

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOTzzCj8igE>

- ✓ Back-up documents relating to the agenda items can be found at [www.fairfieldct.org/bof](http://www.fairfieldct.org/bof).

**Board of Finance Special Meeting Final Minutes**  
**Tuesday, February, 2021**  
**7:00 pm**

A Special Board of Finance Meeting was held virtually on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 7:00 pm in Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Brown-Chair, Lori Charlton, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: CFO Jared Schmitt, Superintendent of Schools Mike Cummings, Director of Operations for FPS Angelus Papageorge, BOE Chair Christine Vitale, Engineering Director Bill Hurley, Director of Human and Social Services Julie DeMarco, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Pequot Library Executive Director Stephanie Coakley, Pequot Library's Financial Advisor John Gleckler, P&R Director Anthony Calabrese, WPCF Superintendent Bill Norton, WPCA Administrator Chris Rogers, BOE Liaison Jeff Peterson, Controller Caitlin Bosse, Attorney John Stafstrom, DPW Interim Director John Marsilio, Joe Centofanti, FairTV

MEMBERS ABSENT: Edward Bateson

- 1) Call to Order

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

- 2) Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

- 3) **DIRECTOR OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES (*requires RTM approval*)**

To hear, consider and act upon the following resolution as recommended by the Director of Human and Social Services:

WHEREAS, as part of the Senior Center Five Year Bus Replacement Plan, it is in the best interest of the Town of Fairfield to expend up to \$71,000 to purchase a wheelchair-accessible motor vehicle to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, \$56,800 of said purchase to be funded by a Traditional 5310 Capital Senior Bus Grant under Section 5310 of the Federal Transit Act's Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program as administered by the State of Connecticut; and NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Brenda L. Kupchick, First Selectwoman, be and hereby is authorized to accept in the name of and on behalf of the Town of Fairfield a Traditional 5310 Capital Senior Bus Grant in the amount of \$56,800; and FURTHER RESOLVED, that the First Selectwoman is hereby authorized, on behalf of the Town of Fairfield, to sign and execute any and all necessary documents to secure said grant; and FURTHER RESOLVED, that up to \$71,000 hereby appropriated to fund said purchase.

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to approve Item 3. Mr. Mitola seconded the motion.**

Ms. DeMarco said this is very similar to the bus that was approved last May and she is waiting for delivery. She said this next bus was awarded a grant and it will come in two years. Ms. DeMarco said the bus purchase is \$71,000 and the grant will cover \$56,800. She said the additional \$14,200 will be taken out of donations to the Senior Center and no Town money will be spent. She said this new bus will replace a natural gas bus that was expensive to run and got poor gas mileage.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

4) To hear an update on CAFR

**Ms. Charlton made a motion to put this item before the board. Ms. LeClerc seconded the motion.**

Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Centofanti for the handouts. Mr. Centofanti then presented the CAFR and discussed the highlights. There were many questions for Mr. Centofanti.

Mr. Brown asked about the Unassigned Balance; he said the minimum balance is a few years old and wondered if there was a reason to look at that and update the policy. Mr. Centofanti said it is at 11% right now and it is something to look at, but there are a lot of unknowns. He said there were different weather issues, but it was still a breakeven year. Mr. Brown said based on the environment and certain situations maybe 8% is too low and needs to be between 10%-12%. Mr. Mitola asked if rating agencies still consider 11% a strong fund balance. He asked if the Town should go over 11%. Mr. Centofanti said the benchmark is 10%-15%, but things are different now. He suggested Mr. Schmitt or Ms. Bosse get information regarding this. He said he doesn't know if it's been adjusted or if they are just comfortable with that range. Mr. Centofanti said the Town has a lot going on and there are factors other than percentages. Mr. Brown asked if the Town is contributing to it. He said Mr. Walsh is the Chair of the Fund Committee and suggested Mr. Walsh and Mr. Centofanti speak to be sure the right things are being done.

Ms. Charlton had a question regarding the Capital Projects fund that showed a balance of \$15.9 million; she said she wanted to know if that money has been spent. Mr. Centofanti said it was a combination of funds, accounts payable and outstanding. Ms. Charlton wanted to know what cash the Town has for projects that are currently bonded. She asked if that money was a combination of cash and grant money and wondered if the Town received grant money in advance if it was just sitting there. Mr. Centofanti said most grants are reimbursements that have been requested.

Ms. Charlton wanted to follow up on a footnote in Capital Projects Authorization. She said the \$200 million of project authorization are projects that have received Town approvals. She said there is still \$52 million remaining on approved projects that hasn't been spent. Ms. Charlton asked how much of that is yet to be bonded. Ms. Bosse said the bond issuance for projects has \$25 million to \$28 million left, but Mill Hill is \$12 million of that and grant money has to be taken into consideration. She said \$15 million is still coming in through school construction projects.

Mr. Brown said pension and OPED are a very important part of the budget.

He asked Mr. Centofanti if there was anything that needed to be looked at and asked if anyone had questions for Mr. Centofanti. Mr. Schmitt said when the report was done the funded ratios were not based on actual calculations. He said the Joint Retirement Investment Board met last week and said the Town pension is funded 83%. Mr. Brown said they need to be cautious as the ratio is going in a downward trend and they need to be aware of it. Mr. Centofanti then concluded his presentation of the CAFR.

- 5) To hear an update from DPW Director on the Town's Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Plan

**Mr. Testani made a motion to put Item 5 before the board. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion.**

Mr. Marsilio presented the plan that was put together with the Fleet Manager and other managers of DPW. He said the plan is for replacement of some equipment at the garage. Mr. Walsh asked for justification and revisions for further discussions with members of the administration and the BOF. Mr. Marsilio said they tried to blend the request over three years. He said he also wanted to give them some visual representation of photos and data to go along with the mileage. Mr. Brown thanked the DPW for working so hard on the roads during the recent snowstorm. Mr. Marsilio said they worked very hard and it was a long storm. He said every truck was in the garage at some point for maintenance issues and the crews still kept the roads safe for the drivers. Mr. Brown said on the last page of the document is the 5-year replacement plan. He said the request was to consider bonding for 2021. Mr. Brown asked what the plan was and if Mr. Marsilio is looking to bond \$1,395,000 in upcoming budgets. Mr. Marsilio said he was. Mr. DeWitt said the 5-year plan starting in 2021 is actually fiscal year 2022. He said if the Board approves the money, the check will be written in July 2021. Mr. Marsilio said if that is the format, he will have to work with it. He said there are long lead times on the vehicles and they take a long time to acquire. He said if there is no place holder for March, they might not get the trucks for the next snow season. Mr. Walsh wanted to know why it couldn't have been voted on earlier to let Mr. Marsilio buy the next three years of trucks. Mr. Marsilio said they should be spread out so they all don't need to be replaced at the same time. He said it should be a specific bond and not a non-recurring bond. Mr. Walsh suggested putting them in the operating budget after three years so they won't have to be bonded any longer. Mr. Schmitt said they planned to issue the bond for three years' worth and when they do it, they won't spend the money all at once. He said when they do spreadsheets to reflect dollars, they do it on a cash-flow basis; if the bond is issued for three years, the money is being spent over those three years. Mr. Mitola said DPW had \$600,000 in its operating budget and they wanted a three-year bond. Mr. Marsilio said they selected the items on the capital budget based on fact. He said he assumed a 20-year bond would be issued. He said in the operating budget, he put the smaller vehicles like mason or dump trucks because they don't have a 20-year life. Mr. Marsilio said the vehicles that have a life as long as the bond were put in the capital budget. He said the operation budget items last 7-10 years. Ms. Charlton said it would be authorized, but bonded on an annual basis as vehicles get purchased. She said there is no description for years two and three. Mr. Marsilio said he gave back-up for year one and put a five-year plan out there. He told Ms. Charlton he will provide any back up she wanted. Mr. Brown asked that the backup and documentation be sent to the BOF for its vote on March 16, 2021. Mr. Testani asked about the lead time and if it was longer due to COVID. Mr. Marsilio said all municipalities have specs for their trucks. He said most municipalities buy them through the State. Mr. Marsilio said the low bidder is Freight Line.

He said the sooner you can get in line, the sooner you get your trucks before the snow. Mr. Marsilio said he wasn't sure about what COVID would do to delivery, but said if there is a lot of snow, the trucks will be in demand.

Ms. LeClerc said the 5-year plan looks reasonable, but she wasn't familiar with it. She asked Mr. Marsilio if he had full inventory and what the mileage and age of the vehicles are. Mr. Marsilio said he will provide the Board with data so everyone knows what they are voting for. He said he will supply a full inventory and a three-year back-up. Mr. Walsh asked Attorney Stafstrom if having a bond resolution for three years and drawing off the account was legal. Attorney Stafstrom said it is legal as long as it is signed off with the amount. He said the BOF can determine how much will be spent per year. Mr. Walsh said the five-year replacement plan proposes they bond all trucks. He said wants the money in an operations budget so they don't have to bond trucks every year and can plan ahead. Mr. Marsilio said he will give the Board a 10-year plan and it can decide if it will go into capital or operational budgets. Mr. Walsh said that in past years, it was agreed to put \$1 million in the DPW operational budget for paving trucks and \$1 million in bonding, but it never happened. Mr. Testani asked if Mr. Marsilio had a wish list, what trucks would he want first. Mr. Marsilio said plow trucks and bucket trucks are essential and as soon as the CFO approves, he would like to get them ordered. Mr. Brown told Mr. Marsilio that Ms. LeClerc would like a list of years bonded by equipment life expectancy.

#### 6) SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

To hear and discuss the Board of Education's 10-year capital plan, including specific capital and non-recurring capital projects

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to bring Item 6 before the board. Mr. Testani seconded the motion.**

Mr. Brown said this is a follow up to the 12/9/20 meeting updating the 10-year plan that Mr. Papageorge put together. Mr. Papageorge started with the FLHS automated system upgrade. He said a security upgrade was performed, but it identified weakness. He said the old system would be removed and replaced with a computerized system for full control of the building. He said the cost of \$1,750,000 was a conservative number and there is concern that when they open up the can, there will be worms, but he didn't want to have to come back to the BOF and request additional funds. Mr. Papageorge said some of the roof top systems are designed to reheat air in the building. He said these systems are manually set, but this system could change settings based on temperature. Mr. Walsh asked how the BOE will know this is working. Mr. Papageorge said they looked at utilities and costs and this will allow better control over what air is flowing. Mr. Walsh asked if there could be COVID relief money that would recover this expense since legislation is requiring it. Mr. Papageorge said he did not know of any at this time, but said there might be something in the future. He said this is important because there were old XP systems that were upgraded by adding a translator to let them communicate with each other but they don't have control. He said over the summer due to COVID requirements, the BOE sent guys to the roof units and opened them. He said with this new system, there will be control and no need to send anyone up to the roof. Mr. Mitola asked if Mr. Papageorge moved things from the waterfall to get this. Mr. Papageorge said he moved the Walter Fitzgerald HS relocation out of the budget, but the CFO said the BOE could add this item to this year's budget. Mr. DeWitt asked how long it will take to get the system up and running. Mr. Papageorge said it is based on 12-18 months to get it up and running and to see data on savings. Mr. Walsh asked if the law changes in the next 12-18 months, will the school have to be closed.

Mr. Papageorge said portable air tubes would be used. He said Holland Hill, Riverfield and some other schools will be able to meet the requirements. He agreed with Mr. Walsh that it will be pricey to get the systems where they should be.

Mr. Papageorge went through the 10-year Facilities Plan and Capital Waterfall schedule. He noted that the presentation was also in the back up documents for tonight's meeting. Mr. Mitola asked why Dwight and Jennings' projects were removed. Mr. Papageorge said those buildings were pushed out to figure out the best use of the buildings. He said Dwight will need more work. Mr. Mitola asked if there will be redistricting when Mill Hill is finished. BOE Chair Christine Vitale said that there is racial imbalance and facility needs. Mr. Papageorge said the ECC still needs to be discussed and Jennings will also be in discussions. He said Dwight has had particular projects in the last few years, it is an older building than Jennings and there are maintenance costs and that is why it was put before Jennings.

#### 7) CHIEF FISCAL OFFICER

To hear and discuss the Town's 10-year capital plan, including specific non-recurring capital projects and to review updated waterfall and exhibits

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to put Item 7 before the board. Mr. Testani seconded the motion.**

Mr. Schmitt presented his 10-year capital plan. He said there was a \$500,000 request for renovations at Sullivan Independence Hall. Mr. Marsilio said in 2019, an architect did a report on space needs for Economic Development, the Credit Union and other spaces in the Old Town Hall. He said a budget for this was generated two years ago and it offers space solutions for OTH. He said there is a need to redesign Conservation and Zoning's spaces. He said he has not had the chance yet to look into this budget. Mr. Marsilio said he didn't think there was much more for what is being done, but he will look into it. He said there are departments that need attention and modifications of workspace. Mr. Marsilio said this is for a Town-wide facilities audit which will look at every building for life safety and ADA needs. He said each building will have to be addressed code wise. Mr. Walsh asked if the \$500,000 was for the work or the planning. Mr. Marsilio said there is a schematic plan. Mr. Walsh said there are no quotes and the Board will need more information. Mr. DeWitt said the Board should not move forward with this and Mr. Marsilio should come back with more details before the vote on March 16, 2021. Mr. Walsh said the Board needs a comprehensive plan for the whole project. He said he spoke with Mr. Marsilio last week and there were concerns about what to do with OTH. Mr. Marsilio said if life safety issues are identified, they have to be addressed. He said this will be presented as a 10-year plan to know what is needed and what the cost will be. Mr. Walsh asked Attorney Stafstrom to share his thoughts on a 20-year bond. Attorney Stafstrom said the point of study is to do capital repairs that will last 20 years. He said it is normal to bond this over 20 years and that most of this is 20-year capital.

Parks & Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese discussed the lights at Dougiello Field. He said the girls little league wants to purchase lights for the field and there were questions regarding the legality of taking a 20-year bond and how the league would pay it back over the next 20 years. He also said there were also questions on zoning and neighbors. The BOF asked Mr. Calabrese to speak with zoning and Town Attorney Jim Baldwin before the vote on this.

Pequot Library Executive Director Stephanie Coakley presented a unique request for the Pequot Library roof. She said she was addressing an urgent need to completely replace the 125-year old red tile roof. She said it is a project that will make the roof and the building watertight.

Ms. Coakley said the roof project cost is estimated at \$1.5 million. She said to meet current scope and contingency in place involves complete repair to protect the building and contents, stabilizing the portico, window repair and all new red tile. She said there is a donor request of \$100,000 if the Town matches that amount. Mr. Mitola asked if it is legal to bond for a private entity. Attorney Stafstrom said it is legal. He said the secondary question is if the Town wants to open the door for other organizations to do this. Mr. Mitola asked if the Town could give Pequot an extra \$50,000 this year and an extra \$50,000 next year and not bond this. Ms. Marmion said she is concerned with setting a precedence and other non-profits could come to the Town for a capital project request. She said the Town already gives Pequot \$350,000 per year and thought it could use some of that money for the roof. Mr. DeWitt said Pequot Library receives more money from the Town than any other non-profit. He said he would not support this. Ms. Coakley asked the library's financial advisor, John Gleckler, to speak about the endowment. Mr. Gleckler said the Pequot budget is \$1.5 million and funded mostly by fundraisers. He said there is an endowment of \$2.5 million. Mr. Gleckler said if money isn't taken out of the endowment it will reduce the balance. He said Pequot was hoping with the Town, it would have the \$100,000 match. He said Pequot wants to maintain the endowment for the \$125,000 annually used for operations. Mr. Gleckler said that due to COVID, Pequot has been unable to do fundraising events. Mr. Walsh said he has a problem paying for this with a bond. He said every non-profit will come to the Town asking for non-recurring funding. He said in order to support the partnership the Town has with the library, he suggested it goes back to the donor and to ask if the donor would accept adding \$50,000 to the money the Town gives the Pequot Library over two years. He said this way, the Town and the taxpayers aren't paying interest on this. Mr. Walsh said he will not support this as part of a bond, but he will support this as part of the budget. Mr. Brown told Ms. Coakley that someone would follow up with her and that he appreciates Pequot Library and everything it does.

Mr. Schmitt then presented the Town's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and shared and reviewed reports on the screen.

8) WPCF SUPERINTENDENT (*requires BOF and RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and act upon a request from the WPCA to appropriate \$115,000 from the WPCA Fund Balance for environmental sampling, monitoring, excavation and disposal of contaminated soils for the Microgrid Project - the Treatment Plant, Fire Academy, Conservation Building and Animal Control Building - due to the environmental impacts of contaminated soil.

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to approve Item 8. Mr. Testani seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

9) WPCF SUPERINTENDENT (*requires BOF and RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and act upon a request from the WPCA to appropriate \$53,595 from the WPCA Fund Balance for environmental sampling and monitoring of a gas line trench and installation of a new gas line to the Waste Water Treatment Plant generator.

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to approve Item 9. Mr. Mitola seconded the motion.**

Mr. Norton said they need the new gas line to supply the new generator bought with a grant. He said the old line does not have enough pressure.

He said 400 feet of a new line has been installed, but the gas company wants to add another 300 feet within the Waste Water Treatment yard. He said there is no contaminated soil so far.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

10) WPCF SUPERINTENDENT (*requires BOF and RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and act upon a request from the WPCA to appropriate \$135,950 from the WPCA Fund Balance for the design to replace 311 feet of the East Trunk Sewer Wetland Crossing Interceptor from the Metro Center, 210 Ash Creek Boulevard, to the intersection of Kenard Street and Kenwood Avenue in accordance with Bid# 2021-36.

**Mr. Mitola made a motion to approve Item 10. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion.**

Mr. Norton said the Town went out with an RFP for engineering firms to design the 311 feet increase for the interceptor. He said there were four bids and a panel interviewed the firms.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Walsh asked if this will benefit the Metro Center properties when they are finished. Chris Rogers said it would. He said there is currently a \$4,250 fee per a two-bedroom unit based on projected flow and this is a formula used to get the figure. He told Mr. Walsh that this has brought in \$500,000 in revenue and there is \$1.5 million projected fee for the Metro Center projects.

11) To hear an update on the Internal Audit -This item was postponed to the BOF meeting on March 2, 2021.

12) To hear, consider and act upon a recommendation by the BOF Senior & Disabled Tax Relief Committee regarding the Chapter 95, Tax Relief for Elderly and Disabled Homeowners ordinance

**Mr. DeWitt made a motion to approve Item 12. Mr. Mitola seconded the motion.**

Mr. DeWitt presented the item as Chair of the Sub-Committee. He said he spoke before the RTM L&A Committee a couple of months ago. He said he asked the Town Attorney to change language in the Town Ordinance. Mr. DeWitt said the original language states the RTM has to convene a special committee, but this new language would allow him to go before the L&A Committee right away. Mr. Walsh said he supports this as a member of this Sub-Committee. Mr. DeWitt said the RTM does not need to look at this every year. He said this Town has the best senior tax relief and it is not necessary to form a new Committee all the time to make the program better. Mr. DeWitt said the change in the language will involve the Tax Assessor. Ms. LeClerc asked if it should all be on the Tax Assessor and what would happen if he doesn't think the relief should be increased, but the other boards do. Mr. Mitola said there is nothing in the language that precludes the BOF from looking at this.

**The motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Marmion thanked Mr. DeWitt for all his hard work.

13) To hear, consider and act upon any communications

There were no new communications. Mr. Brown said if there needs to be more back and forth with the Administration to email him and he will forward the emails to the Administration.

14) Adjourn

Mr. DeWitt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:02 am. Ms. Marmion seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary