

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

MINUTES

Board of Finance Special Meeting

Wednesday, May 31, 2023

7:00 PM

Meeting House Hill School Multi-Purpose Room

<p><u>Board of Finance members present:</u> Wes Marsh, Chairman Mark Beninson Thora Perkins Cheryl Reedy Claudia Willard Dave Coleman, Alternate (via phone) Greg Williams, Alternate</p> <p><u>Board of Finance members not present:</u> Kim Hanson Chris D’Esposito, Alternate</p>	<p><u>Other Town officials and Educators present:</u> Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman Khris Hall, Selectman Lori-Ann Beninson, Selectman Olga Melnikov, Finance Director Dr. Ken Craw, Superintendent of Schools Carrie DePuy, Director of Business and Operations Elisa Beckett-Flores, Registrar of Voters Shareen Langdon, Tax Collector Holly Smith, Town Clerk Paul Gouveia, Director of Technology Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman Greg Flanagan, BOE member Kimberly LaTourette, BOE member Samantha Mannion, BOE Ed Sbordone, BOE member/PBC member Stephanie Strazza, BOE member</p>
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Call To Order Chairman Wes Marsh called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- Wes Marsh noted that Kim Hanson was unable to attend tonight's meeting and has requested that Dave Coleman serve in his place. Dave Coleman participated in the meeting via phone.

Correspondence and Announcements

Wes Marsh noted that the BOF received five emails since the May 17th meeting. He broke them down in the following categories:

- Two emails requested that the BOF raise the BOE budget.
- One email requested that the BOF raise both the BOE and BOS budgets.
- One email suggested that the BOE budget be based on school performance.
- One email from the Registrar of Voters gave a timeline for the second referendum vote.

Public Comment

Approximately 35 members of the public spoke during public comment that lasted about 45 minutes. With a few exceptions, these speakers urged the BOF to listen to the advisory questions from the May 20th referendum and to fully fund the BOE budget and restore cuts.

Registrar of Voters Elisa Beckett-Flores spoke of the logistics and a timeline for a second referendum and how it may be affected by the high school construction project.

Discussion and vote on revised final markup of the BOF recommended budget for 2023-2024

Wes Marsh spoke of the five components of the budget that include: Payroll, Non-payroll, Capital, Debt Service and Medical.

Cheryl Reedy spoke of a proposal that she composed based on the May 20th budget referendum and advisory questions. She spoke of the debt service due to the school construction project and how it affects the budget. She further spoke of taking money out of the bond premium and noted that this scenario would yield a 6.25% tax increase.

There was a discussion of the medical fund and the optimal balance to keep in the fund. Wes Marsh noted that the he heard from the medical consultant and claims are steady and are not expected to increase dramatically.

MOTION: Cheryl Reedy made a motion to make the following changes to the previously marked up budget of the April 26, 2023 meeting: add \$200,000 to the BOE Operations Budget, subtract \$400,000 from medical and spend \$2,000,000 of the Bond Premium. Wes Marsh seconded the motion.

MOTION: Thora Perkins made a motion to call the question. Dave Coleman seconded the motion.

Vote to call the question: 6-0-0 (Motion passed)

Vote on motion after question was called: 2-4-0 (Motion denied- Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard opposed)

MOTION: Thora Perkins made a motion to adjust the original budget proposal from March 4, 2023 and subtract \$100,000 from the BOS Operations budget from police overtime. This is in addition to the items previously subtracted from the previous final markup meeting on April 26, 2023 totaling \$345,367 resulting in the total reductions from the BOS Operations Budget of \$445,367. Dave Coleman seconded the motion.

There was a discussion of the BOS budget and the intent of the advisory questions. There was a question of whether changes should be made since this portion of the budget passed at the May 20th referendum.

MOTION: Thora Perkins made a motion to call the question. Dave Coleman seconded the motion.

Vote to call the question: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)

Vote on motion after question was called: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)

There was a discussion of how much to add back to the Board of Education budget based on a “too low” response to the advisory question from the May 20, 2023 referendum. The BOF discussed the effects of adding \$100,000 vs. \$200,000 to the BOE budget.

MOTION: Thora Perkins made a motion to add \$100,000 to the BOE Operation Budget. (The effect of this would be a \$700,000 reduction from the original BOE budget instead of a reduction of \$800,000). Claudia Willard seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)

MOTION: Wes Marsh made a motion to only use \$2.2 million of the Bond Premium for the 2023-2024 budget. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

There was a discussion of how only using \$2.2 million from the Bond Premium will affect future operating budgets and increase in the Mil Rate for this year.

MOTION: Cheryl Reedy made a motion to call the question. Wes Marsh seconded the motion.

Vote to call the question: 6-0-0 (Motion passed)

Vote on motion after question was called: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Wes Marsh, Cheryl Reedy, and Claudia Willard in favor, Thora Perkins and Dave Coleman opposed)

Vote to bring BOF recommended budget to a Town Meeting

MOTION: Wes Marsh made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting the following expenditures for the Board of Selectmen: Town government expenditures totaling \$13,621,500 from the General Fund and \$822,070 from the capital and nonrecurring funds and \$3,091,605 from other governmental funds for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024. Mark Beninson seconded the motion

Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)

MOTION: Wes Marsh made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting Education expenditures for the Board of Education: Education expenditures totaling \$52,311,168 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. Claudia Willard seconded the motion

Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion passed- Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)

MOTION: Cheryl Reedy made a motion to add the same advisory questions to the referendum as was on the May 20, 2023 budget referendum. Wes Marsh seconded the motion

MOTION: Dave Coleman made a motion to call the question. Thora Perkins seconded the motion.

Vote to call the question: 6-0-0 (Motion passed)

Vote on motion after question was called: 2-4-0 (Motion denied- Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Mark Beninson, Dave Coleman, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard opposed)

Public Comment

Finance Director Olga Melnikov how a failed budget could cause a potential loss of interest revenue and could result in the need to draw from the reserve fund to pay the Town's obligations.

Approximately 11 members of the public spoke of their disappointment with the decisions made by the BOF at tonight's meeting and encouraged them to reconsider before the budget referendum.

Board Member Comments

Cheryl Reedy spoke of her disappointment with the outcome of tonight's meeting and asked if there was a possibility of reopening the issue before the referendum. She spoke of her concerns regarding possible loss of interest income from a delay in tax collections.

Thora Perkins spoke in support of the budget and how budget increases could affect future years.

Claudia Willard thanked everyone for their feedback regarding the budget.

Mark Beninson spoke in support of the budget and the need to compromise. He spoke of the cumulative effect of budget increases and the need to look at all the taxpayers in town.

Greg Williams spoke of his disappointment with the budget cuts and his concerns with New Fairfield becoming an unstable community that could result in the inability to hire high quality teachers and employees.

Wes Marsh spoke of his disappointment with the votes at tonight's meeting and the inability of the Board to compromise. He spoke of his concerns with having to use the reserve fund if tax collections are delayed.

Adjournment

Wes Marsh made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:45 pm. Claudia Willard seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Received by email 06/06/2023 @ 8:30 a.m.
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield