

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL RTM MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
April 22, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Moderator Jeff Steele.

PRESENT: 48 ABSENT: 2 VACANCY: 0

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

ABSENT: M. Ambrose, Stopa,

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

Moderator Jeff Steele asked for a moment of silence in memory of those victims who lost their lives and those effected by the recent events in Boston, MA.

Moderator Steele read the Charter reminding the Body of the 2/3 vote required for each of the three appeals being heard this evening. Abstain votes do not count.

ITEM NO. 2 ON CALL: TO HEAR AND CONSIDER AN APPEAL BY THE PEQUOT LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE FIRST SELECTMAN FROM THE FOLLOWING VOTE OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE PERTAINING TO THE PEQUOT LIBRARY (2013) BUDGET:

TO REDUCE CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER ACCOUNT # 58500 BY \$350,000:

	<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>BOARD OF FINANCE APPROVED</u>
CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER	\$350,000.00	\$0

First Selectman Tetreau spoke in support of this appeal. The RTM, Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen had set up a committee to review non profits, but it seems that we have stepped away from the process which needs to be defined. Pequot Library's value is to the entire town, who we are and who we want to be.

Bill Russell, President, Pequot Library Board of Trustees, gave a presentation explaining the contributions of Pequot to the town (attached).

Martha Lord, Executive Director, hired 8 months ago stated that 40% are fixed costs - operational and program costs, 5% is books and materials, 55% is salary and benefits. For every dollar Pequot receives, \$3 in free services are provided. The average donor gives \$150. They are currently renting the cottage on the property, increased rental fees and altered staff schedules to save another \$10,000.00. She explained the endowment is restricted to maintain special collections and book funds, it would be exhausted in 3 years. Pequot is a historic institution and should be allowed time for a longer plan.

Jim Bradley, 111 Cherry Lane, explained that in the interest of fairness and balance in town the funding should be restored to do the right thing for the community.

Board of Finance Chair Tom Flynn stated that 8 weeks ago they were presented with a budget

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with a 6.4% tax increase that was unacceptable and difficult choices would need to be made.

Rob Bellitto, BOF Vice Chair, discussed the rationale behind the cut. These are tough times with hurricanes, tragedies, economic distress, people out of work, fixed incomes, and increased expenses. Salaries, pensions and retirement make up 70% of the budget. Our obligations must be fulfilled. Board of Finance cut 2.7 million from the budget, but we have to ask if we can we afford a third library. It was made quite clear that services would be cut, so this is no surprise to anyone. We need to keep Fairfield affordable to all.

Selectman Kiley encouraged all to support the entire \$350,000 to Pequot Library.

Joe Palmer, District 4, said the Republican caucus supports Pequot Library

Hal Schwartz, District 7 with respect to the Board of Finance, he doesn't agree with how this was done, although he is not sure he would support the entire amount but the process was not done properly.

Ann Stamler, District 5, supports the appeal. There are 19 non profits in the budget, 16 were not touched, 1 was reduced by 5%. There are many questions as to why Pequot Library was treated differently. We have limited information and have not received the final report from the Non Profit Committee as to whether we should continue with grants, subsidies, etc.

David Becker, District 1 explained that the non profits keep our costs down and feels that public/private partnerships are instrumental in driving our costs down.

John Mitola, District 2 said he is struggling with restoring this funding when significant proposals to cut Town departments will be brought up. We are not paving roads this year and that affects everyone. You may have to do things differently this year just like Town departments.

Marc Patten, District 7 said he does not want to see Pequot close, but we are sacrificing one Town asset in favor of another.

Michael Herley, District 1 asked BOF Chair Tom Flynn why he was not in favor of this cut.

Tom Flynn responded Pequot Library differentiates us as a Town. It is too severe a cut at this time. The reduction short circuited the process. He supported across the board the reduction to all non profits stating that they had to share the same pain all the other departments had to suffer.

Jim Walsh, Board of Finance did not support this cut. Pequot Library is the fabric of our community and cannot be replaced. It is one of the first images you see of Fairfield. He could not be part of any cut that would close this institution. All non profits should be treated equally and he moved to cut 10% across the board.

Heather Dean, District 4, will support restoration funds. Pequot Library cannot become self sufficient with 3 months' notice. She will not support additional cuts to the Town or Board of Education.

Speaking in support of Pequot Library were: Kathy McElroy, Ginny Arndt, The Wonderland Book Savers, Annabelle Barry, David Sturges, David Slepian, Doug Fried, Michele Adams, Cynthia Crawford, Rochelle Almeida, Andrea Chance, Margaret Rick, Katya Meade, Pam Iacono, Tom Lawlor, Pequot Library Secret Service Kids, Paul Fattibene and Kelsey Biggers.

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VOTE: Motion to sustain the appeal carried with 43 in favor and 3 opposed (Mitola, Smey, Newman) (Mirabile and Wolk were not present to vote.)

ITEM NO. 3 ON CALL: TO HEAR AND CONSIDER AN APPEAL BY THE HUMAN SERVICES DIRECTOR FROM THE FOLLOWING VOTE OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE PERTAINING TO THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES (6050) BUDGET: TO DELAY HIRING OF SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR UNTIL JANUARY 1, 2014, TOTAL \$53,261:

		<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>BOARD OF FINANCE APPROVED</u>
REGULAR PAYROLL	51010	\$34,419	0
HEALTH INSURANCE	52100	\$14,940	0
LIFE INSURANCE	52120	\$106	0
SOCIAL SECURITY	52200	\$1,163	0
SOCIAL SECURITY	52200	\$2,633	0

First Selectman Tetreau introduced Director of Human & Social Services Terry Geigengach.

Ms. Geigergach explained she is basing this appeal on the Top 10 Committee recommendation. She receives 4- 5 weekly referrals, stabilize critical situations and stated that since February 2013 over 600 seniors have registered in their programs. She comes to us with over 23 years' experience in senior social services and feels that there is great potential in this program promoting independence.

Selma Cohen, Human Services Commission Chair was pleased that the recent tax relief program passed for the seniors. She stated that we are the only town that does not have a Senior Director. Seniors are an asset to the town and are entitled to these benefits to stay here.

Board of Finance Chair Tom Flynn said it was the unanimous vote of the BOF to eliminate this position. Any new positions in the budget were eliminated; this is not a priority given the economic conditions.

Marc Patten, District 7 said he cannot support this although we probably do need it.

Sheila Marmion, District 6 said the demographics show our seniors are an urgent priority and supports restoration.

Carol Way, District 10 is a senior who chose to move her family here in 1979 because of its diversity. Little is spent on our seniors; cut the fat elsewhere, it's a disgrace that there is not a paid Director for seniors.

David Becker, District 1, is in favor of the appeal. The Human Service component is very important for the senior population and keeping them here.

Speaking in support of the appeal were Human Services Commissioners Kevin Lennon, Nancy Legare and Marc Andre; Palma Senatore.

Peter Ambrose, District 2 urged support of reinstating funding as the seniors are a wonderful asset to the town.

Ellen Jacob, District 9 asked for clarification as to whether this is a delay in hiring the director.

First Selectman Tetreau explained the original request was to hire a director July 1st which was reduced

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by the BOS to delay hiring to January 1st. The BOF eliminated it entirely. The appeal is to restore hiring to January 1st.

VOTE: Motion to sustain the appeal failed with 22 in favor and 26 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Becker, Herley, P. Ambrose, Mitola, Dean, Garskof, McAleese, Smey, Stamler, Campbell, Gottleib, Marmion, Wolk, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Braun, Marks, Domeika, Felner, Hannum, Lee, Way

OPPOSED: Lipp, Meyer, Sundman, Jennings, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Conley, Ference, Mackenzie, McCullough, DeMartino, Hug, Mezzoff, Palmer, Brogan, Newman, Patten, Schwartz, Kery, McCarthy, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli, Abercrombie, Ryan

ITEM NO. 4 ON CALL: TO HEAR AND CONSIDER AN APPEAL BY THE FIRST SELECTMAN FROM THE FOLLOWING VOTE OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE PERTAINING TO THE FAIRFIELD COUNSELING SERVICES (2150) BUDGET:

TO REDUCE CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER ACCT #58500 BY \$8,750:

	<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>BOARD OF FINANCE APPROVED</u>
CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER	\$175,000.00	\$166,250.00

First Selectman Tetreau stated that Family Counseling Services need us, they have a history of supporting people in need, those that cannot speak for themselves. He asked that Director Dorothy Timmerman speak. FCS is an underfunded non profit that spends \$3.24 for each resident compared to \$7.74 per person funded by Stratford and \$6.36 per person provided by Trumbull. Our mental health needs have doubled and the current non emergency waitlist is 2 weeks. We cannot meet the needs without the support of the Town.

Board of Finance Chair Tom Flynn stated that the non profits need to be reviewed. After Pequot Library it was clear that we were not going to treat them the same so he would not support any cuts.

Board of Finance member Jim Walsh was 1 of 5 that voted to cut by 5%, but he wanted 10% across the board; it was nothing to do with the services they deliver.

Hal Schwartz, District 7 stated that these are people who can't go online, do power point, can't speak for themselves. We need to help these people, treat all non profits equally, restore the funds until the Committee does its work.

Ken Lee, District 10 said cuts are being made to mental health at the state and federal level. We are all equal in Fairfield - we cannot ignore the little people, support the \$8750 to those that need it the most.

David Becker, District 1 said this is a line item that has been consistent and is now going under. In Fairfield we need to take care of our own.

Rep. J. Wolk District 6 is on the Board of Family Counseling Services spoke in favor to restore funds. Hurricane Sandy, the trauma of Sandy Hook are not billable in the insurance world -such services are not being met, we need essential mental health services.

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Peter Ambrose, District 2 has a special interest in the organization REACH which then became Fairfield Counseling Services. It helps kids/families in crisis - we get a lot of bang for our buck when we see what good it does.

Gaylord Meyer, District 1 asked Ms. Timmerman of the 10,770 counseling sessions, 6,785 were Fairfield residents; where do the other 3,985 come from. She explained they come from several communities such as Bridgeport, Trumbull, Stratford, Ansonia.

Ann Stamler, District 5 stated that Pequot Library had incredible support and noted that Fairfield Counseling Services whose community can't speak for themselves asked that the funding be restored and we should look at how Fairfield addresses all non profits.

Leonora Campbell, District 6, said as a college counselor she sees that problems rarely go away by themselves and asked for support of the funding.

Speaking in support of the restoration of funds were Board Members Liam Burke and Deputy Police Chief Chris Lyddy.

Moderator Steele asked for Deputy Moderator Hank Ference to assume Moderator duties and then spoke in favor of the restoration because of the tragedy in Newtown.

VOTE: The motion to sustain the appeal carried with 34 in favor and 14 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Becker, Herley, P. Ambrose, Jennings, Mitola, Steele, Varian, Mackenzie, Dean, DeMartino, Mezoff, Garskof, McAleese, Smey, Stamler, Brogan, Campbell, Gottlieb, Marmion, Wolk, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Newman, Patten, Schwartz, Kery, Marks, Domeika, Felner, Abercrombie, Hannum, Lee, Ryan, Way

OPPOSED: Lipp, Meyer, Sundman, Bateson, Conley, Ference, McCullough, Hug, Palmer, Braun, McCarthy, Jacob, Mirabile, Pontrelli

OTHER BUSINESS

Since this was a special meeting no other business was transacted.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made, duly seconded and carried unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne
Town Clerk

Recorded by: Kyle Fournier