

## **RTM Finance & Budget Committee - Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes 3/9/2015**

Present: J. Palen, R. Cardone, T. Duffy, J. Davis, B. Hayes, J. Boulton, M. Thorne, M. Banks, S. Anderson, K. Hoffman, D. Ritchie

Absent: A. Millar, G. duPont

With 9 of 13 members present consisting of quorum, J. Palen called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. in the Cafeteria extension of the Mather Center. The agenda was unanimously approved. D. Ritchie and B. Hayes arrived shortly after meeting was called to order.

J. Palen began meeting by asking for thoughts on how to relay committee comments to the Board of Finance and whether comments should be relayed at the public hearing set for March 10. Discussion ensued with members both in favor and against formal comment at board of finance meeting with 1-day turnaround identified as issue. S. Anderson noted he had line items related to BOS budget he would like relayed to Board of Finance. J. Palen recommended that we try to meet in 1 week to vote on recommendations/thoughts to formally provide Board of Finance.

J. Palen moved to first discussion item, 2015-2016 Board of Selectman Budget. R. Cardone (BOS subcommittee chair) noted that overall increase and individual line items seemed mostly reasonable this year with a .68-.69% increase. J. Davis questioned whether certain intra-year budget items—such as the purchase of the property next to Holmes school—were included in the budget and whether other items were presented in a fashion that may optically make the increase look smaller. R. Cardone noted that an actuarial adjustment in the pension did act to effectively decrease the budget by ~\$600k, and without this adjustment BOS increase would be higher.

Committee discussed other items in BOS budget. T. Duffy noted that detail on need for new police boat and fire vehicle replacement plan was sparse and not necessarily convincing. M. Banks questioned need to repair fire drill tower given that we have a new tower and that there are already 9 regional fire training centers, including one in Stamford. Further discussion on whether we could just use Stamford tower. T. Duffy noted that other information/detail still has not been provided including status of civil dispatcher for police. M. Banks noted that the BOF should have an executive session to understand the salary increases assumed in the salary contingency account for both the unions and the non-reps.

S. Anderson noted that he compiled 6 points that should be addressed with BOS budget. Items included: (1) CIO to coordinate IT across BOE and town. Would like summary of all technology outlays (hardware, software, services) and noted this had been requested for some time; (2) Questions on efficiency of insurance programs and whether there was a better approach to lower costs—suggested a meeting with CIRMA agent to understand how managed now and what could be changed to limit increases; (3) Police overtime—

better explanation as to why this continues to increase despite cost-saving programs like new software that was to reduce overtime. J. Palen did not note that union contracts impact overtime; (4) plan for vehicle fleet management to increase efficiency/decrease cost. Noted that town has certain software package that may not be fully utilizing; (5) Capital and non-recurring items need to have a one page summary for each request—noted that this has been requested by F&B as well as rules committee, but have only seen on resolutions. Would like to see for each capital request item in budget as well so have an explanation. Rules Committee needs to inform the BOS and BOE that these summary sheets will be required for all proposed items in the budget. J. Palen suggested that maybe over a dollar threshold such as \$50k, which was 13 items in current proposed budget. Discussion on other capital items across committee; (6) Revenues and increase of fees for services including dump and beach permits.

J. Palen moved discussion to BOE Budget. J. Davis subcommittee chair discussed. Noted that BOE Capital budget impacted by a few items including request related to field that may be countered by DAF contribution. Also request by BOF that items be moved up in priority to take advantage of low rate environment (which brought capital budget items forward). Discounting for these factors would bring number to ~\$1.4m.

J. Palen inquired whether BOE should start budgeting for higher expectations from state excess cost grant with special education. M. Banks noted that there should be some increase in expectation so citizens are not overtaxed as this item has been perennially forecasted below actual amount. The BOE should be held harmless, however, if they do not receive the full budgeted amount. J. Davis noted that state finances remained difficult and should be cautious with this line item. M. Thorne noted that we should be cautious with this line item given issues with applications and special education over the last 12-18 months. M. Banks noted that there probably was room for some increase as the governor has committed to flat fund the excess cost pool for the next two years and there are many proposed bills before the legislature that seek to more fully reimburse communities for special ed costs.

J. Davis noted that overall budget increase was a good proposal but noted a few areas of question including substitute teachers, chromebook purchase plan, aged telephone system. Also questioned whether certain items are under-estimated for future, including high school teacher headcount given aspirations for curriculum outlines. General discussion on BOE items followed. D. Ritchie questioned budget based on fact that was done before facilities study complete, which could have meaningful impact on budget.

J. Palen suggested meeting for Monday March 16 at 7:30pm to vote on committee comments to deliver to Board of Finance before their votes. Committee in general agreement with suggested date.

M. Thorne moved that J. Palen make public statement on behalf of committee at public hearing on March 10. K. Hoffman seconded motion. Discussion ensued. Called to vote. Item failed to pass with 5 members in favor, 5 members opposed and 1 member abstaining.

D. Ritchie moved to approve minutes from December 14, 2014 and January 22, 2015 meetings. K. Hoffman seconded motion. Committee unanimously approved minutes.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00PM.