



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Bernie Dennler, First Selectman

Board of Finance

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 28, 2024 @ 7:00 PM

Hybrid: Town Hall – Meeting Room 1 & Via Zoom

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TOWN CLERK

1. Call to order and Roll Call
 - a. Scott Chapman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM
 - b. BOF Members Present: John Thomas, Scott Chapman, Tim Vaillancourt, Mike Hayes, Mike Egan, Karen Belding
 - c. BOF Members absent: none
 - d. Others present: Bernie Dennler (First Selectman), Michelle Marceau (representative for town finance office)
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Approval of budget forum #1 minutes – 2/21/24
 - i. Motion to approve made my M. Hayes; second by M. Egan. No discussion. Motion carried with all approving.
 - b. Approval of Finance Meeting minutes – 2/21/24
 - i. Motion to approve made my M. Hayes; second by M. Egan. No discussion. Motion carried with all approving.
4. Citizens Comments
 - a. Tiffany Moroch: stated that idea of budget survey is positive and good to collect general attitudes in community. Seems fair overall way to gather opinions.
 - b. Deanna Bouchard: stated that meeting minutes does not label board chair clearly enough in citizen comment section. Policy around capital reserve fund references a CFO and since there no longer is one, policy will need to be revised. Stated that state law prescribes to the board of finance the ability to determine budget formats from all groups that submit a budget. This was a problem last year and there were disagreements on this point. Noted that budget surveys have been done every year. Recommended not completely changing budget survey from past years.
 - c. Katherine Pickett: thanked the board for time and energy. Glad town citizens have opportunity to be involved and that people keep working together.
 - d. Vince Rose: stated concern with state of schools. Feels we are at inflection point and that programs do continue to disappear because funding has not been appropriate for a number of years now. Example stated of French teacher that is no long at the high school. Doesn't want to see budget discussions focused on wrong details. Need to keep schools strong.
5. Additions to agenda
 - a. None
6. Department reports
 - a. Finance department
 - i. B. Dennler notes that the updated finance reports are provided. Included are original December reports, report through January 31 (expenditures run last week, so show reclassifications through the prior week), and February expenditure report valid as of yesterday because of the work being



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done so everyone can see the move recent and accurate information possible (normally would only provide a report through close of prior month).

- ii. Described high level reclassifications and encumbrance updates that were made. Noted where open concerns still exist.
 - iii. Noted that Michelle Marceau is present to give more details or answer questions
 - iv. M. Egan asked for details on sample lines from update lists to better understand types of changes and reasons. Michelle explained some of the items on journal entry list of corrections. Bills were being paid, but the accounting entries were not being made correctly – so money was being directly put into bank accounts, but the step to make entries to properly account for the journal entries and move the money were not being done.
 - v. T. Vaillancourt asked whether these types of entries are a stylistic choice being made where someone coming in next could decide it should be different again or if it is generally accepted practice? Michelle confirmed it is generally accepted accounting practice that she is following. Some things were not done at all that need to be done monthly.
 - vi. Discussion around the situation that led to some of these impacts.
 - vii. K. Belding asked for diagnosis on how much or what is left to clean up. Michelle indicated that we're in a much better place, particularly on general fund fixes – which is what has the biggest impact on budget. Other funds will still need to be addressed.
 - viii. Board asked B. Dennler to have finance office give weekly updates on progress and at a high level indicate different 'buckets' of fixes and an idea of progress.
 - ix. B. Dennler noted that bank reqs are a priority because of timing of the audits and a plan to use UHY resources to do the bank reqs.
 - x. T. Vaillancourt questioned the line item for the K-9 officers that were supposed to be cost-free to the town, but there is a charge line. Being taken away for an answer.
 - xi.
- b. Tax Collector
- i. T. Vaillancourt asked for a list of adjustments and accounts at the prior update she gave, but has not seen it. S. Chapman agreed to send follow up to her on that.
- c. First Selectman
- i. No transfers
 - ii. Legal work/ bills – planning on taking overages on legal lines with BOS and BOF in the next cycle of meetings to talk about those bills and items.
 - iii. Strategically is choosing to focus more on the righting the operational side of the town budget in this cycle and not do major capital priorities this year. A full capital plan will be created, but this year's contributions will conservative. Nothing will be removed from current capital projects like road improvements, however.
 - iv. Launched an online social services application to connect residents with resources.
 - v. All 4 fire engines have been delivered. The tanker is expected in late spring.
 - vi. Lebanon street scape – goal is to add sidewalks. Fully funded through state program – this goes back to Art Shilosky's administration and is finally in its final stage. Goal to go out to bid in spring and deliver potentially in summer.
 - vii. Norton Park – signed engineering contract. Applied for variety of grants.

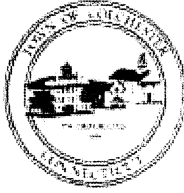


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- viii. M. Hayes asked about status on purchase of ambulance. Steve Sharp in fleet maintenance has said the chassis we were already contracted on and could not sell back to vendor could be used for a different town vehicle that was slotted to be purchased (so cost is a wash).
- 7. Correspondence
 - a. No discussion
- 8. Old Business
 - a. Clerk for the board – there is a clerk willing to clerk for the board, but the current stipend does not meet the union contract rate. Board discussed and agreed to move forward with this clerk.
 - i. Motion: board to adopt appropriate compensation per union contract to compensate this clerical candidate as a clerk for the Board of Finance. Result: passed unanimously.
- 9. New Business
 - a. Assessor memorandum brought up – no discussion. 2.2% increase in grand list.
 - b. EV charging station. Guest Demian Sorrentino joined as guest. Brought forward the signed contract and first invoice for a public EV charging station to be installed at town hall. This contract was approved and signed last year; approved up to \$20,000 from equipment reserve account last year, but it was never brought in front of the Board of Finance at that time.
 - i. Discussion on details around how this charger would work, where it would be located, life expectancy, etc. Invoice is already overdue, so action needs to be determined quickly.
 - ii. M. Egan made motion to fund \$19,250 out of the equipment reserve fund to pay the bill on the EV unit and installation. K. Belding seconded. Discussion included J. Thomas asking if the contract can potentially be cancelled instead of paid; Demian confirmed no work other than administrative have been done so far. Motion halted.
 - iii. Board asked Demian to find out what the options are for getting out of the contract – any penalties or fees to cancel. Also asked for details on return on investment from comparable similar towns. Noted that there is a 5 year warrantee on the unit.
 - iv. M. Hayes stated concerns over location of the unit. B. Dennler asked Demian to state impacts of moving the planned location to somewhere like RecPlex and Demian stated that the costs would go up since this was deemed the least costly location for installation reasons. Board discussed locations and
 - v. Motion made by J. Thomas to table the action on EV until the next board meeting; second by T. Vaillancourt. Result: passed unanimously. Board agreed to revisit this topic, with the new information from Demian, at the next meeting for action.
 - c. Budget survey.
 - i. Discussion of assumptions and purpose.
 - ii. Reviewed sample demographic questions and agreed on edits to draft questions.
 - iii. Reviewed budget specific questions, agreed on categories for ranking question and other specific questions.
 - iv. Discussed using Survey Monkey to build and run survey.
 - v. Motion made by J. Thomas to build and launch the survey as discussed by the board in this meeting via survey monkey. Seconded by T. Vaillancourt. Discussion on timing confirmed to launch as soon as survey monkey is available and it is built and keeping it open for 2 weeks. Result: unanimously approved.
 - d. Board of Education budget format.



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- i. Board discussion on requests for content and format of the Board of Education budget proposal for this year.
- ii. Board agreed to request that the Board of Education provide views of spending category areas at a rolled up level and at a more granular level, by school and showing year over year comparisons. Also need notes and narratives on drivers of budget line increases. In addition, all materials need to be collated into a single document or binder to aid in the review and ability to clearly follow the information.
- iii. Agreed action for M. Egan and K. Belding to take the requests to the Board of Education.

10. Liaison Reports

- a. T. Vaillancourt – Board of Selectman – no additional notes on top of First Selectman's update earlier.
- b. T. Vaillancourt – senior center committee – normal billing approvals, some of the MEP approvals are slightly delayed, but okay.
- c. K. Belding – park and recreation commission – ran elections, acknowledged strategic plan and special meeting for drafting that based on the consultant plan to be presented to Board of Selectman. Also noted that the annual report will be presented soon.
- d. M. Egan – Board of Education – capital plan presentation, budget workshop, discussion on athletic fields. Possibly see final fund payments from the middle school project coming back to town soon.

11. Citizens Comments

- a. Deanna Bouchard – concerned with the Board of Education forum being streamed and not done in hybrid format. Stated timeline of turnover in finance department and impacts of that. Stated the budget details reports should include how many teachers at each step levels. Stated concern on overlooked section of sidewalk for the sidewalk project.
- b. Ron Silverman – stated that town has too many large vehicles, but should consider replacing with smaller EV vehicles and also liked the idea of collaborating with local businesses for locations.

12. Adjournment

- a. J. Thomas Egan makes motion to adjourn; T. Vaillancourt seconds; roll call vote passed unanimously. Adjourned at 9:39 PM.

Submitted By:
Karen Belding
Member, Board of Finance