

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

MINUTES
Board of Finance Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 30, 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
Dr. Pat Cosentino, Superintendent of Schools
Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman
Lori Beninson, 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
Christine Baldelli, Middle School Principal
Allyson Story, MHHS Assistant Principal
Rob Spino, Consolidated School Principal
Karen Gruetzner, Consolidated School Assistant Principal
Kerrie Greening, Tax Collector
Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman
Greg Flanagan, BOE member
Kimberly LaTourette, 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 Paul Gouveia 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 an FOI request for a copy of all emails that the BOF received regarding the 2022-2023 budget. He thanked Cheryl Reedy for getting these emails together and providing them to the resident.

Public Comment

Many members of the public spoke in support of both the Education and the Town budgets and asked the BOF to send the proposed budget to the taxpayers without any further cuts.

Approval of Minutes

Michael Cammarota made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2022 regular meeting as presented. Thora Perkins seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Budget Transfers- None

Medical

Tom Kowalchik from USI spoke of the Medical Plan and noted that claims paid have increased and spoke of how COVID has affected claims. There was a brief discussion of the prescription drug rebate. It was noted that year over year numbers and stop loss will be discussed at the next BOF meeting on April 6th.

Recess

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to take a five minute recess at 8:55 pm in order to allow a BOF member that was experiencing technical difficulties to log back into the meeting. Thora Perkins seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0 (Motion approved- Claudia Willard did not vote since she was experiencing technical difficulties)

Wes Marsh noted that Claudia Willard was experiencing technical difficulties and asked that Dave Coleman serve in his place until she is able to return to the meeting.

Wes Marsh made a motion to come back from recess at 9:09 pm. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Communications

Wes Marsh noted that BOF member Claudia Willard put together a flier regarding the budget that will be available for distribution at the New Fairfield Library.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget planning

Wes Marsh spoke of discussions about the budget from recent meetings and noted that a motion was made at the March 23rd meeting 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. This motion was denied. Another motion was made 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%. This motion was also denied.

The BOF members continued their discussion of the optimal budget increase for both the BOE and the BOS budgets. Thora Perkins asked that 10 years of test scores be provided by the next BOF meeting. There was a discussion of whether or not this information is relevant for putting together a budget. The Board also spoke of potential holes in the budget for future years that may occur due to positions created from grant money. There was an explanation of positions funded through grants and not the operating budget. BOE Chairman Dominic Cipollone spoke of the how data is collected and how it was affected by COVID.

There was a discussion of the use of ARPA funds and the process for spending this money and the capital plan.

Mark Beninson asked about the state reimbursement for the school projects. Dr. Sanzo explained that a portion of the CELA project that was done at MHHS is not eligible for State reimbursement under current legislation. He noted that he along with First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, State Representatives Patrick Callahan and Ken Gucker and State Senator Julie Kushner have worked with the Department of Administration Services to get support to correct this. There are no issues regarding reimbursement for the work at the high school or the CELA project. This will not have an impact on next year's budget.

There was a suggestion of cutting \$375,000 from the BOE budget. Dr. Cosentino spoke of how this would affect positions in the school and/or programs. Dr. Sanzo spoke of how the payroll budget is determined including using attrition to come up with a number.

Public Comment

Members of the public spoke in favor of the budget and encouraged the BOF to send the budget to the voters without any further cuts. It was noted that there is overwhelming support of the budget and that there is more public comment during this budget cycle than ever before.

Future Agenda items

- Medical budget
- April 6th- Final budget mark up.

Board Member Comments

Members of the BOF spoke of the budget and made some suggestions for the final mark up. They thanked everyone that gave their opinions

Adjournment

Michael Cammarota made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:28 pm. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Received by email on 04/05/2022 @ 8:30 a.m.
by Christy M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield