

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

MINUTES
Board of Finance Regular Meeting
Wednesday, January 21, 2015
7:30 PM
New Fairfield Community Room

Members present:

Wes Marsh, Chairman
Don Blackwell
Michael Cammarota
Tom Edwards
John Hodge
Jane Landers
Brian Shea, Alternate
Cheryl Reedy, Alternate
Anthony Yorio, Alternate

Other Town Officials Present:

Susan Chapman, First Selectman
Kim Hanson, Selectman
Evelyn Abraham, Finance Director
Ed Sbordone, Accounting Manager
Marcia Marien, Auditor, O'Connor Davies
Kathy Hull, Senior Center Director
Linda Norris, BOE member
Susan Starr, BOE member

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- None

Correspondence and Announcements- Chairman Wes Marsh noted that alternate member Steve Brown has resigned from the board due to work commitments. Chairman Marsh thanked Mr. Brown for his service to the board and welcomed Anthony Yorio as the new alternate member.

Approval of Minutes

Don Blackwell made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2014 regular meeting as presented. John Hodge seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Public Comment

Linda Norris spoke of the proposed elderly tax relief changes and asked the board to consider how the changes will affect all taxpayers.

Budget Transfers

Wes Marsh made a motion to approve the following Inter-Department transfer in the amount of \$10,000.00 Jane Landers seconded the motion. (Such document to be attached to the minutes of this meeting)

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

\$	Transfer To		\$	Transfer From	
\$10,000.00	4310-742	PW-Truck & Equip Maintenance and Repair	\$10,000.00	4160-260	Unclass P&B-Workers Comp.
\$10,000.00			\$10,000.00		

Presentation of the 2013-2014 Town Audit by Marcia Marien from the firm of O’Connor Davies

Marcia Marien from the firm of O’Connor Davies gave a presentation of the audit for the Town of New Fairfield for the year ending June 30, 2014. This audit has been reviewed with management and the BOF audit subcommittee. Ms. Marien reviewed the balance sheet and spoke of the fund balance as compared to general revenue and compared the fund balance with other towns in Fairfield County. It was noted that New Fairfield has an excellent tax collection rate when compared to other towns. Other areas of discussion included the special revenue funds, the Internal Service Fund and the long-term balance sheet. It was noted that there were no significant journal entries this year and the town is in excellent fiscal shape.

Acceptance of Audit

John Hodge made a motion to accept the 2013-2014 audit for the Town of New Fairfield as prepared by the firm of O’Connor Davies, LLP as presented. Don Blackwell seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Elderly Tax Relief

John Hodge spoke of the possibility of amending the existing Elderly Tax Relief program for the Town of New Fairfield. A subcommittee was formed in order to research the existing program and met immediately prior to this meeting.

John Hodge presented the board with a handout that compares New Fairfield’s tax relief program to that of the town of Brookfield. New Fairfield is similar in size and income to Brookfield but Brookfield’s program has higher income limits. This handout explained the current cost of the program to New Fairfield and the possible increase in cost if it were to increase the income limit to match Brookfield’s. Currently New Fairfield’s income limits are \$34,600 for a single homeowner and \$42,200 for married homeowners. Brookfield’s income limits are \$47,740 for a single and \$58,240 for married couples. The cost of the program for 2013 for New Fairfield was \$262,000 and \$430,487 for Brookfield. There was also a suggestion of combining Part I and II of the existing tax relief program in New Fairfield and to increase the income limits for the Tax deferral program to \$60,000 for a single and \$70,000 for a married couple.

The board discussed length of residency requirements and the possibility of an asset check but it was believed that this would not be permitted under state statute.

John Hodge made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the following call for a Town Meeting: 1. Income limits for the town's elderly tax relief program to be raised to HUD income limits for affordable housing in New Fairfield of \$47,000 for a single person and \$57,000 for a married couple. These limits would continue to increase each year based on the COLA as determined by the State of Connecticut.

2. Elderly tax deferral income limits be increased to \$60,000 for a single person and \$70,000 for a married couple.

3. The benefits for the elderly tax relief shall be set at \$1585 and shall increase on an annual basis based on the increase in the town's budget.

4. That the elderly tax relief program part 2 shall be incorporated into one elderly tax relief program thus increasing the benefits from both programs to \$1585. Don Blackwell seconded the motion.

Tom Edwards made a motion to amend the previous motion to remove "HUD Income limits." John Hodge seconded the motion.

Vote on amendment: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Tom Edwards made a motion to amend item # 3 to add "amount to be raised by taxes" and percentage increase. John Hodge seconded the motion.

Vote on amendment: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

AMENDED MOTION

John Hodge made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the following call for a Town Meeting: 1. Income limits for the town's elderly tax relief program to be raised to \$47,000 for a single person and \$57,000 for a married couple. These limits would continue to increase each year based on the COLA as determined by the State of Connecticut.

2. Elderly tax deferral income limits be increased to \$60,000 for a single person and \$70,000 for a married couple.

3. The benefits for the elderly tax relief shall be set at \$1585 and shall increase on an annual basis based on the percentage increase in the town's budget amount to be raised by taxes.

4. That the elderly tax relief program part 2 shall be incorporated into one elderly tax relief program thus increasing the benefits from both programs to \$1585. Don Blackwell seconded the motion.

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

Discussion of 2015-2016 budget planning

Chairman Wes Marsh noted that Steve Rinaldi will be present at the regular BOF meeting in February to discuss the town's medical plan.

The Superintendent of Schools presented a budget to the BOE recently with a proposed 2.44% increase.

The Board of Selectmen have been meeting with department heads in the last couple of weeks and is working on putting their budget together.

ONGOING UPDATES

Medical update- Medical claims have gone down and thus the Medical Reserve fund is up. The board asked for a report of the number of catastrophic claims for the year.

Legal update- No report

Year to date expenses review- a full time employee has been hired for the Communication Center which should reduce the amount of overtime needed to cover shifts.

Current year revenue update- The tax collection rate is 99.5%. It is expected that the student tuition for Sherman students will be over the budgeted amount but the amount of revenue collected for Special Education will be less than the budgeted amount.

Cap & Non-Town- The Unappropriated Cap & Non will be higher due to the surplus. John Hodge asked First Selectman Susan Chapman about the status of certain projects that can possibly be swept if completed.

Public Comment

Senior Center Director Kathy Hull spoke in favor of the amendment to the Elderly Tax Relief program and spoke of how valuable senior citizens are to the town.

Selectman Kim Hanson spoke of the Elderly Tax Relief program and how it affects all taxpayers and not just senior citizens. Mr. Hanson suggested that the board look at what the equivalent income limit would be for a family of four.

Adrian Bing-Zaremba spoke in support of the Senior Tax relief program and also in support of the schools.

First Selectman Susan Chapman reminded residents that any amendments to the Tax Relief program must be voted on at a Town Meeting and that all taxpayers will have a vote in the outcome.

Future Agenda Items- The following items will be discussed in the near future:

- Medical Reserve plan- Steve Rinaldi
- Budget planning
- Library renovation status

Board member comments

- Brian Shea noted that there was a great discussion tonight.
- John Hodge congratulated the town on a positive audit and reminded everyone that they will all get a chance to vote on the Elderly Tax Relief.
- Cheryl Reedy spoke of the audit and thanked both the BOE and the Town.
- Jane Landers spoke of the positive auditor's report.
- Wes Marsh reminded everyone that taxes are due by February 2nd.

Adjournment

John Hodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:29pm. Don Blackwell seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)