

**MINUTES
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Representative Town Meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. by Christa McNamara, Town Clerk, who said they are now past the date for candidates' names to be posted on the ballot. The ballot will be mailed out on October 6th. A write-in candidate must register with a form. The candidate must solicit neighbors to write in their name on the ballot. There must be at least 25 votes of the electors of the district. Candidates' names will be in the order as determined by the lottery, which was held in conjunction with the Registrar of Voters. Three members of the RTM were present: Theresa Vogt, Janet Grogan and John Visi. She then reviewed the status of each district:

- District I – Full ballot with an expected resignation
- District II – 1 open seat
- District III – 2 open seats
- District IV – Full ballot
- District V – 2 open seats
- District VI – Contested election: 11 names with 9 openings

Following the result of the election, as per Town code, some terms will be one year while others will be two years. She is working with Town Counsel as to how this breaks down.

Upon Roll Call, the following members were present:

- From District I, there were 13 members present, 3 absent.
- From District II, there were 12 members present, 4 absent
- From District III, there were 10 members present, 7 absent.
- From District IV, there were 13 members present, 3 absent.
- From District V, there were 14 members present, 4 absent.
- From District VI there were 11 members present, 6 absent.

The absentees from District I were: Lublin, McGovern, Schwartz.

The absentees from District II were: Hudson, Mix, Vanovitch, Wilson.

The absentees from District III were: Cardone, Crouse, Giordano, Gollus, Hesli, Mitchell,
Ruddy.

The absentees from District IV were: Bhat, Keller, Obin.

The absentees from District V were: Butler, Laird, Pesce-Gray, Reed.

The absentees from District VI were: Baldwin, Conway, Johnson, Silsby, Vogt, York.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

**** THE AGENDA WAS ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 5, 2023 MEETING

**** THE MINUTES WERE ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Moderator stated that the Hindley, Holmes & Royle projects had been delayed until sometime in the Spring.

UPDATE ON GREAT ISLAND

Mark Adiletta, District V, RTM representative to this Committee, read his detailed report (attached).

Joseph Miceli, District IV, asked about contamination and access. Mark Adiletta responded that contamination questions have been directed to staff but access questions have not. Joseph Miceli said that support for this project is going downhill.

Jan Raymond, District IV, asked if there was a draft of an environmental study. Mark Adiletta said he was not aware of such a study, but the issue has been raised and is being looked into. Jack Davis, District III, said an environmental study has been done but he did not know to what extent.

Frank Adelman, District VI, asked when meetings are held. Mark Adiletta said it is the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30. Frank Adelman encouraged the opportunity for public comment at these meetings.

UPDATE ON THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING

Jack Davis, District III, read his report:

I am Jack Davis, District 3, RTM Finance & Budget chair. I am also a member of the ARPA Advisory Committee. This committee has been reconstituted recently to address the status of the original project and to make recommendations to the BOS on any potential changes. The committee is solely advisory and it is the BOS sole discretion on how funds should be allocated within the ARPA guidelines. Once approved by the BOS, the BOF effectuates the accounting entry to create the appropriation within the ARPA fund with the offsetting entry being the ARPA contingency. Closed projects surpluses are moved into the contingency; overages or shortfalls are taken from the contingency.

As a quick refresher, all funds must be allocated no later than December 31, 2024 and the monies actually spent no later than December 31, 2026. Any funds not spent are to be returned to the Federal Government. The total amount received by the Town of Darien was \$6,430,414.32.

I am not going to go into great detail on some of the progress made to date. I would reference those that are interested to go to page 53 of the BOF packet for tomorrow's meeting which has a 3 page analysis of all projects. Jenn C provides the BOF with a monthly update.

The following projects have been completed:

- Police drone
- DFD rescue jacks
- Senior tablet loan library
- Replace picnic tables in town
- Vaccination clinics

The projected cost of these projects was \$111,500 with the final cost being \$103,509.42. The balance of budgeted versus plan was moved to the ARPA contingency account to be allocated to future projects.

The following projects have been modified by reducing the allocated amounts – some due to timing of completion or estimated cost to complete or progress on the project:

- OKHS pipe lining – reduced from \$1mm to \$605m
- Grove St Tilly Pond drainage upgrade – reduced from \$1mm to \$250m – design phase only
- Salt Box-Coachlamp drainage upgrade - reduced from \$1.5mm to \$250m – design phase only

The following projects were added to the ARPA list by the BOS:

- EMS fly car
- Fire marshal vehicle
- DPW Garage floor (785)
- Highland Farms additional landscaping

There are numerous projects underway some very near to completion. To name a few:

- McGuane playground
- CCTV – police
- WB new paddle court
- PD switches for IT
- NFD bunk room
- Health software
- Rings End Rd bridge
- And others

Several projects have had increases in funds allocated based upon more refined cost estimates or modifications to original specs. They include:

- Rings End bridge
- OKHS bridge
- Website upgrade
- NHFD mortar repair
- Upgrades to Auditorium and other meeting rooms

I want to ensure this body that both Kate and Jenn are always monitoring the projects selected and looking for new opportunities for using the remaining \$1.244mm of unassigned funding.

Thanks for your time.

23-24

SPECIAL APPROPRIATION OF \$679,394,000 TO REPLACE FUNDS IN THE RESERVE FOR CAPITAL & NON-RECURRING EXPENDITURES

**** JACK DAVIS, DISTRICT III, CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE & BUDGET, MOVED:**

WHEREAS, the Board of Finance has determined that it would like to utilize a portion of the Unassigned Fund Balance to fund capital projects; and

WHEREAS, this special appropriation will allow for an additional contribution from the General Fund to the Reserve for Capital & Non-Recurring Expenditures (RFCNRE) resulting in an increased fund balance in that fund at the end of FY2023; and

WHEREAS, the additional (RFCNRE) fund balance will be used to fund the fiscal year 2024 capital projects; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Selectmen approved this request at its meeting of June 19, 2023.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Representative Town Meeting of the Town of Darien hereby authorizes an appropriation of Six Hundred Seventy Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety Four Dollars (\$679,394) and the transfer of funds in that amount from the General Fund to the Reserve for Capital & Non-Recurring Expenditures (RFCNRE). Said appropriation will be effective for fiscal year 2023.

**** THE MOTION WAS SECONDED FROM THE FLOOR.**

Jack Davis, District III, read the Finance & Budget report:

Historically, the Town used the State's Town Aid Road Grants to support the annual paving programs. It was recorded as a revenue within the RFCNRE. Due to the State recently implementing contractor requirements on projects over \$50,000, those requirements reduced the potential number of bidders and/or potentially increasing the cost of our paving. As a result, the Town has decided to use the TAR grant to support allowable road maintenance expenses in the General Fund that would not be subject to the new additional contractor requirements.

The FY 2022 and 2023 budgets were already approved before the decision, thus creating an unbudgeted revenue in the General Fund whilst the RFCNRE had a revenue shortfall. This special appropriation resolves the imbalance between the two funds.

Year	Budget	Grant Received
FY2022	\$341,348	\$341,529.50

FY2023	\$341,530	\$337,864.17
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The amount budgeted for FY22 and FY23 totaled \$682,878. The amount received in the General Fund was \$679,393.67 (rounded to \$679,394 – the amount of this special appropriation).

The RTM Finance & Budget committee met on September 6th, and voted unanimously to approve this special appropriation and recommend the same to the full RTM.

Respectfully submitted

Jack Davis, RTM Finance & Budget Chair

September 18, 2023

**** ITEM 23-24 CARRIED ON A STANDING TALLY VOTE OF 72 IN FAVOR, 0 OPPOSED, 1 ABSTENTION.**

23-25

DONATION OF UP TO \$200,000 FROM THE DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE TO THE TOWN OF DARIEN FOR ATHLETIC FIELDS AT MCGUANE PARK

**** ADELE CONNIFF, DISTRICT III, CHAIRMAN OF THE PARK & RECREATION COMMITTEE, MOVED:**

(23-25) RESOLUTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING OF THE TOWN OF DARIEN AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A GIFT FROM THE DARIEN LITTLE LEAGUE FOR UP TO TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$200,000) TO THE TOWN OF DARIEN FOR A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE THREE ATHLETIC FIELDS LOCATED AT MCGUANE PARK

**** THE MOTION WAS SECONDED FROM THE FLOOR.**

Adele Conniff, District III, read the Park & Recreation Committee report:

In April, the RTM approved the acceptance of a gift of \$15,000 from the Darien Little League for a professional evaluation of 2 baseball fields and a softball field which is also Darien’s Challenger baseball field at McGuane Park.

Tom Irwin Advisors, Inc. was hired to investigate the conditions of the fields and provide a report outlining solutions to the findings. Scott Rose, Technical Advisor, conducted multiple tests and evaluations including laboratory soil tests, a test pit, infiltration rate testing, Surface Hardness testing (Gmax), Surface Compaction, checking the Irrigation System, and determining the field gradients.

The evaluation found the following themes:

The infield areas are challenged by difficulties managing water which results in sloppy conditions when it is wet and dusty/loose conditions when there is too little water.

The ground staff has struggled against less than perfect materials to maintain optimal conditions. (They have maintained the infield “lips”, an often difficult and time consuming challenge.)

Infield materials, while generally meeting ASTM F2107 does not meet the Hummel Ballfield Guidelines.

The percentage of clay is too low and the sand fractions are biased toward the fine diameters.

The infields, without some level of renovation, will remain challenged.

The recommended solution is Infield Skin Reconstruction & Irrigation Improvements.

Carry out a full reconstruction of the infield skin. Replace the infield skin material with a custom blended material with the proper particle size fractions and material properties and to laser grade the infield skin material to reestablish positive surface drainage and grades. During this work, the base paths between 1st and 3rd base should be widened to allow for use of machines to assist in the field maintenance and more closely align the field geometry with the sport specific standards.

During the excavation there is the opportunity to examine and test the sub-base material for drainage properties, and consider options such as sand channeling or a drain installation, if necessary. Irrigation heads would need to be relocated to provide a 12” buffer between the irrigation heads and the infield skin material. More irrigation heads are needed, particularly small irrigation heads specifically for infield skin hydration.

The estimated cost of reconstruction of the fields is \$130,000 - \$150,000.

The Darien Little League presented the evaluation results and recommendations to the Parks & Recreation Commission at their meeting on July 19th and committed to a donation of up to \$200,000 for reconstruction of the fields which is expected to cover any additional unforeseen costs exceeding the estimate for the reconstruction. The Parks & Recreation Commission voted to accept the gift of up to \$200,000 from the Darien Little League. The reconstruction project will be bid by the Parks & Recreation Department and the Darien Little League will pay the

construction company directly for the work done. The hope is that the fields will be ready to play on by spring.

The Board of Selectmen voted on August 21st to accept the gift.

The RTM Parks & Recreation Committee met on September 13th with 9 of 15 members present, constituting a quorum, and voted unanimously in favor of the gift acceptance of up to \$200,000 from the Darien Little League and encourage the RTM to do the same.

Thank you to the Darien Little League for your most generous gift to reconstruct the fields at McGuane Park. Maintenance of the infields will be less time consuming for the park crew and Darien's children will enjoy the fields for years to come!

Adele Conniff
RTM Parks & Recreation Committee Chair

Jack Davis, District III, read the Finance & Budget Committee report:

I am Jack Davis, District 3, RTM Finance & Budget Committee chair.

Adele, thank you for that excellent report.

I will be addressing solely the financial aspects of this gift. The Town will be doing the RFP regarding the work to be performed – so that the work is consistent with the Town's practices and procedures on this Town owned property.

The Darien Little League will be making payments directly to the chosen company(s) – as such not using Town funds. Due to this, the Darien BOF does not need to establish an appropriation related to this gift. On gifts to the Town over \$12,500, only the BOS and RTM are required to approve the acceptance of a gift.

The estimated amount to complete this project, based upon the initial evaluation conducted by Tom Irwin Advisors was between \$130,000 to \$150,000. The committee felt that the total gift up to \$200,000 provides sufficient contingency to cover all expenses.

The F&B committee met on September 6th and voted unanimously to approve acceptance of this generous gift and recommends the same to the full RTM. The committee would also like to thank the Darien Little League to facilitate this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Davis, RTM Finance & Budget chair

September 18, 2023

**** ITEM 23-25 CARRIED ON A STANDING TALLY VOTE OF 71 IN FAVOR, 0 OPPOSED, 2 ABSTENTIONS.**

**** UPON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED FROM THE FLOOR, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADJOURN AT 9:00 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco Blois
Telesco Secretarial Services