

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

MINUTES
Board of Finance Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 11, 2020
7:30 PM
New Fairfield Community Room

Members present:

Wes Marsh, Chairman
Michael Cammarota
Tom Garben
Cheryl Reedy
Anthony Yorio
Brian Shea, Alternate
Mark Werner, Alternate
Greg Williams, Alternate

Members not present:

Jane Landers

Other Town Officials Present:

Ed Sbordone, Finance Director and Town Treasurer
Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman
Khris Hall, Selectman
Kim Hanson, Selectman
Dr. Pat Cosentino, Superintendent of Schools
Julie Luby, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Rich Sanzo, Director of Business and Operations
Peggy Katkocin, BOE Chairman

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Appointments- Wes Marsh noted that Jane Landers would not be in attendance for tonight's meeting and appointed Mark Werner to serve in her absence.

Correspondence and Announcements- None

Public Comment

Resident Joseph Galanti spoke of his concerns regarding tax increases and distributed information about a proposal with ideas for Senior Tax Relief that could benefit more seniors than what is done with the current program.

Finance Director and Town Treasurer Ed Sbordone noted that he received notification from the S&P Rating Authority that it has assigned a AAA rating for New Fairfield. He spoke of how this affects the town and noted that the interest rate for bonding will be slightly lower than expected.

Selectman Kim Hanson asked if the both school projects have been approved for the State finances. Director of Business and Operations Dr. Rich Sanzo spoke of the status and noted that both school projects are before the legislator now and are part of the school construction bill. It is expected that this bill will be approved by the end of the legislative session.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino gave a brief update of the three major goals of the school district as of January 10, 2020. They include priorities, action steps, SMART goals and progress.

Approval of Minutes

Wes Marsh made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2020 regular meeting as presented. Anthony Yorio seconded the motion. **Vote: 5-0-1 (Motion approved- Mark Werner abstained)**

Wes Marsh made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2020 special meeting as presented. Anthony Yorio seconded the motion. **Vote: 5-0-1 (Motion approved- Mark Werner abstained)**

Wes Marsh made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2020 regular meeting (budget workshop) meeting as presented. Anthony Yorio seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)**

Elderly Tax Relief

Wes Marsh spoke of the Elderly Tax Relief program and noted that it has been reviewed by the Commission on the Aging. Selectman Khris Hall spoke of getting the word out to senior citizens that may be eligible but may not be aware of the programs. She noted that she and Assistant Assessor Julie Blick held listening hours on February 28th to answer questions for the public regarding the parameters and process of the different tax relief programs which include tax abatement, tax deferral and veterans' benefits. It was noted that the deadline to apply for these programs is May 15th. There was a brief discussion of having a possible mailing in order to inform applicants about the program and the possibility of setting up an informational video on the town's website. Anyone looking for more information should contact Julie Blick at Town Hall.

Discussion of the BOS and BOE requested budgets for 2020-2021

The Board reviewed the BOS and BOE and spoke of their "guidepost" as to what would be a fair budget increase that would meet the needs of the budget while weighing the taxpayers' ability to pay. There was a brief discussion of changes that may affect the grand list such as revaluation and new construction. It was noted that interest rates are lower that will affect the bonding and long-term capital projects.

Specific topics discussed long term plans for bridge and drainage, the role of the Fire Marshal, the unassigned fund balance, student tuition and Medicare reimbursement rate.

Chairman Wes Marsh noted the current proposed budgets for both the BOS and BOE would yield an increase of 4.79%. A poll of the members stated that they would be comfortable with an increase of between 3.00 and 3.5%. This will be discussed further in meetings in the near future.

Public Comment

Resident Joseph Galanti spoke of his concerns regarding tax increases especially for senior citizen residents.

BOE Chairman Peggy Katkocin spoke of the overwhelming support from senior citizens regarding tax increases especially with the school building projects.

Selectman Kim Hanson asked for a calculation of the town payroll analysis that shows what the percentage increase would be with the additional benefits. He further spoke of the possibility of a recession and how this will affect the budget.

Future Agenda Items

The audit presentation and discussion of the 2020-2021 budget will be discussed at the next BOF meeting on March 18th.

Board member comments

Tom Garben asked the BOE about contingency plans for the schools in the event of the need to isolate due to the coronavirus. BOE Chairman Peggy Katkocin assured him that there is a plan in place for remote learning.

Anthony Yorio noted that the budget workshops may seem to be abbreviated but noted that it was due to budget workshops that were held by both the BOS and BOE in recent months. He thanked both board for all their preparation with the budgets.

Cheryl Reedy clarified that when she said that she would cut some things from the Selectman's budget that there are also some things that she would add to it and the importance of prioritizing. She also noted that the BOF has spent a lot of time recently reviewing the Elderly Tax Relief ordinances. This review showed that many seniors that may qualify for the programs are not aware that they exist so the goal for this year is to get the word out and encourage as many people as possible to apply for the programs. The BOF will continue to review the programs in the future.

Wes Marsh spoke of the budget timeline. The BOF will meet every Wednesday in March and will do the final mark up in April for a budget referendum in May.

Adjournment

Anthony Yorio made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 pm. Wes Marsh seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0-0 (Motion approved)

Received by Email on 3/17/2020 @ 1:46 pm
by Pamela J. Dohan, Town Clerk, New Fairfield