



Town of Ridgefield

Approved Board of Finance Budget Deliberations Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 26 2024

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called the Budget Deliberations meeting to order at 7:00 PM on March 26, 2024 in the Town Hall large conference room. Board Members Mike Rettger, Joe Shapiro, Greg Kabasakalian, Andrew Okrongly, Dave Ulmer present.

Others present: Rudy Marconi, First Selectperson; Kevin Redmond, Controller; Maureen Kozlark, Sean Connelly, Barbara Manners, Chris Murray, BOS members; Dennis DiPinto, P&R Director; Barbara Dobbin, P&R Commission Vice Chair; Jeff Kreitz, Chief of Police; Jake Muller, Director of Town Facilities.

II. Budget Deliberations-Town Operating and Capital

Mr. Marconi reviewed the proposed FY 2024-25 Operating and Capital budgets for the town, highlighting specific areas of changes, in addition to the details he had provided in his public hearing presentation on March 25. Among the topics covered were early voting and its cost implications, civilian dispatch being fully staffed with two new dispatchers in training, electrical and roof issues at the police department building, the holiday trust fund, and costs associated with maintaining the Branchville train station parking lot. Mr. Redmond noted that the budget for fuel/diesel have been reduced from prior year while electricity has slightly increased, and that the increase in costs for cyber security is due to a combination of software and consulting.

Representatives from Parks and Rec reviewed a summary of their operational results and their proposed budget and capital requests. They noted that Programs and Membership are the major sources of revenue, and that both have recovered to pre-Covid levels. Expenses have increased approximately 4% due to salaries and minimum wage increases. Further expense increases are expected in chemicals, supplies, and uniforms.

Mr. Marconi noted that there has been extensive discussion by the Board of Selectpersons regarding the capital item for new pickle ball courts in response to public comments, resulting in a letter from the BOS to Parks and Rec requesting that they identify and consider an alternative site for the proposed courts. Parks and Rec has identified a potential site on the Rec Center

property, and they expect to report back next week with an initial assessment of feasibility and costs.

There was a discussion of Parks and Rec revenues versus expenses for the membership and program portions of their operation. It was agreed that this was a topic that should have additional follow up in a future BOF meeting.

Chief Kreitz discussed the proposed capital budget item for new portable radios for the Police Department. The current radios are 10 years old and need to be upgraded. The radios being purchased will be multi-band, which will enable officers to communicate with other departments in surrounding towns. Mr. Marconi and Chief Kreitz summarized the discussions in the BOS on the reasons the purchase could not be spread across two budget years and the impracticalities of having a smaller number of units to be shared across the officer staff.

Mr. Muller reviewed the elements of the capital budget relating to buildings and engineering projects, including a design study for the Venus building heating system, replacement of exterior doors at some schools, upgrading of elementary school playgrounds for ADA compliance, the Mountain Road bridge replacement project, and a proposed town road safety report. He noted that grants have been received or are being sought for several of the major projects, that would provide offsets for up to \$1.47 million of the projected costs.

III. General Budget Discussion

Following the presentations, BOS and BOF members had a general discussion of various elements of the proposed budgets, including discussion about concerns for the higher level of capital requests in recent years, and how that trend would impact the overall budget via debt service costs should the proposed new Police and Fire facility be approved by voters in the next few years.

IV. BOS Recommendation of the BOE Budget

At the request of the BOF, each of the BOS members summarized his or her views of the BOE proposed operating budget, which the BOS has recommended be supported by the BOF as proposed.

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 10:20 p.m. by Mr. Rettger, seconded by Mr. Okrongly. All in favor. Next meeting March 27, 2024, BOE Budget meeting.

Respectfully Submitted by
Mia Belanger