

**REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF DARIEN, CONNECTICUT
FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a Special Meeting Held on May 2, 2011
“DRAFT”**

On May 2, 2011, a regular meeting of the RTM Finance & Budget Committee was held in the auditorium of the Darien Town Hall with twelve of fourteen members present.

Present were:

Michael Harman
Kirk Hoffman
Bruce Orr
Tim Schwarz
Deb Ritchie
Bill Smith
Reilly Tierney
Jim Palen
Terry Duffy
Anita Rycenga
Nora McIlree
Charles Brode

Absent were: Marc Thorne, Jack Davis

Guests in the audience included: Members of the Board of Education

The Chairman, Bruce Orr, called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Anita Ryncenga moved to approve the agenda.

Item 3 was discussed regarding the acceptance of a \$50,000 gift to the Weed Beach project to fund the purchase and installation of exercise equipment on an exercise path. Jim Palen's previously posed questions to the Town staff were satisfactorily answered. The gift would cover all costs and the ongoing maintenance costs will be negligible. Schwarz moved to vote on the approval and the vote was unanimously passed.

Orr initiated a discussion of RTM Resolution 11-8 to approve a special appropriation of \$210,000 to fund the education budget shortfall for the current school year. There was an inquiry as to which account would be the first to fund the \$475,000 shortfall. Would it be the draw on the special education reserve or the appropriation from the general account? Also, should there be any excess funding, which fund would be the first to receive back any surplus? It was conjectured by the board of education members present and Bruce Orr that the special ed reserve would be the primary source of funds and the general fund would be the first to receive any surplus funds. Terry Duffy moved to approve the resolution and the vote was unanimously passed.

Discuss and take action on the board of finance approved budget was initiated by Bruce Orr. The RTM will be asked to take action on three budget items; the education, selectman and capital budgets.

Anita Rycenga commented on the usefulness of the newly formed Board of Ed subcommittee tasked with analyzing the special education programs. The committee is comprised of board of ed members only. It will not include Liz Mao or any board of finance members, as was previously understood by some members of the F&B committee at the April 25th meeting. The committee will focus on efficiencies in the program and the budgeting impact. It will hold regular public meetings and report its progress to the full board of ed. Terry Duffy suggested to the board of ed members present that the district should focus on how it is staffing given the data Jack Davis compiled. Tim Schwarz pointed to the future size of the special ed budget if recent growth rates continue as being a potentially divisive issue in the community.

Bill Smith moved to accept and approve the board of education budget. 7 members voted to approve and 4 members voted to reject the budget. The four dissenting voters were asked to submit a minority opinion to Bruce Orr to be included in his comments to the RTM.

Deb Ritchie moved to discuss and take action on the Selectmen budget. Hoffman asked why there is a \$500,000 increase in the police department overtime budget. Smith indicated that it is more efficient to pay overtime than increase full time staffing to meet intermittent staffing needs. Cost savings are being realized by running natural gas lines to the police

station and city hall to save on energy costs. A vote to approve the selectmen budget was taken and 8 members voted to approve and 2 members voted to reject the budget.

Terry Duffy moved to discuss and take action on the capital budget. A vote to approve was taken and unanimously passed.

Bruce Orr initiated discussion of RTM Resolution 11-9 to authorize the board of finance to refund up to \$50 million in Town debt. Jim Palen inquired as to how the town amortizes debt service savings when in refunds debt. Do the savings in interest get accounted for up front or does it get spread over the life of the bond? The vote to approve was unanimously passed.

Bruce Orr moved to approve prior meetings' minutes. The March 14, 2011 regular meeting, March 21, 2011 special meeting and April 25, 2011 regular meeting were all unanimously approved.

Dated: May 2, 2011

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Schwarz, Member

RTM Finance & Budget Committee