

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Budget Workshop
Wednesday, February 22, 2023
Preston Town Hall - Lower level Conference Room**

Call to Order - Sandra Allyn-Gauthier called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier

Jerry Grabarek

Ken Zachem

Also Present

Cindy Varricchio - Financial Director

Kimberly Lang - Recording Secretary

Members of the Public - 1

2. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

- **February 15, 2023 - Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes**

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 3 the name is *Casella*, not *Castella*
- Page 3, #4, Line 3 should read - *the \$10,000 grant would help cover other costs.*
- Page 3, #4, last line should read - *they would tentatively receive \$32,500 for the next 4 years.*

*Ken Zachem motioned to approve Special Meeting Minutes of February 15, 2023 as amended.
Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

3. Correspondence - None

4. Reports - None

5. Appointments and/or Resignations - None

6. New Business

a. Resolution Application for Poquetanuck Village Heritage Trail Grant

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained the need for a resolution to apply for a Recreational Trail Development project through CT DEEP. She explained the resolution is a request to allow

her to execute and file the grant which is due on or before March 1, 2023. Ms. Allyn-Gauthier went on to explain this will compliment the LOTCIP grant and enhance the Village by:

- Provide parking areas for two different kayak launch sites
- Create a fishing area on Lincoln Road along Shoeville Brook
- Regravel and fence to improve parking lot on Route 2A to allow access to the multi-use path through the Village
- Purchase a small plow to maintain the trail
- Watering system for the hanging baskets on period lighting
- 30 banners marking the Poquetanuck Village Heritage Trail
- Trash bins
- Interpretive signs

This will cost \$568,000 and the Town is receptive to funding parts of this project rather than all of it, if need be.

Ken Zachem motioned to authorize Sandra Allyn-Gauthier to execute and file on behalf of the Town of Preston for the Poquetanuck Village Heritage Trail Grant through CT DEEP for an amount not to exceed \$600,000. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. 2023-2024 Budget for General Government

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier reminded the group that as they go through the various budgets this evening they will not be discussing salaries, that will be done at the March 1, 2023 Special Meeting at 5:00 PM.

1. Board of Selectmen

It was pointed out that the Program and Supplies Line Item was reduced based on past spending.

2. Central Services

Areas of increase were: Technology - \$30,000; Technology Fund(for servers) \$7,500; Legal Notices - \$2,000; and Electricity - \$3,768.

It was explained that Technology increases are to cover the rising cost of established programs, the adding of ClearGov, upgrading of Office 365, and following Starr's suggestion to start replacing employee computers at a rate of 5 a year, rather than all at once. The Town's 5 servers will need to be eventually replaced and it was suggested to start setting aside funds to cover the future cost, thus the creation of the Technology Fund(for servers) and budgeting \$7,500.

3. Employee Benefits

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared that she would like the Board to start thinking about Staff Development. She stated with several new employees it is important to train staff and to provide opportunities of continuing education in order to keep staff members knowledgeable with current trends and requirements. She shared that CCM and other organizations offer free or inexpensive training. It is her hope to have quarterly training and staff development that will be incorporated into evaluations.

The projected cost of MERS may not be available until early March, so increases over the last 3 years were averaged and then calculated numbers to be used as a placeholder in order to finalize the budget on time.

Once the salaries are determined then FICA, Medicare, and Pension figures can be finalized.

Health and Dental Insurance - Dental is at a 2% increase and Health Care is not to exceed 8.5% and when they have final numbers those will be adjusted.

Because UnitedHealthCare now pays Brown & Brown broker's fee. It is thought that those funds could be used for Human Resource support in a variety of ways.

4. Building

Building Inspector is covered by a SCOGG grant so there is a savings in that area. The Pass Through Fees to State may look like an expense, however, there is a corresponding revenue nullifying that line. Travel and Meeting Reimbursement was reduced because of low use in the present budget.

5. Town Clerk/Tax Collector

The increase in this budget is largely due to postage.

6. BoF

It was noted that the Legal Fees were moved to the Central Services, and that the only significant increase is the Auditor with a 33% increase.

7. Assessor

The Transfer to Revaluation is to build funds to cover the cost of the next revaluation of property. It was noted that \$5,000 was set aside to do a personal property audit. In the fall the Assessor will conduct a personal property audit and once the results are seen it will be determined whether it's feasible to continue conducting that kind of audit.

8. Treasurer/Finance

The Treasurer's budget was briefly discussed.

9. Animal Control

Stipends will be dealt with when salaries are discussed. The Transfer to Dog Fund increase was calculated based on the average monthly cost of this year, a 43% increase.

10. Miscellaneous - None

11. Follow up and Discussion

Amos Lake Associations request of \$5,000 was discussed. The itemized list of their expenditures was shared. It was decided that the Town could pay for water testing that was listed at \$800. Invoices would be given to and paid through the Conservation and Agricultural Commission.

7. Old Business - None

8. Tax Refund - None

9. Public Comment and Questions

Andy Depta, 6 Young Court, asked for clarification on the Heritage Trail and if it connected to the TRi-Town Trail. Clarification was given.

He also had questions concerning the Town's 5 servers and possible reduction of servers. It was explained that some programs need their own server.

He thanked the First Selectwoman for the information he requested on the Troopers' hours. He was concerned that there was an 8 hour gap with no coverage. It was clarified that Troop E covers those hours.

10. Adjournment

Ken Zachem motioned to adjourn at 5:50 P.M.. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

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J. Keir
PRESTON TOWN CLERK