

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

**MINUTES**  
**Board of Finance Special Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 13, 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  
Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer  
Holly Smith, Town Clerk  
Kerrie Greening, Tax Collector  
Dr. Karen Fildes, Director of Technology  
Julie Luby, Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Christine Baldelli, Middle School Principal  
Cheryl Milo, Middle School Assistant Principal  
James Mandracchia, MHHS Principal  
Allyson Story, MHHS Assistant Principal  
Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman  
Kathy Baker, BOE member  
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 many emails regarding the budget since the last BOF meeting and all but one were in favor of sending the budget to a referendum without any further cuts. Once email spoke of the increases in the cost of living.

Wes Marsh noted that Ongoing updates will be tabled until the next regular BOF meeting.

### **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.

Jane Landers spoke of the process for the budget and the role of the BOF members and noted that an in-depth review of the budget by the BOF is necessary. She asked everyone to consider the needs of older residents and those on fixed incomes.

### **Approval of Minutes**

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

### **Budget Transfers-** None

### **Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget planning**

Wes Marsh asked Director of Business and Operations Dr. Rich Sanzo and Finance Director Olga Melnikov to discuss how inflation has affected their respective budgets. Olga Melnikov noted that inflation has especially affected utility prices (\$42,000), vehicles and the cost of road paving.

Dr. Sanzo spoke of higher than expected costs totaling \$345,000 for utilities, tuition for students attending the agriculture program and additional special education outplacements that were not included in the original budget. He spoke of positions that have been funded by the ESSER Grants and noted that these positions will be evaluated to determine if they are still needed.

There was a discussion among the BOF members about the possibility of reaching a compromise and the optimal budget increase. It was noted that public participation is so much greater this year than in past years.

Wes Marsh made a motion to approve both the BOS and BOE respective budgets as presented and to use \$1.4 million from the bond premium which would yield a Mill Rate increase of 3.3%. Michael Cammarota seconded the motion.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to call the question after much discussion. Michael Cammarota seconded the motion. **Vote to call the question: 5-1-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Michael Cammarota, Cheryl Reedy, Claudia Willard and Wes Marsh in favor and Thora Perkins opposed)**  
**Vote on motion after question was called: 3-3-0 (Motion denied-Michael Cammarota, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Mark Beninson, Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard opposed)**

Mark Beninson made a motion to approve the budgets with a reduction of \$25,000 for the BOS budget and a reduction of \$275,000 from the BOE budget and using \$1.2 million from the bond premium which would yield a Mill Rate increase of 3.11%. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

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

Dr. Rich Sanzo and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino spoke of how budget cuts would cause a reduction in staff. There was a brief discussion of larger class sizes and how it will affect both the learning and social and emotional development of the students especially coming out of the pandemic.

### **Vote to send Board of Finance recommended 2022/2023 budget to a Town Meeting**

Members of the Board of Finance including the alternate members gave their opinions on what they thought would be an optimal budget number and whether or not they would be open to compromise. Since no decision was reached to date, the BOF will hold their regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Wes Marsh noted that a decision must be made at that meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Many members of the public including First Selectman Pat Del Monaco spoke of their disappointment that the BOF did not vote to send the taxpayers as presented.

### **Future Agenda items**

- Budget Mark Up
- Ongoing updates

### **Board Member Comments**

Michael Cammarota encouraged the BOF members to listen to the public and not to make any more cuts. He suggested that more of the bond premium be used to offset the budget.

Thora Perkins thanked Chairman Wes Marsh and the entire BOF for their hard work. She further thanked First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino and Director of Business and Operations Dr. Rich Sanzo for their diligence.

Claudia Willard thanked the public for their participation.

Chris D'Esposito thanked the public for their participation

Greg Williams thanked Paul Gouveia for all his hard work with arranging the Zoom meetings and appreciated his public comment in support of the budget. He thanked fellow BOF members Mark Beninson and Cheryl Reedy for trying to reach a compromise and extending an olive branch.

Cheryl Reedy thanked everyone for the public participation. She thanked Mark Beninson for his willingness to reach a compromise. She noted that this year is especially difficult for the schools due to potential learning loss from the pandemic.

Mark Beninson thanked Cheryl Reedy for compromising. He thanked the public for their opinions on the budget.

Dave Coleman thanked everyone for the public participation.

Chairman Wes Marsh encouraged all the BOF members to evaluate the budget between now and next week and to think of ways to fix the budget that don't include cuts. He suggested increasing revenue or using more of the bond premium.

### **Adjournment**

Michael Cammarota made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:11 am. Mark Beninson seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**