

Minutes

Board of Finance Meeting

May 20, 2014

7:30 PM – Town Hall Room 206

CALL TO ORDER

Liz Mao, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. All members of the Board of Finance were present. Also in attendance was Assistant Finance Director Eileen McGrath. The meeting was broadcast live over Channel 79.

SPECIAL APPROPRIATION – Board of Education \$807,000

Chairman Liz Mao provided a summary on the additional cost related to Special Education. Mrs. Mao asked Betsy Hagerty Ross, Chairman of the Board of Education, to provide more detail regarding the fund request. Mrs. Hagerty-Ross stated since the special education complaint was filed last march, expenses have been incurred and mandated by the state of Connecticut. She went on to say that even though the expenses were extraordinary, regular education would not suffer as a result.

Mrs. Hagerty-Ross provided a spreadsheet summarizing the \$187,463 in legal costs and stated that they were due in part to FOI and FERPA requests from parents and the media. Mrs. Hagerty-Ross also indicated that these costs did not include any staff's time to pull the data.

Dr. Lynn Pierson, Interim Superintendent, provided details related to legal fees. Dr. Pierson stated that there were 71 FOI and 17 FERPA requests, which included 57,455 documents containing 145,100 pages. Each page has had to be read and redacted by lawyers. Bruce Orr asked Dr. Pierson to expand on the source of the requests. Dr. Pierson stated that 30 requests came from parents, 31 from the Darien Times and 4 from the Darien News.

Bruce Orr highlighted that there is approximately \$1.2 million of extraordinary expenses in the operating budget and that if combined with the special appropriation, the cost associated with special education problems is over \$2 million. Mr. Orr also suggested checking as to whether \$100,000 in the SPED fund could be used to offset the sizable request.

Bruce Orr made a motion to approve. Passed 7 – 0

CONTINGENCY TRANSFER – RFCNRE – Parking Study \$3,200

Jamie McLaughlin made a motion to approve. Passed 7 – 0

FINANCIAL REPORT

Vice Chairman Jon Zagrodzky provided a summary of the audit expenses and mentioned that several families have participated. Mr. Zagrodzky indicated that audit should be finalized in June, with a report to the BOF in July.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

Vice Chairman Jon Zagrodzky stated that although everyone is happy with the current town auditor (McGladrey), the BOF is probably a year away from changing, as it is best practice to do so every 3 to 5 years.

Jon Zagrodzky made a motion to approve. Passed 7 – 0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes tabled until members can review.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS/COMMITTEE REPORT

Chairman Liz Mao stated that the Board of Selectmen is looking for two members of the Board of Finance and Board of Education to be a part of shared services meetings. Mrs. Mao is going to provide more detail on the number of meetings and expected participation.

Vice Chairman Jon Zagrodzky provided a summary on the funding of the town employee pension plans. Mr. Zagrodzky stated that earning assumptions need to be compared to other towns and that the pension boards have Buck Consultants to help with this assessment.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Liz Mao attended an OPC meeting, where a review was done of the Board of Education management structure. Mrs. Mao also provided a summary of the flood map project. Jon Zagrodzky stated that several of the homes that have been classified as being in the flood zone that have never had water problems and that homeowners should get involved if they feel their homes have been miscategorized.

OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing reported.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Bruce Orr made a motion to adjourn. David Lopiano seconded the motion. Passed 7 – 0 at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Lopiano
Clerk