

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

**MINUTES**

**Board of Finance Special Meeting  
Wednesday, April 26, 2023  
7:30 PM  
via Zoom**

<p><b><u>Board of Finance members present:</u></b> Wes Marsh, Chairman Mark Beninson Kim Hanson Thora Perkins Cheryl Reedy Claudia Willard Dave Coleman, Alternate Greg Williams, Alternate <b><u>Board of Finance members present:</u></b> Chris D'Esposito, Alternate</p>	<p><b><u>Other Town officials and Educators present:</u></b> Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman Khris Hall, Selectman Lori-Ann Beninson, Selectman Olga Melnikov, Finance Director Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer Dr. Ken Craw, Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Ass't Superintendent of Schools Carrie DePuy, Director of Business and Operations James D'Amico, High School Principal Michael Chapleau, High School Ass't Principal Scott Rohwedder, High School Ass't Principal Karen Gruetzner, Middle School Principal Cheryl Milo, Middle School Assistant Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Ass't Principal Steven Groccia, Elementary School Ass't Principal Rob Spino, Elementary School Ass't Principal Katherine Matz, Pupil Personnel Director Melissa Busnel, Special Education Supervisor Mark Ottusch, Athletic Director Holly Smith, Town Clerk Paul Gouveia, Director of Technology Phil Ross, Director of Buildings and Grounds Bruce Taylor, Fire Chief Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman Kathy Baker, BOE member Tim Blair, BOE member Greg Flanagan, BOE member Amy Johnson, BOE member Kimberly LaTourette, BOE member Samantha Mannion, BOE Ed Sbordone, BOE member/PBC member Stephanie Strazza, BOE member</p>
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Quintin Flower gave a brief overview of the rules and procedures for a virtual meeting.

**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 several emails since the April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. He broke them down in the following categories:

- 91 emails requested specifically that this meeting be held in person. Four emails requested that this meeting be held via Zoom.
- 39 emails requested that the BOE budget be presented to the taxpayers as is. Of these 39 emails, 22 of them also asked that the BOS budget be presented to taxpayers without any further cuts.
- 11 emails asked that if cuts were necessary to please make them not too drastic.
- Two emails requested that advisory questions regarding the budget be put on the referendum ballot.

**Public Comment**

Over 40 members of the public spoke during public comment that lasted over 2 ½ hours. At least 37 residents spoke against any further cuts to the education budget and encouraged the BOF to send the budget to the taxpayers as presented. Many residents also spoke in favor of the town budget. Two residents spoke in favor of cutting the budget and one member of the public spoke against having advisory questions on the referendum ballot. One member of the public spoke in support to keeping the dispatch center in town.

**Approval of Minutes**

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2023 regular meeting as presented. Kim Hanson seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

**Budget Transfers**- None

**Additional Appropriation for the Medical Reserve Fund**

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to make an Additional Appropriation (Town Meeting required) of \$650,000 out of the General Fund Interest Income to Medical Reserve Fund. Mark Beninson seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

\$	Transfer From		\$	Transfer To	
\$650,000.00	001/R3400001	General Fund-Interest Income	\$650,000.00	601/R3901001	Medical Reserve Fund-Transfers
<b>\$650,000.00</b>			<b>\$650,000.00</b>		

### **Board of Selectman Presentation of proposed cuts**

Pat Del Monaco gave a presentation of the effect of the proposed cuts of \$300,000 to the Board of Selectmen's budget. She noted that the proposed budget has an increase of \$510,435 over the 2022-2023 budget. This amounts to an increase of 3.85% and contributes less than 1% to the total budget increase. She spoke of cuts that have already been made to the operating and capital budget and compared payroll to fiscal year 2017 and 2013. Ms. Del Monaco spoke in support of using the bond premium and spoke of how this will affect debt service and help the taxpayer.

The Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed to following cuts at their April 20<sup>th</sup> special meeting.

Additional Road Paving	\$150,000.00
Utilities	\$40,000.00
Catch Basin Cleaning	\$20,000.00
Dispatch OT	\$20,000.00
State Police	\$22,000.00
Library Books and Materials	\$6,000.00
Library Automation	\$2,200.00
Library Salaries, Circulation Clerk	\$2,000.00
Senior Center Materials and Supplies	\$2,000.00
General Insurance	\$9,500.00
Land Use Assistant	\$8,167.00
Workers' Comp	\$5,000.00
Pension	\$5,000.00
Postage	\$5,000.00
Grant Administrator	\$3,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,367.00</b>

### **Board of Education Presentation of proposed cuts**

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Crow gave a presentation showing the effect of a \$1,775,000 cut to the Board of Education budget. He noted that the BOE members are not in favor of any cuts to the budget. The four major areas that will be affected by the reductions include Staffing, Student Programs and Services, Operations and Leadership and Long-Range effects.

Dr. Crow spoke of the rankings of the district based on Performance Index Results. He compared rankings from 2016-2017 to 2021-2022. He further noted that certified staffing has been reduced since 2018-2019 despite a slight uptick in enrollment. He specified that ESSER funds have not caused an increase in positions.

Dr. Craw presented the following reduction scenario totaling \$1,775,000.

FTE	Reduction	Amount
(3.00)	Elementary Classroom teachers	(\$225,000)
(2.00)	Instructional Coaches	(\$150,000)
(2.00)	Interventionists	(\$150,000)
(5.00)	Paraprofessionals	(\$125,000)
	Fuel and Oil Savings	(\$100,000)
	Capitol-reduce funding toward Middle School oil tank replacement	(\$100,000)
(1.30)	HS Math Lab and Math Workshop	(\$97,500)
(1.00)	Administrator	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	MHHS Gifted and Enrichment Program	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	MS Gifted and Enrichment Program	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	K-5 Art	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	Elementary STEAM Teacher	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	Special Education Teacher	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	HS English & SS	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	Business Teacher	(\$75,000)
(1.00)	ILS Teacher (SPED Self-contained class)	(\$75,000)
	Curriculum and Instruction	(\$68,750)
(.80)	World Language Teacher	(\$60,000)
(.75)	Strings Teacher	(\$56,250)
	Freshmen Sports	(\$50,000)
(1.00)	Secretary	(\$50,000)
	Regular Pension	\$20,000
	Early Retirement	\$37,500
1.00	PreK Teacher (SPED)	\$75,000
<b>(23.9)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>(\$1,775,000)</b>

**Recess**

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to take a 5 minute recess at 10:46 pm. Kim Hanson seconded the motion.

**Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Kim Hanson made a motion to come back from recess at 10:52 pm. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

**Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

**Vote on final markup of the Board of Finance recommended budget 2023-2024**

Wes Marsh gave a brief description of the process for doing the mark up and recommending the budgets to a Town Meeting. He further spoke of the Medical Fund and noted that based on the numbers, \$7,082,737 should be budgeted for the Medical Fund. This can be reduced by the \$650,000 that will be appropriated from additional interest income.

There was a lengthy discussion among the BOF members regarding the optimal budget to bring forward to the taxpayers. Multiple scenarios were discussed with input from the First Selectman, Superintendent of Schools and many administrators.

**BOS**

Kim Hanson made a motion to adjust the Board of Selectmen’s proposed budget in the following categories resulting in a reduction of \$345,367 to the operating budget and an increase of \$50,000 to the capital and nonrecurring budget. Mark Beninson seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Road paving reduced from original request		150,000
Utilities		40,000
Catch Basin (storm water management)		20,000
Dispatch OT		20,000
State Police		22,000
Library Books and Materials		6,000
Library Automation		2,200
Library Circulation Clerk		2,000
Senior Center M&S		2,000
General Insurance		9,500
Land Use Asst. (General Land Use Salaries)		8,167
Workers Comp		5,000
Pension		5,000
Postage		5,000
Grant Administrator		3,500
PT clerk -Finance Department		20,000
Tax Collector Salary		5,000
Senior Center Secretary reduce raise		3,000
Reduce increased hours PT Town clerk		<u>17,000</u>
		<b>\$345,367</b>
Put back Apparatus Reserve	25,000	
Put back Equipment Reserve	25,000	

## BOE

Thora Perkins made a motion to reduce the Board of Education operating budget by \$950,000. Kim Hanson seconded the motion.

Wes Marsh made a motion to amend the motion to change the reduction to \$750,000 from the Board of Education operating budget. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

Kim Hanson made a motion to call the question on the previous motion. Thora Perkins seconded the motion. **Vote to call question: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

**Vote on motion as amended: 2-4-0 (Motion denied- Cheryl Reedy and Wes Marsh in favor, Mark Beninson, Kim Hanson, Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard opposed)**

Kim Hanson made a motion to reduce \$850,000 from the Board of Education operating budget. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

Kim Hanson made a motion to call the question on the previous motion. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion. **Vote to call question: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

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

Kim Hanson made a motion to reduce \$800,000 from the Board of Education operating budget. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

**Vote: 3-2-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Kim Hanson and Thora Perkins in favor, Cheryl Reedy, and Wes Marsh opposed- Claudia Willard did not vote on this motion.)**

## Medical

Kim Hanson made a motion to contribute \$7,400,000 to the Medical Insurance Fund. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

**Vote: 5-0-0 (Motion approved- Claudia Willard did not vote on this motion.)**

## BOE Capital and Nonrecurring

Kim Hanson made a motion to reduce the Board of Education Capital and Nonrecurring budget by \$100,000. Thora Perkins seconded the motion.

**Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Kim Hanson and Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard in favor, Cheryl Reedy, and Wes Marsh opposed)**

## Revenue

Kim Hanson made a motion to increase interest income contribution by \$300,000. Mark Beninson seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

## Debt Service

Kim Hanson made a motion to expend \$2,500,000 on debt service from bond premium. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

**Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Kim Hanson and Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard in favor, Cheryl Reedy, and Wes Marsh opposed)**

There was a brief discussion of the part-time accounting clerk. The BOF agreed that this position will be funded for six months.

### **Vote to recommend the Board of Finance 2023-2024 to a Town Meeting**

Wes Marsh made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting the following expenditures for the Board of Selectmen:

Town government expenditures totaling \$13,721,500 from the General Fund and \$822,070 from the capital and nonrecurring funds and \$3,391,605 from other governmental funds for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

**Vote: 5-1-0 (Motion approved- Cheryl Reedy opposed)**

Wes Marsh made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting Education expenditures for the Board of Education: Education expenditures \$51,911,168 from the General Fund and \$148,575 from the capital and nonrecurring fund for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024. Kim Hanson seconded the motion. **Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion approved- Cheryl Reedy and Claudia Willard opposed)**

### **Vote to put Advisory questions on the budget referendum ballot**

Wes Marsh spoke of the purpose of putting advisory questions on the ballot is to get a feel from taxpayers as to whether the budget is too high or too low. He noted that the answers are not binding in any way.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to add two advisory questions to the referendum ballot. (Board of Education budget- too high or too low and Board of Selectmen budget- too high or too low?)

Wes Marsh seconded the motion. **Vote: 3-1-1 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Cheryl Reedy and Wes Marsh in favor, Thora Perkins opposed and Kim Hanson abstained- Claudia Willard did not vote on this motion.)**

### **Public Comment**

Over 20 members of the public expressed their disappointment over the budget vote and specifically the reductions to the Board of Education budget. There was one comment regarding concerns with having an advisory question on the ballot. Many of the residents that spoke thanked Cheryl Reedy and Wes Marsh for their support of the education budget.

One member of the public noted that not everyone voted in favor of the school building projects and further spoke against the advisory questions on the ballot.

Cheryl Reedy spoke of the law requiring giving of names before speaking for zoom meetings. She asked that she be on record for opposing letting residents speak without identifying themselves.

### **Future Agenda items**

The BOF will discuss the audit, general fund policy and salaries for elected officials at future meetings. The Board will discuss the policy for requiring of speakers to identify themselves.

### **Board Member Comments**

Kim Hanson noted that the original request for the BOE budget was an increase of approximately 6.8% and the reduction to this increase was under 2%.

Greg Williams spoke of his disappointment with the outcome of the BOE budget. He thanked Cheryl Reedy and Wes Marsh for their support of the education budget.

Cheryl Reedy clarified that the rumors that Kim Hanson lives in Florida are not true. She noted that he continues to live in New Fairfield and has lived here for many years. She spoke of her appreciation for parents, students and fellow board members but noted that she is unable to support this budget.

Wes Marsh spoke of his frustration with the budget and his disappointment and embarrassment of not being included in the proposed cuts until the last minute. He spoke of his appreciation for everyone that spoke so passionately about the budget especially the students.

### **Adjournment**

Kim Hanson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:27 am. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

**Vote: 5-0-0 (Motion approved- Claudia Willard left early and did not vote on this motion.)**

Received by email on 05/02/2023 @ 8:30 a.m.  
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield