

**Litchfield Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2024 ~ 7:00 p.m.
Litchfield Firehouse**

Call to Order: Chairman Erich Marriott called the regular meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Members Present: Erich Marriott, Elliot Fuessenich, Matt Dyer, Patty Dauten. Sam Olmstead arrived at 7:10 p.m. Tom Terhaar, alternate, arrived via Zoom at 7:17 p.m. E. Marriott seated T. Terhaar as a regular voting member for Pat Donovan.

Members Absent: Pat Donovan, Alternate Jennine Lupo

Others Present: First Selectman Denise Raap, Selectman Jeffrey Zullo, Treasurer Alan Landau, Finance Director Amaechi Obi and Finance Assistant Stacey Dionne.

Motion: M. Dyer moved and E. Fuessenich seconded a motion to add to the agenda after the CIP budget presentation, "Fire & EMS Commission Plan for Pay Per Call". All voted aye and the motion carried.

Approval of the 2/12/24 Regular Meeting Minutes: **Motion:** E. Fuessenich moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of 2/12/24 as presented, and M. Dyer seconded. All voted aye except M. Dyer, who abstained because of absence, and the motion carried.

Public Comment: None

CIP Budget Presentation and Action: E. Marriott summarized the plan by department with the expectation to avoid bonding. **Motion:** E. Fuessenich moved to accept as presented the total capital request of \$2,433,900 for 2024/25. P. Dauten seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Fire & EMS Commission Plan for Pay Per Call – John Campbell: J. Campbell, Fire & EMS Commission Chairman, presented Dan Morosani's concept of the plan with an approximate timeline. There will be a subcommittee comprised of all departments that will devise a full comprehensive plan using \$160,000 for a pay-per-call program, awarding volunteers \$20/call up to 100 calls with a \$2000 maximum payout. Accrual will start in July of 2024 for payout in August of 2025. They need \$160,000 for this 2024/25 budget and must comply with all training requirements to be eligible. J. Zullo said it is a problem to put the money into the budget now without a full plan. E. Fuessenich said he did not see this happening in the next budget. It would have to be ready for 4/2/24 to be considered by the Board of Selectmen. S. Olmstead suggested creating a non-lapsing account, and E. Fuessenich thought the surplus should go back to operating. Matt Tobin, in the audience, suggested promoting it as everyone will get something at the end of the year, and they could multiply what they would get by 16/20. J. Zullo said we also need to prove the recruitment and retention result of this program. J. Campbell said they hope to have a plan by April 2nd.

Board of Selectmen's Budget Presentation and Action: D. Raap presented the proposed budget, going through each department and noting highlights. There was discussion and explanations on the addition of a third Resident Trooper at 100% of their total cost and \$40,000 in overtime, resulting in a 43.32% increase in the Police line. J. Zullo noted that at a public meeting with the State Police, analysis showed there is no increase in crime. The Troopers' contract is a two-year term. Under libraries, D. Raap explained the OWL had asked for a 5% increase of \$408,450, but the Board of Selectmen approved a higher budget of 9.2% at \$425,450. The reasoning for the increase is that traditionally libraries are funded by towns at 50%, and we are only at 37% but have the highest per capita adult circulation in the State.

Motion: P. Dauten moved to adjust the Oliver Wolcott Library budget from \$425,450 to \$400,000 to reflect a 2.7% increase from 2023/24. E. Fuessenich seconded the motion for discussion. D. Raap said this is an investment in our community, and the Selectmen felt they should increase the budget to come closer to the average town support, plus the library usage is higher with less spending. J. Zullo said they have been drawing 7% from their endowment at an unsustainable rate. We used to provide 52% and now it is 35%, so the increase of 37% would get them on a more sustainable path. Upon roll call vote on the motion, S. Olmstead voted no, E. Fuessenich abstained, P. Dauten voted yes, M. Dyer voted no, T. Terhaar voted yes and E. Marriott voted no, and the motion failed.

Motion: P. Dauten moved to reduce the OWL budget from \$425,450, to \$408,450, its original asking price. E. Fuessenich seconded the motion. M. Dyer thought the library is important and vital to the community and urged the group not to look at this as an extraneous expense. Upon roll call vote, S. Olmstead voted no, E. Fuessenich voted yes, P. Dauten voted yes, M. Dyer voted no, T. Terhaar voted yes and E. Marriott voted yes, and the motion passed.

[S. Olmstead left the room here at 8:25 but joined by Zoom.] D. Raap explained how Region 20 will be taking on \$1.1 million of our debt service to be paid in August 2024 for FY 2024/25, and our remaining BOE debt will be paid to us a year later, with a written agreement forthcoming. A. Obi explained the debt service line items from the 2024/25 budget summary spread sheet, noting that we will pay off the debt from the credited funds from Region 20. Before they close with Region 20 they will make sure there is a closing document. The \$217,000 for BOE capital money came in for this year and was town-bonded. The BOE did not use the money for capital improvements, so we have to reallocate the debt. A. Obi said we would reallocate it to the debt – \$221,500 plus interest. A. Obi emphasized we are taking \$288,000 in debt and we are keeping \$217,000. The difference is \$71,000. We will have enough money to pay all costs this year. Next year they will probably give us enough to pay, but we will be short \$71,000 that will be budgeted to offset that. He wanted to make sure it was understood that there will be \$71,000 more in the schedule for us to pay, and J. Zullo noted that it would be spread over 15 years, so it will be a small amount and folded into the total debt service number. Under pension, E. Marriott questioned why the pension study for the merit service emergency responders would be in operating instead of a one-time payment. They will need the actuary (USI) to do the analysis to see what the numbers would be, estimated at \$25,000 or less. A. Obi suggested taking it out of operating and putting it into Contingency. E. Marriott thought it should come from fund balance after receiving a quote from USI, but A. Obi said it should technically be in Contingency.

Motion: M. Dyer moved to transfer \$25,000 from the Fringe Benefits line item 8101-56105 in the operating budget to the Contingency line item, which would increase Contingency to \$100,000. E. Fuessenich seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

Motion: M. Dyer moved to table voting on the total Board of Selectmen's budget as proposed until either we get a plan in place from the Fire Commission for pay-per-call, or at the 4/8/24 Board of Finance meeting. *[this was taken up later in the meeting]*

Motion: E. Fuessenich moved that 2101 Police be reduced from \$430,096 to \$322,174. M. Dyer seconded the motion. This reduction eliminates the third trooper (\$150,000). E. Fuessenich felt that we would not get better results with a third trooper, as they cannot be everywhere all at once. Upon roll call vote, E. Fuessenich voted yes, S. Olmstead voted yes, P. Dauten voted no, M. Dyer voted yes, T. Terhaar voted no,

and E. Marriott voted no. The vote was 3-3, so it failed and the line item remains at \$430,096. *[S. Olmstead returned in person at 8:52 p.m.]*

In summary of the budget action, E. Marriott said the Board of Selectmen approved \$31,316,975. The Board of Finance agreed to cut the OWL by \$17,000. M. Dyer then repeated his previous motion.

Motion: M. Dyer moved to table voting on the total Board of Selectmen's budget as proposed until either we get a plan in place from the Fire Commission for pay-per-call, or at the 4/8/24 Board of Finance meeting. E. Fuessenich seconded the motion. Right now the budget stands at 31,299,975, with the Selectmen's budget at \$9,129,011. Upon voting to table, all vote aye and the motion carried.

Monthly Financial Report for February

Motion: S. Olmstead moved to table the February financial report until next month, and M. Dyer seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

New Business

a) Transfers: Transfer #7 - \$7,782 for Firefighting Foam Disposal: **Motion:** S. Olmstead moved to approve Transfer #7 for \$7,782 for removal and disposal of PFAS firefighting foam. Funds will come from 01-1903-51703 Contingency and go into 01-2202-52111 Other Professional Services (Fire Protection). E. Fuessenich seconded, all voted aye and the motion carried.

b) Correspondence: None

c) Payment of Bills: None

d) Future Agenda Items: E. Marriott said they will take up approval of the BOS budget at the next meeting, find out if the Board of Ed will present, and hear from the Fire Commissioners.

Adjournment: Motion: P. Dauten moved to adjourn at 9:04 p.m. and M. Dyer seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.



Ann Combs, Recording Secretary