

Thompson Board of Selectmen
Special meeting Minutes
February 17th, 2016
Library Community Room

PRESENT: Ken Beausoleil, First Selectman, Shaina Smith, Selectwoman, Steve Herbert, Selectman, Orla McKiernan-Rafterty, Finance Director

First selectman Ken Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

Board of Assessment Appeals

Chairwoman Erica Groh presented the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. She noted an increase of 3%. She noted what her job entailed; came in as chair with two FOI complaints. They average about 14 meetings or 60 hours. The issue of professional affiliations was brought up by Ken Beausoleil as there were no dollars set previously and the department is now proposing \$100 in the event that there are any. Advertising question brought up by Steve Herbert and Erica Groh stated there are ads placed in the Shopper's Guide to remind residents of upcoming meetings/opportunities for residents. Declare personal property reminders were examples of a circumstance when a resident should be made aware through advertising. Training is in Hartford during the day and is intended for new members of the Board. Mr. Herbert noted that there were \$81 spent last year in terms of what we spent the year before which was \$200 so thinking we will spend \$600 on professional affiliations, meetings, fees and training as well as advertising. Mrs. Groh noted she didn't appreciate it being announced that she didn't gain this position on her own merit. Mr. Beausoleil asked what the fees were last time to which Ms. Rafterty said she would look into it.

Emergency Management

Steve Benoit, Emergency Management Director presented his department's budget. Only increase asking for is the maintenance and equipment for the hummer (first aid kit, cones, sound unit). The budget increase is 24.8% or \$500. Mr. Herbert asked how many times the Hummer was used and Mr. Benoit noted there were people who needed to go out to the fire departments. Mr. Beausoleil asked how often he uses his personal vehicle and Mr. Benoit noted he goes around town and makes appropriate calls and now will use the Hummer to do the same thing. Mr. Herbert said people have been up in arms about the Hummer. Mr. Benoit said a list came out as to what we've used it for. In the 6 months it has been ours we have used it a few times. He notes that if a tree hits my truck then the town is responsible for the truck. The hummer did not cost the town anything. It is stored inside now at the WPCA. Total increase is to spend \$900 more than last year. The \$6,057 came from contingency for repairs and painting, etc. Protective clothing would include jackets, for example. Homeland security outlines may come out of the books and periodicals line item.

Recreation Department

Recreation Director Angela Hachey presented the proposed 2016/17 budget for the recreation department. There were also members of the Recreation Commission present. Mr. Herbert asked to look at miscellaneous items first. He asked about the traveling for example as to why it is anticipated to keep it at \$400 when YTD nothing has been spent. Angela noted that with the new training which she is hoping to participate in as she is the new Rec. Director. Mr. Herbert then stated why the additional \$600 for meetings to which Angela noted that it would all be for her to gain the training for the National Recreation and Park Association certification class, exam as well as workshops for budgeting and grant

writing workshops. These would all be classes for the upcoming fiscal year as some classes are not offered until the new budget begins. The application fee for the Parks and Recreation Professional Certification is \$260. Angela noted that booking concerts and the bands can be expensive; hoping that the increase will help with the quality. Some people have come with suggestions and some bands are too expensive. Steve asked why it costs \$1,000 and it is a combination to fill the eggs by vendor and then there are prizes and raffles. Steve stated it seems like a lot of money for an Easter Egg Hunt. Total for the department being proposed is \$87,887 which is a decrease of \$1,389 or 1.6%. Regarding the office and recreation supplies, Mr. Herbert said it seems like the exact amount that is budgeted is spent and not all departments operate that way. Mrs. Smith responded by saying that Angela cannot speak for the spending that has taken place in prior years.

Fiscal year 2016 Capital Improvement Projects would include a request for \$5,000. Total estimated cost for little league complex improvements is \$33,000 total over the next two years. The little league is requesting the removal of tree removal, fence work and the scoreboard. For fiscal year 2017-18 would total \$28,000 for the playground. The total does not include the scoreboard request.

Under playground and park improvements is to include a fishing platform at Riverside Park in the amount of \$1,000, \$2,000 fencing project at the Grosvenordale Common, \$1,000 for site improvements at Duhamel's Pond and \$1,200 for playground surfacing material for all playgrounds. Total for that is an estimate of \$5,200 for FY 16-17. The recreation truck is used year round for setup of all programs and the amount that is being requested is \$8,000 to purchase another truck as existing one is becoming too reliable for programs to run. Mr. Herbert asked to perhaps request more as this isn't even going to cover the cost of the quotes that were provided by various UHaul vendors.

Fire Departments

All five fire departments were asked to present proposed budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. The Chiefs which were asked to

West Thompson—Mike Rivers

Thompson Hill—Holger Krohn (absent) but provided budget ahead of time

East Thompson—Jeff Sheldon

Community Fire—John Sharpe

Quinebaug FD—Steve Bodreau

John Sharpe explained OSHA testing for the Board of Selectmen's background knowledge. National Fire Protection Association NFPA standards have changed for hose testing. There are multiple size ranges. There are locking mechanism on connectors and without a lock they will not test it. You have to get it replaced, but they will not test unless the locks are on them. Any hose manufactured before 1987 to meet requirements of 1979 addition shall be removed from service. A report from last year and all fire hoses in the town shows 213 lengths of hose will not be tested this year because they are too old but need every inch that we can get. The 5 inch hose is \$5/ft, average maybe \$3 per foot. 213 lengths are 50 so about \$32,000. We have no choice as they won't use it. Steve Bodreau noted that he placed an order months ago and there was a problem with the rubber. There are no exceptions for the new rule about the hose testing requirement. John Sharpe noted that there are 1978, 1972 hoses and some of those hoses are better than newer hoses. Doing the math there are 213 lengths that has to come out of service. Chief Sharpe noted that there are bottles will need to eventually come out of service. 7 years is how many years the trucks can have the tires utilized for. Some tires are \$300 each.

Chief Bodreau for Quinebaug presented for the department. The total expenditure for the last calendar year equates to \$66,554.30. Mr. Herbert asked how that amount can be if last year the total was \$119,585.00. Chief Bodreau noted there were trucks and repairs that took place. Chief Bodreau noted he would have to go back to verify the actual vs. what was budgeted.

West Thompson's Chief Mike Rivers presented the budget proposal. The department is up to 43 members, averaging 3-4 new members every month. Good and bad as that means there are additional training growing pains. Trying to keep down training costs, some are out to be training instructors. EMSI's are at the dept. We recently did a free class for members and charged \$200 total for that event. Our President's wife is an accountant and broken down well and as you progress on in the packet there is a spreadsheet that breaks it down further. Saved some dollars on DOT shipments and fuel which has been a savings. Hose replacement came after an OSHA complaint. This year proposed \$55,135.00 with increases in some of the line items. Capital improvement major purchases would be more like a plan to accomplish such as a replacement service truck, turnout gear, generator for the station, radio upgrades and building projects. Major purchases proposal would total \$203,500.00 which are items that aren't necessary but it is more of a wish list. The items included cutters, thermal camera, gas meter and light tower.

Chief Sheldon of East Thompson reflected a budget of \$49,725.00. Mrs. Smith asked how the departments knew its costs in the past after the Chief noted that there was no budget for 2014. Chief Sheldon said that the town gave us a check and we spent it as we needed it. He said Kerstin Forrester pushed us to this system and we didn't have to estimate budgets. Chief Sharpe added before we never had to justify our needs. Up until I took over we had to justify purchasing \$300,000 truck. He added that turnout gear is about \$2,710 per person without SCBA; it costs \$10,000 for interior fire fighter gear. Mr. Herbert asked about the loans within the East Thompson document that had budgetary figures to which Chief Sheldon said an engine was purchased. It was noted that all fire department chiefs in Thompson have to take out loans for gear or apparatus to keep status quo and properly function. Chief Bodreau added that a grant writer could help the departments gain extra funds for equipment. Mrs. Smith noted that it seems some of the projections for 2016 are undershooting when you compare the numbers to previous years' expenditures. Chief Sheldon said the speedway is self-sufficient. He has 10 members who are staffed on payroll. The department generated about \$80,000 in revenue from the speedway. When asked about membership numbers by Mr. Herbert, the departments stated on average about 40 fire fighters with the maximum amount not to exceed 45.

Chief Sharpe presented on behalf of Community Fire and noted the fiscal year for the department runs from May 1st to April 30th. Sharpe went down the budget proposal and said that repairs and maintenance line item is the fire department and EMT combined, medical supplies are on the ambulance side and training is down. He noted that the department reimburses after certification. Payroll is for ambulance and is outsourced. Uniforms includes shirts or badges. The majority of the radio expense comes from the fire department side. Direct public support has been adjusted to stand alone and not with the fundraising line item as it reflects personal checks that have been written to the department. On the ambulance side, Chief Sharpe said in the 9 months there were numbers that showed billable ambulance calls. There are 16 staff members which are paid; there were 22. Chief Sharpe went on to say \$210,000 original purchase price of an ambulance now shows a balance of \$37,074; this time last year it was \$120,000.40 with money coming out of service provided to the speedway. Chief Sharpe said he hears from residents that they feel the ambulance service is a cash cow but it is not. A claim amount in 2014/15 was given as an example: there were 560 billable calls that

amounted to \$465,979. The department deposited four claims, paid \$244,350.52 with a total net of \$-39,028.01. Chief Sharpe explained that Community Fire Co. charges \$100/hr for the ambulance to be there during events; \$29,000 payroll ambulance payment comes out of that in the amount of \$67,200 so the net of that service is \$48,943.96 so only about a \$10,000 amount is in the positive. Chief Sharpe met with Community's billing agency and explained claims, percentages and how Medicare and Medicaid plays a part in reimbursement rate for the ambulance company. He noted that he does not like to rely on another business to make ours function, when speaking about the speedway. He has heard the calendar for the speedway may include less events than last year.

Chief Sharpe added he would like to put a proposal before the Board of Selectmen of \$50,000 to offset ambulance expenses. He investigated other services within the area and gave the following examples:

Dudley, MA—EMS at night line item is \$144,515

Brooklyn (KB)--\$69,00 that is subsidized

Putnam EMS—proposed in 2015/16 \$90,500

Woodstock Emergency Med.--\$133,675

Canterbury Ambulance staffing--\$89,000

Chief Sharpe discussed the newest ambulance that is used in-town and the requirements being mandated, including a loading stretcher which amounts to \$14,000; power loading system is \$22,000. Mr. Beausoleil asked outside of the \$45,500 within all of the budgets presented at the meeting, what else would the departments like or need? Sharpe responded by mentioning it is possible to have software to go from the current fire system to a web-based system so that members can access and enter in data off-site and that would be an increase to the computer software of about \$300. Chief Sheldon added he can justify an increase to \$48,000 in total for his department's budget. Sharpe agreed that he could see a 5% increase from what Community currently sees from the town. He would also like a capital improvement line item to create asks and start saving dollars to replace uniforms, tires, etc. Then for ambulance, Chief Sharpe would like \$50,000 for the replacement of the ambulance, payroll and medical supplies/equipment (defibrillators). He added that as far as a capital expense, \$20,000 for all departments may be a good place to start.

The issue of morale and performing tasks were brought up by Chief Sheldon and noted that all of the Chiefs are spending their own time and money or equipment and resources without asking for reimbursement, to continue functioning as a department as status quo.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Mr. Beausoleil, seconded by Steve Herbert to adjourn.

Beausoleil: Yes

Smith: Yes

Herbert: Yes

Motion Carried.

The special Board of Selectmen's meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Shaina Smith, Selectwoman