

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

MINUTES

Board of Finance Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
7:30 PM
via Zoom

Members present

Wes Marsh, Chairman
Mark Beninson
Kim Hanson
Thora Perkins
Cheryl Reedy
Claudia Willard
Dave Coleman, Alternate
Greg Williams, Alternate

Members not present

Chris D'Esposito, Alternate

Other Town Officials Present

Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman
Lori-Ann Beninson, Selectman
Khris Hall, Selectman
Olga Melnikov, Finance Director
Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer
Dr. Ken Craw, Superintendent of Schools
Carrie DePuy, Director of Business and Operations
Katherine Matz, Pupil Personnel Director
Melissa Busnel, Special Education Supervisor
Paul Gouveia, Director of Technology
Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman
Amy Johnson, BOE member
Greg Flanagan, BOE member
Kimberly LaTourette, BOE member
Samantha Mannion, BOE member
Ed Sbordone, BOE/PBC member
Stephanie Strazza, BOE member
Jane Landers, Zoning Commission member
Mark Ottusch, Athletic Director

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- None

Correspondence and Announcements

Wes Marsh noted that the BOF received four emails since their last meeting. Two of the emails were from the same resident asking that there be no increase to the budget. The other two emails were from residents asking that the increase be lower than proposed.

Public Comment

Some residents spoke of the proposed budget and encouraged the Board to find ways to mitigate the debt service and medical fund costs and not cut from the Education budget.

Approval of Minutes

There was a discussion regarding the Public Comment portion of the March 8, 2023 minutes. Members of the BOF asked that the minutes reflect that some members of the public spoke in support of the budget and some members of the public spoke against tax increases. It was requested that both sides of the issue be included in the minutes.

Kim Hanson made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2023 regular meeting as presented. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to amend the motion regarding the March 8, 2023 minutes to clarify under the Discussion of Medical Expense and Debt Service updates to the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 budgets that there was a suggestion of putting some of the additional interest income from the current fiscal year into the medical fund before June 30, 2023. She further moved to clarify that Future Agenda items read "Discussion of the General Fund Policy for closing out projects" Thora Perkins seconded the motion.

Vote to amend motion: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Vote on minutes as amended: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Budget Transfers- None

Discussion of Medical Plan

Tom Kowalchik from USI gave a presentation regarding the Medical Plan and spoke of an increase in claims compared to what was budgeted. There was a brief discussion of large claims over the last year and a discussion of projections from last year vs. actual claims. It was noted that prescription rebates, the prescription contract, and the stop loss will affect rates in the future. It was decided to invite Mr. Kowalchik to the March 22nd BOF meeting to give more information.

Discussion of long-term capital plan for the Board of Selectmen

Pat Del Monaco spoke of the five-year capital plan for the Town. She spoke of the unappropriated fund balance and specific revenue that goes into this fund. Some grant money was added to this fund this year. No money from taxes is going into the unappropriated cap and non-fund this year due to the building of the new schools. She spoke of the process for closing out projects.

Pat Del Monaco gave a chart of projects that were taken out of the budget. She noted that some projects were funded through grants and some through surplus funds. There was a brief discussion of bridge and drainage projects, the fire department apparatus fund, and other capital and non-recurring funds.

Discussion of fiscal year 2023/2024 Budget planning

There was a discussion of the premiums paid to the debt service and how it is applied to the debt. There was a question regarding interest earned for premiums. Treasurer Terry Friedman noted that most of the investments have rates around 4%. There was a discussion of an organizational chart for town employees.

Subcommittee assignments

The BOF discussed subcommittee assignments. Mark Beninson will replace Michael Cammarota as the liaison to the New Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department. Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard

will serve on the Medical subcommittee and Cheryl Reedy, Thora Perkins and Wes Marsh will serve on the Audit subcommittee

Discussion of In-person vs. Zoom meetings.

The March 22nd meeting will be held via Zoom. The BOF will decide at their March 22nd whether or not future meetings will be in-person or on Zoom. Future meetings are March 29th and April 12th. There is no meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 5th. The final markup will be done on April 12th.

ONGOING UPDATES

Medical update- The Board reviewed the Medical Fund to date. The total fund balance as of the end of February is approximately \$1.6 million.

Legal update- There was a brief discussion of if this report is still necessary. It was decided to keep receiving updates for now and revisit in the future.

Year to date expenses review- No discussion

Year to date revenue review- Olga Melnikov noted that revenue is trending as expected. There was noted that interest income is recorded on a quarterly basis so this figure is as of December 2022.

Cap & Non- There was a brief discussion of the Boat Launch lock box. Cheryl Reedy thanked Pat Del Monaco and Olga Melnikov for the update on the ARPA projects.

Public Comment

Members of the public encouraged the BOF to hold budget meetings via Zoom in order to get as much public comments as possible.

Some members of the public commented on the operations budget and noted that staff increases are a relatively small part of the budget process. There was a question of whether or not email comments are weighted more than in-person comments.

Future Agenda items

- 2023/2024 Budget Planning
- Capital Presentation by the BOE

Board Member Comments

Cheryl Reedy spoke of the public comment session regarding the March 8th meeting and noted that Thora Perkins was correct regarding residents that spoke about encouraging the BOF to keep taxes low. She responded to a previous public comment and noted that email comments and in-person comments are weighted equally in her mind.

Thora Perkins spoke of the amount of public comments and thanked the people that spoke for their high degree of civility.

Wes Marsh agreed that the comments have been very civil and thanked everyone that has commented to date.

Adjournment

Mark Beninson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:43 pm. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

**Received by email on 3/21/2023 @ 11:15 AM
By Tricia Quinn, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield**