

BOARD OF FINANCE
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
June 3, 2014

******DRAFT******

The Monthly Meeting of the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, June 3, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Offices, Seminar Room 295 A&B, 501 Kings Highway East,, Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Catherine Albin, David Becker, Ken Brachfeld, Christopher DeWitt, Thomas Flynn, Mary LeClerc

MEMBERS ABSENT

James Brown, Robert Stone, James Walsh

ALSO PRESENT

Robert Mayer, Chief Fiscal Officer, Town of Fairfield
Caitlin Bosse, Controller, Town of Fairfield and Clerk of the Board of Finance
First Selectman Michael Tetreau, Town of Fairfield
Donald Leslie, Director of IT, Town of Fairfield
William Hurley, Engineering Department, Town of Fairfield
Cinda Buchter, Tax Collector, Town of Fairfield
Donald Ross, Tax Assessor, Town of Fairfield

ACTION TAKEN

1. On a motion made by Mr. DeWitt and seconded by Mr. Becker, the minutes for the Board of Finance Meetings as listed in Agenda Item #1 were approved unanimously.
2. Approved a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$428,000 from account Contingency (01002010-58010) to Assessor- Fees & Professional Services account (01003050-53200) in the FY15 budget on a motion made by Mrs. Albin and seconded by Mr. Brachfeld.
Motion passed with a vote of 4 yeas, 2 nays (Becker, DeWitt), 0 abstentions.
3. On a motion made by Mrs. Albin and seconded by Mr. DeWitt to add this item as a voting item and to accept the Suspense Report from the Tax Collector for a total value of \$155,468.71 to be added to the Suspense Tax Book the motion passed unanimously.
4. Mrs. LeClerc moved and Mr. DeWitt seconded to approve the following resolution as recommended by the Director of Public Works:
RESOLVED, that a 2013 \$275,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant be, and hereby is, accepted, in order to increase handicap accessibility at South Benson Marina, Southport Beach, Ye Yacht Yard and Sasco Beach; and FURTHER RESOLVED, that First Selectman Michael Tetreau be, and hereby is, authorized to apply for and execute the grant agreement and accept the funds for this project. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Mrs. LeClerc moved and Mrs. DeWitt seconded to approve a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$25,000 from account IT-Contingency (01003110-59010) to IT- Special Department Supplies (01003110-56140) in the FY14 budget.

Motion passed with a vote of 4 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention (Flynn).

6. Mrs. Albin moved and Mrs. LeClerc seconded to approve the request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$1,120,790 from Contingency (01002010-58010) to various accounts per the attached schedule A in the FY14 year. Motion passed unanimously

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Flynn asked for a moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of Lucie McKinney and to express condolences to her family and to thank them for all of their service to the people of Fairfield.

Mr. DeWitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

1. To approve minutes:
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from February 18, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 4, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 6, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 11, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 13, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 18, 2014.
To approve the minutes of the Budget Hearing from March 20, 2014.

Mrs. Albin suggested that multiple meeting minutes could be approved in a group even if some Board members were not present for all the meetings as long as the minutes state who was present and who was absent at each meeting.

Mr. DeWitt moved and Mr. Becker seconded to approve the minutes as listed in Agenda Item #1. Motion carried unanimously.

2. To discuss the legal opinion related to the Board of Finance role in the Tax Assessment process.

Mr. Flynn reminded everyone that, during the budget deliberations this year, some discussion arose about the role of the Board of Finance in the Town tax assessment process and, as a result of those discussions, the Town Attorney was asked to prepare a legal opinion concerning who has the authority to appoint a company to assist the Tax Assessor in conducting a real property revaluation and, more specifically, whether the First Selectman and Board of Finance have any role in said selection according to the Town Charter. Mr. Flynn informed the Board that the Town Attorney is not able to be present at tonight's meeting but he has sent the opinion requested to the Board for their information and discussion.

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Mr. Ross informed the Board that it is his understanding that the Board of Finance is to provide software for the data collection system and to fund the Tax Assessor's budget but the selection of the revaluation company rests with the Tax Assessor. Mr. Ross also reminded the Board that the last full revaluation was done in 1993 and if is considered appropriate to have a full revaluation done every 10 years so Fairfield should perform a full revaluation at this time.

Mrs. LeClerc commented that the Town Charter only specifies details concerning the Assessment System which leads to discussion regarding why this is the only area specified in the Town Charter. Mr. Mayer stated that the Tax Assessor reports to the Finance Office; he is certified and he is fulfilling the regulations as set forth in State Statutes. Mr. Mayer further stated that he has no problem with a member of the Board of Finance sitting in on the evaluation of the RFP for the company to be hired to perform the revaluation.

Mr. Becker stated that the last revaluation shook up a lot of people in town and highlighted the importance of these decisions on everything we do as a town.

Mrs. Albin questioned the BOF's authority to approve/deny the system to be funded since the funds are still in the Contingency Account. Mr. Flynn agreed that the BOF has the authority to accept or deny the purchase of the system to be used since the funds are now in the Contingency Account. Mrs. Albin asked Mr. Ross to explain paragraph D from the Town Charter as stated in the Town Attorney's opinion. Mr. Ross explained that the last full physical data collection revaluation was done in 1993; a data mailer valuation was done in 2003; a statistical validation update was done in 2005 and in 2010 another data mailer valuation was done.

Mr. Flynn stated that, given the contentious situation that arose from the last valuation, a full physical data collection revaluation seems to be necessary.

Mr. Brachfeld noted that, in his opinion, it appears that the BOF financial role drives its operational role.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. To hear, consider, and act upon a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$428,000 from account Contingency (01002010-58010) to Assessor- Fees & Professional Services account (01003050-53200) in the FY15 budget.

Mrs. Albin moved and Mr. Brachfeld seconded to approve a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$428,000 from account Contingency (01002010-58010) to Assessor- Fees & Professional Services account (01003050-53200) in the FY15 budget.

Mr. Ross explained that, in his opinion, it is actually past time to have a complete full physical data collection done for several reasons:

- A full physical data collection collects exterior as well as interior data
- Hurricanes Sandy and Irene have altered the landscape of a lot of properties along the coast
- A data audit was last done in 1993, 21 years ago
- The frequency of full physical data collections done by our neighboring towns are more frequent, averaging about every 10 years

Mr. Ross informed the Board that the \$428,000 is ½ of the total amount needed for the full physical data collection revaluation.

Mrs. Albin expressed her support for a full physical data collection revaluation given that it has been over 20 years since the last one was done.

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Mr. Mayer, in response to a question from Mr. DeWitt regarding the possibility that a full physical data collection revaluation might minimize the number of appeals, stated that a full physical data collection revaluation will provide the best job possible for the residents of Fairfield.

Mr. Ross noted that a full physical data collection revaluation would be more likely to minimize the number of court appeals. Mr. Ross also noted that State Statutes recommend a revalue every 5 years and a full revalue every 10 years.

Mr. Tetreau stated that there is no guarantee of lower costs and/or appeals but, there is a probability that homeowners are going to feel more confident with an actual visit for evaluation that everyone is being assessed fairly; the participation rate in 1993 was 60-70%; this full physical data collection revaluation will also employ the use of data mailers in an attempt to maximize resident participation to get full and accurate valuations.

Mr. Ross, in response to a question from Mr. Flynn regarding the potential for creating a whiplash effect, informed the Board that neighboring towns have reported a positive experience. Mr. Ross further informed the Board that the State does statistical evaluation based on performance based testing using median assessment to market ratio on a sample set of properties.

Mr. DeWitt stated that he cannot support a full physical data collection revaluation because he believes the Town already has lots of accurate data at this time.

Mr. Becker added that the last evaluation seemed to focus more on the land values rather than the house values in certain specific areas of town and that is why he is having difficult supporting a full physical data collection revaluation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carol Way, 324 Villa Avenue, RTM District 5

She previously lived in district 10 and she has seen this from all different perspectives; the main problem last time was a greater premium on certain areas in town; access to properties is very important for an accurate full physical data collection revaluation.

On a motion made by Mrs. Albin and seconded by Mr. Brachfeld to approve a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$428,000 from account Contingency (01002010-58010) to Assessor-Fees & Professional Services account (01003050-53200) in the FY15 budget, the motion passed with a vote of 4 yeas, 2 nays (Becker, DeWitt), 0 abstentions.

Mr. Brachfeld left the meeting at this time.

4. To review suspense accounts for Tax Collector.

Ms. Cinda Buchter presented this item to the Board. Ms. Buchter informed the Board that she reviews accounts annually and any uncollectible accounts are determined to be suspended. Ms. Buchter stated that the number of accounts is larger this year than in years prior.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Mrs. Albin moved and Mr. DeWitt seconded to add this item as a voting item and to accept the Suspense Report from the Tax Collector for a total value of \$155,468.71 to be added to the Suspense Tax Book. Motion passed unanimously.

5. To hear, consider and act upon the following resolution as recommended by the Director of Public Works:

RESOLVED, that a 2013 \$275,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant be, and hereby is, accepted, in order to increase handicap accessibility at South Benson Marina, Southport Beach, Ye Yacht Yard and Sasco Beach; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that First Selectman Michael Tetreau be, and hereby is, authorized to apply for and execute the grant agreement and accept the funds for this project.

Mr. Hurley presented this item to the Board. Mr. Hurley informed the Board that all four projects can be accomplished within the \$275,000 STEAP Grant and \$25,000 in in-kind services from the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Tetreau explained that the grant is still valid and the DPW has been in continuous contact/conversation with the State regarding this item. Mr. Tetreau further stated that these items did not fall under the insurance items from Storm Sandy.

Mrs. LeClerc asked if there will be storage for oars somewhere in the part of the project for Ye Old Yacht Yard as had been available before the damages were incurred. Mr. Hurley said he would check on that and get back to the BOF with that information.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Mrs. LeClerc moved and Mr. DeWitt seconded to approve the following resolution as recommended by the Director of Public Works:

RESOLVED, that a 2013 \$275,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant be, and hereby is, accepted, in order to increase handicap accessibility at South Benson Marina, Southport Beach, Ye Yacht Yard and Sasco Beach; and FURTHER RESOLVED, that First Selectman Michael Tetreau be, and hereby is, authorized to apply for and execute the grant agreement and accept the funds for this project.

Motion passed unanimously.

6. To hear, consider, and act upon a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$25,000 from account IT-Contingency (01003110-59010) to IT- Special Department Supplies (01003110-56140) in the FY14 budget.

Mr. Leslie presented this item to the Board. Mr. Leslie explained that this is needed now because the RTM made additional cuts to his budget. Mr. Leslie further explained that this system needs to be updated in order to keep in sync with other state agencies. Mr. Leslie informed the Board that this money will be used to purchase licenses for work stations from ESRI which will allow Fairfield to put our information into the system and work with the GBRC-GIS System.

Mr. Flynn stated that he will abstain from this vote due to company affiliation conflicts.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Mrs. LeClerc moved and Mrs. DeWitt seconded to approve a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$25,000 from account IT-Contingency (01003110-59010) to IT- Special Department Supplies (01003110-56140) in the FY14 budget.

Motion passed with a vote of 4 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention (Flynn).

7. To hear, consider, and act upon a request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$1,120,790 from Contingency (01002010-58010) to various accounts per the attached schedule A in the FY14 year.

Mr. Mayer presented this item to the Board and explained the items in the handout. Mr. Mayer noted that these figures include funding for contracts approved by the RTM for unions that settled pending contracts.

In response to a question from Mr. DeWitt regarding funds remaining in the Contingency account for other pending contracts, Mr. Mayer stated that the Contingency Account does still have funds for any pending contract negotiations. Mr. Mayer further added that the amount were developed by HR, the Finance Department staff and were reviewed by the Budget Director as well as being spot checked by the Payroll Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Mrs. Albin moved and Mrs. LeClerc seconded to approve the request from the Chief Fiscal Officer to transfer \$1,120,790 from Contingency (01002010-58010) to various accounts per the attached schedule A in the FY14 year.

Motion passed unanimously.

8. To hear, consider and act upon any communications.

Mr. Flynn reminded everyone that there is no scheduled July Meeting, one meeting in August (August 5th) and then 3 meetings in September (Regular Meeting on the 2nd, Capital Planning Workshop on the 16th and Quarterly Review Meeting on the 30th).

Mr. Flynn also noted that the Budget Sub-Committee should be meeting to prepare for a presentation at the September Quarterly Review Meeting with recommendations.

On a motion made by Mrs. Albin, seconded by Mr. DeWitt and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah J. Garavel
Recording Secretary