

RTM Finance & Budget Committee -Special Meeting Minutes 06//02/2014

Present: J. Davis, M. Banks, R. Cardone, S. Anderson, T. Duffy, J. Palen, B. Ball, J. Boulton, D. Ritchie, A. Millar, M. Thorne , and G. Dupont

Absent: B. Hayes, K. Hoffman, and A. Rycenga.

Guests:

Board of Education members, RTM Education Committee members, RTM Public Health and Safety Committee members, School Administration officials: Dr. L Pierson, Ombudsman J. Verre, Facilities director Mike Lynch, Finance Director - Mr. Feeney, Assistant Superintendent - T. Canty, Darien Office of Emergency Services - M. McEwan, Police Chief - D. Lovello, Darien Athletic Foundation members: M. Maybell, Peter Graham, and J. Montanaro, RTM Moderator - S. Seeyle, Town Counsel- Wayne Fox, and members of the public

With 11 of 15 members present consisting of quorum, J. Davis called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Shortly after the start of the meeting Chairman J. Palen joined the meeting bringing those in attendance to 12 of 15 committee members.

J. Davis made a motion to approve the agenda of the special meeting and was seconded by S. Anderson.

The purpose of the joint committee special meeting was to discuss the various resolutions before the joint committees. There was a fair amount of overlap for the committees and it made sense to hold a joint session.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation from The Darien Athletic Foundation. Mark Maybell, Peter Graham, and Jen Montanaro gave a detailed presentation on their plans to upgrade 5 fields at the Darien high school. Plans are to turf the existing upper oval, replace middle oval turf and expand it, upgrade the lower oval to a new grass softball field, turf the existing JV softball field, and turf the field behind the stadium field. The DAF has been working on the plans since 2012 and see this as a multi year plan. All monies for the plans have been privately raised. The gifts have been approved by The Board of Education, Planning and Zoning, Environmental Protection Agency, and Board of Selectmen. All of the details are available for review in greater detail.

Questions were discussed regarding the future maintenance plans which would come from an endowment, scheduling, traffic, title IX, turf safety, costs of existing fields and new turf fields, fund raising, and other items were discussed at length. The special meeting was taped for the public and all the finer details and discussions can be viewed on channel 79.

The various committees broke in separate groups to discuss the resolution and DAF plans. J. Davis made a motion to add a wording to the resolution (14-15) Authorizing Acceptance of a Gift worth \$4,000,000 to the Darien Board of Education from the Darien Athletic Foundation for new artificial turf Fields at Darien High School; [and any additional enhancements to their plans](#). He was seconded by A. Millar. The committee voted to approve the additional stipulation with 10 members voting in favor of the supplemental wording, none opposed, and two abstentions (D. Ritchie and R. Cardone). A motion was then made to approve the new resolution by T. Duffy and seconded by J. Davis. The committee voted with 10 members in favor to approve resolution 14-15, none opposed, and two abstentions (D. Ritchie and R. Cardone). The committee thanked the Darien Athletic Foundation for their generous gift to the town.

The next item was to discuss Resolution (14-18) Authorizing the special appropriation of \$807,000.00 related to unbudgeted expenses related to Special Education services. Board of Education chairwoman Betsy Haggerty-Ross went through the details of the request. Additional details were provided by Dr Pierson, Mr. Feeney, Ombudsman Verre, and Board of education Vice Chairwoman Heather Shea. Question and discussions followed concerning legal fees, Special Education excess cost reimbursements from the State of Connecticut, software to track reimbursement, monies returned to the town in previous years, comparisons to other school districts Greenwich and new Canaan, and other details. Again, the special meeting can be viewed on the publically recorded transcripts.

A motion was made to vote on Resolution (14-18) Authorizing the special appropriation of \$807,000.00 related to unbudgeted expenses related to Special Education services by J. Davis and seconded by S. Anderson. The motion passed with 11 members approving, none against, and one abstention (T. Duffy).

The next item was (14-17) Authorizing and Approving \$587,000 for the replacement of Fire, EMS and Police Radio System Communications Equipment. Mark McEwan and Chief Lovello went through the details of the proposed emergency equipment upgrade. Questions and discussions were held on the topics of dead zones, potential Federal changes to the bandwidth used, age of the current system, support of the current system, and other details. A motion was made to vote on resolution 14-17 by R. Cardone and seconded by J. Boulton. The committee voted to approve the resolution with 11 members in favor, one no vote by S. Anderson, and no abstentions.

The next item was discussion and recommendation of Resolution (14-14) Authorizing acceptance of a gift worth \$38,095 from the Garden Club of Darien for an entry garden to Cherry Lawn Park. A motion to vote on resolution 14-14 was made by D. Ritchie and seconded by J. Davis. The motion to approve resolution 14-14 passed unanimously. The committee thanked the Garden Club of Darien for their generous gift to the town.

The next item was Discussion and recommendation of Resolution (14-16) Authorizing and Approving the formation of a regional Council of Governments (COG). A motion was made by S. Anderson to postpone discussions to a special meeting next week prior to the RTM meeting. It was noted that the Darien League of Women Voters is holding an informational meeting tomorrow night at the Darien library where the committee could learn more about it and hear from the public before discussing the resolution and voting on it.

The next item was the approvals of the minutes from the regularly scheduled meeting RTM -F&B committee for April 28,2014.The minutes were unanimously approved with 10 members voting. J. Boulton and G. Dupont abstained as they were not in attendance for the meeting.

The next item was the approvals of the minutes from the regularly scheduled meeting RTM -F&B committee for May 5, 2014.The minutes were unanimously approved with 11 members voting. J. Boulton abstained as he was not in attendance for the meeting.

The final item of the evening was discussion of a proposed review and voting schedule for the BOE and BOS proposed budgets for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The committee had several members who felt the budget process could use some improvement. Chairman Palen presented a timeline for the committee to review and make suggestions and improvements. Discussions were held regarding the ability to suggest a lump sum across the board cut as opposed to a line item on the Selectmen's budget. This was a point of contention for some members at the RTM budget meeting for this year's budget. The Town Charter does not allow a line item cut to the Board of Education budget. A sense of the committee was that there should be earlier input from all parties in the budget process prior to any budget votes being held. This will be a continuing discussion as it was already 3.5 hours into the meeting.

A warning will be sent to schedule a special meeting of the RTM - F&B committee prior to the RTM meeting scheduled for June 9, 2014 for discussion and recommendation of Resolution (14-16) Authorizing and Approving the formation of a regional Council of Governments (COG).

A motion to adjourn the special meeting was made by M. Thorne and seconded by T. Duffy at 10:33 pm