

CHAPLIN BOARD OF FINANCE
Chaplin, Connecticut
Remote Budget Public Hearing Minutes
May 10, 2021

Chairperson Dick Weingart called the remote Budget Public Hearing to order at 7:02 PM and read the procedures. Present were Board members Link Diwan, Jean Lambert, Linda Caron, Doug Dubitsky and Victor Boomer; Alternate Peter Haines. Others present was First Selectman Bill Rose, CES/BOE Chair Jaclyn Chancey, Superintendent Ken Henrici and CES Principal Kevin Chavez. Unable to attend were Alternates Matt Foster and Bill Jenkins.

3. READ PUBLIC HEARING LEGAL NOTICE:

Dick Weingart read the Public Hearing Legal Notice that is posted on the website.

4. REVIEW GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARING:

Any questions should be directed to Board Chair Dick Weingart.

5. SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BUDGET PROCESS: REVIEW KEY BUDGET POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS:

Dick Weingart explained the budget process that started with input solicited from Town Boards, Commissions, Agencies, Boards of Education and the CIP Committee for the CIP Plan. The entire Town Agency budgets were reviewed in significant detail by and with the Board of Selectmen. All Agencies were asked to hold their budgets constant except salaries that are determined by the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Finance will meet after the Public Hearing to prepare the budget to go to the Annual Town Meeting.

The Total Town Budget represents an increase of approximately 2.4%. Revenues are down by approximately 1% (due to Grand List for Personal Property with a large amount from the Algonquin facility) combined with the increase in expenses leaves a budget deficit of approximately \$152,000 with a plan to offset using the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance. There will likely be a mill rate increase (approximately 1-1/2 to 1-3/4) for next year and possibly the year after.

6. PRESENTATION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION AND TOWN BUDGETS; AUDIENCE QUESTIONS:

CES Board Chair Jaclyn Chancey, Superintendent Henrici and Principal Kevin Chavez presented the revised FY 2021-22 CES/BOE Budget with an overall increase of 1.8% that includes \$25,000 reduction by the Board of Finance. The majority of the increase is staff related - contractual salaries, one staff member receiving certification to move from Paraprofessional to Teacher position, and up-to-date high quality instructional materials. The staff in Regular Ed and Special Ed have been moved to the right area to reflect their positions. **Regular Education** - Substitutes (increase), Group Insurance (decrease based on actuals); Equipment Rental (decrease); **Special Ed** – (increase for additional staff per student IEPs); **School Library** - (change from Paraprofessional to Certified Staff - Librarian commended for receiving certification); **General Administration** - Legal Services (increase due to upcoming negotiations); **Business Office** – Central Office (added 1 day for the Business Manager); **Buildings & Grounds** - Heating Oil (locked in at lower price of \$1.94 gal.); **Pupil Transportation** - Diesel Fuel (based on actuals with no change); **Out-of-District Tuition** – Magnet School Tuition (based on enrollment, unanticipated costs just received for 2 newly enrolled students).

Superintendent Henrici presented the RD11 Budget with a 0.60% increase that will be revised due to being defeated at the May 4th Referendum. Another Referendum must be held within 30 days with tentative dates of May 26th, June 1st or June 2nd. The RD11 Board will meet on May 18th at 7pm to revise the budget

and intends to present a notable offset on the assessments that will help Chaplin. Mr. Henrici clarified the statement in the Letter to Residents and Taxpayers regarding the major increase to Parish Hill Costs is due to the increase in the percentage of enrollment of Chaplin students and not the budget. **Regular Instruction** – Substitutes (increase due to Covid quarantines), Group Insurance (4% increase for health insurance); **Business & Computer** (hope to resurrect the program); **Special Education** – Certified Staff (decrease to replace retired teacher at maximum salary), Aides & Assistants (covered by grants), Central Office (decrease - switched Director of Special Ed to Administrators health insurance); **School Office - Central Office** (increase for adding 1 extra day for the Business Manager); Building Grounds & Maintenance (increase – building needs work); **Capital Improvement** (increase – building needs work); **Out-of-District Special Ed/Tuition Vo-Ag Special Ed** (most of the cost is for 4 Special Ed students-looking at other options).

Peter Haines commended the CES Administration and Board of Education for their work on the budget and being responsive and sensitive to the adjustments with a budget that should be approved at Referendum. Dick Weingart asked about RD11 Certified Staff position reduced for the Library (the Parish Hill Librarian is a .6 FTE with non-certified staff that fills in on two days so the Library is fully covered).

Revenues

Revenues for the current year decreased significantly with some due to equipment depreciation from Algonquin and some from Eversource, the electric energy supplier. Revenues for FY 2021-22 decreased about \$100,000 keeping the mill rate the same. Revenues are projected to increase for FY 2022-23 with an increase to the mill rate and projecting the possibility of a deficit. The Appropriations Committee has proposed changes to estimated State Revenues from the Governor's Budget including the ECS Grant (Chaplin may lose \$60,000) that is still in the works.

Expenses

First Selectman Bill Rose reviewed the proposed reductions from the Board of Finance for Agency budgets that the Board of Selectmen is responsible for. **General Government** – (mostly contractual); **Board of Selectmen** – (possible cut to Clerical); **Building, Grounds Maintenance** – (some contractual, possible cut to Grounds Maintenance with mowing that came in at lower cost); **Employee Fringe Benefits** – (possible cuts to Annuity Match and Unemployment Compensation); **Police Protection** – (contractual with new contract not yet received); **Public Works** – (already cut \$100,000 from Road Maintenance in the CIP); **Sanitation** – (contractual). If the proposed cuts are made, requests would need to be made from the \$25,000 Contingency Fund.

Doug Dubitsky expressed concerns with consistent raises over the years for every town employee and suggested holding off for this year with many people struggling with no income due to the pandemic. Bill Rose reported that raises are not included in this budget and DPW negotiations are this year. He is adamant about not increasing the mill rate with the struggles the citizens are dealing with and not sure if there will be any raises this year. Link Diwan believes there should be a cost-of-living increase (will go backwards without an increase). Leslie Ricklin from England Road asked if there is any leeway with Sanitation by just picking up recycling and having residents bring the rest of their waste to the Transfer Station (not much savings as the Town still pays for tonnage either way, curbside pickup encouraged and is very inexpensive). Jean Lambert expressed concerns with trash and tires thrown along town roads without

curbside pickup. Victor Boomer expressed concerns about pollution with runoff to the Natchaug River without curbside pickup. Link Diwan commented that most people are not receptive to change and suggested education to increase the value of the Recycling Stream.

The CIP Plan for FY 2021-2026 was reviewed. **General Government** – Playscape at Garrison Park (to install equipment), Bicentennial Celebration (total of \$30,000 is needed to complete funding requirements and additional fundraising is planned); **Public Safety** – Firefighter Gear Replacement & Fire Hose Replacement (reduced funding), Vehicle Replacement (\$175,000 towards the purchase of a new Fire Truck to replace 1998 Fire Truck with the application of a \$90,000 Department of Agriculture Grant that must be spent in FY 2021-22), Generator Replacement (needed with the Fire Station designated as the Emergency Response Command Center); **Public Works Department** – Road Maintenance (reduced by \$100,000 for this year only), England Road Bridge (In design stage with \$200,000 towards the 80/20 grant match), Equipment Replacement (replacement of sweeper and over the rail mower), Vehicle Replacement (funds toward replacement of plow truck), Drainage Infrastructure (ongoing to replace old drainage pipe and culverts), Tree Removal (hope to maintain tree trimming with small DPW budget after this year); **Chaplin Board of Education** – Replace Carpets with Tile (for heavy traffic areas), HVAC – Replace building Electric Controls (to prepare for boiler replacement), Building Wing Air Conditioning, (may be able to offset with Covid Relief Funds for air purification). The total CIP Plan is \$727,500 that will be offset by funding from the State LOCIP program, transfer from the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance and funding from completed CIP projects with a Net CIP funding from the General Fund Budget of \$294,657.

7. ANNOUNCE TIME AND DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

The Board of Finance will hold a special meeting after adjourning this Public Hearing to finalize budget preparation for the Annual Town Budget Meeting to be held on May 24th. Bill Rose reported that the Annual Town Meeting will be held in person only with social distancing at the Chaplin Senior Center with the following items to be voted on in person only: election of RD11 Board of Education member, CIP transfers and two ordinances regarding appointing Rec Commission members instead of being elected and merger of the Wetlands Commission with the Conservation Commission.

8. ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING: The Public Hearing adjourned at 8:58 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott
Recording Secretary*