# Town of East Windsor Broad Brook Fire Department Commission

# SPECIAL MEETING/BUDGET WORKSHOP January 11, 2021

Meeting held via ZOOM Teleconference Meeting ID: 687 566 5576

**REMOTE INFO:** 

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## **Meeting Minutes**

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

#### **Board of Commissioners:**

John (Jay) Madigan, Regular Member/Chairman Nicholas MacSata, Regular Member/Vice Chairman **Regular Commissioners:** Gil Hayes, Bill Loos, Ron Masters **Alternate Commissioners:** Cal Myers, Andy Ouellette

## **Broad Brook Fire Department, Inc.:**

Tom Arcari, Chief; Gerald Bancroft, Assistant Chief; and Jim Bancroft, Deputy Chief.

**Guests/Participants:** First Selectman Bowsza; Selectman Nordell; Selectman Muska; James Barton, Warehouse Point Fire District Chief; Amy Bancroft, Derek Chapin, Kathy Macsata, Jason Plorek.

#### 1. Call To Order:

Chairman Madigan called the Special Meeting/Budget Workshop being held on January 11, 2021 to order at 7:00 p.m.

#### 2. Roll Call:

Chairman Madigan noted the Commission has established a quorum with all seven members present. Commissioners Madigan, Loos, Masters and Myers are present at the Fire Station; Commissioners Macsata, Hayes, and Ouellette are joining the meeting virtually.

## 3. Public Participation:

Chairman Madigan offered the public an opportunity to speak; no one requested acknowledgement.

### 4. Broad Brook Fire Department Inc. Budget Presentation:

Chief Arcari opened discussion of the Department's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021 - 2022. He reviewed the budget line by line, noting the following expenses:

- Professional Services general office expenses, postage, phone, and cable fees.
   Chief Arcari noted a significant increase in the cost of internet service has raised this line item by 20%.
- LAP Insurance: Chief Arcari indicated they researched insurance costs and have switched carriers. They've been able to reduce the annual cost by \$3,000 for a 11% reduction in this line item.
- o **CIP** capital improvement requests. Chief Arcari indicated this is a totally new budget item this year; the item being requested is the replacement of a 20+ year old truck which is getting to the end of its useful life. The truck is experiencing electrical and other problems. The total cost of a replacement truck is estimated to be \$1,000,000; the request is \$200,000 per year under the CIP (Capital Improvement Program) Fund. This new budget item increases the Department budget 100% for this line item.

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Discussion followed regarding the funding via the CNR (Capital Non-Recurring) Fund for this line item. First Selectman Bowsza cited the CIP funding is part of the Town's General Fund, any projects not completed in the fiscal year cycle over into the Capital Non-Recurring Fund, with associated lines for each project. The Broad Brook Fire Commission would allow for any surplus unexpended at the end of the year to be recycled for the same purposes as the prior year. First Selectman Bowsza noted this line item under discussion is dedicated to the truck replacement funding.

Assistant Chief Bancroft cited the benefit of budgeting under the CIP line on a cyclical basis for truck replacement. Vice Chairman Macsata supported the request under the CIP, but questioned if this funding is a dedicated line specific to the truck which can't be raided for other purposes? First Selectman Bowsza cited the Board of Finance will be establishing a Non-General Fund that will be solely dedicated for the Town Fire Department. First Selectman Bowsza gave examples of current dedicated funds for various town projects, such as DPW road projects and Park and Recreation projects. He noted those are all town funds not in the general funds that can't be raided; there's no crossing of the lines regarding purpose of the funds. First Selectman Bowsza reiterated it's your money; no one else can raid it.

Discussion continued regarding bonding for projects vs. budgeting via the CIP.

Assistant Chief Bancroft cited the first truck replacement will be a lease/purchase agreement as the department needs this truck. Commissioners Myers, Loos, and Vice Chairman Macsata concurred with the proposed lease/purchase agreement for this vehicle.

Supplies and Equipment – equipment includes bunker gear, hose, various mandatory testing fees for equipment, helmet and mask replacement, medical equipment, and communication equipment such as portable and mobile radios and pagers.

With regard to **bunker gear**, Deputy Chief Bancroft noted that last year the Town specified \$90,000 for bunker gear under the Capital Improvement Planning Program (CIP), but only provided the Broad Brook Fire Department \$30,000. He suggested it would make sense to fund bunker gear under the Department budget at a value of \$25,000 to continue an on-going replacement program.

Discussion followed regarding the availability of gear as it relates to the number of firefighters. Deputy Chief Bancroft reported each firefighter gets one set of gear; the goal is to provide two sets for everyone. Equipment needs to be cleaned

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after each use, and then be allowed to dry because of the carcinogens that accumulate in the equipment. It takes 2 hours to wash the gear, and another 6 hours to dry; the washer can only accommodate 4 sets of gear at a time so it could take a couple of days to wash 40 sets of equipment. He noted if the department responds to a fire during the day those firefighters would be pretty much off-line until their gear dried.

Chairman Madigan questioned if \$40,000 would provide two sets of equipment for everyone? Assistant Chief Bancroft indicated it would take longer than the one year to provide equipment for everyone. He noted the cost of a set of gear (coat and pants) is \$2960, plus an additional \$750 for each helmet; gear is sized specifically to the individual wearing them. Chief Arcari noted each set of equipment can only be used for 10 years per FDA code; replacement is mandatory. He also noted it takes 8 weeks to get the gear for each person. Vice Chairman Macsata supported the Chief's comments, noting studies have indicated cancer is a leading cause of death of firefighters because of the gear worn during calls.

Under the **Testing category**, Chief Arcari noted the line item for "**Mask fit test calibration**" citing that every year the guys have to go have their face masks and M-95 masks tested. Chief Arcari reported medical equipment includes the M-95 oxygen masks, gloves, shoes, anything the guys require to respond to a medical call. Chairman Madigan questioned if the Department has enough equipment to get through another year if the pandemic continues at its current rate? Chief Arcari cited the State has been reimbursing the towns for medical equipment.

Chief Arcari and Assistant Chief Bancroft indicated the **Radio** category is ongoing replacements of equipment the department uses either being notified of calls, or equipment used during calls. Discussion followed regarding a Town subcommittee which is currently investigating upgrades to the system.

Vice Chairman Macsata referenced the **SCBA** line, noting some departments are looking at the SCOTT SCBA that's integrated with the heat sensors. He questioned if consideration had been given to purchasing one unit to test? He noted they had seen one of the units in use at Bradley Field. Deputy Chief Bancroft felt the cost was excessive for a mask that would only fit one or two firefighters. He cited the department is currently using good thermal imaging cameras.

O **Uniform line** - Chief Arcari referenced the increase in the **uniform line** is due to the addition of daytime paid part-time staff.

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- Truck maintenance no increase over last year.
- Truck fuel no increase over last year. Chairman Madigan questioned if the
  fuel is acquired at the Town garage? Chief Arcari noted diesel fuel is purchased
  from Taylor Energy, gasoline they get from the Town garage or Taylor Energy.
- Dues and Fees Chief Arcari cited these fees are for training for firefighters or EMTs, or recertification which is required every two years. Professional development is for more advanced classes on the Chief's level.

Regarding the **Fees** category, Chief Arcari noted the **Tolland County Fees** had previously been covered in the Board of Selectman budget. This charge increases the BBFD budget 100% for this line item; the cost is for the BBFD dispatching services and is charged on a per person/per capita calculation, which is currently estimated to be 6900 people on the Broad Brook side times \$3.10.

"W2W" (When to work) is scheduling software for the paid firefighters; "IamResponding" notifies firefighters at the station what other personnel is responding to a call.

"Firehouse Software" is a software system the department has been using for 10+ years which tracks fire and ems/calls. Assistant Chief Bancroft reported they've been bought out by ESO, which is another fire/EMS reporting system. This cost is to upgrade the department's software to accommodate this change.

Chief Arcari noted the remaining line items are dues to various professional organizations.

## Salary- Part-time:

Chief Arcari cited the current budget of \$127,000 was underfunded by \$16,000 due to the way the budget went through last year. Chief Arcari noted the Department currently has 5 shifts of 3 men during the week, Monday through Friday; the BBFD is budgeting \$190,000 to cover those shifts. Chief Arcari noted Friday and Saturday night we have 2 shifts from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.; their intent is to increase these shifts by three more nights. The proposed shift increases would increase this budget line 55%.

Discussion followed regarding the benefit of the addition of paid staff to fire services under today's circumstances. Commissioner Loos cited the personnel who staff these shifts are fully trained, including medical training, through their full-time employment in other departments so it costs the town nothing for

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training. He cited not enough firefighters work in town any longer; volunteers are down dramatically. These guys respond in minutes. Commissioner Myers noted that at least three times this year these paid firefighters responded to structure fires and it made all the difference in the world. These guys are right out the door; if we would have had to wait for someone to come to drive the trucks it would have made a big difference in the outcome. Assistant Chief Bancroft noted it's not only the daytime shifts. He recalled a fire at Mill Pond shortly after instituting the nighttime shifts and there were already two guys here; they only had to wait until two more guys responded to get that truck out the door. It cut the response time down drastically, and they were able to get a line in place right away and saved a lot of money from the perspective of the property owner. Assistant Chief Bancroft suggested especially if someone is trapped in a building - you're going to get your price twofold for that.

Vice Chairman Macsata suggested the nature of fire services has changed dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years as you have a lot less volunteerism. You rely on the backbone of a semi-professional force to make sure you have the response that's adequate to cover your town. Vice Chairman Macsata thought one of the things that's important is to recognize the nature of this change, and to be ahead of that change as we go into what is now defined by the NFPA as a combination department comprised of paid and volunteer staff. He suggested from a supervisory standpoint he felt the department was currently doing a very good job; he wanted to give credit to the Fire Department leadership in doing that good job in covering that.

Vice Chairman Macsata noted the Department now has 14 to 15 paid staff. He questioned if, in the near future, the department may find itself in a supervisory challenge. He felt it was important to recognize strategically that in a couple of years it's foreseeable that you might need one person to be at the station on a consistent basis to manage the combination department. Vice Chairman Macsata suggested the Commission think about this and consider if it's worth putting in the budget to look at. He suggested the Department put together a completely new budget; he felt it was important that the taxpayers be aware of the changes in fire services and the cost of those changes.

Chairman Madigan noted Vice Chairman Macsata had worked up some numbers, he asked him to share the numbers with everyone. Vice Chairman Macsata suggested if you consider adding a full-time employee with a competitive wage of \$55,000 to \$65,000 more or less, and the associated workers comp, payroll taxes and other things that come with that, you'd be looking at around \$115,000 per year. He also noted there would be a reduction in the part-time staff because you would remove one from the part-time staff Monday through Friday. Vice

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Chairman Macsata felt it merits the discussion now if we want to look strategically at the long term. He cited the desire to replace apparatus on a five-year plan; he suggested the Department should also look at its human capital so we're postured for long-term success.

Assistant Chief Bancroft indicated he appreciated Vice Chairman Macsata's comments but questioned if now was the time for that consideration? He would rather see an addition to the three guys, and if nothing else that supervisor becomes an instant commander. You would still have three guys on the truck, he could make tactical decisions, call for help if warranted, or cancel the help that's coming if it's not warranted.

Commissioner Loos reiterated that the current part-time staff are officers in their current full-time jobs; he felt they know what they're doing and can supervise themselves. Commissioner Loos didn't feel the need for someone else down there to supervise these guys.

Deputy Chief Bancroft indicated he would like to see more money in that line, he would personally like to see 4 part-timers there during the day. He gave examples of the work the firefighters would be trying to do, noting it's safer to operate with 4 guys than 3.

Vice Chairman Macsata indicated he deals with risk management daily on his job; he suggested the BBFD is considering risk management with these proposals. The risks we're dealing with now are the lack of manpower or staffing, which we've covered moderately effectively by having three part-time staff members available Monday through Friday, and through the evenings budget proposal.

Vice Chairman Macsata agreed with Commissioner Loos, the personnel the Department has hired have not presented any problems and have been well-received by our firefighters. He concurred with Deputy Chief Bancroft and Assistant Chief Bancroft that the additional personnel mitigates the tactical risk on scene, and the operational risk. Vice Chairman Macsata indicated he's concerned with the potential long-term strategic risk of potential problems that could come with managing an increasing part-time staff. Vice Chairman Macsata suggested the Commission review the numbers and consider if those positions, and their cost, should be included in this budget.

Vice Chairman Macsata suggested if the voters feel the proposal is unreasonable and doesn't sufficiently pass their requirements they can vote it down and it can be removed from the budget. Vice Chairman Macsata felt it also shows good well, that we've put together a strong budget that's going to provide the best fire

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protection services for our people. He's looking at the long-term risk of the management of those staff members.

Commissioner Hayes suggested the Commission should get a job description for Vice Chairman Macsata's proposal; he felt it was probably a position the Department needs. Commissioner Hayes would like to continue discussion at the next meeting.

Chairman Madigan requested that Vice Chairman Macsata provide a job description and salary for a full-time supervisor for the Commission's Regular Meeting scheduled for January 25, 2021. He suggested if the Department chose to go to a 4 man or woman crew then one of those crew members could be the supervisor at a higher hourly rate. Chairman Madigan requested the Commission and Chiefs be provided those numbers for the January 25, 2021 Meeting.

- Recording Secretary: Chief Arcari noted the Department now has two recording secretaries, the Commission's recording secretary, and the Department recording secretary. The line is increased at \$1,000, for a 33% increase for the Town recording secretary.
- Incentive Program: No increase.
- Payroll Taxes: New expense associated with paid staff under the MOU for Fire Services; expense previously paid by the Town.
- Workers Compensation: New expense associated with paid staff under the MOU for Fire Services; expense previously paid by the Town.
- Annuity: Chief Arcari noted the Department is fully vested in the annuity; they are adjusting the current funding request accordingly. Vice Chairman Macsata questioned if the employees who are coming into service who are not volunteers are part of the annuity program? Chief Arcari indicated the annuity is only applicable to volunteers.
- o **Physicals:** Slight increase due to provider cost.
- Fire Marshal: Chief Arcari noted this is a new cost to BBFD budget since last year. The Town has increased the salary since the previous Fire Marshal held the position. Assistant Chief Bancroft explained the total budget figure for the Fire Marshal is \$30,500; all other expense lines total the \$30,500. Discussion followed regarding consideration of splitting some line item costs with the

Warehouse Point Fire District, as it's assumed the employee would only need one cell phone, or computer, etc.

Chief Arcari noted the total budget being submitted by BBFD to the Town this year is \$842,530, which is an increase of 81.58%. Prior to the initiation of the MOU for Fire Services the budget paid by the Town was \$464,000. The \$378,530 increase in BBFD service costs is due to reallocation of costs as a result of the Fire Services MOU.

Vice Chairman Macsata suggested the Commission compare last year's budget vs. this year. If we look at the line items that are apples to apples it's not actually a very big increase. The only increase are the things the BBFD are now assuming that the Town previously assumed. That's important to convey to the voters. It's also important that the Town commits also that there isn't a further increase as a result of the BBFD's assumption of portions of that budget. Vice Chairman Macsata noted he and First Selectman Bowsza had discussed the comparative costs; he requested First Selectman Bowsza share that information.

First Selectman Bowsza suggested the Town's intent when they put the ordinance forth in the fall remains unchanged as far as he's concerned. we're not going to look to repurpose the money that's coming out of the BBFD for other things. We're looking to actually remove that from the budget. First Selectman Bowsza suggested the way he plans to illustrate that is that when he puts his budget forward to the Board of Selectmen in a month the full funding for the BBFD will still be in there. it will remain there through the BOS budget process until just prior to forwarding the budget to the Board of Finance. that way it will be demonstrable that this amount was budgeted for BBFD in the past and we are now taking that amount out. He cited some unhappiness when Warehouse Point separated from the budget that the money seemed to be reapportioned to other place; he's trying to make it very clear that we are not doing that here. First Selectman Bowsza indicated he'll take last year's BBFD number out of the budget, anything above that is what you guys decide. Vice Chairman Macsata noted last year's budget was \$464,000. First Selectman Bowsza indicated he'll take the \$464,000 plus those other expenses identified by Chief Arcari and Assistant Chief Bancroft, combine them into a Fire Service cost, and then remove them. He cited he would not include the additional personnel, but he would include the workers comp because it's a cost associated with the Department in the current fiscal year that would not be present in the next year. First Selectman Bowsza suggested he felt it's the best way he can present his commitment to be transparent about removing the cost from the General Fund.

Chairman Madigan suggested it appears that it will be \$299,700 for the CIP, the TN dues, apparatus, 27<sup>th</sup> week, secretary, payroll tax, workers comp, and Fire Marshal. he anticipated that amount would be taken off the town budget. Assistant Chief Bancroft

suggested we're talking about \$464,000, with a current mill rate on this side of town of about \$390,000 for 1 mill. if they back that \$464,000 out of the Town side you'll save a little over a mill on the Town tax side, but it will go up a little because we're adding in the CIP for the truck so there will be a slight increase because these are costs we've never had before.

Vice Chairman Macsata noted originally the BBFD budget was \$464,000 last year. Without any of those new items that we would assume based on the Ordinance it's an \$88,030 increase to an amount of \$552,030. When you add all of those new costs in it goes up by \$378,000+, so the new budget is now \$842,530, which looks like a big increase. He suggested it was a smart budget proposal by the Chiefs and the Board of Directors of the BBFD.

First Selectman Bowsza requested to clarify the comments about the \$200,000 in Capital Expenditures. He suggested you really can't necessarily say that that's money that would have been spent on the BBFD. When he was speaking of those numbers he'll be pulling out of his budget – the town spends \$1 million on capital projects annually townwide; how that's spent gets decided after the budget is adopted based on what's available. Just because there's \$200,000 for CIP purposes in this budget does not equal \$200,000 coming out of the Town budget; that's future forecasting.

Discussion of reallocation of funds vs. town budget requests continued; most budget requests are not requested at the flat 2%.

The Board of Commissioners thanked Chief Arcari for his presentation.

## **5.** Questions/Comments From Commission Members:

See discussion above under specific line items.

Chairman Madigan requested comments from the Commissioners.

Chairman Madigan indicated his request to the Fire Chiefs to provide the numbers for the full-time person and the addition of the 4<sup>th</sup> firefighter as a supervisor for the next meeting.

Commissioner Loos preferred to increase the paid staff to one more person at the current rate. He didn't feel the 4<sup>th</sup> person needed to be paid as a supervisor; most of the paid staff work as supervisors in their full-time positions.

Vice Chairman Macsata cited the ESO codes are online; he suggested Assistant Chief Bancroft contact Chief Barton to discuss splitting the cost of that line as well. Assistant Chief Barton suggested the cost can't be shared by the Departments; it's a shared cost on the dispatching side. Assistant Chief Bancroft suggested because we're legally two separate departments we can't legally share that cost.

Commissioner Hayes indicated he didn't know the day to day operations of the Department but regarding the supervision issue, he'd like to see some justification for that position because in the long run some day we might have 10 guys. He's looking forward to Vice Chairman Macsata's comments for the next meeting. Chairman Madigan agreed that would be available for the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Loos addressed the need to replace the 20 year old truck, noting how many people drive a 20 year old vehicle today? He cited the wear and tear on the truck due to age, condition, and use by multiple drivers. Discussion continued regarding replacement standards.

Vice Chairman Macsata referenced a second document provided to the Commissioners by Assistant Chief Bancroft regarding the property tax impact to the taxpayers; he questioned if the Commission should review that document tonight? Assistant Chief Bancroft felt the document would need to be revised based on future budget discussions. Vice Chairman Macsata concurred regarding potential adjustments, but he felt noting that under the current proposed budget property taxes would increase approximately \$660 annually on a home assessed at \$300,000 - that works out to \$12.80 a week. If your home is assessed at \$150,000, you're looking at \$6 to \$7/week for Fire Protection Services. You're paying \$7 for the surety that when you're in danger you're going to get some valuable people who know their profession who will show up and do their job effectively. Vice Chairman Macsata suggested this budget has his support. Discussion continued regarding the mill rates incurred due to fire service taxes or fire district taxes, the impact on the taxpayer, and the commitment of the volunteers and paid staff to provide protection and a level of comfort for the residents.

Vice Chairman Macsata cited he received a text from a resident signed in to the meeting questioning when the minutes will be posted? Chairman Madigan indicated the Minutes for 12/14/2020 Regular Meeting and the Minutes for this 1/11/2021 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop will be reviewed by Commission members, and voted on at the 1/25/2021 Regular BBFD Commissioners Meeting. Meeting Minutes are also posted on the Town Website.

#### 6. Actions Required To Move Forward:

Chairman Madigan noted the Commission will meet on January 25<sup>th</sup>, via ZOOM and at the Broad Brook Fire Station, to finalize the proposed Fiscal Year 2021 – 2022 BBFD Budget.

#### 7. Consideration Of Budget Calendar:

The Commission briefly discussed the continuing budget process. Chairman Madigan, Vice Chairman Macsata, Chief Arcari, and Assistant Chief Bancroft will present the BBFD budget to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on February 1, 2021. The BOS will review it during their Budget Workshops, which are presented via the ZOOM format. The BOS will in turn send their budget, along with the Board of Education Budget, to the Board of Finance for further review and action. Budget referendums will be held on the dates scheduled on the Town Website.

### 8. Executive Session – Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 1-200 (6)(B) – pending negotiations:

**MOTION:** To GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION Pursuant to C.G.S.

Section 1-200 (6)(B) – pending negotiations at 8:32 p.m. and invite First Selectman Bowsza to join the Commission. Attending the Executive Session were: First Selectman Bowsza, Chairman Madigan, Vice Chairman Macsata, Commissioners Hayes, Loos, Myers, and Ouellette, Chief Arcari, Assistant Chief Bancroft, and Deputy Chief

Bancroft.

Macsata moved/Loos seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: In Favor: Madigan/Macsata/Hayes/Loos/Myers/Ouellette

(No one opposed/No abstention)

Chairman Madigan noted the Commission has come out of Executive Session at 9:33 p.m.

He queried the Commissioners for additional items to discuss. Hearing no requests for discussion he called for a motion to adjourn.

## 9. Adjourn:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting of the Town of East Windsor

Broad Brook Fire Commission at 9:33 p.m.

Loos moved/Myers seconded/<u>DISCUSSION:</u> None. VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous

Submitted by:

<del>\_\_\_\_\_\_</del>

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary
Town of East Windsor Broad Brook Fire Commissioners