

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE RTM FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

First part was a joint meeting with RTM PH&S

Place: Virtual GoTo Meeting Conference Call @ 7:30 pm

1. Call to Order: @ 7:30 pm

Committee Members Attendance:

	Jack Davis	Barry Baldwin	Luisa Brakman	Werner Domittner	Millyn Gaaserrud	Elizabeth Lane
Present	X	X		X	X	X
Absent			X			

	Iris Mix	Peter Orphanos	Jenny Schwartz	Bill Smith	Bert von Stuelpnagl	Charles Teschner
Present		X			X	X
Absent	X		X	X		

8 Present and 4 Absent. Needed for Quorum: 7. Quorum attained.

2. **Other Attendees Present:** Members of the RTM Public, Health and Safety Committee; Dr. Alan Addley; Mr. Rich Rudl; Mr. Kevin Munrett; Duke Dineen, Chair BOE; Chief McEwan; and Assistant Chief Plank.

The meeting may be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/800132079>

3. DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE APPROPRIATION AND BONDING OF NORTON HEIGHTS PURCHASE OF FIRE ENGINE (JOINT)

Moved: Mr. Baldwin

2nd: Ms. Gaaserud

Chief McEwan presented the case for a new fire engine vs. the refurbishment of an existing, 33-year-old one for the cost of \$861,400, which has been proposed to be bonded. The existing fire engine was built in 1989, and Darien acquired it in 2006. Questions about the average life of a fire engine, scrap and resale value, and considerations for accessibility to future buildings and

developments in Town were addressed. Mr. Davis made a reference a previous emergency services study that identified that this fire engine be replaced.

After no further discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. Mr. von Stuelpnagl, while supporting the item in principle, abstained because his son is a member of the Noroton Heights Fire Department. The Motion was passed. (7:1:0).

Members of the PH&S Committee:

Moved: Mr. Cameron

2nd: Ms. Schneider

The Motion was passed by the PH&S Committee. Mr. Patrick, while supporting the item in principle, abstained due to work-related matters.

The Bond Resolution will be available for approval at the next meeting.

The joint meeting was concluded at 7:51 pm.

4. DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE APPROPRIATION AND BONDING OF DARIEN HS TRACK PROJECT FOR \$815,960 FOR WHICH \$450,000 ALREADY EXISTS IN THE FY23 CAPITAL BUDGET (A \$365,960 IN ADDITIONAL FUNDING)

Dr. Addley, Mr. Rudl, and Mr. Munrett joined F&B for the next portion of the meeting. Mr. Davis stated that the Board of Education approved their FY24 budget at an increase of ~3.5%. Dr. Addley and Mr. Munrett provided a summary of the proposed capital needs for the Darien High School Track Project. With no questions from the Committee, Mr. Davis asked for a motion to amend the prior bond resolution amount to \$366,860 and approve the item.

Moved: Mr. von Stuelpnagl

2nd: Ms. Lane

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

5. DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON ACCEPTANCE OF A DONATION FOR \$25,000 FOR THE WEED BEACH MEADOW & TRAIL CONSTRUCTION BID PACKAGE. APPROVAL OF THIS DONATION TO OBTAIN THE CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATE DOES NOT BIND THE TOWN TO PURSUE THIS PROJECT

The donation of \$25,000 by the Darien Athletic Foundation is to fund the bid package to determine the cost of the proposed capital improvements at Weed Beach. Mr. Davis stated that because a Building Committee would be required for projects over \$1 million, the capital request for the project itself was removed at this time from the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget until the cost can be determined by the bid process.

Mr. Davis called for a motion to accept the gift from the Darien Athletic Foundation.

Moved: Mr. Baldwin
2nd: Ms. Gaaserud

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

6. DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON ACCEPTANCE OF A GIFT FOR \$20,000 FOR WORK ON THE CHERRY LAWN GAZEBO AND A PLAQUE HONORING THE LATE BILL DORDELMAN

Mr. Davis provided a summary of the proposed gift by the family of Bill Dordelman to honor his memory and love for Cherry Lawn Park. Some recent improvements to the roof were already made to the gazebo, and the additional funds would be used to repair the ADA ramp and add a commemorative plaque.

Moved: Mr. von Stuelpnagl
2nd: Mr. Baldwin

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

7. DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE FUNDING OF SPECIAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE SETTLEMENT FOR A HEART AND HYPERTENSION SETTLEMENT

A settlement for \$142,714 has been approved by the appropriate boards. Mr. Davis clarified that the committee is voting to appropriate the funds for the settlement only.

Moved: Ms. Lane
2nd: Mr. Orphanos

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

8. APPROVAL OF OUTSTANDING MINUTES ON FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Moved: Mr. Orphanos
2nd: Ms. Lane

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

9. MOTION TO MODIFY THE AGENDA

Mr. von Stuelpnagl noted that the items on the agenda were discussed out of order and asked for a modification to the agenda.

Moved: Mr. Orphanos
2nd: Mr. von Stuelpnagl

After there being no discussion, Mr. Davis called for any No's and Abstentions. The Motion was passed. (8:0:0).

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN for F&B MEMBERS

Moved: Mr. von Stuelpnagl
2nd: Mr. Baldwin

The Motion was passed. (10:0:0).

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Schwartz, Clerk

Date: 2/22/23



TO: Monica McNally, First Selectman

FROM: Kathleen Buch, Town Administrator

DATE: January 5, 2023

SUBJECT: Darien Police Association Contract Settlement

As you know, the Town's bargaining team recently reached an agreement on a successor contract with the Darien Police Association for the contract that expired on June 30, 2022. Our team worked well together, exploring options, evaluating consequences of proposals, considering and developing new ideas while remaining mindful of our responsibility to the taxpayers.. I want to thank Susan Barksdale, Director of Human Resources, Jennifer Charneski, Finance Director and Kevin Cunningham, Police Commissioner for their efforts.

Overall, the average annual increase in cost of this contract is approximately .03 mills per year, based on the October 1, 2022 Grand List. This assumes status quo in union positions and medical premiums, and is based on currently quantifiable items.

The major economic items are as follows:

Wages:

The general wage increases agreed to are as follows:

- 7/01/22 – 2.75%
- 7/01/23 – 2.75%
- 7/01/24 – 3.125%
- 7/01/25 – 3.125%

The general wage increases are about at the average negotiated settlements in the first two years, and higher in the third year. The wage increases are higher than average negotiated settlements for all employee types (not just public safety) and are slightly higher than the average arbitrated settlements for FY 22, but lower than the average arbitrated settlement for FY 24. No data is available on arbitrated settlements past FY 24. As a consideration for the currently high cost of living, the Town agreed to a signing bonus of \$1,500 per member who is employed as of the date of the execution of the agreement. As with other Town employees groups, this is a mature union, with approximately two-thirds of the members on the top step of their rank. As such, they will only receive the general wage increase for the life of this contract. By the end of the contract, assuming no retirements or changes in

rank, over 90% of the members will be at the top step. When considering those members who will still receive step increases, and assuming there are no changes in positions over the contract period, the average cost increase over the duration of the contract is 3.95%. The overall cost of this contract would be impacted by changes in personnel and rank.

Medical changes effective 7/01/23:

There are no changes to the provisions of the medical plan. We agreed to the following increases in employees' premium cost share:

- 7/01/23 – increase to 11.0%
- 7/01/24 – increase to 12%
- 6/30/26 – increase to 13.0%

Cost savings from the above medical changes are estimated at \$8,000 per year. These savings are based on the current premiums as of 01/05/2022, but make no assumptions for further rate increases. The increase in cost share on the last day of the contract ensures that a premium increase is already in place, while we are negotiating the next contract. This same provision was in place on the last day of the old contract, which proved valuable, as the contract will have been expired for 6 months when signed. Without that provision, employees would likely not have paid an increased share of the premium for FY 23 at all.

Retirement plan:

There are no changes to the current Police Pension Plan. The new contract does provide an additional means for officers to save for retirement. The Town has agreed to allow members to “cash in” up to six (6) sick days annually in exchange for a contribution to the employee's 457 account. We believe that, in addition to providing retirement savings for employees, it will encourage employees to manage their sick time appropriately.

Other

More minor changes include a small boost in longevity pay rates and a small increase in the sick time accrual rate. There are language changes regarding use of personal days and bereavement time.

Summary

There are also language changes that are administrative in nature.

I believe that the proposed contract settlement is a good outcome - fair to both sides. We continue to work to manage the Town's medical costs by increasing the premium cost share for employees.

cc: Board of Selectmen