

**Litchfield Board of Finance  
Special Meeting Minutes  
March 23, 2015**

**Call to Order:** Chairman David Geiger called the meeting to order in the LIS Art Room at 7:05pm with Ed Gadowski, David Wilson, Mitchell Fishman, Brenda Barnes, Sky Post (Alt.) and Ed Weik (Alt.) present.

Absent: Anne Dranginis

Also present: Leo Paul, David T. Wilson, Jack Healy, Stacey Dionne, Amaechi Obi, John Campbell, John McKenna

**Call to Order and Appoint Alternate(s)**

Chairman Geiger appointed Ed Weik to full member.

**Board of Selectmen Budget Proposal:**

Leo Paul distributed copies of the BOS Budget Proposal 2015-2016 as approved by the BOS on March 3, 2015. The total proposed budget of \$9,134,384 is a 5.75% increase over last year, or \$493,653. First Selectman Paul said the spending plan would allow the town to maintain its current level of services and carry out some much-needed public works improvements.

In answer to a question about an 8.7% increase in salaries, Leo Paul said one town employee is being paid on Worker's Compensation and another salary is being paid to cover his job, but this will come to an end soon.

In discussion about the Net Collectible Grand List, First Selectman Paul said the new larger Stop & Shop opening will lead to an increase in the 2017 Grand List. He said Arethusa had been over-paying property taxes due to a computation error and this was a key component in the large drop in the Grand List.

Jack Healy said the Public Works projects included in the budget increase will not require more employees and they are cross-training employees for more efficiency. Mr. Healy answered questions about repairing and rebuilding of equipment and explained the \$86,000 increase in salt is due to this being underfunded in past years. In answer to a question about the line item for Tree Services, which increased from \$40,000 to \$70,000, he said he has a five-page listing of trees that have been determined to be dead and present a threat to motorists so they will be taken down by a professional tree service.

Leo Paul said there is a spending freeze for all other town departments because of Public Works snow removal costs. The greatest increase in this year's budget is for public works projects that were delayed in the past and now must be done. In answer to a question, he noted that the current tax rate of 25.2 mills would increase to 26.5 mills if the proposed selectman's budget, proposed capital budget and debt spending of \$3.4 million, and the BOE proposed budget remain unchanged. For a median property assessed at \$200,000, this would result in a tax increase of

\$260/year. In reply to a question about \$20,000 in the budget for re-valuation under Tax Assessment, he said this is an accrual to fund the town's next re-valuation.

Leo Paul said they are searching for a new Finance Director but so far do not have viable candidates and most likely will have to offer a higher salary to fill the position. He said the BOE declined to consider the option of a shared Finance manager.

John Campbell, Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners and EMS, explained the 11.8% increase for volunteer fire departments was needed for protective equipment for new members and older equipment that must be replaced. In reply to a question about a single line item for Fire Protection expenses, rather than a breakdown by fire departments, John Campbell read off the individual budgets.

In reply to a question about the \$17,133 operating money for Sandy Beach, Leo Paul said there is a 60/40 split between Litchfield and Morris to maintain Sandy Beach, even though the property belongs to White Memorial.

Chairman Geiger noted that line items for Fringe Benefits and Worker's Compensation had a 12% increase and life insurance was increased by \$40,000 and these were possible places to look for savings. He asked about the increase from \$43,000 to \$58,000 for Legal and Professional Services and First Selectman Paul said this is due to union negotiations this year. Chairman Geiger asked if a BOF member could attend those negotiations and Leo Paul agreed.

In reply to a question about the Technology Department line item of \$12,000, Leo Paul said this is to manage their tech leases and for new computers so that all town employees have compatible computers. In reply to a question about the total number of town employees, First Selectman Paul did a quick calculation of 72 and said staffing has remained static for several years. David T. Wilson said the town is 100% self-insured and pays Anthem Insurance an administrative fee.

Chairman Geiger said he understands that it is a tight budget but the BOF thinks the numbers are too high. Vice Chairman David Wilson asked if the Public Works budget of \$150,000 could possibly be reduced to \$100,000. Chairman Geiger suggested reducing the budget by \$150,000 by taking that amount out of the Fund Balance for the needed Public Works projects. He requested the BOS consider how their budget could be reduced by up to \$100,000, or at least \$70,000. First Selectman Paul said he will present a list of potential reductions to the BOS at their April 7 meeting and will report back to the BOF on April 13.

It was decided to have the capital budget on the agenda for the BOF special meeting on March 30.

**Public Comment on the Board of Selectmen Budget Only:**

There was no public comment.

**Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Ed Weik moved to adjourn at 9:08pm and Mitchell Fishman seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann Jaacks  
Recording Secretary