

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4MtYaOUmD8>

Members of the Public: Due to COVID-19 & pursuant to Executive Orders 7B & 9H, the Town is holding this meeting via Webex & taking live public comment via Webex during the meeting.

- ✓ Back-up documents relating to the agenda items can be found at www.fairfieldct.org/bof.

Board of Finance Meeting Final Minutes
Tuesday, March 2, 2021
7:30 pm

The Regular Board of Finance meeting was held virtually on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 7:30 pm in Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Edward Bateson, 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, Auditor Connie Saxl, FPS Executive Director of Finance & Business Services Doreen Munsell, Superintendent of Schools Mike Cummings, Director of Operations FPS Angelus Papageorge, BOE Chair Christine Vitale, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Police Chief Robert Kalamaras, Police Captain John Bucherati, Police Captain Chris Tursi, P&R Director Anthony Calabrese, Controller Caitlin Bosse, Attorney John Stafstrom, Interim DPW Director John Marsilio, Engineering Manager Bill Hurley, Casey Elliot, FairTV

1) Call to Order

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Before hearing the next item, Mr. Brown suggested a motion to switch Items 3 and 4, change Items 7 and 8 to Items 5 and 6 and change Items 5 and 6 to Items 7 and 8.

Mr. Testani made the motion suggested. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) To hear an update on the Internal Audit

Ms. Saxl gave an update on the internal audit and reviewed the highlighted items. She said this report is included in the back-up materials. She then opened the items up for questions. Mr. Brown turned it over first to the BOF Audit Committee. BOF Audit Committee Chair Lori Charlton thanked Ms. Saxl and asked her to explain the process for following up to determine that the recommendations made to the various departments have been implemented. Ms. Saxl said she discusses everything with the department heads. She said if the department agrees with the recommendations, the item is closed on the report. Ms. Saxl said the departments want strong internal controls and she will go back a month later to be sure everything has been implemented. She said she will do sample checks and document the result. Ms. Charlton asked if there have been situations where something is not remediated. Ms. Saxl said only if it involved a software issue or staffing levels. She said departments have complied and there are no open items at this time.

Mr. Walsh asked about the solar panels and if Ms. Saxl was shocked at the lack of savings. He said some sites are losing money. Ms. Saxl said the Purchase Power agreement is a 20-year term and some have escalating rates. She said the rate the Town contracted for is a higher rate than the electric rate per kilowatt of power. Ms. Saxl said the former Assistant Director of Public Works who retired in December told her about the rate for the solar panels. Mr. Walsh asked if the recommendation to the Town was to get three quotes from three vendors. Ms. Saxl said the Town has an independent energy consultant who can determine if these purchase power agreements are better than electric. She said the rate through UI is actually less. She said an RFP was not done to look at other solar panel companies. Ms. Saxl said there were not enough companies at the time, but now there are. Mr. DeWitt said in the new purchasing policy, there will be an RFP for everything. Mr. Walsh asked for a response from the Purchasing Director as to why there was only one company used. He also asked Ms. Saxl about the FOG permits (fat, oil and grease) and why they were not inspected since 2012. He asked if the administration at that time was aware of this. Ms. Saxl said there are meeting minutes that mention discussions about reinstating the inspections, but they were never done. Mr. Schmitt said this audit was done through the guidance of CAO Tom Bremer. He said since this audit has come out, the Town has not done any more with solar panels and if the Town does in the future, there will be more than one source. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she has put a moratorium in place regarding solar panels for now.

4) To hear an update on the BOE FY21 financial position

Mr. Brown reminded the BOF that this item is a carryover from the quarterly meeting on 2/16. He said at that time, the BOE projected balance was -\$1.3 million. Superintendent Cummings said they have been working on reducing costs since the last meeting. Ms. Munsell said the updated projection of 2/28 went from -\$1.3 million to -\$500,000. Ms. Munsell detailed the efforts put in place to reduce costs. After the report was reviewed, she said school is returning to full time next week and they will monitor everything and get back to the Board. She said the next update will be at the third quarter financial meeting. Mr. Brown asked Ms. Munsell to go over the RLA (Remote Learning Academy) staff costs. She said the staffing was difficult to track because the budgeted staff had to be used in the RLA and then had to be replaced with unbudgeted positions. Mr. Cummings said the RLA will continue through the end of the school year per the State. He said there are 700 students enrolled and 54 moved to go back to school full time. She said that number will be updated by the next meeting.

5) BOARD OF EDUCATION (*requires RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and adopt a bond resolution as recommended by the Board of Selectmen entitled, "A resolution appropriating \$1,750,000 for the costs of a building automation system upgrade at Fairfield Ludlowe High School and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation."

Mr. Testani made a motion to put Item 5 before the BOF. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion.

Mr. Brown said this item was presented at the last meeting and he asked Mr. Papageorge if he had anything to add. Mr. Papageorge did not have anything to add but did offer to answer questions. Mr. Mitola commented that at the last meeting, Mr. Papageorge had said there was a "catastrophic failure" of the system. Mr. Mitola pointed out that it had been printed in the paper and parents understood it as being a catastrophic failure of the air quality. Mr. Papageorge said that is not what he meant and that he should not have used the word catastrophic.

He said he was referring to the actual system and the ability with the new system to log into a computer and see what is going on outside the building. He said everything is still operating with air flow, but they will be able to log in and check it with the new system.

The motion carried unanimously.

6) BOARD OF EDUCATION (*requires RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and adopt a bond resolution as recommended by the Board of Selectmen entitled, "A resolution appropriating \$3,653,150 for the costs of various Board of Education capital projects and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation."

Mr. DeWitt made a motion to put Item 6 before the BOF. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion.

Mr. Brown said this item is regarding a 20-year bond resolution and Exhibit A was in the backup documents and it listed the projects. He said this resolution is for the Burr Elementary School Roof and the FLHS bathrooms and they were discussed at the last two meetings.

The motion carried unanimously.

7) POLICE CHIEF (*requires RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and adopt a bond resolution as recommended by the Board of Selectmen entitled, "A resolution amending and restating the resolution entitled "A resolution appropriating \$2,897,276.45 for the costs associated with establishment and operation of a Fairfield-Westport Multi-Town Emergency Communications Center with Town of Westport and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation" to increase the amount of the appropriation by \$1,116,940 to a total \$4,014,216."

Mr. Schmitt said this item is to issue an additional \$1,116,940 to fund the ECC. He said he wanted to answer a question presented at the last meeting about how the pension and OPEB were going to be split. He said there are non-ECC departmental costs. Mr. Schmitt said a portion of costs have been allocated and factored into the budget. He said when other towns are brought into the ECC, the other towns would contribute to OPEB and pension that would be outside the ECC expenses. He said it is factored into the budget and will be paid for by towns coming in. Mr. Schmitt said the debt service is paid by Fairfield and Westport. He said the formula will be adjusted so other towns coming in will pay into that also. He said the formula for payment could be based on the population of a town as compared to Fairfield. Mr. Walsh asked if Mr. Schmitt would review the finished formula with the BOF before it is finalized. There was a very detailed discussion between Mr. Schmitt and Mr. Walsh regarding the formula and payment from other towns participating. Mr. Schmitt said that before entering into a contract with a vendor, it would have to be approved by the BOS only because there is no cost involved to Fairfield. Many BOF members referenced Mr. Walsh's comments regarding formulas, transparency and consistency. Police Captain John Bucherati said when more towns join, the State subsidy will go up and it will be considered a regional center and the State will give more money. Mr. Schmitt stressed that this is not going to be a money making venture for the Town, but he said bringing in other towns will offset some of the costs. Captain Bucherati said right now the ECC is stationed in the basement of the police station and although the equipment works, it is very outdated. Discussion about costs and reimbursement continued.

The motion carried 8-0-1 (Jim Walsh abstained)

Mr. Walsh asked for updates on when other towns are added and asked for the town, contribution, state contribution and Fairfield's contribution.

8) NON-RECURRING CAPITAL – 20 YEARS (*requires RTM approval*)

To hear, consider and adopt a bond resolution as recommended by the Board of Selectmen entitled, "A resolution appropriating \$4,509,000 for the costs of certain nonrecurring capital projects and authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation."

Mr. Mitola made a motion to put Item 8 before the BOF. Ms. Marmion seconded the motion.

Mr. Schmitt said the bond resolution Exhibit A consisted of 15 items. He said 14 items were for the Town and one item is for the BOE. Mr. Brown reminded the BOF that they have gone through all the items and after he reads them, they will vote. He said Item 14 in the exhibit was for \$206,000 for Softball field lights at Dougiello Field. He acknowledged Casey Elliot who was on the call to make a public comment. Mr. Elliot introduced himself and said he is the VP of the little league girls' softball and has been on the Board of Directors for 12 years. He said he heard of some people concerned that the League might not be active for the next 20 years of the bond. He said this is the largest little league girls' softball in the state and they are independent of the Town's little league baseball. He said they have been around for 15 years. He said the league has spent close to \$100,000 on improvements at the Dougiello Field and they have an annual amount of \$10,000-\$15,000 for improvements. He said \$14,000 per year for 20 years will be less than they have been paying and it would end up being a \$200,000 gift to the Town. He is hoping to receive support from the Town. Mr. Mitola said he is in favor of it, but wants to see a legal agreement with the Town and thought there would be one in the backup. Parks and Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese said he received an email from the Town Attorney saying the easiest way to handle this is having the CFO determine the cost of the bond and bill the league for that amount. Mr. Brown said the BOF would need to see and approve the agreed upon funds. Mr. Walsh said he thought it would need to go before zoning and the neighbors would need to be contacted first. He also said it would set a precedent. Mr. Elliot told the BOF that the girls' league has an annual budget of \$110,000 and usually \$50,000-\$60,000 in the bank. He said their goal was to have the lights paid for in 17 years instead of 20. Mr. DeWitt said he would support this, but there are still things that need to be resolved. He said he doesn't want anyone to think if it does not pass tonight, that it couldn't be done again. He said the BOF just needs questions answered.

Mr. Mitola made a motion to amend Item 8 to remove the softball lights at Dougiello Field for \$206,000 making the total amount of the resolution \$4,303,000. Mr. DeWitt seconded the amendment which carried unanimously.

Attorney Stafstrom said the BOF would have to amend Exhibit 1 to be a total of \$4,303,000 and the list of 14 categories would be as listed in Exhibit 1, #s 1-13 for the Town and #14 for the BOE.

Mr. Brown made an amendment to change Exhibit 1 and Exhibit A as referenced. Mr. DeWitt seconded the amendment which carried unanimously.

The main motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

9) To hear, consider and act upon the minutes of November 24, 2020, January 5, 2021, February 2, 2021, February 16, 2021

Mr. Testani made a motion to put Item 9 before the BOF. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

10) To hear, consider and act upon any communications

Mr. DeWitt said on behalf of the budget committee, Ms. Carpenter sent out budget dates. He said there are snow dates that the Board probably won't need given the virtual environment. He said there is an open session with the public on Saturday 3/27/21 that the Board will need to address.

Mr. Brown said on 3/11/21, the Town non-profits organizations are scheduled to meet with the BOF. He said other than the Pequot Library, if no one has questions for them, he will cancel the meeting. Mr. DeWitt suggested inviting Operation Hope.

Mr. Brown said there are budget deliberations on 3/11/21, but he will also post a special meeting on Wednesday, 3/10/21 at 7:00 pm with the Tax Assessor and the revaluation company. He said there will be a presentation regarding the revaluation and the BOF can ask questions.

11) Adjourn

Mr. Testani made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:29 pm. Mr. Walsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary