker felt the police position was soft dollar savings, although he felt the position was a great idea. Selectman Baker felt the facilities maintainer position was a great idea as well, but if one position is cut both positions should be considered. He felt the Board needs to concentrate on growing the Grand List. Discussion continued regarding the shift coverage for each fire department.

MOTION: To ACCEPT the Fire Services/Broad Brook Fire Department budget – line 511100 - in the amount of \$502,000.

DeSousa moved/Baker seconded/*DISCUSSION*: Selectman Baker requested deleting \$30,000 for the additional firefighters for the Broad Brook Fire Department, and the additional \$80,000

position for the Police Department, which reduces the overall budget by \$110,000. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa disagreed; she felt the Board needs to do something to move the Town forward.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa

Opposed: Muska/Nordell/Baker

MOTION: To CUT \$35,000 from the Fire Services/Broad Brook Fire Department and

reduce the total budget request to \$467,000.

Baker moved/no one seconded the motion – the motion failed.

The Board continued reviewing other budget reductions.

MOTION: To ADD the Warehouse Point Fire District lump sum back into the Fire

Services budget in the amount of \$250,000.

Muska moved/Nordell seconded/DISCUSSION: First Selectman Bowsza suggested this addition would result in a 6.5% tax increase. Selectman Baker felt that when this Board was elected it was expected we would right a lot of wrongs made previously but there were a lot of "asks" that the Board can't fund. Selectman Baker suggested he would rather pass a budget that's more than 2%; if the BOS don't make the cuts the BOF will. First Selectman Bowsza suggested with the BOE asking for 6.2% he felt like this budget is a fait accompli; he felt sending a 6.2% budget increase to the BOF is just throwing away \$15,000 (for referendums), and the budget will go to 2%. Selectman Baker felt that most of the Board would like the Warehouse Point Fire District returned to the budget at \$800,000 but that would increase the overall budget by 14%, which won't fly.

Treasurer O'Toole indicated this motion brings the Town operating side to 6.85%, with the overall budget increase of 6.25% not including the BOE, for a \$1,017,085 increase. The total Town budget would be \$17,282,982, which includes Warehouse Point at \$250,000.

First Selectman Bowza felt the BOS is putting forth a budget which is extremely lean. He suggested the position the Board is in is the accumulation of 10 years working with the 2% budget spending cap, which doesn't provide the community an opportunity to grow. He reiterated the need for the BOS to put forth a budget as lean as possible; the first thing he would return to the budget is the Warehouse Point funding but it's not possible. Selectman Baker concurred, but noted the math doesn't work.

First Selectman Bowsza raised the question of the ability of the BOS to make a recommendation to the BOF regarding the amount of the BOE funding. First Selectman Bowsza noted the BOS has not yet seen the BOE budget; any recommendation would be going blind. The consensus of the Board was reluctance to make a recommendation. Selectman Nordell indicated he doesn't want to submit a budget to the BOF that doesn't include funding for the Warehouse Point Fire

District without saying the BOS tried. First Selectman Bowsza felt the BOS had spent the last 6 weeks reviewing options; it comes down to the math. Selectman Baker reiterated the Board's intention is to move forward to a permanent solution to the fire services issue; adding this funding back is still only a bandaid.

MOTION: To TAKE A FIVE MINUTE BREAK at 7:02 p.m..

DeSousa moved/Muska seconded/*DISCUSSION:* None. **VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell**

First Selectman Bowsza RECONVENED the Meeting at 7:08 p.m.

The Board considered their vote on the motion on the floor.

VOTE: In Favor: Muska/Nordell

Opposed: Baker/DeSousa

First Selectman Bowsza voted against the motion to break the tie; the motion

failed.

The Board reconsidered funding for the additional part-time fire fighters for the Broad Brook Fire Department.

MOTION: To TAKE the \$30,000 from the Salary – part time line and the \$5,000 from

the Volunteer incentives line, and approve the FY 2020 – 2021 Budget for the

Fire Services/Broad Brook Fire Department – line 511000 - at \$467,000.

Baker moved/DeSousa seconded/*DISCUSSION:* Selectman Nordell agreed this proposal helps both sides of town because both departments do work together. First Selectman Bowsza questioned if this money were included would Selectman Nordell support the budget in total? Selectman Nordell indicated he understood the need to make budget cuts; he questioned if the Board put the \$5,000 back in would that put Broad Brook Fire Department under 2%? Treasurer O'Toole noted the \$5,000 is for the volunteer incentive pay; that line would not be needed if the Board doesn't fund any of the new positions.

VOTE: In Favor: Baker/Nordell

Opposed: DeSousa/Muska

First Selectman Bowsza <u>vote in favor</u> to break the tie vote; the motion

passed.

First Selectman Bowsza reopened discussion of the BOS making a recommendation on the BOE budget when sending the Town budget to the BOF. Selectman Muska didn't want to vote without having the information from the BOE. Selectman Nordell indicated he understood that much of the BOE budget is contractual. Selectman Baker felt without having seen the numbers any recommendation on the part of the BOS would be an arbitrary decision. First Selectman

Bowsza agreed; he indicated it wouldn't be a binding vote, he felt obligated to throw the question out to the Board because the numbers are so bad. Selectman Baker noted that while the BOS don't have a vote on the BOE budget they do have a right to participate as audience members during the BOE budget submission to the BOF. Discussion followed regarding the scheduling for the BOF budget presentations.

MOTION: To ACCEPT the FY 2020 – 2021 Budget for the Town of East Windsor at \$16,997,982 for a 4.50% increase.

DeSousa moved/Baker seconded/*DISCUSSION*: Selectman Muska indicated she couldn't be in favor of something that supports one public safety provider over another; she felt the Board hadn't tried to resolve the issue. First Selectman Bowsza indicated the Board has tried; it's just the math with this budget. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa felt the departments should come together and work out why the budget didn't pass. Selectman Baker noted the Board has a plan in place to go forward and fix the inequities in the budget; he suggested the Board should go forward with that but he supports this budget. First Selectman Bowsza reported he cut \$1.6 million from the department head requests, and there were good reasons for many of the requests. Selectman Nordell agreed there are plans in place, but the BOS don't have the final say on any of the options, that's up to the voters. First Selectman Bowsza concurred, that's a difficult concept to come to grips with but that's for the voters to decide, and the BOS must live with that. The BOS must put forth a responsible budget for the fiscal year. Selectman Nordell suggested consciously it's difficult to put forth a budget that doesn't include them (the Warehouse Point Fire District). Selectman Baker suggested the Board's positions are well known on that subject, but the budget is about more than the fire department issue, it's about all of the other subjects as well.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker

Opposed: Muska/Nordell

First Selectman Bowsza voted in favor of accepting the budget to break the tie

vote; the motion passed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Tom Lansner, BOF member: Mr. Lansner indicated he was trying to wrap his head around the Warehouse Point Fire District funding issue; Mr. Lansner noted he lives on that side of town. Mr. Lansner felt there was pressure on the BOS to do something. When looking at this Mr. Lansner felt giving them the \$500,000 is a beginning step to do something. Mr. Lansner acknowledged Selectman Baker's point is compelling because we're not really fixing it. As long as the voters would buy that you couldn't fix it in this year's budget with the \$500,000 payment he's ok with that. Mr. Lansner questioned what people will say – that you could have at least given us something. Selectman Baker noted that was exactly the same argument and the same path the BOS took last year, and the decision that was made was we ended up with a 2% budget, with no funding for Warehouse Point. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa noted the lack of the public present at this meeting, she questioned where the public is? She suggested the public

needs to get out, and if they don't how valid is it? Mr. Lansner suggested for the sake of argument, if we put the \$500,000 in the budget and we end up cutting it out and then the Warehouse Point Fire District will tax us the way we should have been taxed anyway, so we didn't really get any relief this year. Mr. Lansner felt we should put it in because it says we tried to do something.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Budget Workshop at 7:24 p.m.

Nordell moved/Baker seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: In Favor: DeSousa/Baker/Muska/Nordell

(No one opposed/No abstentions)

Respectfully submitted

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Board of Selectmen