

Lebanon Board of Finance
Special Meeting March 4, 2023
Minutes

BOF members in attendance:

In person: Liz Charron, Phil Johnson, Mike Nintean

Via Zoom: Meghan Scott, Diane Malozzi (arrived at 9:26), David Scata, Gregg Lafontaine

BOF members absent: AJ Dunnack, Haley Messier

Other in attendance: Kevin Cwikla (First Selectman), Hayley Wagner (Finance Director), presenters for each area (see below)

The meeting was held in-person in the downstairs conference room at town hall and via Zoom.

L. Charron called the meeting to order at 8:33 am. M. Nintean to sit for D. Malozzi until she arrives.

L. Charron explained the protocols for the meeting. Each area would present information, BOF members would ask questions, then public comment would be offered.

NOTE: public comment was offered after each area was discussed. There was no public comment for any area.

Dept. 410 Assessor – Emma Sousa: Other than busy in office no changes. Capital request of \$25,000 is to cover potential extra expenses associated with reval, including hearing, court cases where we need Vision to attend. The \$80,000 allocated in the current year capital covers the basic reval contract. The Grand List was discussed. Nice increase due to big project at Prides Corner and from Eversource. M. Scott questioned the motor vehicle piece. E Sousa said this has stabilized. No other capital needs other than future reval.

Dept. 410 Elections – Berkley Nowosad: tend to go through a 4 year cycle of elections. While FY 24 would be similar to FY20, that year flowed into FY 21 due to the pandemic, so comparisons to FY 21 are more appropriate. Minimum wage requirements have increased wages. Supply costs have increased.

Dept. 422 LVFD – Chief Jay Schall, Todd Kulman, Brandon Dominique, Mark Elliott: Calls are up 16% over pre-pandemic levels and up 44% in last decade. Still able to cover. Membership is good. Takes approximately 2 years to train a new member and cost approximately \$10,000 for training and gear. Budget request is up \$10,000. Key areas driving this are increased cost of gear, increase cost of training classes, diesel fuel, \$2000 for admin assistant that has allowed them to be on calls. Capital request of \$100,000 for Rescue 106 Equipment. This is for the “jaws of life”. Current equipment is old and outdated and has failed recently. New one will not require tethered to truck, gives more ability to handle more situations. Lifespan is 20 to 30 years. Next big item will be ET 106 in the 2025/26 timeframe. M. Scott asked if substation was still being discussed. They are always on lookout for property that might become available. Understand focus is now on DPW facility. The Fire Department was thanked for their service to the town. We are very fortunate to have an excellent volunteer fire department.

Dept. 446 Paramedic – Mark Elliot explained the contract and how it might change when Hartford Healthcare purchases American Ambulance in Norwich. Our contract has been based on 70% of our population since Am. Amb handled part of town. Also, the per person charge is going up each year. This will be about a \$10,000 impact to the budget. M. Scott questioned if it was necessary to have. It is a state requirement.

Dept. 449 Dispatch – very satisfied with service. Cost was fixed at \$15,189 for 5 years when we entered it.

Dept. 409 Town Clerk – Mary Ellen Wieczorek: Pretty status quo with activity. Some items have increased some down. Handled 350 absentee ballots in election. Home sales have decreased from levels during pandemic. Implementing online dog registration. Using Historic Preservation Fund for indexing. This will probably run out of money in 2 or 3 years. Salary line is up due to a market adjustment of \$6,000 to the Town Clerk's salary. No capital needs.

Dept. 407 Tax Collector – Kelly Lawer: nothing unusual, busy tax season. Percent of collections is high. No capital needs.

Dept. 420 Police – Resident State Trooper Eckman: Constables doing overtime due to Frontier fiberoptics project. Hiring another officer this week. Two items added to budget request: Upgrades to taser equipment (\$3600) and psychological testing which is required with new police regulations. If buy the tasers it is \$18,000 (this is in the TIP list) but RST Eckman included a leasing approach costing \$3600 per year for 5 years. L. Charron mentioned we may lower his budget by \$3600 if it is decided to fund this in TIP. A police car is requested in capital. The one they use for backup is on last legs, over 100,000 and needs to be jumped to start. Used cars are hard to find. The fleet has 3 vehicles: the new one used by SRO, patrol car with approximately 60,000 miles, and the backup. The new car would replace the patrol car and that car would become the backup. All vehicles are stored at the FSC and are washed once per week. M. Scott mentioned we should look at lease to purchase for this. P. Johnson noted the charge for the RST from the state has dropped. This is due to a change in how the state is charging.

Dept. 439 Cemetery Commission – Jim Barrett, Tom Meyer, Keith LaPorte: They are looking for more salary dollars for sexton and backup sexton. Amount is based on \$25/hour X 20 hours per internment X 40 internments/year. L. Charron explained that the BOS is responsible for salary decisions. L. Charron asked about fees charged. \$500 for grave site and half that for cremation site. They are also requesting budget dollars for a groundskeeper. Volunteers are aging and it is hard to find a vendor to perform these small tasks. They have 2 miles of walls they maintain. Repairs & maintenance request is higher to handle invasive grass that has become a hazard. There are 90 trees that need to be removed and because of the delicate work around gravestones, this needs to be done by a professional. They also would like to have stone wall work performed. Many items are on the TIP list.

Fund 213 Library – Matt Earls, Cathe McCall: L. Charron thanked Matt for his work at the library and wished him well in his new position. The new building is loved by all. They are estimating that the utilities will increase based on double square footage offset by improved efficiency. Library is a busy place with programs every day. Salaries are up due to increase approved by BOS to meet minimum wage and market. A discussion on eBook cost and utilization happened. The new big item added was the elevator maintenance contract for \$5,000. Matt is not happy with this and feels there could be cost savings if couple with the school's contract.

Fund 206 Recreation Commission – Sandy Tremblay, Nick Poppiti: focus is maintaining facilities. Seasonal salaries up due to resuming typical activities after COVID. Also, minimum wage has increase these and they added \$1 to keep staff since it is so difficult to find new people. The capital request of playscape was discussed. L. Charron requested they get new info on cost since the numbers they are using are over 1 year old. D. Malozzi also requested info on maintenance, including annual inspections and lifespan of equipment. The location and possible need for fencing was discussed.

Dept. 436 Solid Waste – Rick Nelson, new chairman: Board approved slight changes to the budget we have in book. Assumed 3% increase in most costs. Disposal charges are the big unknown since Casella has purchased Willi Waste. Salaries reflected in book can be reduces since Supervisor hours should be 988. Fees charged are going up which will help offset increases. Revenue anticipated at \$167,000. Capital needs are being done through TIP. L. Charron requested the board look at capital needs over next 5 to 10 years, focusing on next 5 the most. A sticker program was mentioned to assure we are just servicing town residents/taxpayers.

Dept. 458 Senior Center – Darcy Battye: about 85% of the seniors are back using the center. They serve 60 to 65 lunches every Tuesday (\$5 charge). A unique service offered is the loaning of medical equipment. They have attic to store items (ex. Walkers, knee scooter, commodes, hospital beds). They have partners with Alzheimer's Association first Friday of each month from 11:00 – 4:30 to provide activities and lunch. In the budget propane is up. Generator uses this. Current capital needs are being addressed in TIP (floor in big room, carpeting, chairs). They will be receiving \$15,993 from state in a grant to help with programs.

Salaries across the board – M. Ninteau asked why the words “under negotiation”? K. Cwikla answered salaries are being discussed and might change.

Fund 221 Senior Van Program – Darcy: doing a good job serving the community. Using WRTD more. Difficulty getting drivers when she needs to. They will need to replace the old van when a new program comes out from the state where they cover 80% of the cost. They are ok till then. Old van is used as backup. L. Charron mentioned we will need to look at fund balance for this to see the amount to transfer to it. While the request is for \$88,000, we typically can fund less than this due to the grants received from the state. Darcy acknowledged this is ok.

Dept 437 WPCA – Gregg Lafontaine. This is a small budget and all were curious why we didn't cover this under small/static budgets. It will be moved there next year.

L. Charron adjourned the meeting at 11:41.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Charron, Chairman