

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

**MINUTES
Board of Finance Special Meeting
Monday, April 29, 2024
7:30 PM
via Zoom**

Board of Finance members present Doug Jendras, Chairman Mark Beninson Wes Marsh Thora Perkins Cheryl Reedy Claudia Willard Eric Huff, Alternate Peggy Katkocin, Alternate Greg Williams, Alternate	Other Town officials and Educators present: Dr. Ken Craw, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kris Woleck, Ass't Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Melissa Lindsey, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Selectman Tom Perkins, Selectman Olga Melnikov, Finance Director Carrie DePuy, BOE Director of Business and Operations Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer Paul Gouveia, Director of Technology James D'Amico, High School Principal Scott Rohwedder, High School Assistant Principal Mark Ottusch, Athletic Director Karen Gruetzner, Middle School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Principal Dr. Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Assistant Principal Rob Spino, Elementary School Assistant Principal Maria Kennedy, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepstul, Secondary Special Education Supervisor Elisa Beckett-Flores, Registrar of Voters Dan McDermott, Registrar of Voters Holly Smith, Town Clerk Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman Kathy Baker, BOE member Tim Blair, BOE member Greg Flanagan, BOE member Sue Huwer, BOE member Amy Johnson, BOE member Kim LaTourette, BOE member Samantha Mannion, BOE member Ed Sbordone, BOE member/PBC member
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Call To Order Chairman Doug Jendras called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. It was noted that both the BOS and the BOE proposed budgets failed at the referendum held on Saturday, April 27th. The purpose of this meeting is for the BOF to recommend a revised budget to send to the taxpayers for a second referendum.

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- None

Correspondence and Announcements

Wes Marsh gave a brief summary of the emails that were received from the taxpayers since the budget referendum on April 27th. The breakdown of the content were over 100 taxpayers thought the budget was too low and asked the money be added to the BOE budget and 75 taxpayers thought money should be added to the BOS budget. Approximately 14 taxpayers send emails noted that the budget was too high for the BOE and the BOS and asked the money be cut from the budget. Five taxpayers sent emails noting that the budget as presented on April 27th was adequate.

Public Comment

Approximately 20 taxpayers spoke in support of adding money to the budgets especially the Board of Education budget. Many residents spoke in favor of adding an advisory question to the ballot to determine the intent of the taxpayers.

Three residents spoke against increases the budget in any way.

Registrar of Voters Elisa Beckett-Flores and Town Clerk Holly Smith explained the process and timeline for a second vote and the statutory rules for adding an advisory question to the ballot.

Discussion and vote on revised budget

Wes Marsh made a motion add \$250,000 to the Board of Education Operating budget and \$150,000 to the Board of Selectmen capital budget to be earmarked for Fire Equipment Reserve in the amount of \$60,000 and bridges and drainage in the amount of \$90,000. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion.

There was a discussion among the members of the Board of Finance regarding the results of the April 27th referendum and if a failed vote meant it was too high or too low. Specific topics discussed included the amount that New Fairfield spends per pupil and how COVID affected the needs of students. Capital needs were discussed especially the track and field replacement, fire equipment reserve and bridges and drainage and the possible use of surplus funds for these projects.

Claudia Willard made a motion to call the question on the previous motion. Thora Perkins seconded the motion. **Vote to call the question: 3-3-0 (Motion denied- Mark Beninson, Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard in favor, Doug Jendras, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy opposed)**

Claudia Willard made a motion to amend the previous motion by striking all and to subtract \$150,000 from the Board of Education Operating budget and to subtract \$150,000 from the Board of Selectmen capital budget that was originally recommended on April 3rd. Thora Perkins seconded the motion.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to call the question on the previous motion. Thora Perkins seconded the motion. **Vote to call the question: 5-1-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Wes Marsh, Thora Perkins, Cheryl Reedy and Claudia Willard in favor, Doug Jendras opposed)**
Vote to amend motion: 3-2-1 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard in favor, Cheryl Reedy and Wes Marsh opposed and Doug Jendras abstained)

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to amend the motion made by Claudia Willard to “strike all” and to add \$150,000 to the Board of Education Operating budget and \$60,000 to the Town Capital Fire Equipment reserve fund and to use the remainder of the bond premium to reduce debt service. Wes Marsh seconded the motion. **Vote on amendment: 2-4-0 (Motion denied- Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Mark Beninson, Doug Jendras, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard opposed)**

Doug Jendras made a motion to amend the motion made by Claudia Willard to strike all and to add \$100,000 to the BOE Operating budget to the April 3rd mark up to be funded by the bond premium. Mark Beninson seconded the motion.

Vote on amendment: 4-2-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Doug Jendras, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Thora Perkins, and Claudia Willard opposed)

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

There was a discussion of the BOE reduction and the use of bond premium and if that would affect future budgets. There was a suggestion of using surplus funds left over after the replacement of the track and field for the fire equipment fund.

Registrar of Voters Elisa Beckett-Flores spoke of the statutory requirements for advisory questions on the ballots.

Cheryl Reedy made a motion to add advisory questions to the budget referendum. Wes Marsh seconded the motion. **Vote: 4-2-0 (Motion approved- Mark Beninson, Doug Jendras, Wes Marsh and Cheryl Reedy in favor, Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard opposed)**

Doug Jendras made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting the following expenditures for the Board of Selectmen: Town government expenditures totaling \$14,105,707 from the General Fund and \$539,455 from the capital and nonrecurring funds and \$2,599,112 from other governmental funds for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Doug Jendras made a motion to recommend to a Town Meeting Education expenditures for the Board of Education: Education expenditures totaling \$55,071,776 from the General Fund and \$119,577 from the capital and nonrecurring fund for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. Cheryl Reedy seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Public Comment

Approximately 15 members of the public spoke of their disappointment with tonight’s votes and spoke of their desire to add more to the budget especially the education budget.

Board member comments

Thora Perkins thanked residents and BOE Chairman Dominic Cipollone for speaking at tonight’s meeting. She further thanked her fellow BOF members.

Doug Jendras thanked Quintin Flower, Suzanne Kloos and Olga Melnikov for their hard work with the meetings.

Adjournment

Doug Jendras made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 pm. Claudia Willard seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Received by email on 05/06/2024 @ 3:41 p.m.
by Chrystie M. Bontempo, Asst. Town Clerk, New Fairfield