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\*\*\*\*\*FINAL\*\*\*\*\*

**BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARING  
MEETING MINUTES  
April 16, 2020**

The Virtual Board of Finance Budget Hearing was held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 16, 2020.

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

**ALSO PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE:** Town Attorney James Baldwin, Interim CFO Caitlin Bosse, CAO Thomas Bremer, First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, Pequot Library Executive Director Stephanie Coakley, Pequot Library Board of Trustees President Sean Kelly, Pequot Library Board of Trustees Treasurer Doug Fried, Pequot Library Finance Manager John Glecker, Fairfield Public Library Board of Trustees Chair Sonal Rajan, Fairfield Public Library Town Librarian Dr. Helene Murtha, Marina Coordinator Justin Cathcart, Golf Superintendent Peter Grace, Parks & Recreations Director Anthony Calabrese, IT Director David Kelly, FairTV

1. Call to Order – Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brown reminded everyone that there will be no live public comment. The public is encouraged to email comments before or after the meeting to [bof@fairfieldct.org](mailto:bof@fairfieldct.org).

3. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

Miscellaneous - Pequot Library

Ms. Coakley stated the public has continued to support the Pequot Library since 1923 and shared complimentary survey comments and the multitude of services the library offers. Mr. Fried said the library counts on the same funding from the Town each year.

Ms. Marmion asked if their Board has had conversations on ways to reduce costs during the pandemic. Mr. Fried said the endowment has been down without fundraisers. He said the library has applied for a grant and is looking for innovative ideas. Ms. Coakley said the budget goes up every year and the library tries to manage as best it can. Mr. Glecker added that employee salary expenses increased and it will be a challenge with the decrease in revenue. It was noted the Pequot, Main Library and Fairfield Woods Branch library materials can be accessed at all libraries. Ms. Coakley discussed various ways to conduct the annual summer book sale safely. Mr. Fried reported revenue loss would be \$260,000 for this calendar year and he said it is unknown for the next fiscal year. He said the library is making contingency plans. Mr. Walsh said it may take a year for people to recover from this psychologically and they may be hesitant to come out to events. Mr. Walsh requested the other non-profits the Town funds come before the BOF. Mr. Brown and Mr. DeWitt said they will work on it.

Culture and Recreation - Library

Expenses - Mr. Brown said the Library budget is about a 2% increase each year. He said the BOF had previously requested the finance department describe each increased line item which the BOF received.

Ms. Rajan read a statement and said the library remains virtually open throughout this pandemic. Dr. Murtha said 40% of the budget is print materials, 30% is digital and the rest is split between databases and audio visual. She said almost all the part-time workers have been furloughed.

Revenue – Dr. Murtha said overdue fines and room rental lines are less since the closing and that affects this current budget.

Library – Fairfield Woods Branch

Expenses - Dr. Murtha said the main increases were due to ADA accommodations that had to be met that weren't budgeted for and an upgrade to Windows 10. She explained the payroll line is not an increase in staff, but a transfer. She discussed innovative ways to reach the public with services. Mr. Walsh asked if she had a calculation on what revenue will be going down by; she replied no, but she said it is the next thing the library will have to look at. She said library staff has had meetings with the Friends of the Library on ideas. Dr. Murtha said typically \$40,000 of funding from the Friends of the Library goes to things outside the regular budget such as "One Book One Town" and STEM learning. Mr. Bateson requested the number of employees who were furloughed, savings expectations, current endowment, as well as the last two years. Dr. Murtha said she will get back to the BOF. She said she thinks there will be a surge after this crisis in digital material use as people are more comfortable with the medium. Mr. Walsh asked if people will be afraid to use books after this pandemic. Dr. Murtha said it will definitely be a consideration.

Dr. Murtha said the library is working on the strategic plan and space planning. She said there had been plans and money allocated for an elevator and bathrooms before the pandemic, but they haven't been executed. Mr. Walsh questioned where the money is that was allocated for these projects. Ms. Bosse said the projects are in the 2019 Non-Recurring Capital and some of the funding has been spent. She said the First Selectwoman signed off on it a month ago. Ms. Bosse explained time constraints with Bond Counsel. She said she reviews projects status each year with department heads; some go on for years and State funding takes a long time, but the bulk is spent within two to three years.

Mr. Walsh said he wants Ms. Bosse to give an update on authorized projects that have not yet been bonded and to let the BOF know which are open and closed at the BOF Capital Planning meeting. Ms. Bosse said there are 60 part-timers furloughed as of now resulting in a \$190,000 savings that is incorporated in her fiscal year summary the Board received today.

Mr. Testani said he hopes Pequot Library is not taking in the 100 books donated a day and he said he wants that checked. He asked about furloughs. Dr. Murtha said there are no full-time personnel furloughed - only part-timers - 10 from Woods and 18 at the Main Branch. Mr. Testani asked for more scientific calculation revenue estimates and asked if the library contacted other towns of similar sizes. Dr. Murtha said other towns have been in touch with each other. She said they also look at historical data. Ms. Charlton said she wants a revised estimate with what is known now for revenue. Dr. Murtha said she will submit that information early next week.

Parks and Recreation

Revenue – There was an extensive discussion on 2020 lost revenue and savings scenarios with beaches and parks opening June 1, July 1 or August 1. First Selectwoman Kupchick said no decision has yet been made on when the Town is going to open these locations. She said the Town is in constant contact with the State Department of Health, the Town's Department Heads, and Emergency Management on protecting the Town. She said she is meeting tomorrow with Emergency Management to discuss the process on how to best open our town safely and that decision will be based on when the peak hits. Mr. Calabrese said his budget is based on past projections.

Ms. Charlton said people may not be comfortable gathering in public places when places re-open. Mr. Calabrese said places will probably be opened in phases. He said he thinks some people will want to get out of the house, although it won't be the usual number.

Mr. Bateson asked if there is a plan in place to refund a partial boat slip fee. Mr. Calabrese said he will address that based on when the marina opens up and some proration will be issued. He said the budget will take a hit in FY2021 for FY2020 losses in the marina being closed. He said he's optimistic Rec can get the marina open in a reasonable amount of time.

Mr. Bateson suggested discounting golf ID cards to generate revenue. He said he would like to see Department Heads approach the First Selectwoman when they receive public input on openings and closings and to keep an open mind if there is an opportunity to open, but roll it out slowly.

Mr. DeWitt commented that if the Town opens the beaches June 1, it will probably be okay since the Town doesn't open until Memorial Day anyway. Mr. Calabrese said his department sold a 1/3 of the beach stickers this year; the bulk purchase is between May 1 and July 4. Mr. Bremer said the Fireworks contract was signed late in the year so the Town will not get any money back, but no decision has been made yet on holding the fireworks.

Ms. Marmion asked if summer camps are already paid for if the Rec director will double up so kids can still participate. Mr. Calabrese said if summer camp can't open until August 1<sup>st</sup>, his department will make modifications. He said if a camp is at a school, his department would have to move to a park and figure out logistics, bathrooms and water. He said there would be refunds, but obviously they want to have the camps because kids need camps. Ms. LeClerc asked when the director has to decide. Mr. Calabrese said vendors have been very understanding and anything for April or May is in the process of being refunded. He said most independent contractors work off fees so the Town doesn't have to pay instructors.

Marina – Mr. Walsh asked if the marina was closed per the Governor's Executive Orders. Mr. Calabrese said not to his knowledge. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she has closed the marina on the advice of the Health Department and the Emergency Management Team. Mr. Walsh read an email from Justin Cathcart who splits his time as marina coordinate between parks and recreation and DPW. Mr. Calabrese said he is optimistic the marina will open. Mr. Walsh said he understands the opening could cause angst amongst boaters who paid a full boat slip fee and depending on how it works out they may not be able to use the marina all season. He said the boaters need to know this because they think the Town is not prorating fees.

Penfield Pavilion – Mr. Calabrese said his department cancelled all events scheduled during the quarantine and his staff has worked with clients to reschedule events to the fall or next year, if possible. He said his department offered refunds or a discount if an event is rescheduled in the fall. He said he is not refunding cancelled events scheduled as far in advance as October or November yet because of the virus.

Penfield Lockers – Mr. Calabrese reported revenue reduction because there were about 50-60 lockers available last year. Mr. Walsh said it used to be really hard to get a locker. Mr. Calabrese agreed, but said he doesn't know why since the price was the same. Mr. Testani asked if Mr. Calabrese reached out to other towns to come up with these numbers. Mr. Calabrese repeated his projections are based on the prior year's average.

#### Penfield Pavilion Complex

Expenses – Mr. Calabrese said he previously submitted answers to the BOF's questions. Mr. Brown said there is a 5% difference. Mr. Calabrese stated his department will continue to market both pavilions and lockers.

Ms. Charlton remarked that Pequot Library said it doesn't believe it will have a book fair with people physically attending so why should there be events at Penfield Pavilion. She said the same principles should be applied across the board because every department is operating under a different set of assumptions without knowing all the facts. She said the Town has to be realistic and listen to the experts since there is a resurgence in some countries and a vaccine isn't expected for a year.

Mr. Brown said at the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the BOF will try to come to a consensus as a Board and have Ms. Bosse, Mr. Calabrese, Mr. Kluczowski and Mr. Conley participate and revisit all the revenue lines.

Mr. DeWitt remarked that the Town is bound by the Governor's orders and the First Selectwoman has wisely followed the orders. Mr. Calabrese said the tennis center is also closed. First Selectwoman Kupchick said the Health Department said it is closed because people were sharing a tennis ball.

Revenue – Mr. Calabrese said the budget is based on a July 1 estimate. He said there is a chance his department may not collect the full amount if the concessioner wants a rebate. He said pavilion rentals will be down as well under the Governor's Orders on gatherings. He said he has not received cancellations for July bookings.

#### Parks and Recreation

Expenses – Mr. Calabrese said all the lines are lean.

There was a lengthy discussion on assumptions and possibilities with varying opening dates. First Selectwoman Kupchick recommended the Board move forward and said when it is closer to its vote the Town will have more information. Mr. Walsh asked if someone in finance is building a contingency worksheet. Mr. Brown asked Mr. Calabrese to work with Mrs. Bosse and Mr. Bremer so the BOF can have as much information before its vote. BOF and RTM meetings dates were reviewed.

Waterfront and Marina - Mr. Calabrese explained how his department broke out the two budgets. He said seasonal payroll and clothing could change drastically depending when the waterfront and marina open. Fuel pumps were discussed.

Carl Dickman Golf Course - Mr. Grace presented and Mr. Calabrese reviewed savings.

H. Smith Richardson Golf Course - Mr. Grace said there is a lot going on with the construction of the new clubhouse and it is ready to open any time and everything looks good.

Finance

Information Technology

Expenses – Mr. Kelley said this budget is similar to last year's. He said the vast majority of expenses pay for a wide area network, Munis, Microsoft maintenance and lots of other software. Mr. DeWitt noted the Capital BOE purchased chrome books that this budget isn't impacted which Mr. Kelly confirmed is true. Mr. Kelley said chrome books are \$225 a piece which is good price, but not something the Town uses. Ms. Charlton asked Mr. Kelley to explain the management and replacement of laptops. Mr. Kelley said PCs are on about a five-year replacement plan.

First Selectwoman Kupchick thanked Mr. Kelley for reprogramming many laptops for town employees to work from home and for assisting town bodies in conducting online meetings. The Board concurred and thanked Mr. Kelley. Security measures were discussed.

The Board discussed future meetings.

4. Adjourn

**There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Charlton moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Tesei  
Recording Secretary