

**MINUTES OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF
THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
MAY 8, 2012**

The Annual Budget Meeting of the Town of Fairfield continued on Tuesday, May 8, 2012, at Fairfield Warde High School, Melville Avenue, Fairfield, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 P.M. by Moderator Jeffrey Steele.

PRESENT: 47 ABSENT: 3 VACANCY: 0

PRESENT: Becker, Herley, Meyer, Richmond, Sundman, P. Ambrose, Mitola, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Conley, Ference, Mackenzie, McCullough, Dean, DeMartino, Hug, Mezoff, Palmer, M. Ambrose, Garskof, McAleese, Smey, Stamler, Brogan, Campbell, Gottlieb, Marmion, Wolk, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Newman, Patten, Schwartz, Braun, Kery, McCarthy, Domeika, Felner, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli, Hannum, Lee, Ryan, Way, Weber

ABSENT: Stewart, Marks, Stopa

ITEM NO. 1 ON CALL: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Moderator led the Body in the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence.

ITEM NO. 2 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$273,382,694 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE AND AMENDED BY THE RTM ON APRIL 30, 2012, FOR ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE

(This item had been moved and seconded at the beginning of the Annual Budget Meeting held the previous evening.)

MOTION: David Becker, District 1, moved to amend the proposed budget by reducing line item 2010, Contingency account, by \$850,000, duly seconded.

Kevin Hoffkins, District 7, asked what effect such a reduction would have on our credit rating outlook.

First Selectman Mike Tetreau asked for the rationale behind the motion.

Mr. Becker said that he considered zeroing out the account, but with contract funding becoming due he decided to leave some funding in the account. He noted with the projected surplus from the current year, we can deal with what is left using fiscal prudence.

First Selectman Tetreau said that with the estimate for wages after contract approvals, and allowing a certain amount for emergencies, this cut wipes out the account. He said it would be fiscally unwise to approve such a cut.

Mr. Becker said that he believes that we can manage down to this number.

Josh Garskof, District 5, asked how reducing the contingency fund could affect our AAA bond rating.

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Fiscal Officer Paul Hiller said such a cut would be financial suicide.

Board of Finance Chairman Tom Flynn said that our bond rating was affirmed last week by Moody's. He is risk-averse and this cut would be fiscally irresponsible.

Mr. Becker asked if Moody's looks at individual line items or at the budget as a whole.

Finance Chairman Flynn said that you cannot look at one without the other. The contingency account is relative to the surplus in the budget. He reminded the Body that \$1 million in interest was saved this year due to our AAA bond rating.

Selectman Cristin Vahey said that the proposal made at the initial RTM budget hearing on April 30 was to reduce this fund by \$21,770. This is a new conversation. She asked where the money would come from when, for example, the Police contract is settled.

Mr. Hiller said that the five remaining contracts date back to June 2010. He said the funding would come from contingency, then the already-low reserves. The remaining funds would be exhausted.

VOTE: The motion to amend the proposed budget by reducing the Contingency account by \$850,000 was approved with 26 in favor, 21 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Becker, Herley, Meyer, Richmond, Sundman, P. Ambrose, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Ference, Mackenzie, McCullough, DeMartino, Hug, Mezoff, Palmer, Braun, Kery, McCarthy, Domeika, Felner, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli, Ryan, Way

OPPOSED: Mitola, Conley, Dean, M. Ambrose, Garskof, McAleese, Smey, Stamler, Brogan, Campbell, Gottlieb, Marmion, Wolk, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Newman, Patten, Schwartz, Hannum, Lee, Weber

MOTION: Joe Palmer, District 4, moved to reconsider the motion to reduce the Smith Richardson Golf Course budget by \$27,810, duly seconded.

VOTE: The motion to reconsider the vote to reduce the Smith Richardson request by \$27,810 was approved with 31 in favor, 16 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Becker, Herley, Richmond, Sundman, P. Ambrose, Mitola, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Ference, Mackenzie, Dean, DeMartino, Hug, Mezoff, Palmer, Garskof, Hoffkins, Schwartz, Braun, Kery, McCarthy, Domeika, Felner, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli, Hannum, Lee, Ryan, Way

OPPOSED: Meyer, Conley, McCullough, M. Ambrose, McAleese, Smey, Stamler, Brogan, Campbell, Gottlieb, Marmion, Wolk, Hochberg, Newman, Patten, Weber

Mr. Palmer said the mower should be added back to the budget due to the previous vote to reduce the contingency budget.

Selectman Vahey said that she expected to hear line item reductions to different departments and she is disappointed in this approach. The conversation should be done by department and she urged the Body to vote the way they did last night.

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John Mitola, District 2, said that the cut to the contingency fund will force the Board of Finance to take money from each department to fund contingencies. This is putting the town finances in jeopardy and abdicating responsibility.

Mr. Palmer said that the Republicans are the only ones who put forward a discussion on reducing the budget. We are trying to find some amount of savings without reducing services.

Ann Stamler, District 5, spoke against revisiting this item. The majority expressed its opinion and to go back now is inconsistent.

Nick Mirabile, District 9, said that it should be up to the department head to decide how to spend its funds. Rec Director Lombardo said we need this item, and we should believe him.

VOTE: The motion to reduce \$27,810 from the Smith Richardson golf course budget for a mower failed with 5 in favor (McCullough, M. Ambrose, Brogan, Newman, Patten), 42 opposed.

At 9:00 P.M. the minority leader called for a caucus. The meeting resumed at 9:25 P.M.

Josh Garskof, District 5, urged that someone who voted in favor of reducing the contingency account move to reconsider that cut.

Matthew Ambrose, District 5, urged the Body to reconsider the cut to contingency.

Heather Dean, District 4, said she is disappointed in the cut to the contingency account, particularly after we had received a positive upgrade from Moody's.

Hal Schwartz, District 7, said that he is in shock from the vote to cut the contingency account. He is disappointed in the decision that was political instead of budgetary.

MOTION: Joe DeMartino, District 4, moved the question, duly seconded. The motion failed with 9 in favor (Richmond, Steele, Mackenzie, DeMartino, Braun, McCarthy, Ryan, Way, Weber), 38 opposed.

Kevin Hoffkins, District 7, said that it is hard to vote on a budget that was called "fiscal suicide" by the finance director.

Ed Bateson, District 3, asked what would happen in the event the budget is voted down.

Town Attorney Stanton Lesser said that we would be in unchartered waters. State statutes allow the Board of Selectmen to set the mil rate after July 1 if a budget has not been approved by then. There are provisions for the Board of Finance to make expenditures. Both of those scenarios have only occurred in towns with a town meeting form of government.

Mr. Bateson said that previously the RTM had been told that they would have to come back the next night and so on until a budget has been passed.

Atty. Lesser said that there is nothing that says the RTM would convene a third night.

Tom Conley, District 3, urged the Body to reconsider the cut from contingency and to go line item by line item to extract the \$850,000.

Jay Walk, District 6, asked the Body to reconsider the cut. If we lose our bond rating, we will not enjoy the low interest rates which would put us further into debt.

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John Mitola, District 2, asked if the Board of Finance has the authority to take funds from departmental budgets.

Fiscal Officer Hiller reiterated that we are in unchartered waters.

Mr. Mitola said that both the CFO and the Board of Finance have called the cut to the contingency account fiscally irresponsible. He is disappointed in the cut, which he called the absolute wrong thing to do. He said he is willing to look at the budget line by line to make reductions. Since we need to have a budget, he would reluctantly support it.

Bruce Ryan, District 10, said that this budget includes an increase of \$10 million over last year's. The proposals put forward this evening represent a 1.1 percent cut over the increase from last year.

Marc Patten, District 7, said that it is irresponsible to make a cut in the one area that we should not cut. We should follow the rules and make line item reductions.

David Becker, District 1, said that we have received consistently competing opinions from the beginning of the budget process. There is much vagueness in the rules. The budget increases every year. It is irresponsible that only republicans have risen to make motions to reduce the proposed budget.

Sheila Marmion, District 6, noted that last week we heard a proposal of 2 percent cuts to each department. That is the conversation she wanted to have. She said she cannot support this budget as it stands.

At 10:10 P.M., the minority leader called for a caucus. The meeting resumed at 10:30 P.M.

MOTION: Joe DeMartino, District 4, moved the question, duly seconded and carried with 38 in favor, 8 opposed (Mitola, Dean, M. Ambrose, Garskof, Gottlieb, Marmion, Hochberg, Patten) (Ms. Mezoff was not present to vote).

VOTE: The motion to approve the budget as amended to \$272,282,694, was approved with 34 in favor, 13 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Becker, Herley, Meyer, Richmond, Sundman, P. Ambrose, Mitola, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Conley, Ference, Mackenzie, Dean, DeMartino, Hug, Mezoff, Palmer, Stamler, Brogan, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Schwartz, Braun, Kery, McCarthy, Domeika, Felner, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli, Hannum, Ryan, Way

OPPOSED: McCullough, M. Ambrose, Garskof, McAleese, Smey, Campbell, Gottlieb, Marmion, Wolk, Newman, Patten, Lee, Weber

The total proposed budget as approved by the Board of Finance, as amended, is as follows:

Gross Budget	272,282,694
Less Estimated Receipts	(25,626,101)
Net Budget	246,656,593
Plus Reserve for Uncollected Taxes	4,229,790
Amount to be Raised by Taxation	250,886,383

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ITEM NO. 3 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE SELF-SUPPORTING FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5,036,356 FOR THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013

The Moderator moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

VOTE: The motion to approve self-supporting funds in the amount of \$5,036,356 for the WPCA was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and upon motion made, duly seconded and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne
Town Clerk

Recorded by: Ann Roche