

CHAPLIN BOARD OF FINANCE
Chaplin, Connecticut
Budget Public Hearing Minutes
April 25, 2022

Chairperson Dick Weingart called the Budget Public Hearing to order at 7:02 PM. Present were Board members Linda Caron, Doug Dubitsky and Victor Boomer; Alternate Peter Haines. Others present were First Selectman Juan Roman, Finance Manager Val Garrison, Town Treasurer Diana Alvarez, Public Works Supervisor Dave Stone, CES Board members Chair Jaclyn Chancey and William Hooper, Superintendent Ken Henrici, CES Principal Kevin Chavez and Business Manager Jobina Miller. Unable to attend were Board members Link Diwan and Bill Jenkins; Alternate Matt Foster and Alternate Izzy Alvarez.

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING FOR FY 2022-23 CHAPLIN TOWN AND BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGETS

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:

The budget process began in February with multiple meetings to gather input being cognizant of the budget issues with some out of the Board's control. The Town Hall staff was commended for all their work gathering information and putting it into electronic format.

Highlights of the proposed budget for FY 2022-23 includes: Mill Rate increase of 2.00 mills to 34.50 mills. The total proposed town budget is \$9,496,493 (4.48% increase). Total revenues are projected to be \$9,364,116 (3.20% increase assumes level state funding). Projected budget deficit of \$132,377 will be offset by using the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance. The Town's Unassigned Fund Balance is projected to be at \$1,199,134 (12.63%) that is within the recommended 10-14%. Future mill rates are likely to increase substantially (Grand List expected to decrease annually due to depreciation from Algonquin and Eversource).

Budget performance from the current year of FY 2021-22 include: Projected budget deficit expected to almost break even primarily due to sale of the William Ross Library (\$75,000) and FEMA reimbursement (\$31,844). \$80,000 in capital funds set aside for vehicle and equipment replacement, infrastructure repairs and tree removal. Capital funds set aside toward the town's share of replacing the England Road Bridge (\$200,000 - total share is about \$800,000) and to purchase a new fire truck for the Fire Department (\$175,000). Committed \$650,000 from the Unassigned Fund Balance for future replacement of England Road Bridge and other projects.

- Jim Randall asked about the Fund Balance (will review later).
- Pat asked about a Fund Balance Policy (in process of writing policies, relies on advice from auditors).

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

Superintendent Henrici presented the CES/BOE proposed budget that represents a 2.75% increase with major increase for Health Insurance (15%). **Regular Education** – Certified Staff (decrease - number of retirements replaced at lower step); **Special Ed** – Certified Staff (increase for Flex program – deals with severely high needs students), Non-Certified Staff (decrease - retired para not replaced), Central Office

(increase - 2 people moved to here from Parish Hill); **PPT Services** – Certified Staff/Speech & Language (decrease – hired non-certified specialist at a lower salary); **School Library/Computer Lab** – Central Office (increase - Tech Coordinator moved to here), Instructional Supplies (increase - replace Smart Boards); **Superintendent’s Office** – Central Office (increase - instructional supplies, Administrative Assistant changes); **School Office** – Administration (increase for the Principal) **Buildings & Grounds** – Non-Certified Staff (increase – added Building Maintainer), Central Office (increase – moved Director of Maintenance here - 75%/25%), Bldg./Grounds Maintenance (increase – 25-year-old building), Heating Oil/Propane (increase based on actuals); **Pupil Transportation** – (contractual increase), Diesel Fuel/Gasoline (increase based on actuals); **Out-of-District Transportation** – Transportation SPED and Tuition/Private SPED (decrease to zero – high needs student moved up to Parish Hill), Magnet School Tuition (increase), Magnet School Tuition SPED (increase). The Administration will work on the budget and present with a 0% increase recommended by the Board of Finance.

- Pat asked for the number of Magnet School students (14 students with tuition at \$6,000, Special Ed - \$7,300).
- Jim Randall asked why the cafeteria budget is at zero (the CES Board, Superintendent, Administration, Business Manager, Cafeteria staff worked very hard to make the cafeteria program self-supporting). Dick Weingart reviewed the proposed CES/BOE Object budget that puts all like items into one category. **Object 100 – Salaries & Wages** (overall decrease - Tech Coordinator moved to Central Office), **Object 200 – Employee Benefits** – (overall increase – Group Insurance), **Object 300 – Purch/Prof/Tech Serv** – (overall increase – Central Office increased 25% after subtracting \$80,000 salary for Tech Coordinator), **Other Purchased Services** – (overall decrease - Transportation/SPED and Tuition/SPED targeted services no longer being performed – major reason the Board of Finance asked for 0% increase to their budget), **Supplies** – (overall increase – will take \$25,000 out of Instructional Supplies for Smart Boards and move to the CIP), **Equipment** – (overall increase), **Dues & Fees** – (overall increase), **Other Objects** – (zero for Transfer to Cafeteria Fund). The Central Office Committee (comprised of 2 seats for CES and 3 seats for RD11 – one for each town) has a total budget of \$836,724 with an increase of 35.60%.
- Dick Weingart expressed concerns about the following: Board of Finance not being asked for input, Central Office budget approved without a public hearing (not fair to the Chaplin BOE), formula for RD11 Assessments based on enrollment (need a 2 mill increase to absorb Chaplin’s assessment of \$300,000).
- Superintendent Henrici commented on the following: The 3-year average formula is by statute and hasn’t changed due to not enough support, meetings are posted on the website and he is willing to meet with the Board of Finance for input, the Central Office Committee keeps Chaplin in mind when making decisions with 3 votes from Chaplin and 2 votes from the other towns.
- CES Chair Jaclyn Chancey commented that Central Office is the mechanism to control costs for shared services. It allows hiring one person to share with both entities (CES and Parish Hill) for a full-time job. The majority of the Central Office Committee budget is for salary and insurance.

Superintendent Henrici reviewed the proposed RD11 budget with an overall increase of 2.14%. **Regular Instruction** – Group Insurance (15% increase); Worker’s Compensation (decrease based on true cost); **On-Line Education** – Dues & Fees (decrease based on actuals); **Language Arts** – Certified Staff (step increase); **World Language** – Certified Staff (decrease - dropped French); **Mathematics** – Certified Staff (increase - teacher hired at higher step); **Music** – Certified Staff (increase - Music teacher hired at higher step); **Science** – Certified Staff (decrease - teacher retired – hired long-term sub, still looking for replacement);

Social Studies – Certified Staff (step increase); **Computer Technology** – Other Certified (decrease - non-union position hired at lower salary); **Special Education** – Certified Staff (decrease - reduced 1 teacher), Aides/Assistants (decrease – reduced 1 para); **Guidance** – Certified Staff (increase - Director of Guidance retired, hired Certified School Counselor); **PPT Services** – Psychological Services (decrease - services contracted out); **Board of Education** – Printing (increase - print Newsletter); **Superintendent’s Office** – Central Office (increase – supplies, Administrative Assistant); **School Office** – Administration (contractual increase – Principal); Clerical/Secretarial (decrease - reduced 1 secretary), Comp. Program Support (increase), Equipment Rentals (decrease); **Business Office** – Central Office (decrease); **Buildings & Grounds** – Central Office (switched Director of Maintenance partially into Central Office/partially into Parish Hill); **Capital Improvement** – (decrease); **Out-of-District Special Ed** – Transportation/Spec Ed (decrease), Tuition/Private-Special Ed (huge increase with \$336,000 in unanticipated expenses for 3 special needs students), Tuition/Public-Special Ed (big decrease); **Out-of-District VoAg/Tech** – (decrease).

Dick Weingart reviewed the proposed Town Government Expense Budget (*BOF Budget Reductions are highlighted in red). Most employees received a 3% salary increase approved by the Board of Selectmen (unionized Public Works employees received 2.5% increase). Agency budgets with an increase: ***General Government, Accountant, Assessor, *Board of Selectmen** (to hire part-time staff to assist the full-time Town Hall staff), ***Building/Grounds Maintenance** – (single mowing contract under budgeted for FY 2021-22), ***Employee Costs & Benefits** – (Health Insurance and Retirement Plans), **Library, Police Protection** (contractual), **Public Works** (Fuel, Salt, Tree Removal), ***Sanitation** (contractual), **Senior Center, Tax Collection Services** (contractual), **Town Clerk, Town Treasurer** (transition of job duties in the works), ***Volunteer Fire Department**. Agency budgets with a decrease: **Transfer Station, Town Contingency**. The remainder of agency budgets have minimal or no change. Town Government Expenses are \$2,186,160 with an increase of \$83,423 (3.97%). Total Town Expenses including the CIP, Debt Service, CES, and RD11 are \$9,496,493 with an increase of \$407,514 (4.48%). Projected deficit of \$132,377 is due to reduction in some revenue items. Dick Weingart reviewed the Fund Balance section.

- Doug Dubitsky suggested talking about the effects of legislators reducing the mill rate for vehicles. The town may have 2 mill rates (1 for motor vehicles, 1 for real estate). There is pending legislation to cap the mill rate at 29 mills for motor vehicles and a proposal to reimburse the difference to towns that would lose tax revenue – about \$73,000 for Chaplin at the current mill rate).
- An audience member asked what the town is doing for revenue generation with inflation, an impending recession and having to raise the mill rate (3 new houses built in the past year, PZC has some new businesses attracted to the town, tax collection rate is 98.9% - an all-time high with great job done by the folks at Windham, actively pursuing grants – received grants for the sign and fire truck, town is doing quite well moving forward, can reach out to the Economic & Community Development Commission, revenues are decreasing because the Grand List is decreasing).

7. ANNOUNCE TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

- The Annual Town Budget Meeting is May 9th at the Senior Center with a referendum on May 17th.
- The RD11 Annual Budget Meeting is May 2nd at Parish Hill with a referendum on May 3rd.

8. ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING: The Public Hearing adjourned at 9:06 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott
Recording Clerk*