

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

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

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
BUDGET HEARING  
MEETING MINUTES  
April 21, 2020**

A Virtual Board of Finance Budget Hearing was held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 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, Budget Director Linda Gardiner, Interim CFO Caitlin Bosse, CAO Thomas Bremer, Human Resources Director Jim Haselkamp, Risk Manager Patrick Egan, Marc Donald-Executive Director RYASAP, Alan Mathis-Lifebridge Community Services President, Cary Ostrow-Lifebridge Chief Behavioral Health Officer, Sarah Tropp-Pacelli-Discovery Museum Director of Education and Strategy, Shari Greenblatt-Audubon Society Southwest Regional Director, Mike Jehle-Fairfield Museum and History Center Director, Elizabeth Zicari-Grasmere on Park Adult Day Services VP or Community Services, Stephen Chykirda-Hooker & Holcombe, Carlton Lindgren-AON, Donna Monks and Robert O'Connor of Peoples, PMA's Dan Roche, FairTV

1. Call to Order – Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 7:02 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. He said the public is encouraged to email comments including their name and home address before or after the meeting to [bof@fairfieldct.org](mailto:bof@fairfieldct.org).

3. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

**Miscellaneous**

**2073 RYASAP**

Mr. Donald gave a brief background on RYASAP. He said it has partnered with the Town of Fairfield for about 15 years. He said RYASAP's budget request is \$21,000, the same as last year. Mr. Walsh asked if there are any other trust funds or endowments and what would a 5% cut do to this budget. Mr. Donald replied that mental health and substance abuse is already underfunded by the State and it will create a reduction in services. Mr. Walsh asked RYASAP was able to take advantage of the CARES Act funding. Mr. Donald replied yes, but said RYASAP will apply in the second round. Mr. Walsh said it could pay rent and utilities. Mr. Donald said there are 25 full-time and 8 part-time employees. Mr. DeWitt asked how the funding from the Town is used. Mr. Donald said of the \$3.9 million operating budget, the \$21,000 is applied to the \$450,000 HUB program. Ms. Marmion asked if programs changed because of the pandemic and if more money will have to be raised. Mr. Donald said the HUB principle programs will not be affected.

Mr. Testani asked what HUB entailed. Mr. Donald explained HUB has six regional behavioral health actions that serve Greenwich through Stratford including substance abuse awareness, Narcan training, suicide awareness, opioid and alcohol awareness. He said RYASAP works closely with police and fire departments and partners with other agencies and organizations.

### **2150 Lifebridge Community Services**

Mr. Mathis discussed the services Lifebridge offers. He said the request is \$175,000. He said Lifebridge supports 705 people with family and individual counseling. Mr. Mathis said Lifebridge works with fire and police departments and has opened up an emergency 24/7 hotline. He said he believes the need for programs will be even higher in the next six months to a year after the pandemic. Mr. Ostrow said he works with Fairfield and Bridgeport residents, often without insurance. He reported services go beyond behavior health and that Lifebridge also assist with housing and pharmacy needs. Mr. Walsh asked if Lifebridge applied for the CARES Act. Mr. Mathis replied yes. He said Lifebridge fundraises although regretfully had to cancel this year's event because of the Governor's Executive Order.

### **2170 The Discovery Museum**

Ms. Tropp-Pacelli discussed programs including STEM learning that reaches all ages to become scientifically minded citizens. She said the money goes to field trips, teachers, science and hands-on educational experiences. She said the Museum is looking forward to continuing programs in the fall. She said the Museum asked the Town for \$34,500; \$24,000 for the STEM program that reaches 2,000 students grades 3-6 and \$10,500 for the Challenger Learning Center Experience which is a simulated space mission. Mr. Walsh asked what would happen if 5% was cut. Ms. Tropp-Pacelli said the Museum would have to cut back on field trips. She said the Museum has been closed since March 13. She reported the launch of a digital program platform that has experienced an extremely high engagement. She said the Museum will have to reprioritize and maximize every dollar. She then listed other funding sources and said the Museum has applied for the PPE Cares Act, but hasn't heard if the Museum will receive anything.

### **2210 Audubon Society**

Ms. Greenblatt said since 1972 the Connecticut Audubon has provided two facilities in town; the birdcraft museum and sanctuary and the nature center. She said the programs directly support the Fairfield school system, Grades K, 1 and 2. She said staff work directly with elementary school classrooms, trains parents and volunteers to provide first-hand learning experiences at both locations which reduces the burden on teachers and reinforces what they are already teaching. She said the Audubon's request is \$14,000, the same as previous years. She said the Audubon quickly pivoted to virtual learning when the pandemic began and provided lesson plans to teachers in that manner. She said the revenue stream has been effected since the closure and the biggest concern is summer camp which is a big source of revenue. She said the Audubon has applied for the Cares Act, but hasn't heard back.

### **2250 Fairfield Museum and History Center**

Mr. Jehle said the Center welcomes about 32,000 visitors a year. He said it provides a wide range of educational programs for school, seniors and families. He said the Center is a museum, library and educational center that reaches a broad audience. He said the total operating budget is \$1.03 million.

He said he asked for an increase to expand school and senior groups, but bumped back down to level funding. He said the Center has applied for the PPE, but hasn't received any funding as of yet. Mr. Jehle said the Center lost about \$25-30,000 in income from school programs. He said the Center's endowment has been significantly impacted also. He said he hopes to open even with limited opportunities.

**2350 Grasmere on Park Adult Day Services**

Ms. Zicari gave some background on the adult day care services. She said the medical model program plays an important role and is staffed by nurses and nursing assistants. She said this allows older adults to live in their home of choice as long as they can with the commitment of family members and enables caregivers to continue to work. Ms. Zicari said the objective of the program is to provide medical and a socially stimulating environment. She said this year's request is \$35,000 a \$5,000 reduction from last year. Mr. DeWitt thanked Ms. Zicari for reducing the budget each year and still give amazing services. She said the adult day care onsite program closed in mid-March and participants still receive at home services and 70 meals a week are delivered.

Mr. Brown took items out of order.

**Administrative & General Retiree**

**1310 Pension**

Mr. Chykirda gave highlights of his presentation on the Town of Fairfield Employee's Retirement System Actuarial Valuation Report dated July 1, 2019. He provided an overview of the executive summary, valuation results, risks, certification, funded ratio, assets, employee contributions, actuaries, market value, rate of return, amortization, liability, assumptions and summarized plan provisions. The Board debated the various scenarios.

**1310 OPEB**

Mr. Chykirda said this is done on even years for a two year budget cycle and is under \$9.7 million. He said it's about a \$20 million figure if looking at both Pension and OPEB. He said if you are going to short one of them there would be less of an impact on the OPEB side than on the pension side and are in a fairly strong position whichever way you decide to go on the OPEB side. He said the Town has had strong funding policies it's adhered to with both OPEB and Pension.

**1320 Active Employee Benefits (Health & Life)**

Ms. Bosse furnished the 401A retiree benefits data. She said there are 118 people and a match of up to 5%. Mr. Brown noted last year there were 100. Mr. DeWitt said retirement was reduced and police and fire were increased.

Mr. Lindgren explained the budget projection for the Town split by active and retirees. He discussed Fairfield health insurance projects for actives based on December 2019 renewal plus estimate for new employees. He said the BOE rates increased 6.5% and because of the increased headcount and number of families the increase is 9.1%.

Mr. Mitola requested a list of new employees. Ms. Gardiner said there is one Fire Marshal Inspector, one Community and Economic Coordinator, two Field School Nurses and one Parks and Recreation Coordinator.

Mr. Lindgren said AON was able to negotiate a flat fee on all of Anthem's administrative charges per employee per month. The Board requested data through March. Health care contributions by Town and employee for active and retirees was examined. Mr. Lindgren said he will give Finance the updated numbers when he gets them.

### **Administration & General**

#### **1330 Human Resources**

- **PMA**

Mr. Egan went over workers compensation line items and noted an overall decrease of 7.78%. He said inclusive of that is a heart and hypertension increase of 12.4% based off an average of four fiscal years. Mr. Walsh asked how many police and fire are still eligible for heart and hypertension. Ms. Bosse said 55. Mr. Bateson questioned the calculations – whether it is an average of \$175,000 or \$200,000. Ms. Bosse said she will rerun the numbers without the highest claim. Mr. Walsh requested an executive session with the Town Attorney which Mr. Brown said he will arrange.

- **People's Insurance**

Mr. Egan gave an update on property insurance, premiums with CIRMA and flood insurance with the Hartford and other carriers. He said CIRMA has a 3% increase. Ms. Monks reported no change to premiums or coverage. Mr. O'Connor said he submitted a claim for the pile that was initially rejected, he is pursuing it. Mr. Walsh requested numbers from Mr. O'Connor.

- **ISF/Risk Management**

Previously reviewed.

- **Human Resources Administration**

Mr. Haselkamp commented that the professional services line item increased to add a Town time and attendance system.

#### **3150 Unemployment Compensation**

Mr. Haselkamp explained this is 22% less than last year, but an additional \$350,000 is going to be needed with all the layoffs. Ms. Bosse remarked that a lot of assumptions would have to be made depending on when furloughed employees return, how long unemployment will extend and how it will affect fiscal years, varying month to month.

#### **1270 Legal**

Mr. Baldwin said the budget is up 34% and broke it down. He discussed how some of the funding will be related to the reassessment. Mr. Walsh asked for an update on the Town Attorney's hourly rate vs. the previous Town Attorney's rate. Mr. Baldwin said it is the same. Mr. Walsh asked if there is an Assistant Town Attorney. Mr. Baldwin replied no and it's an item in the Charter revision that may be looked at. Mr. Walsh asked if there were other attorneys doing Town work. Mr. Baldwin confirmed Cohen & Wolf, Wiggins & Dana, Lotte, Baker & Donaldson, Rose & Kallor and Marino, Zable & Shalenberg assist in Town work. Mr. Walsh asked for their hourly rates. Mr. Baldwin confirmed most are higher than the Town Attorney rate of \$200/hour. Mr. Walsh asked for the last two assessments and attorney fees. Mr. Bateson asked what labor contracts are coming up. Mr. Baldwin said next year there will be ECC, DPW, Nurses and Professional & Technical; in two years, Fire and THEA; and in three years Police.

Mr. Baldwin confirmed there will be outside council and Human Resources Director Mr. Haselkamp in addition to himself negotiating these contracts. Mr. Bateson asked where the department head salaries and increases are in this budget. Mr. Bremer said that will be in the contingency line. Mr. Bremer said the \$1.4 million for the fill pile will be separated out in the budget. Mr. Brown suggested holding a special meeting to discuss the fill pile.

**2010 Contingency**

Mr. Mitola motioned to enter into Private Executive Session at 11:33 p.m. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.

Mr. Testani motioned to enter back into Public Session at 12:19 a.m. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.

The Board took no action.

Mr. Brown noted the Thursday, April 23, 2020 Board of Finance Public Hearing will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will include the remaining Non-Profit groups, Fund Balance and Debt Service.

He said there could be a meeting after the Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting and the Board could meet on May 5<sup>th</sup> and vote on the budget on May 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brown asked members to respond to him before Thursday as to whom wants to meet on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

4. Adjourn

**There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Mitola moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:22 a.m. Mr. Testani seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Tesei  
Recording Secretary