

Minutes

Board of Finance Meeting

April 5, 2011

Room 119 7:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Liz Mao at 7:35 PM. All members of the Board of Finance were present. Also in attendance was Kate Clarke Buch, Finance Director. The meeting was broadcast over Channel 79.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Members of the Board of Education (BoE), including Chairman Kimberly Westcott and Superintendent Stephen Falcone, were present to answer final questions on the Board of Education budget.

The Board of Finance began the discussion by reviewing the proposed BoE capital projects. Chairman Liz Mao noted that the replacement of the Middlesex gym floor had been previously approved and would be funded during the current year.

The Board agreed to fund the following projects:

- Dump truck replacement (\$47,000)
- Paint fascia at Holmes Elementary (\$17,500)
- Renovate the (last) portable building at Ox Ridge Elementary (\$45,000)
- Re-pipe the boiler room at Ox Ridge Elementary (\$65,000)

The Board cut the following projects:

- Energy controls at Ox Ridge Elementary (**\$200,000**). The Board thought it best to postpone this effort until the new Facilities Director, Hans Otto, has a chance to review energy planning for the schools. Gwen Mogenson suggested checking for federal and state grants to help with energy efficiency projects.
- External public address systems (**\$75,000**)
- Plantings related to the temporary lights at Darien High School (**\$17,500**)
- Refit of the boilers at Hindley Elementary, which will instead be funded in the current year budget out of the BoF Infrastructure Reserve (**\$25,000**)

The discussion continued with a review of the BoE operating budget. A number of points were made:

- Martha Banks asked why 200 desktops for teachers were being replaced, when teachers only recently received laptops. Dr. Stephen Falcone replied that these desktops act as servers in the classrooms and are important for substitute teachers, who don't have laptops. He noted that the desktops are 5 years old and that their replacement was postponed from last year.
- Murry Stegelmann asked why the proposed spending increase isn't closer to 5% (versus 6.38%) given that teacher salaries are climbing 4.2%. Ms. Westcott cited health care costs, rising enrollment and Special Education funding. Mr. Stegelmann also asked whether someone could be charged with reducing Special Education costs.
- Chairman Liz Mao discussed the need to add \$107,726 to the BoE budget to fund Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), the amount required to fund OPEB at the actuarially recommended level (the original BoE funding level as insufficient). Factors driving the higher cost include the number of retirees, the ratio of retirees to current employees and medical inflation and weaker investment returns. Ms. Westcott asked for a presentation to the BoE explaining this issue further, which Kate Buch said she would help arrange.
- Joe Duwan asked about doing more to bring students placed out of the district. Ms. Westcott indicated that this is a priority of the district. She noted that there are roughly 35 students out-of-district versus 25 in the mid-1980s.

The discussion continued on to the Board of Selectman (BoS) budget. Both First Selectman Dave Campbell and Selectman David Bayne were in attendance. A number of points were made:

- Chairman Liz Mao proposed restoring \$5,000 intended for renovation of the bathrooms at the Cherry Lane Nature Center, which had been cut earlier by the BoS (**\$5,000 add-back**)
- Selectman David Bayne asked about funding for the Hoyt Street sidewalk project. BoF members indicated that the \$45,000 for the sidewalk engineering study could be funded, once the project is ready to go, from the BoF Infrastructure Reserve.
- Martha Banks and Joe Duwan asked about the police cars. Mr. Duwan thought that the plan was to wait on replacements until the V-8 Caprice was available in 2012. Ms. Banks asked about trying a four-year replacement schedule (instead of three) given the

warranty coverage. It was noted that the original car replacement budget was reduced (less in-car technology). Four vehicles are being procured, with two being retired.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board reviewed and approved (with amendments/corrections) minutes from prior meetings:

- March 22, 2011 – Mr. Duwan moved approval, approved 7-0
- March 29, 2011 – Mr. Duwan moved approval, approved 6-0. (Murry Stegelmann abstained due to absence on March 29th).

NEXT MEETINGS

The BoF discussed its upcoming meeting schedule.

- It was decided to accelerate the final budget vote and mill rate decision to the planned Thursday, April 7th meeting, instead of Tuesday, April 12th.
- The Board will still hold its April 12th meeting to discuss an update to the BoE deficit situation in the current fiscal year, which as of March 31st was \$408,000. An additional appropriation will be required to fund this deficit.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Joe Duwan made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and approved 7-0 at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Zagrodzky
Clerk