

Town of New Fairfield
Board of Finance
4 Brush Hill Road
New Fairfield, CT 06812

MINUTES
Board of Finance Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 23, 2022
7:30 PM
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Members present via Zoom

Wes Marsh, Chairman
Mark Beninson
Michael Cammarota
Thora Perkins
Cheryl Reedy
Claudia Willard
Dave Coleman, Alternate
Chris D'Esposito, Alternate
Greg Williams, Alternate

Other Town Officials Present via Zoom

Olga Melnikov, Finance Director
Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer
Dr. Pat Cosentino, Superintendent of Schools
Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman
Khris Hall, Selectman
Dr. Rich Sanzo, BOE Director of Business and Operations
Dr. Karen Fildes, Director of Technology
Julie Luby, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Katherine Matz, Pupil Personnel Director
James D'Amico, High School Principal
Scott Rohwedder, High School Assistant Principal
Cheryl Milo, Middle School Assistant Principal
James Mandracchia, MHHS Principal
Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman
Samantha Mannion, BOE member
Ed Sbordone, BOE member
Stephanie Strazza, BOE member

Call To Order Chairman Wes Marsh called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Network Administrator gave a brief overview of the rules and procedures for a virtual meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- None

Correspondence and Announcements

Wes Marsh noted that the BOF received one email that was reviewed and forwarded to the BOF members.

Public Comment

Jane Landers spoke of the proposed budget for 2022-2023 and asked the BOF to keep in mind that inflation is high and that a lot of residents are on a fixed budget when considering budget increases.

Residents Olivia Micca, Aline Fogle, Margaret Brady and John McCartney all spoke in support of the budget and encouraged the BOF to send both budgets to the taxpayers for a vote as presented.

Approval of Minutes

Michael Cammarota made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2022 regular meeting as presented. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Budget Transfers- None

Medical

Tom Kowalchik from USI spoke of the Medical Plan and spoke of trends in projected claims. Finance Director Olga Melnikov explained how the retiree costs affect the budgeted amount. Wes Marsh spoke of amount to budget for claims and the amount to keep in the reserve fund. There was a discussion of how inflation will affect the reserve fund. There was a request for three years worth of trends for claims, information about drug rebates, and specific information regarding year to year comparison of the insurance reserve fund and information about any changes to the ASL and ISL. Wes Marsh explained self insurance and how it affects the Mill rate.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget planning

Wes Marsh spoke of potential increases to both the BOE and BOS budgets due to world events and inflation.

Director of Business and Operations for the BOE Dr. Sanzo spoke of the increase in costs for technology, fuel, oil, gas and propane. He further spoke of additional tuition expenses for students attending the Vo-Ag program in Region 12 and special education expenses. He spoke of revenue including student tuition from Sherman students.

Finance Director Olga Melnikov spoke of challenges to the BOS budget specifically in increases in fuel costs. She further spoke of revenue including the potential for the State to cap the motor vehicle Mill Rate at 29 Mills and how this will affect New Fairfield. Pat Del Monaco noted that she has reached out to State Representatives Patrick Callahan and Ken Gucker and State Senator Julie Kushner to ask them to vote no on this proposal.

There was a discussion of detailed capital plans for both the BOE and the BOS. Topics discussed included Fire Department equipment, ARPA funds.

Claudia Willard spoke of communications with the taxpayers and will send a flier to Chairman Wes Marsh for his review. This flier will be available in the public library for residents.

Olga Melnikov spoke of options for using the bond premium of \$2.4 million. She presented four different scenarios that will affect the Mill Rate from anywhere to a 3.3 % change to a 4.8% change.

There was a discussion of the 3.68% Mill Rate increase and whether or not it would be passed by the taxpayers on the first vote and the consequence of the budget not passing on the first try.

Michael Cammarota made a motion to approve the budget as proposed and implement option #2 which applies a premium of \$1.2 million and will yield a 3.68% Mill Rate increase. Wes Marsh seconded the motion.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to amend the previous motion to require a cut of \$150,000 from the BOE operational budget and \$50,000 from the BOS operational budget which would yield a Mill Rate increase of 3.32%. Michael Cammarota seconded the motion.

Vote on amendment: 3-3-0(Motion denied: Wes Marsh, Michael Cammarota and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Mark Beninson, Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard opposed)

Vote on motion as originally presented without amendment: 2-4-0 ((Motion denied: Wes Marsh and Michael Cammarota in favor, Mark Beninson, Thora Perkins, Cheryl Reedy and Claudia Willard opposed)

The BOF members discussed the optimal budget percent increase.

Public Comment

John McCartney thanked Superintendent of Schools Dr. Cosentino along with BOE members and teachers and staff in the district.

Aline Fogel spoke in support of the budget and asked that there be no further cuts and that the budget be put out for a vote as presented.

First Selectman Pat Del Monaco spoke of the budget and noted that cuts necessary to get to a small percentage increase will create a hole in future budgets and is not sustainable. She also spoke in support of the education budget.

Don Kellogg spoke in support of both budgets.

Stephanie Strazza spoke as a member of the BOE and as a parent in support of the school budget. She noted that data regarding test scores has not be updated in over two years due to COVID.

Jane Landers spoke in support of the members of the BOF and thanked them for all their hard work. She encouraged the BOF to keep the percentage increase to under 3.1% keeping in mind taxpayers that may not be able to afford increases due to recent inflation numbers.

Future Agenda items

- Medical budget

Board Member Comments

Members of the BOF thanked their fellow members for the hard work and encouraged everyone to come back next week with solid numbers for the budget.

Adjournment

Michael Cammarota made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 pm. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Received by email 03/28/2022 @ 11:03 a.m.
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield