



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

**Board of Finance
Budget Workshop Minutes
First Selectman's Budget
April 11, 2018 – Town Hall – 7:00**

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2018 APR 18 AM 9:08
TOWN OF COLCHESTER

BOF Members Present: R. Tarlov, R. Lepore, M. Egan, T. Kane, A. Migliaccio & A. Bisbikos

BOS Members Present: A. Shilosky, D. Mizla & J. Ford

Staff Members Present: CFO M. Cosgrove, Town Clerk G. Furman, Town Planner R. Benson, Tax Collector M. Wyatt, Tax Assessor J. Chaponis, ROV L. Grzeika & D. Mrowka, PW Director J. Paggioli, Senior Center Director P. Watts, Fire Dept. Chief Cox, Deputy Lee, assistant J. Walsh, Fire Marshal Shoemaker & many officers, Library Director K. Byroade, Police Department Resident State Trooper Martinez, Officer Edwards & assistant G. Santos, Executive Assistant T. Dean and clerk J. Campbell

Citizens Present: M. Hayes, S. Dubb, J. Kelly, T. Rudko, C. Vaillancourt and other citizens

1. **Call to Order** - R. Tarlov opened the workshop at 7:00 pm.
2. **Town Budget – Review and Discussion** - M. Wyatt address some of the questions the BOF had. NexisLexis is \$50/mo. for 50 searches with each additional search being \$1. M. Wyatt stated that there are a lot of delinquent taxes to be recovered and there for she added money to that line item to cover additional searches. M. Wyatt also stated with the busy tax season coming up and the assistant being new she thought additional PT/seasonal help will be needed, which is why she added additional money to that item. J. Chaponis stated that what they would use NexisLexis for is MV searches not people search, therefor requiring a separate account. DMV is closing the department that the assessor would normally use to help with this type of search, man hours will be needed to assist. He recently discovered that the assistant in the office knew of the financial restraints within the town and did not put down approx. 60-70 hours she worked last year, causing additional funds for overtime. There are 1100 personal property account which the assistant is solely responsible for. Most recently she picked up a dozen bucket trucks that were here for about 4 months. This account brought in \$45,000 in taxes and \$5,000 in interest. Legal-Assessment Appeals (in First Selectmen's Budget) are being kept a current level as the assessment appeals legal process could take 1-2 years. Approx. 24 appeals were filed and only 8-10 of them are completed. R. Benson spoke of the software the Planning department is in need of. The current software was designed in house by a former IT person. This program is at version 8 when they should be at version 18. Because of the age of the program, the information is now coming out corrupt and is forcing them to do work by hand. The new program has many more features, cloud based & and can be accessed by a resident from home and pay. Once an inspection has been completed it allows them to send an e-mail, rather than leave a notice on site, which has gotten lost many times. A public kiosk will be available in the office for the public to use. Public will be able to look and see what permits have been issued instead of requesting information from the office. Any missing information will not be allowed. Building officials will be able to access this software remotely. A. Bisbikos asked if this had been reviewed by the BOS. R. Benson has stated that the information has been sent to the BOS, but no formal presentation has been made at this point. He has looked at several other products. Sgt. Martinez spoke on the police department budget. He says currently this is a "bare bones" budget. The OT can be contributed to 2 weddings, child births, injuries, someone on light duties, sick & vacation time. There are paperwork requirements which can sometimes add to OT. Midnight shift has been

removed to save money. The police department cannot work on a freeze year round. Sgt. Martinez reported that his OT might be due to investigations, call outs, emergencies or deaths. R. Tarlov asked if there were scheduling issues due to the 5 days on, 3 days off contract. Sgt. Martinez said that there are no extraordinary issues. Officer Edwards spoke on the inadequate office space and the necessity to have a budget for that. R. Lepore asked what the police department would do if no overtime was allowed. Sgt. Martinez stated that no overtime would be impossible. R Lepore asked if adding additional staff could significantly reduce overtime. If an additional person is added, the need for OT would still be there and an additional administrative person wouldn't be able to do all that an officer could do. Officer Edwards spoke about uniforms and ammo. Vests have a 5 year life. There is a plan to purchase 3 per year as well as the Tasers. Currently there are 11 Tasers within the department and 4 are out dated. Laser and radar technology are severely outdated. Chief Cox stated that he has been to the cinema and has talked about running a no cost public service announcement in addition to Facebook and twitter. Currently there are no written contracts for volunteers for the fire department. On average they commit to 3-5 years. Chief cox connects retention to several issues, one is the lack of support from the "Town (government)." There is a 40 year old contract that needs to be updated, A. Shilosky is working on it. Fire Marshal Shoemaker asks to have his hours increased to 40 hours. About 75% of the work mandated by the state is completed. He said that there is no community that has volunteer FM. People are not interested once the liability is talked about. Currently there is no coverage if he is out of work. Library Director K. Byroade spoke about the memberships and it is noticed that both she and the selectman have a membership to CBA. One will be cancelled. PW Director J. Paggioli spoke about the grant money he would like to add to the capital plan for roads rather than snow. Due to the unsteady State budget, there are questions as to if the town will receive the TAR money. Hebron is testing a phone system and internet of the fiber optics. He should hear shortly how that works for them. This could decrease the budget item by \$9000. We continue to have ongoing computer technology issues within town departments. The fire department is in need of 7 new computers. The Papermill bridge grant has been held back. Talks will continue as to if the town will just fund the project in the current year or wait and see what happens with the state. M. Cosgrove stated that the fuel budget was generated off of February quotes.

3. **Citizen Comments** - T. Rudko stated that he believed the budget increase is 3.5% if the state funding stays as it was last year. R. Tarlov stated that the budgets presented (Town/BOE), based on the Governor's Plan, mill rate would go up 3.65 but the spending on the budget is only up by about .2%. T. Rudko ask the BOF "sharpen their pencils." He feels a good portion of the budget is technology based. He stated the town does not have a technology plan, and most plans are 3 years not 5 years. Are we keeping resources on site, and using bodies to maintain the resources? T. Rudko spoke on various levels of services the town could look into. He feels capital plans does not make sense. T. Rudko asked about the Fire Marshal ability to be more efficient with a computer program. Fire Marshal Shoemaker stated that through a grant he was able to update the department with a current cloud based program and hardware. T. Rudko also suggested the Public Safety look into training through Smith & Wesson or another entity like it. Most offer training free to police officers. He also questioned the duties of the Police Commission. C. Vaillancourt asked if the Police department has looked into buyback programs or will the hiring of PT officers help elevate the OT. S. Dubb asked the BOF to support recruitment budget and spoke in support of the job M. Cosgrove is doing.

4. **Town Budget –Discussion and Possible Action** – The board suggested several areas to reduce as well as looking at alternative ways to fund some of the capital items to bring the budget in at no increase. The First Selectmen will work with the CFO and some department heads to accomplish.
5. **Citizen Comments** - No citizen comments possible as we reached the 10:00 town curfew.
6. **Adjournment** - R. Tarlov closed the workshop at 10:00 pm.

Attachments: Q&A from A. Shilosky & Recruitment/Retention from CHVFD/Town Comparison

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanie Campbell, Clerk