

Town of Lincoln

Budget Board Meeting

April 1, 2014

Present:

**​Carl Brunetti​​Mike Babbitt​​Bob
Turner​​Bill McManus
​Rhonda Lacombe​Paul DiDomenico​Hagop
Jawharjian​Bill DiBiasio
​Paul Deutsch​​Richard Foster**

Absent:

**​Maria Marcello​​
​**

Call to Order

The meeting began at 7:32 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 27th were distributed for review.

**Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Hagop Jawharjian, to
approve the minutes.**

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

**The notes of the March 29th Town Facilities Tour were distributed for
informational purposes.**

Correspondence

The Budget Board received several letters regarding reductions in staff at the schools, specifically the reduction of a .5 FTE Social Worker.

The letters were received from: Kristen Jalbert (LHS English Teacher), Ron Almeida (LHS Social Studies Teacher), Christopher Allen (LHS Social Studies Teacher), Dawn Fish (LHS Guidance Counselor), James Morgan (LHS English Department), Andrew Hallam (LHS Teacher), Patricia Kilsey (Lincoln School District Transition Coordinator), Jay Schofield (LHS Teacher and LTA Secondary Vice President), Stacey Maselli (Special Education Department Chair), Suzana Pereira Borba (LHS Teacher), Lisa Cardarelli (LHS English Teacher), and Sandra Hamel (Taxpayer/Parent).

The Budget Board Chair responded to the letters by sending an email to all of the people who sent letters explaining that the School Committee's proposal to the Budget Board already included a 5.5 FTE reduction in staff and that .5 FTE Social Worker was one of the positions they had recommended be cut.

Also, he noted that the Budget Board only approves a bottom-line budget for recommendation to the Financial Town Meeting so it would be up to the School Committee to allocate that amount within the detail of their budget.

A letter was received from Town Resident Dean Lees.

Bob Turner made a motion, seconded by Hagop Jawharjian, to

postpone discussion of this correspondence.

There was a list of questions sent to the Town Administrator along with a request for the wording of his proposed resolution for a study of the High School campus.

The Town Administrator sent correspondence to the Budget Board regarding the Town Solicitor's opinion on designating a Building Committee for the High School project that will be studied and started within the next few years.

The Budget Board discussed the opinion that it would not be appropriate to set the committee in place at this Financial Town Meeting.

In response to the Budget Board's question whether there was any new information to be added to the Ferguson Field project, the Superintendent noted that she would have Pare Engineering meet with the Board if they choose but there is no new information regarding the project at this time.

The Finance Director gathered information regarding state-wide school salaries.

It seems Lincoln is the highest paid if not close in all areas.

The Town Administrator had requested meetings with the PACs of each school to discuss the budgets, and his requests were all denied based on the fact that the Superintendent was unable to attend.

Capital Fund 56 is running a deficit, and the Town Administrator will request a reconciliation of that account in order to review the more detailed information.

The Budget Board received a copy of a letter that is being distributed among the schools' certified staff regarding budget cuts and urging teachers and parents to attend Budget Board and School Committee meetings.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Business

FY15 Municipal Budget

Valerie Talmage, Executive Director of Preserve RI was present in order to discuss the Chase Farm House Project and the Curatorship Program being proposed for that property.

The Preserve RI Curatorship Program has been around for about 30 years and was started in Massachussets.

It is a program where a chosen Curator lives in a property for free in exchange for taking care of and updating it for a set amount of time.

The details and requirements of each different situation up to the agreement reached between the Town/organization, Preserve RI and

the Curator.

The costs of the work set forth in the plan and agreement are based on 3rd party fair market estimates and would then determine the tenancy length for the Curator.

Preserve RI has recently worked with the Town of Smithfield who have installed a Curator for a 5-year contract, which could then be extended.

Currently, Preserve RI is in the very early stages of a Curatorship project with Lincoln and have determined that since Chase Farm is a contributing building to the historical district of Great Road and it is in very good shape structurally it would be a good candidate for it.

There have only been 2 initial visits made so far, and a complete audit of the building's needs has not been done but before the property could be turned over to a Curatorship there would be some initial investments that would need to be made to make it habitable, so the Town Administrator believes some of that preliminary work should be budgeted for the coming year.

Dave Sale, Town Facilities Coordinator, noted that he is very confident based on verbal quotes that the requested \$13,500 and an additional \$25,000 would be enough to meet the needs of making the building habitable.

The Town will get a Certificate of Occupancy for the property before the Curator can move in, but it was noted that the building will not be held to the new standard and stricter code. It would not be an issue with insurance because it is not a newly constructed property.

The Budget Board questioned whether plumbing work would be

needed on top of the requested heating and electrical work. This would not be known until a full evaluation of the house is done, but plumbing is not included in the budget request.

The Town would then work with Preserve RI to enter a Curatorship, identifying candidates for the Curator position and working out the details of the 5-year term of repairs and maintenance.

They would then make a list of materials and supplies needed and the estimated costs of those, which the Tenant/Curator would be responsible for paying for and it would be equivalent to average rent that would have been paid during those 5 years.

There are currently some interested candidates for Tenant/Curator that do have building backgrounds, but they would hire a contractor to do any work they were not qualified for, and Preserve RI would be in charge of making sure they are doing the work properly as detailed in the work plan agreement.

They would also be obligated, based on conditions set forth by the Town, to make the building open for public viewing at certain specified times during the year.

The building is a 2-family house, and it is the intention that the Curator would live on the 2nd floor, but that would all be detailed in the agreement reached between the Town, Preserve RI and the Tenant/Curator.

It would be up to the Town whether the Curator would be a direct tenant of the Town but either way they would be responsible for paying all maintenance costs and utilities as well while living there.

For example, in the recent program in Smithfield the Town is in a

lease with the Curator directly but Preserve RI is the one with the power to inspect and report back to them. Power of termination of lease is the Town's.

Also, in lieu of rent the Curator sends money in monthly to Preserve RI to be held to pay for materials and maintenance.

Lincoln would decide how they would want to work out the details of their own agreement.

In order to select a Curator, candidates would apply and then the Town could form a Selection Committee.

There are already 2 people interested in the Curatorship.

The Town would propose a resolution for the initial costs to make it habitable of \$38,500 based on getting a Certificate of Occupancy.

There may be some federal grant money available for historical properties, but because Chase Farm is considered in a historic district but is not actually historical the odds of receiving a grant would be small.

In discussion of the Town's pensions, it was noted that all of the plans are properly funded, but that does not mean they are fully funded.

Properly funded means 60-80% of the unfunded liability, and the Town is currently at 67% but would like to see that improved to 80%.

There is a 20-year timeline to do that.

There are many pension systems currently used in Town, including:

- A Defined Benefit plan contribution of 8% of salary
- Municipal employee state retirement system (most non-union

employees) contribution of 13% of salary

- Town Hall: non-union employees' contribution of 6% of salary; union employees' contribution of \$1.61 per hr.**
- Police in are in the Municipal plan, contribution of 9.25% of salary**
- Certified Teachers contribution of 8% of salary**

Additionally, 2 Fire Departments are using the Municipal Pension Plan while the others probably have their own.

All entities that receive Town Health Care are insured through the Interlocal Trust managed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island.

Each area may have a slightly different plan but they are fundamentally the same.

The Union Pension Plan is billed based on hours in payroll, and the Budget Board questioned whether it was properly funded or not.

They will request from the Town Administrator a funding report on the Union Pension System including the hourly rate.

Department 4400 – Public Works, Central Services

Street Lighting was increased based on the Town Administrator's recommendation to \$375,000.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, that Total Central Services be recommended at \$3,032,982 for an increase of \$48,001 over the previous year.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Capital Resolutions

The Budget Board began voting on amounts to be funded for capital improvement projects but not yet on the wording of the resolutions.

Bill DiBiasio made motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to recommend funding of \$175,000 from Capital Reserve Fund 11 for Albion Park upgrades contingent upon receiving a matching DEM grant.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Bill DiBiasio made motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to recommend funding of \$20,000 from Capital Reserve Fund 11 for solar powered compost restroom facilities at Chase Farm with a DEM matching grant of \$100,000.

The Budget Board had questions about the details of the project such as the structure of the restrooms, what it will entail and whether they would be open all the time.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Bill DiBiasio made motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to recommend funding of \$13,500 from Impact Fees and \$25,000 from Capital Reserve Fund 11 for renovations of the Chase Farm House.

The Budget Board wants to be sure they have all of the information they need regarding use of impact fees and the project itself so that they can answer any questions that might be asked at the Financial

Town Meeting.

Also, when writing the resolution it will be very important to include “Not to Exceed” in the wording.

The motion passed by a vote of 9-1 with Hagop Jawharjian opposed.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to recommend funding of \$25,000 from Capital Reserve Fund 11 for restoration and relocation of the Hot Potato Schoolhouse for a total project of \$47,000.

The Budget Board wanted more information including the official legal name of the Schoolhouse, and whether once it's moved it will be fenced and inaccessible or if it will be open for School Tours, etc.

The lot it currently sits on is buildable but the Town can't do anything with it so they are considering putting up a plaque/marker for the school there. They could also use some of the land to widen the road in that area.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Hagop Jawharjian, to table voting upon the renovation and relocation of the Hot Potato Schoolhouse until the Budget Board has more information.

Police Department Addition

Mike Babbitt discussed the Police Department addition and the information he has with the Budget Board.

There is a base bid area of work and an alternate bid area of work.

The renovation of the existing Police Department can't really be included in the cost per square footage.

The Communications area and Mechanical room are included in the base bid.

The base bid area is 4,300 square feet, the alternate bid area is 4,200 square feet and the renovation area is 2,819 square feet for a total of 11,319 square feet.

Another option the Budget Board is looking at is a 12,000 square foot new structure which could fit on the current Town Hall area footprint without affecting DEM or taking away from parking.

The Town Administrator did mention a possible issue with ledge which would have to be investigated as well as possibly reconfiguring parking because he was concerned there is already inadequate parking for Town Hall.

The Budget Board priced out an estimate of this construction at about \$6 million and discussed whether this would be a good option and how it could be funded including a bond.

They agree that there is need for additional space, and will be discussing whether this would be the best way to address that need.

The Budget Board noted that there would be no idea of cost of excavating and prepping the site especially if there is ledge and they would still have to pay for renovations to the existing structure for it to be used for anything.

Also, the School Administration would not be able to move to the current police station because there is not enough space and they would also lose their housing aid reimbursements if not on school property.

For the recommended plans of the addition, the Budget Board has also asked the Town Administrator to price out a pitched roof instead of a flat roof just to see what the difference would be and if it would be a better option for the Town.

It was noted that most municipal roofs are flat and newer ones are usually white to be heat-reflective.

The Budget Board discussed in the long run whether it would be better to build the addition or a new structure.

It would cost approximately \$50,000 - \$60,000 for an architect to determine whether or not a new structure is possible on the site.

They noted that it is ultimately the Town Administrator's decision, and that their job is only to vote on the recommendation of the resolution for the addition.

In returning to Correspondence in discussion of the letter received from Dean Lees, the Budget Board discussed that they do not have the authority as a Board to legally challenge the Town Administrator's or any other Town officials' financial actions (for example the Sewer Enterprise Fund being created and taken out of the operating budget).

FY15 Education Budget

There was no new information or discussion regarding the Education Budget at the time.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Adjourn

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:49 pm.