

Special Meeting
Thomaston Board of Finance
March 2, 2010

Present: D. Colavecchio (Chairman), G. Seabourne, F. Treglia, M. Galbraith, S. Turner, K. Mosimann O'Sullivan.

Also present: Debra Radosevich, Library Director; Martin Egan, Director of Recreation; David Bernagel and Daniella Oullette, Ambulance Corps; Police Chief Eugene Torrance and Captain Kris Nelson; Fire Chief Jamie Wilson and Scott Potter.

Also present: Finance Director Sue Smith, members of the public, press.

1. Call to Order

D. Colavecchio called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance

3. Presentation of 2011 Proposed Budgets

i. Library: Ms. Radosevich noted that the Library budget has been reduced over the last several years in spite of the fact that the usage has grown. She reported that 93,000 items were circulated in the last year and that the recession has brought increased usage for a variety of purposes including recreation, job searches, computer usage. She noted that the staff works very hard and the proposed budget includes \$4,459 (2.5%) in salary increases, the first in 3 years. Other increases in the proposed budget are to open on Wednesdays from 10am -6:00pm and to purchase videos, books and periodicals.

The Laura Andrews Fund of \$10,000 per year is used to purchase books and periodicals.

ii. Recreation: Martin Egan reported that his budget increases are an attempt to reinstate programs that were cut in 2009, including bus trips for campers; he observed that the camp offerings do not constitute a "well-rounded camp." He noted that all programs either break even or make a modest profit; those that don't have been eliminated.

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to move the Ambulance Corps to the top of the agenda. Vote: Unanimous

iii. Ambulance: David Bernagel and Daniella Oullette reported that the Corps has been using the Emergency Services Account to balance the budget; all of the Town funds (\$23,000) have been used. They estimate that they will be over budget this year by \$5000. There is \$5000 unencumbered in the EMS account. They reported that 870 calls were responded to, which is down by 75 calls in 2008. They have a 40% collection rate and only bill what insurance company will pay. They noted that the Ambulance Corps pays for its own capital expenditures.

On a motion by K. Mosimann O’Sullivan, seconded by G Seabourne, it was voted to move the Police Dept to the top of the agenda. Vote: Unanimous

iv. Police Dept: Chief Torrance reported that he is seeking ways to increase revenue to offset expenses in the Police Dept budget; he proposed adding a \$5 increase to the \$60 per hour fee charged to outside users for Special Duty police officers. He calculated that this would bring in an estimated \$3840 more in revenue based on the number of hours billed (768) to date.

G. Seabourne decried the cost of pension benefits, saying that the pension should be changed to a 457 pension contribution fund. The need for a regional communications system was discussed with D. Colavecchio noting that Watertown is installing a \$20m system. G. Seabourne recommended that the Town look at proposals for regionalizing radio service. D. Colavecchio asked the Police Chief to assist the Assessor by looking out for unregistered motor vehicles. G. Seabourne recommended that the Chief hire part time police officers to save on pensions and benefits. The Chief reported that he can only hire part time officers for 4 hour shifts and that non-union new hires will have a 457 pension plan.

v. Fire Dept: Chief Wilson and Scott Potter explained that the 2011 proposed budget of \$125,581 is less than the 2010 budget of \$130,675.

In response to a question regarding charging for fire calls, Chief Wilson responded that it is not lucrative. Jim O’Neill noted that Sandy Hook and Cheshire charge for calls; Sandy Hook receives 600-700 calls per year which brings in \$3000. Thomaston has 245 per year which would bring in \$700-\$1000.

4. Other Business:

- M. Galbraith reported that the Capital Improvements Committee recommends that the Board of Finance request that the Board of Selectmen look into the feasibility of joining or leading a regionalization of communications services. The Board of Finance agreed to with the recommendation and the Chairman will send a letter of request to the Board of Selectmen.
- First Selectman E. Mone joined the meeting at 9:15pm.
- Finance Director Sue Smith reported that the budget as proposed will require a 2.47 mill increase.

5. Public Comment

1. T. Durso- Board of Education request was over 5%; why is Board of Finance “grilling” the departments that have small budgets?

2. A. Rossi- The Town needs to save money without cutting services. He noted that during the election much was made about zero based budgeting , yet the Board of Education budget was not zero based.
3. C. Morrison, Library Board Trustee- Noted that all library programs are free of charge; the library is free and open to everyone and the library will continue to seek new sources of revenue including grants.
4. P. Yost- The Carnival and other events cost the Town a lot of money yet the Town continues to subsidize non-residents' entertainment at the Opera House.

6. First Selectman's Report

E. Mone reported that the energy audit results propose that it would cost \$53,033.62 to retrofit all of the light fixtures. CL&P would pay \$21,272.03 or 40% and the Town would pay \$31,761.59. in monthly payments of \$1134.34 for 28 months. The estimated monthly savings on electric bills is \$1176.97 which will be fully realized when CL&P is reimbursed for the costs of the project.

On a motion by M. Galbraith, seconded by G. Seabourne, it was voted to hire EL&M electricians to retrofit the lighting fixtures at a cost of \$53,033.62 with CL&P paying \$21,272.03 and the Town \$31,761.59. in monthly payments of \$1134.34 for 28 months. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to authorize the Board of Selectmen to move the energy audit proposal , at a total cost of \$53,003.62 with the expectation that CL&P will pay \$21,272.03, to a Town meeting. Vote: Unanimous

G. Seabourne asked E. Mone if he had counted the street lights and if CL&P would change them to LED lights. E. Mone responded that many of the poles were installed at the request of the Town, and he will "look at every pole."

On a motion by M. Galbraith, seconded by S. Turner, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45pm.

Marie Galbraith
Secretary, Thomaston Board of Finance