

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING FINAL MINUTES
March 31, 2014

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, March 31, 2014, in the first floor conference room of Independence Hall.

Members Present: First Selectman Michael C. Tetreau, Selectman Kevin P. Kiley, Selectman Cristin McCarthy Vahey

Others Present: Alyssa Smith, Tom Cullen, Selma Cohen, Judy Ewing, Sands Cleary, Karen Ronald, Andrea Leonardi, Soundview, Gerry Speno, Linda Gardiner, Roger Autuori, Karen Parks, Stanton Lesser, Palma Senator, Bob Mayer, Pam Iacono, Neal Fink, Chief Richard Felner and members of the public

1) CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Tetreau called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3) PUBLIC EXECUTIVE BUDGET SESSION (no public comment)

Discussion of FY 2014-2015 Budget, including all Town Departments and Board of Education and Water Pollution Control Authority

First Selectman Tetreau explained the budget process stating the Selectmen will vote on the budget on April 1, the Board of Finance votes on April 3 and then the RTM votes on May 5. Selectman Kiley thanked the First Selectman and his administration as well as Selectman McCarthy Vahey for their work on the budget. He also thanked the finance department, Board of Finance and education staff. Selectman Kiley thanked all the citizens who emailed him. Selectman McCarthy Vahey also thanked everyone involved in the budget process and said it was a beneficial process with so much public input at Saturday's public budget session and with all the emails she also received. She is proud to be a Fairfield citizen after seeing how engaged and involved the public is on the budget. She said the Town is listening to everyone's comments. First Selectman Tetreau said it was great to see the room filled up at Saturday's public session.

Budget Director Linda Gardiner gave the Selectmen a handout on budget discussion items for the Fiscal Year 2015 proposed budget. First Selectman Tetreau said this handout is a framework for key issues that were brought up during the budget meetings. First Selectman Tetreau reviewed each item starting with revenue from an emergency management grant and increased library fines. The First Selectman then reviewed expenditure decreases. He said the \$40,000 deduction in the water rate is due to the federal tax benefit Aquarion received. The health department position is an unfunded mandate and it is just for public schools, not private schools.

Selectman Kiley asked about the bond premium and wanted to clarify whether \$3 million would be spent over three years and would include \$1 million being spent for year three which is next year. First Selectman Tetreau said one third is being used in fiscal year 2014; a second third will be used in fiscal year 2015 and in fiscal year 2016, \$1 million would be used so the bond premium would be spread out over a three year period.

Selectman Kiley asked if some of the premium was taken this year would it increase the debt service in the subsequent year. First Selectman Tetreau said yes and it would help reduce taxes this year. Selectman Kiley said given this year is a tight budget year and the BOE insurance is up, it's good to have favorable options and this is a worthy concept to consider.

Regarding potential increases, First Selectman Tetreau discussed the IT request for FairTV. He explained how the Cable Advisory Council's (CAC's) money is being used for legal fees instead of giving it to the Town. Selectman Kiley asked if there is an alternative way to fund FairTV into the next budget year without going through the budget process because the Town has not ironed out the ordinance language yet. Selectman McCarthy Vahey said she is interested in talking further about this item.

On the Senior Center Director, First Selectman Tetreau said funding is being proposed for half a year and could follow in the next budget at twice that amount. First Selectman Tetreau said the WPCA budget is not part of the Town's tax rate. It's covered by the WPCA rate that residents who are on the town's sewer system pay for.

First Selectman Tetreau said there are two other items not addressed in this handout. One is the revaluation, the property appraisal program, which the Town is still making evaluations on in regards to choosing a company and the Town can pay the amount for the company over a two-year period starting this year. A \$50,000 increase would be proposed for fiscal year 2015. The other item is the results of the Board of Assessment Appeals. If requests are granted, \$230,000 would be reduced in the budget.

First Selectman Tetreau summarized the increase in revenues, the amount worth of reductions and the amount for expenses for a net reduction of \$85,441 in the general fund adjustments.

Selectman McCarthy Vahey clarified this reduction does not consider the long-term bond premium. First Selectman Tetreau said that is correct—it is not included in the numbers yet nor is there an increase in the internal service fund results based on the BOE experience for this year.

Selectman McCarthy Vahey asked CFO Bob Mayer to explain the finance staff accountant position. Mr. Mayer said this person would have specialized skills to work on a five-year financial plan and another person sharing this funding would be hired on grant accounting and would perform other activities the department does not have time for especially during the budget season. Mr. Mayer said if the funding was approved the five-year capital financial plan would be the primary focus over the grand accounting. Selectman Kiley asked what other work is not being done or shifted around in the finance department. Mr. Mayer said the department is not doing as much on internal auditing.

Selectman Kiley asked for further information on the IT phone engineer funding request. First Selectman Tetreau said there needs to be a new phone system for the town and BOE and after extensive conversations, everyone found a need for this without committing to a timing of when to hire this person. If the person is hired this year, that person would help with implementation and technical work. The project has not been approved. Selectman Kiley said he wants to speak to IT Director Don Leslie who will be asked to attend Tuesday's meeting.

Selectman Kiley said it's important to fund the school security funding request and while it's a big number and a difficult budget year, this is an investment and a good hybrid plan. He hopes to get support throughout the Town. Selectman McCarthy Vahey agreed this funding is a critical need and a good compromise and she appreciates all the time given to look at different alternatives. She appreciates the communication between the police and schools which she said is critical. First Selectman Tetreau said this funding is step one and not a compromise. He wants to see what the state recommends, what funding may be available to Fairfield as the Town moves forward with this, and wants to see what other states and towns are doing. He noted that Fairfield's emergency personnel, who recommended this funding, have worked on safety all along and that this conversation is now more talked about in the public. Selectman McCarthy Vahey clarified that when she said this is a compromise she meant this funding is a reasonable approach and noted how impressive it is that so many in the community are coming together on this crucial matter. First Selectman Tetreau said he has tremendous confidence in Fairfield's emergency personnel implementing the security plan or making changes along the way.

Selectman McCarthy Vahey said she was surprised to see the health position on the handout on budget discussion items and asked what the effect would be if these positions are not funded. Health Director Sands Cleary said the department would function as best it could. They are under the industry staffing level standard so the department is looking to reduce that risk in half. He explained why it's critical for a nurse to be present with a child or at a team meeting.

Selectman McCarthy Vahey asked where the Town stands on negotiations on electricity adjustments. First Selectman Tetreau said in respect to the Solid Waste and Recycling contract, negotiations fell apart and the Town was unable to get a better electricity adjustment and couldn't achieve savings that were originally discussed in negotiations. First Selectman Tetreau said there were management changes with the organization the Town is working with and because the electricity company charged the Town, the Town went back to pricing it had used in the first half of the year.

Selectman Kiley said he personally wants a full-time Senior Center Director but did not get a sense of a full-time one at meetings so he asked if the Selectmen can find something to agree on to help the Senior Center move forward at a proper rate the Town can come to terms with. First Selectman Tetreau said a part-time director is being proposed for the full year to get up to speed and have an impact. Selectman McCarthy Vahey agrees in finding something acceptable to the other boards and having something succeed. She supports the part-time position for the full year and said grants are important to look at but the Town shouldn't rely on that as a funding source. First Selectman Tetreau would like to see a job description including goals and what would be different from now.

Selectman Kiley asked First Selectman Tetreau about the BOE's proposed reduction including where the proposal came from and where we are now. First Selectman Tetreau said \$200,000 was cut from electric, \$200,000 was cut from the pension program and the other \$400,000 is for the BOE to go back and look at their budget to see how they can help the tax rate.

After Selectman McCarthy Vahey asked where the health care expenses for the BOE stand, Mr. Mayer said as of February, the experience on the town-side saw expenses improve with savings of about \$250,000 from the original budget. The BOE's February updated experience had improved arbitration and an increased trend factor equaling \$1.4 million of degregation in experience and a

year-end reserve less than anticipated when the BOE budget book was developed. There will be a proper reasonable reserve at June 30, 2014.

At June 30, 2015 the reserve balance will be about negative \$100,000 for that part of the accrual. Selectman Kiley said it's important to have a short term solution without putting a lot of money into the budget today.

Selectman McCarthy Vahey wants to clarify options with FairTV at tomorrow's meeting.

4) ADJOURN

Selectman McCarthy Vahey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:49 pm. Selectman Kiley seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer S. Carpenter
Recording Secretary
