

Revised Minutes  
Regular Meeting of the RTM-Finance and Budget Committee  
Tuesday, December 6, 2016

**PLACE:**

Town Hall Room 206  
Meeting Starts: 7:35pm

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jack Davis, Brad Pattelli, Chuck Boulier, Steve Anderson, Brent Hayes, Rob Cardone, Taylor Carter, Lisa Yarnell, Terry Duffy, James Howe, Bert Von Stuelpnagel, Martha Banks

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Debra Ritchie

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Kate Buch, Town Administrator, Bill Smith, David Martin, Stacy Tie

**CALL TO ORDER**

Jack Davis called the meeting to order at 7:35pm. He asked if there was a quorum. It was agreed there was and the meeting began. There was an introduction of Kathleen (Kate) Buch, Finance Director and Town Administrator who will talk about the 2017/2018 budget process.

**I. Discussion of 2017/2018 Budget Process**

Kate began to outline the budget process as follows:

- The Board of Selectmen sent a message that they wanted to see increases below 2% overall except Library as not under Town Administrator (TA) purview.
- Department budgets are due to the TA by December 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Kate has requested five year outlooks from all the departments this year.
- Her presentation is Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>. Her hope is to get feedback from all the departments earlier in the process instead of at the end and maybe have less versions of the book.
- Summer and Fall Reviews were not done so much as Town was without an HR Director and or an HR Secretary for most of the summer resulting in TA addressing that discipline/employees.
- Some discussions were begun on solid waste which she feels will be reflected in their budget process.
- The Senior Center is not going the route of a membership fee this year. Jack questioned why there was no "take out" on the weekends also if the lunchtime hours could be extended from a 1pm to 1:15pm closing to allow for greater flexibility and participation.
- On the issue of the +2% maximum cap, it was asked whether departments would build up their budgets to get to the 2% even if not needed. Kate responded absolutely not, she felt that some departments like the police will have a hard time maintaining that as their wage increase were going to be more than 2% and some like Public Works contracts will still be open.
- Revenue generating areas like P&R might need to be reviewed annually to see if they can be further increased as we don't need to subsidize P&R like other areas (except for needy families).
- Need for an Annual Insurance Review was brought up as the total expense for Medical and Liability exceeds \$40MM/year. Kate responded that they had talked about it and that as long as they could not change the claims history, there was not going to be a big drop in the rate except for workman's comp which they had been told they were going to get about a - 5% increase in workman's comp for the year.

**II. Review/Discuss upcoming BOS upcoming legislative actions**

- F&B would like to see a Technology Strategy for the Town as well as the BOE. What was spending on Software across the departments; could things like the License Plate Reader be integrated into the Beach and Dump Sticker areas and cut down on staffing needs? How do we integrate technology into the management of the Town (e.g., buying a parking permit on line) .

- Kate discussed the new OpenGov accounting and management software and it's capability to look at line item data, drill down and look at reports in a number of different ways. Will be particularly useful in looking at the breakdown of capital spending by project and department

## **II. Review/Discuss upcoming BOS upcoming legislative actions (cont'd)**

- Savings associated with the LED street light conversion – we will see the savings associated with the street light conversion in this year's budget. They go into effect in mid-January and we should see the savings in mid-Feb so we will be able to do comparisons with our projections.
- The contracts for the Hecker Purchase for the land grant are in the first Selectman's offices ½ from the DOE and Environmental Protection, half from the Land Trust, total cost to the Town about \$2K for surveys and closing costs. (About \$37,500 in 2 grants in total). To RTM for approval.
- P&R Master Plan - Funds were moved from replacing Cherry Lawn basketball courts to develop a P&R Master Plan for all aspects of P&R. Mary Flynn, Chair of P&R Commission, has created an RFP. New staff member hired last year will be looking to expand programs and corresponding revenue.
- Public Works Garage and Building- Final cost estimates soon to be received per the drawings and one alternate proposal with and without the skylight. They will be going out to bid in December, and determine the best method of bidding. When would we expect to see the appropriations during one of the winter meetings. Need to make sure the surety bond company is good. New advent from prior experience is that bidders must be financially pre-qualified. Martha Banks is on the building committee. BOF will make final decision prior to value engineering out an original design aspect.
- Purchase of the Ox Ridge Hunt Club property, to be seen in Jan/Feb. Property has to be subdivided first and it is with PZ & H now. Discussion of the need for a comfort building, PW and Parks and Rec to see where that would be located. PW is also looking at where Parking would go. Thought is it will be on the grass parking for year one. Need to determine where fields would be located, where walking trail will be located. Need to determine where and how much drainage would cost. Total cost \$6.75MM for the land purchase. They will continue to have the horse show there once a year.
- Discussion of the joint services and specifically town healthcare and being self-insured. Not favorable to the town due to current claim history. Discussed risk management including workers comp where there will be a 5% decrease.

## **III . Review of Board of Finance**

- While the State reductions had not been as severe as anticipated, the additional settlement on the tax appeal and re-valuation of the Country Clubs appraised property values cost the Town about \$700K in income they would have been able to appreciate the positive in state aid.
- Buddy System: Jack stated that in addition to the process flow changes of the budgeting changing, he would like to continue to have a "buddy system" maybe even implemented earlier this time with the different departments so that a member of F&B became a mini expert of the areas that BOF designates as areas for additional focus.
- Guidelines Overview : For this year there should not be any reduction in the amount of Sales Tax Revenue or share that we get (MRSA), for next year there is a cap that goes into play for Fiscal '18, if we exceed the +2.5% cap on our general expenditures, less the exemptions for debt service, arbitrated settlements and SPED, they can reduce or eliminate the MRSA grant.
- Debt Levels established about 6 years ago to not exceed \$100MM. Purview of BOF. Will review if it can be tied to financial aspects of the town like the Grand List, etc. Darien can expect little or no funding from the State for BOE building project-past 15-18%. The BOF is looking at a five year plan for the Town. Discussed how the state reimbursed for BOE building for reimbursements.
- Need to maintain our AAA credit rating.

## **IV. Board of Education (Jack Davis for Debra Ritchie)**

- BOE full day Budget Review Mtg on January 7<sup>th</sup>
- Superintendent has three key initiatives : 1 to 1 budgeting= budget neutral; Alternative School Program for kids who need different educational process they can get it without going out of

district, Addition of Curriculum Administrators will reduce the stipends and act as another level of monitors and supervisors.

- There will be a public hearing on Feb 14<sup>th</sup> ; Teachers contracts stating 3.4% will be reviewed in February, not everyone get an incremental .
- Jack believes total increase will be less than 2.5% increase.
- More information to be forthcoming including analysis of class sizes, number of teacher reductions, health care savings, comparative to other schools, etc.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- BOF to provide F&B access to year-to-date numbers from the general ledger as they did last year.
- Make training/access available to F&B members for OpenGov software as training allows (maybe Bert to buddy)
- F&B member to join/attend Safety Committee Meetings on Town Hall Safety Committee to fully understand the procedures that have been put in place and recommend how BOE employees can integrate into BOS plan to reduce liabilities and costs.
- Need to clarify the language and the future cost requirements for comfort area and parking/drainage on the lease or purchase agreement on Ox Ridge Hunt Club before final approvals. (Need to get a copy of the Open Space Agreement).
- Everyone to get questions for additional information into Jack ASAP on teachers contracts before they need to be finalized.
- Special RTM Meeting to be put on the calendar for Early January Date.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Steve Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Martha Banks. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa F. Yarnell, Clerk