

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
COLUMBIA BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 – 7:00pm
Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT

Members Present: Steven M. Everett, First Selectman; Robert Hellstrom, Deputy Selectman; William O'Brien Selectman; Lisa Napolitano, Selectman; Judy Ortiz, Selectman.

Also Present: Mark Walter, Town Administrator; Beverly Ciurylo Finance Director; George Murphy, Public Works Director; Peter Starkel, Columbia Volunteer Fire Chief; Tom Doyle, Columbia Volunteer Fire Department President.

CALL TO ORDER: S. Everett called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. **NEW BUSINESS:**

2.1 **2020-2021 Budget Review Workshop:** S. Everett stated there will not be an audience of citizens because it is a budget workshop. However, if any of the BOS have questions and we need to ask someone in the audience to clarify or answer a question we will do that. We will ask that comments are kept to a minimum of 2 minutes.

a) **Department of Public Works:** M. Walter reviewed the Capital budget for the Department of Public Works Equipment. The Public Works Director's pickup truck will be replaced with an SUV. The pickup truck then be will given to the Road Foremen as a replacement for his vehicle. He explained that a new SUV will run around \$30,000 and they looked at both the State bidding contracts and local dealers to get the best price.

G. Murphy explained that the Transfer Station yard container needs to be replaced. The steel container is used for holding recyclables or bulky waste and has sustained damage. The container is 11 years old and the door is no longer usable.

M. Walter reviewed the Capital budget for the Department of Public Works Buildings. This includes heating and cooling system replacement and/or upgrade at Town Hall for \$60,000; Roof top units for the annex for \$10,000; Roof replacement at CVFD for the apparatus bays for \$55,000; new table and chairs for the Conference Room at \$5,000 and Building & Land Use Department renovations at \$5,000. M. Walter explained that the renovations in the Building & Land Use department is to better use the workspace to spread out maps, etc. when residents come in to review their projects. This would include extending the countertop and minor alterations to the space.

S. Everett asked what the life expectancy of the annex building is? G. Murphy explained that the building is about 20 years old and it was originally a temporary building, but to keep the building in good shape we need to keep up with the maintenance.

M. Walter stated that there is a placeholder in the proposed 5-year Capital Improvement Plan for a new Department of Public Works Garage. G.

Murphy stated that \$100,000 will need to be put away each year for another 4 years. M. Walter explained that we are looking into a possible annex to the DPW Garage, but the problem is where to put the annex. No funding has started at this time.

b) Columbia Volunteer Fire Department: M. Walter explained that the Operating Budget was flat for the Columbia Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD). He then turned the meeting over to P. Starkel to discuss the Capital budget. P. Starkel explained that originally the Rescue Truck 105 would be replaced in 2022. Starting in 2018-2019, the Town has allocated \$150,000 for the purchase of the truck with the allocations continuing for the next two years.

P. Starkel stated that in the last 5 years the CVFD has paid \$29,000 in maintenance fees and is concerned that maintenance costs will continue. There has been an ongoing electrical issue with two different vendors unable to find out what is causing the problem. P. Starkel explained that the Rescue Truck 105 is the most used vehicle besides the ambulance. P. Starkel stated that we could either move up the purchase by one year and appropriate the remaining funds. P. Starkel explained the other option is to finance the remainder \$150,000 in a one-year note. The interest on the one-year note is \$8,900.

W. O'Brien asked how often are the breakdowns occurring? P. Starkel stated that when the truck breaks down it is typically down 3 to 5 days and it has been out of service a total of 45 days in the past 2 years.

P. Starkel explained that it will be a one year long process to purchase the truck which include setting up the specifications of what Columbia would use on the truck. Design, engineering and pricing would take 6 months, then another 6 to 8 months for them to build the truck. S. Everett asked does a stock truck fit the needs of Columbia? P. Starkel stated that he would not buy a stock truck that would not fit our needs; however, some stock units can be customized to the fire department's needs.

P. Starkel stated that as of July 2020, the Town will have \$450,000 appropriated and he can put together an RFQ for the truck.

E. Sharpe asked if we could trade the truck in or sell it and apply those funds to the project. P. Starkel stated that unfortunately used fire apparatus does not have a good resale value.

The BOS consensus was to authorize P. Starkel to go ahead and do more preliminary work.

c) Senior Center Elderly Services: M. Walter explained that the medical car request will not be moved forward to the BOS for the 2019/20 budget consideration. The main reason is that the van services have not yet run the course on the new Senior Van schedule or other options of partnering with neighboring towns. J. Ortiz asked if there are still some people not able to get to their appointments and how much are we using Dial-a-Ride? M. Walter stated most residents were able to get to their appointments, but that some residents requests were not accommodated

because the appointment was outside of the van's regular schedule or conflicted with time slots already taken. M. Walter stated that at the next BOS meeting, Bernadette Derring will attend and can help answer those questions.

L. Napolitano asked if we could look into an insurance policy that would cover volunteer drivers. She stated that the American Cancer Society covers people who volunteer to drive people to their doctors' appointments.

d) **Seasonal and Part-time Positions**

- **Social Worker:** M. Walter stated that he will be meeting with AHM and the First Selectman of Marlborough to discuss a Social Worker. M. Walter stated that Marlborough is interested in using the Social Worker for possibly one day a week. We are not sure if we need 1 or 2 days at this point. He said that the Town of Hebron Senior Center has a part-time social worker and is willing to listen to some of the options we come up with. M. Walter stated that we still have to define what we need, and he has put a placeholder in the proposed budget of \$25,000.

J. Ortiz cited several examples as to why the Town of Columbia needs a social worker and due to the multiple issues, she feels that we should start with 18-20 hours per week and that we should appropriate \$40,000. J. Ortiz shared with the BOS a job description she had put together for the Social Worker position.

Joanne Prague asked to speak to the BOS and stated that one day a week is not enough. She said that there is a real need for a Social Worker and that the Social Worker should not be housed at the Senior Center. She said that we need someone who is connected in our community and would be able to do home visits. She said that we are not utilizing the towns people enough who might want to donate their time and we need someone to organize the volunteers.

M. Walter stated he will report back to the BOS on 2/18/20.

- **Administrative Assistant for Public Works Director:** M. Walter explained that the Administrative Assistant for Public Works would handle paperwork, bids, answer phones, etc. He is proposing 18 hours a week and this individual would be housed in the annex 3 days a week. The projected cost is \$26,000. He explained that DPW is the only department that does not have an assistant. M. Walter explained that we are also cross training the assistants to work in other departments as needed.
- **Assistant Back-up for Emergency Management Director:** M. Walter is proposing to put another \$2,000 stipend for an assistant to the Emergency Management Director to provide coverage during an emergency if the Director is not available.

- **Seasonal Rec Park Maintainer:** M. Walter explained the seasonal Rec Park Maintainer would work during the summer for 20 to 25 hours a week for about 18 weeks. He stated that we need help at Rec Park mowing, lining fields, painting, etc. The projected cost is \$6,075.
- e) **Other Budgets Items (as time permits):** M. Walter explained that the Rec Director has recommended that we increase the hourly wage for the lifeguards from \$11.75 to \$12.50 an hour. He explained that minimum wage will be at \$12.00 in July and that Mansfield pays \$12.50 for their lifeguards. Consensus was to increase the lifeguard pay rate to \$12.50 for the upcoming beach season.

M. Walter stated that Marine Patrol's and Gate Monitors' pay rate will hold the wage at \$13.85 for the upcoming season.

M. Walter explained that the DPW Director has recommended that we increase the Transfer Station Attendant's hourly wage from \$15.35 to \$16.50. The consensus is to increase the hourly pay to \$16.50 as of July 1, 2020.

M. Walter explained that the Rec Director recommends increasing the Assistant Rec Director's hourly pay to \$15.41. The reason for the increase is the new Assistant Rec Director has more responsibility than the previous assistant with the addition of Marine Patrol and Gate Monitors. The requested pay more accurately reflects the wages for this position. The consensus is to approve the hourly pay to \$15.41 as of July 1, 2020.

M. Walter stated that according to CCM and discussions with our labor attorney municipality raises are at 2 to 2.5 % and BOE is at 2.98%. M. Walter's recommendation is a 2.5% increase. He stated that last year we did a 2.3% increase. This was tabled for further discussion in Executive Session.

M. Walter reviewed the grants and subsidies summary. Question came up regarding the new grant request for the Access Community Action Agency. M. Walter explained his goal is to meet with Access Agency next week to discuss their services to Columbia. The BOS discussion reached a consensus to approve the proposed grants except for Access Community Action Agency.

M. Walter explained that we would like to join the Tolland County Chamber of Commerce at \$400.00 a year. The Tolland County Chamber of Commerce consists of 13 towns and has robust programs to help and support local businesses. The consensus was to move forward with joining and to look to join in 2019-2020.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Real estate per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(D); Pending Litigation per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B); Personnel per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(A). S. Everett MOVED to enter into Executive Session at 8:44 pm with Mark Walter, Town Administrator and

Beverly Ciurylo, Finance Director in attendance with the Board of Selectmen.
MOTION CARRIED 5.0. Executive Session ended at 8:53pm. No action taken.

3.1 Personnel.

4. ADJOURNMENT: S. Everett MOVED to Adjourn at 8:54 pm. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie