

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL MEETING Budget Presentations - Workshop

Thursday, February 18, 2021

5:30 p.m.

East Windsor, Connecticut

Meeting held via ZOOM Teleconference

Meeting ID: 332 683 3563

Town Hall closed to the Public by

Executive Order of First Selectman Jason E. Bowsza

Due to Coronavirus pandemic

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; Charlie Nordell, Selectman

ABSENT: All Selectmen were present this evening.

GUESTS/PRESENTERS signing in to teleconference: Assessor: Helen Tetz, Assessor; Building Department: Rand Stanley, Building Official; Planning and Development: Clark Chapin, Director of Planning and Community Development; Tax Department: Patricia Kratochvil, Tax Collector; Town Clerk: Amy Lam, Town Clerk.

OTHER GUESTS/SPEAKERS: Treasurer's Office: Amy O'Toole, Town Treasurer; Board of Finance: Karen Christensen, Noreen Farmer, Tom Lansner.

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1. TIME AND PLACE OF SPECIAL MEETING:

First Selectman Bowsza called the February 18, 2021 Special Meeting/Budget Presentations – Workshop of the East Windsor Board of Selectmen to order at 5:30 p.m. The Meeting is being held via teleconference due to closure of the Town Hall to the Public as the result of the coronavirus pandemic.

2. ATTENDANCE:

First Selectman Bowsza noted the Board has established a quorum with five members present via video conference.

3. PRESENTATIONS

ASSESSOR AND BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS:

Assessor – Account #100554131– (TAB 2)

The total Budget request for the Assessor for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$212,745.

Helen Totz, Assessor, joined the Board virtually.

Assessor Totz indicated the budget submitted is essentially the same as last year. Her primary request under this budget ties into a CIP request. She would like to upgrade the CAMA software – Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal, which is the software that generates values for the real estate in town. The Assessor's Office currently utilizes E-Quality software which is used in about 11 towns in the State, which makes it difficult to seek assistance from other users when there are issues with the software. Her preference would be to purchase Vision Government Solutions software, which she would like to bring into the office as soon as possible because a revaluation is scheduled for 2024. The total cost of the Vision software is \$43,500; she has been setting aside money since 2013 for the revaluation; that money could be used for the purchase of the software rather than waiting for purchase under a CIP request. Assessor Totz noted she currently has an open position in the office which has been vacant since September; having the updated software, which is more widely used throughout the State, would expand the candidate field. Assessor Totz suggested she would like to see the Board approve the purchase of the Vision software, perhaps with a waiver of the bidding process, prior to initiation of the revaluation process next year.

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First Selectman Bowsza questioned how many towns currently use the Vision software? Assessor Totz indicated over 100 towns use Vision while only 11 continue to use the E-quality software. First Selectman Bowsza questioned that going from software used in 11 towns vs software used in 100 should make recruitment in the office easier? Assessor Totz replied affirmatively. First Selectman Bowsza questioned if the conversion were made would it save either time or money in terms of performing the revaluation? Assessor Totz noted Vision has a long history; she's worked with it almost her entire career which is why she's comfortable endorsing it. Nearly every revaluation company that's licensed in the state will work with, and is familiar with, the Vision product. First Selectman Bowsza questioned that Assessor Totz had consulted with Len Norton and Joe Sauerhoefer and IT to make sure all the costs of conversion are part of that \$43,500? Assessor Totz indicated the cost of the software is \$40,000, the additional \$3,500 is the cost of the upgrade to our server.

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Selectman, or Board of Finance members, for questions?

Selectman Baker noted Assessor Totz had mentioned using the revaluation money. Assessor Totz indicated that would be used to improve the software that would be used for the revaluation. Selectman Baker questioned if it wasn't approved at CIP then we'd be short that money if we chose to go that route? First Selectman Bowsza indicated that one of the things he and Treasurer O'Toole and Assessor Totz have discussed is they're seeing the cost of the revaluation coming down over time; he believes Assessor Totz feels we probably have that expense covered already in CNR and this is a revaluation related expense. Assessor Totz concurred.

Noreen Farmer, Board of Finance, questioned that the Vision software will not have a problem with our current GIS system? Assessor Totz reported both systems interface in several towns throughout the State.

Treasurer O'Toole noted this was a case where we did some reallocation of funds; professional services looks like it's going down, but it's been reallocated to other accounts. The money is pretty much the same.

No one else raised questions for Assessor Totz.

Board of Assessment Appeals – Account #10054132 – (TAB 2)

The total Budget request for the Board of Assessment Appeals for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$1,750, which is an increase of \$100.

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Assessor Totz reported this budget funds a recording secretary. First Selectman Bowsza noted the Assessor's staff has also assisted with that board over the past year, which has saved the Town money.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT:

Building Department – Account #10054213 – (TAB 3)

The total Budget request for the Building Department for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$245,890, which results in an increase of \$60,988.

Rand Stanley, Building Official, joined the Board virtually.

Building Official Stanley indicated he requested a full-time permit clerk, grade 3 classification, for which the base on that is \$48,539 plus benefits at \$14,500. The position is currently filled via a part-time position at \$17,000 annually. The change would be approximately \$50,000 additional to the community. Building Official Stanley indicated First Selectman Bowsza didn't not move that recommendation forward.

Building Inspector Stanley indicated he also requested a part-time electrical inspector; First Selectman Bowsza has increased Professional Services by \$10,000 to fund additional inspection assistance. Building Official Stanley suggested he anticipates that will provide 3 days a week for a 22-week period of contracted inspection services, if he can find someone willing to fill that position.

Building Official Stanley indicated he requested a budget of \$245,890; First Selectman Bowsza's budget recommendation is \$193,248.

First Selectman Bowsza cited the other side of the Building Department budget is the revenue side; he noted he and Treasurer O'Toole will have revenue projections for the Board's review next week. Building Official Stanley indicated his department is currently seeing an approximate 25% increase in permit applications; they have exceeded the revenue projections for this fiscal year already. Anything that comes through from March to June will be revenue which exceeds the projected revenue for this fiscal year. He cited there are several projects coming through, and one in limbo. They have not spent any of the \$20,000 Professional Services line, which was included to cover the part-time inspectors specifically for the 120-unit adult community complex. He noted we also have the large box warehouse development on Route 5, as well as other projects on Route 5 in the review process and two significant solar fields which will provide additional permitting revenue.

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First Selectman Bowsza asked if there were any questions from the Selectmen or Board of Finance for Building Inspector Stanley?

Selectman Nordell asked if Building Inspector Stanley was having trouble getting the part-time inspectors? Building Official Stanley cited the State is having difficulty bringing new inspectors into the field; younger trades people have no interest in municipal work. He's having a problem finding people to work at the salary offered; this would be a part-time non-benefit position not to exceed 19 hours weekly. He indicated he anticipates the solar gravel pit fields coming through to require an estimated 140 inspections.

Board of Finance member Tom Lansner questioned how we would see a benefit with the addition of the full-time clerk; would the public get their inspections done more quickly because you'd be doing less office work and more inspections? Building Inspector Stanley suggested they've been requesting the full-time permitting clerk for perhaps 10 years. They hoped to find more efficiency with the new permitting system, but it still requires input. That, coupled with the business and regulation increase and the increase in residential development, and phone inquiries - that increases the office workload. He absolutely feels the full-time position would benefit the taxpayers; he feels the revenue generated can pay for the position.

Selectman Baker questioned if Building Inspector Stanley feels there will be that much work for the part-time electrical inspector after this building spike is over? Building Official Stanley felt there is enough work especially with the potential approval of the solar fields; the position can be phased out if the work ceases.

Board of Finance member Noreen Farmer questioned the ability to find someone to work the limited hours at the pay offered? Building Official Stanley suggested it will either be someone starting their career who will be gaining experience, or someone retired looking for limited hours.

First Selectman Bowsza asked if there were any other questions for Building Official Stanley; no one raised any additional questions.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, P&Z, ZBA, EDC, IWWA:

Planning and Development – Account #10054153 – (TAB 2)

The total Budget request for the Planning and Development Department for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$246,548.

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First Selectman Bowsza noted the Planning Department Budget is very different than previous years budgets. This is a priority area for him this year, which is a reflection of the feedback from constituents over the last couple of years.

First Selectman Bowsza introduced Mr. Chapin, who is new to the department. First Selectman Bowsza noted Mr. Chapin has been employed with East Windsor for four weeks, he gave a brief history of the experience Mr. Chapin brings to the department.

Clark Chapin, Director of Planning and Community Development, joined the Board.

Director Chapin reported that the Planning Department staffs six boards or commissions; there is no requested change to the majority of those boards.

Planning and Zoning Commission – Account #10054154 - total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$3,100, which is a zero increase

Zoning Board of Appeals – #10054155 - total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$1,400, which is a zero increase

Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Agency – Account #10054163 - total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$1,800.

Agricultural Commission – Account #10054168 – total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$500, which is a zero increase.

Conservation Commission – Account #10054170 – total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$500, which is a zero increase.

Economic Development Commission – Account #10054171 – total budget request for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$1,225.

Director Chapin indicated the one Board that made a request that didn't match the First Selectman's recommendation was the **Economic Development Commission**, who, in the current budget had \$3,000 appropriated. Director Chapin believes they haven't spent that \$3,000 in the past, and that those funds may have been repurposed elsewhere in the budget; he felt First Selectman Bowsza can speak to that.

Regarding the Planning Department, Director Chapin reviewed the following line items:

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Dues and Fees had included \$4,000, the department requested that line item be increased to \$7,339. Director Chapin felt that was based on misinformation and was primarily based on tuition reimbursement which he understands is now picked up in a different part of the budget rather than Planning and Development. Director Chapin suggested reducing it back to \$4,000 makes sense.

Director Chapin noted the other reduction was in the **advertising line**. The current budget amount is \$4,500, which was requested again. The recommendation was to reduce it to \$1,500. If you go back 5 years you'll see there was zero in for fiscal years 2017, 2018, and 2019; it's his understanding that that money was coming out of a different line, which doesn't help us coming up with a number for the real basis. So, if we were to look at last year's expenditure it was a little over \$1,800; this year it's already over \$1,400. Director Chapin feels \$1,500 won't be enough. He would advocate to increase that line at least \$750 to \$1,000. Director Chapin indicated it's difficult to project what the applications will look like over the rest of this fiscal year and into the next year. Based on what's been spent already that line should be bumped up a bit.

Director Chapin suggested the other one that's noteworthy is **professional services**. As you know the Town has had an interim planner who is still working here part-time. What Director Chapin has found in his short four weeks is there were a lot of things that had not been tended to or placed on the back burner. We could definitely stand to keep a consultant on for additional hours in the upcoming year. Most of you know the Warehouse Point Planning Study was recently completed; that came with recommendations for new regulations. Right now, we have 11 zones in town, if we adopted everything that was suggested in the Warehouse Point Planning Study there would be an additional 9. Director Chapin felt we need to work to find a workable median, but to do that we really could use additional help in this department.

Director Chapin noted **economic development** continues to be a priority for the Town. One of the things we've not taken advantage of is some of the grant opportunities that are out there to help in that regard. That would be another good use of a consultant. Director Chapin noted he's very happy to see the First Selectman has been supportive of an increase in that line.

First Selectman Bowsza felt Director Chapin did an excellent job of putting the department into context. He noted you all know that the Planning Department is an area that has needed some bolstering over the past two years. First Selectman Bowsza felt we have the right personnel in place now to have that department be a meaningful contributor to the Town's future. He felt this would be an opportunity to invest in that staff and empower that department to really move us forward. First Selectman Bowsza

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noted here are a number of different budgets that he's repurposed money from. In order to support this his intention is to make a statement where the priorities are in terms of future development opportunities while also being mindful of the impact on the budget. Between Director Chapin and Zoning Enforcement Official/Wetlands Agent Calabrese First Selectman Bowsza is very comfortable and confident, and also with the staff that we have there. First Selectman Bowsza felt that being able to retain consultation services for some projects outside of their job scope makes it all the more empowered. It turbocharges that department so we can not just carry on with the things that are coming through the door now but will encourage additional opportunities there.

First Selectman Bowsza called for questions or comments for Director Chapin.

Selectman Baker agreed that with regard to the **professional services line** for at least the next year or two it was wise to keep someone on to catch things up and help with economic development would be advantageous. Selectman Baker noted that the professional services line, in the past, has been reserved for if Wetlands has a large/complex application and we need to hire a soil scientist, those type of things. How do we anticipate covering those items if they were to come up over the next year? Would they come out of that line, or somewhere else?

First Selectman Bowsza felt it would depend on the cost and the point in the calendar where we are. The current arrangement that we have with CHA, the functions that they bring to the table are pretty expansive; they do a lot of functions for a lot of different communities. He didn't know if they had some kind of soil scientist component, but if there was a need there, we'd have to find the money, either in that line or somewhere else.

With regard to the **Economic Development Commission**, Deputy First Selectman DeSousa questioned if First Selectman Bowsza has checked to see if they have any outstanding contracts with the website they've been trying to do over the past several years? There have been charges for CivicPlus and in 2019, an aerial photographer. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa noted (EDC member) Jim Richards was appointed secretary and he asked for documentation. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa wants to make sure that before we remove it we don't have anything that they're obligated to pay.

First Selectman Bowsza noted CivicPlus is the Town's website administrator; they don't do just the Economic Development website, they do the Town's website in its full capacity. Most of the expenses related to CivicPlus and the website maintenance are in the IT budget. First Selectman Bowsza is not aware of any open contracts; nothing has come over his desk in the past year and a half.

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Treasurer O'Toole felt they had a couple of \$2,000 contracts, and they've all been paid. She also noted there's money available in this year's current budget; if there's something out there we can get it done and paid.

First Selectman Bowsza called for additional comments for Director Chapin. Board of Finance members Christensen, Farmer, and Lansner, and the remainder of the Board of Selectmen had no comments or questions.

Regarding the boards and commissions, First Selectman Bowsza requested Director Chapin give a brief overview of some of the things that have happened since he joined the Department.

Director Chapin noted the Planning and Zoning Commission has been very busy, they've had a couple of controversial applications that generated a lot of interest from the community. Those applications have been withdrawn so it's calmed down a bit, but he estimated we're up to our 6th application for the year going before the Planning and Zoning Commission, which is a little ahead of last year's pace. The Zoning Board of Appeals isn't that busy; they haven't met in a few months. Wetlands has one or two compliance issues we're dealing with. The Agricultural Commission is getting ready to work on the Community Garden leases. And the Conservation Commission has been trying to get an Open Space Ordinance for Assessments done for some time; he's provided them with a draft ordinance for review. The Economic Development Commission had a meeting this week; we did talk a little about the website; Director Chapin indicated he had a preview of that today. It's something the Planning and Development staff are interested in seeing to completion; he felt the Economic Development Commission website would be a good asset for the Town to have in place so the department will work towards that.

Hearing no further comments or questions from the Selectmen or Board of Finance members Director Chapin concluded his presentation.

TAX COLLECTOR, TAX REVENUE:

Tax Department – Account #10054135 – (TAB 2)

The total Budget request for the Tax Department for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$148,565.70.

Patricia Kratochvil, Tax Collector, joined the Board virtually.

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Tax Collector Kratochvil reported there aren't a lot of changes in her requested budget; most of the changes are changes in line items.

Tax Collector Kratochvil noted **advertising** has been moved from the **professional services** line and given its own line. Tax Collector Kratochvil indicated she'll have to do legal notices due to the change in the Broad Brook Fire Department this year, which is an added cost to her budget.

Tax Collector Kratochvil noted she requested a **part-time person** to assist in the office. COVID has impacted serving the public, and she currently has a full-time staff member out on medical leave. Serving the public is an ongoing process; without the other staff member Tax Collector Kratochvil is doing much more administrative work and billing for abatements than she normally would do. She's concerned with having two districts they'll be a lot of problem solving necessary; the part-time person would be beneficial.

Also, the Tax Collector and the Assistant need to do **continuing education**.

Tax Collector Kratochvil respectfully requested the request for the part-time person be returned to her budget.

First Selectman Bowsza questioned if Board of Finance Members Christensen, Farmer, or Lansner had any questions; no one had any comments. First Selectman Bowsza queried the Board for comments or questions; no one requested to speak.

TOWN CLERK:

Town Clerk – Account #10054147 – (TAB 2)

The total Budget request for the Town Clerk for FY 2021 – 2022 is \$148,093

Amy Lam, Town Clerk, joined the Board virtually.

First Selectman Bowsza noted this is Town Clerk Lam's first budget experience. She joined the Town last August just prior to the Presidential election, and has done a great job acclimating herself.

Town Clerk Lam reported the budget hasn't really increased that much. Increases were made in **part-time salary and longevity**.

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Professional services increased because the quote for the land use auditors went up.

Supplies went up; because of COVID the Town Clerk's office has been super-busy because of the housing market – people buying houses or refinancing houses. All of that activity has increased the need for supplies.

Dues and Fees increased, being new to her position in East Windsor she would like to attend the Hartford County Town Clerk's quarterly meetings and conferences; a lot of shared information occurs at those meetings. Attendance at the conferences would be contingent on business returning to normal post COVID.

Town Clerk Lam asked for questions; First Selectman Bowsza offered the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance the opportunity to speak.

Deputy First Selectman DeSousa indicated she's had the opportunity to work in the Town Clerk's office on the voting process. This year they had a dramatic change in how things were done. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa wanted to commend Town Clerk Lam and her office; they really took that task and made it very easy; she wanted to commend them for that. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa felt they should attend the meetings; there's going to be a lot of changes coming down the pike regarding the responsibilities of the Town Clerk. Deputy First Selectman DeSousa felt it was important to leave that in there for her. First Selectman Bowsza concurs; he felt Town Clerk Lam has hit the ground running and has done a very good job. Town Clerk Lam noted both of her assistants are wonderful to work with; they make a great team.

First Selectman Bowsza queried the Selectmen, members of the Board of Finance, and Treasurer O'Toole for comments or questions for Town Clerk Lam? No one requested to speak.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

First Selectman Bowsza noted this the second opportunity for the public to offer comments or questions. No one requested to speak.

First Selectman Bowsza requested a motion to adjourn this Budget Workshop, noting the Regular Meeting, which will include additional Budget Workshops, and other business as appropriate, will reconvene in about 25 minutes.

4. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 6:35 p.m.

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Muska moved/DeSousa seconded/DISCUSSION: First Selectman Bowsza noted the motion is non-debatable.

**VOTE by rollcall: In Favor: Muska/DeSousa/Nordell/Baker
(No one opposed/No abstentions)**

Respectfully submitted

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Board of Selectmen