

**DRAFT MINUTES
BOARD OF FINANCE REGULAR MEETING
December 15, 2009
7:30 PM – Room 206**

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM by Chairman Murry Stegelmann. Also in attendance were Martha Banks, Lori Bora, Gwen Mogenson and Jon Zagrodzky. Finance Director, Kate Clarke Buch was also present. The meeting was televised and taped by Channel 79.

Transfers Under \$5,000

Public Works – Gorham’s Pond Tide Gates. Public Works requested a transfer of \$4,470 from the Scalehouse project, which was completed under budget, to the Gorham’s Pond Tide Gate Project. The Tide Gate Project was over budget due to additional masonry repointing required on the substructure. The condition of the masonry could not have been determined until construction was in progress.

Ms. Banks moved to approve the transfer as requested. The motion was seconded and approved 5-0.

Transfers Over \$5,000

The Health Department requested a transfer of \$36,750 from the Professional Services account to Part-time Salary and other accounts, mostly to cover the hiring of a part-time Public Health Nurse and a part-time Sanitary Inspector. Salaries for these positions were budgeted under Professional Services but they were actually hired as part-time employees. It was noted that part-time employees are not eligible for employee benefits and that in addition to the hiring Dept, the Finance Dept monitors working hours to ensure that part-time employees do not work enough hours to entitle them to benefits. The overtime funding related to seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccinations; the request for additional Office Supplies related to new restaurant ratings forms.

Mr. Zagrodzky moved to approve the transfer, which was seconded and approved 5-0.

Other Business

Mr. Zagrodzky moved to request that the Board move to Other Business. The motion was seconded and approved 5-0.

Ms. Buch discussed a Police Department request for an appropriation of \$30,000 related to a federal grant received to purchase video equipment for in-house training. The grant requires the town to first purchase the equipment and subsequently be reimbursed. She explained that since this was not budgeted, it

must be appropriated (requiring Board of Finance and RTM approval) to specify the grant proceeds as new revenue, offset by the purchase expense.

Discussion centered on how this equipment would be used, how Police Dept video taping relates to Channel 79 video taping and concerns that the sophistication and/or scope of an equipment grant this large might lead to higher, on-going operating costs down the line. It was noted that the Board of Selectmen had not reviewed or approved this grant.

Mr. Zagrodzky moved that the issue be tabled to a joint special meeting of the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen. It was proposed that this meeting take place in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen's regular January 4, 2010 meeting. If the appropriation is approved at that time, it will allow the motion to be considered by the RTM at their next scheduled meeting. The motion for a joint special meeting was seconded and passed 5-0.

Financial Reports

Investment Income was significantly below budget due to the extremely low interest rate environment, which was expected to persist. Mr. Stegelmann reported that a review of the Board of Education's financial situation related to State reimbursement of excess special education costs would be put off until February, after the first State reimbursement payment is received. Due to State budget pressure, there is continued uncertainty regarding reimbursement levels, which could cause a significant deficit in the school budget.

Minutes

Mr. Zagrodzky moved to approve the November 17, 2009 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

Special Committees

- Weed Beach – Ms. Bora reported that the fund raising donor bricks were installed at the playground and that Park and Rec head, Sue Swiatek, was instructed by the First Selectman to hold off on getting the entire project site “shovel ready” for further development.
- Darien Energy Task Force (DETF) – Ms. Mogenson updated the previous meeting's discussion about whether natural gas lines could be run to town hall or some of the schools to reduce energy costs since some sites have dual-fuel burners. Karl Kilduff had already looked into this and found it infeasible. There is only one gas line in town, along Post Road, and the supplier has no interest in expanding so the full cost would have to be borne by the town. Mr. Kilduff thought that solar panel funding would be a better alternative.

- Audit Committee – Mr. Zagrodzky offered that the committee would report on their review of Town Hall financial policies at the next Board of Finance meeting.
- Flooding – Ms. Banks reported that there were no committee meetings since the last BOF meeting. The next scheduled flood mitigation committee meeting is in January.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Stegelmann discussed the budget meeting calendars for the Board of Ed and Board of Selectman and distributed last year's Board of Finance budget assignment sheet. He requested that BOF members volunteer to attend specific nights of the BOE/BOS budget meetings and get back to him on any requests/changes for their BOS budget responsibilities, which are assigned by department.

Mr. Stegelmann noted that the annual regional meeting of Board of Finance Chairs for similar-sized towns will take place on Dec 17th.

Ms. Banks volunteered to be the BOF representative regarding a review of Open Space taxation. The BOS has committed to consider whether properties greater than 10 acres should be taxed as open space rather than highest and best use. The BOF was concerned about the property value assessment methodology and possible revenue impact. Ultimately, any change will require P&Z approval and RTM approval of a new ordinance.

Mr. Zagrodzky moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Gwen Mogenson, Acting Clerk