



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Mary Bylone, First Selectman

Board of Finance Minutes
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 5, 2020
Colchester Town Hall @ 7 PM

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2020 FEB - 7 PM 12:53
Gayle Furman
TOWN CLERK

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Rob Tarlov, Mike Hayes, Mike Egan, Andreas Bisbikos, and Andrea Migliaccio

MEMBERS ABSENT: none

OTHERS PRESENT: First Selectman Mary Bylone, CFO M Cosgrove, Resident Bernie Dennler III

1. Call to Order

R Tarlov called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Additions to the Agenda - none

3. Approval of Minutes: TriBoard Meeting December 4, 2019

M Egan moved to approve the Dec 4, 2019 TriBoard meeting minutes, seconded by M Hayes.
Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting January 15, 2020

M Hayes moved to approve the January 15, 202 meeting minutes, seconded by A Migliaccio
Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Citizen's Comments - none

5. Correspondence:

Letter from Evan Evans

Letter from Merja Lehtinen

Website contact from Susan Demma regarding promotion of the survey

Resignation letter from Nilda Negron effective February 4, 2020

6. Department Reports

a. Tax Collector - no report

b. Finance Department - no report

7. First Selectman

a. Transfer Requests - none

b. First Selectman's report -

- HR Director hired. Starts March 9, 2020
- Beginning work on budget. Meeting with Department Managers
- Will establish an Ad Hoc committee to focus on needs of the Fire Department including staffing, equipment and Paramedic Program recommendation. Members to include First Selectman, Vice Chair BOS, Chair and Vice Chair BOF, Chief Cox.

8. Old Business

a. Open Gov - M Bylone reported having a recent phone call with the Open Gov staff which provided a good review of what the program offers. Looks very promising. Still need a follow up on some unresolved drops in data over the past few months. Also, M Bylone pointed out past use of the program by members of the BOF was minimal. Other than the BOF chair, no one had signed on since April. R Tarlov said he rarely signs in with his password as what he can see from the Town website, which is easier to access, is the same as with his password. BOF members said the information is not currently

relevant as viewable updates are not timely and more detail must be accessible. R Tarlov attended a webinar and received good feedback about the product from a couple of other towns currently using Open Gov

9. New Business

2020-2021 Budget

- a. Budget Survey – 430 responses with is slightly less than last year. Higher number of seniors participated this year due to Senior Center making arrangements for paper copies of the survey to be available. The survey will be posted on the Town website. The comments will be posted once they are scrubbed for names and foul language. Survey link will also be shared on the Town Facebook page. Discussion took place regarding some of the comments provided regarding the survey. A couple of areas of noted interest: People do not want to spend tax dollars on the 57 Fest. People who use the Town services felt the quality was very good. People had some concerns related to the wording of the question on the paramedic program.
- b. Public Forum – Newspaper article covered the issue of Field Maintenance. J Paggioli and T Quinn will come to a future BOF meeting (Feb 19th) to discuss the field concerns.
- c. General Discussion – Presentation of the budget will take place by the First Selectman and the Superintendent. M Bylone shared an early release of the proposed State Budget with R Tarlov who forwarded it to the BOF. Some of the budget info is not final yet.

10. Liaison Reports

M Egan reported on Senior Center Building Committee. Interviews of the Architect firms took place at the last meeting. M Egan reported that BOE Teacher contract has been settled.

A Bisbikos reported on Economic Development Commission. Looking to bring a membership to SeCTer back. M Bylone explained this would enable Colchester to make use of a number of services SeCTer provides related to business development.

A Migliaccio reported on Police Commission. Discussed getting keys to schools for all officers. M Bylone and J Burt are working on this request. Police Union negotiations are underway.

11. Citizens Comments - none

13. Adjourn

A Migliaccio moved to adjourn at 7:58 p.m., seconded by M Hayes. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Bylone, Clerk

From: Merja H Lehtinen <ctmlhr@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 5:40:22 PM
To: Andreas Bisbikos <abisbikos@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: COMMENTS FOR BOF JANUARY 15, 2020

To The Board of Finance:

As we enter this budget plan I urge you to do something differently in 3 steps.

1. Establish that we cannot afford to raise taxes and the mill rate every year.

We have sent out the incorrect narrative that "taxes must rise and spending must rise." This is a false assumption. A certain amount of new money is generated by natural growth of the Grand List without impacting the need to raise taxes. Use it judiciously. But never go beyond it. In years prior to 1991, our leaders used it to reduce the mill rate. That is, in fact, sound fiscal municipal finance Best Practices after a sound emergency fund is established of 5 % to 10%. Ours is more than sound at 11 % to 13%.

2. Use the new software OpenGov we bought as it was intended.

Allow each constituency and department to suggest a zero based budget that does not exceed this year's budget. Let EACH taxpayer view it as it is built on line. Big cities from NYC to Cambridge are doing it, so are small towns like Coventry. Colchester must be allowed to use what we invested in and advocated to buy.

3. Your fiscal duty is to propose affordable spending within all taxpayers means, not just those 50% above the average household income. Just do it.

The financial stress on young families is enormous and equally difficult for those on fixed incomes or who live on their savings alone as many farmers do.

I commend your diligence and hard work. Work smarter not harder. Anyone who took muni finance knew it was a gut course. Let's make it an easy pass. Balance the budget for once. We all know we spend too much, transfer surpluses after the budget passes, and make passing the budget a popularity contest. Just don't. Be adults. Reduce the mill rate and the burden. Our long term fiscal health and our citizens' wealth and peace of mind and abilities to send children to colleges depend on it.

Sincerely,

Merja Helen Lehtinen
Colchester CT

From: Evan Evans <evansforthe48th@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020, 5:47 PM

To: Andreas Bisbikos

Subject: Question for tonight's budget forum

Here is my question tonight since I am home sick and with the kids.

What are they doing (town/school) to ensure that tax dollars are spent efficiently? Why don't we have a fraud, waste and abuse system like the federal government?

MAJ Evan A. Evans, USA (Ret.)

-----Original Message-----

From: cmsmailer@civicplus.com [<mailto:cmsmailer@civicplus.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2020 3:05 PM

To: Maggie Cosgrove <mcosgrove@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: [Colchester CT] Finance Budget Survey (Sent by Susan Demma, Demma.Susan@yahoo.com)

Hello mcosgrove,

Susan Demma (Demma.Susan@yahoo.com) has sent you a message via your contact form (<https://www.colchesterct.gov/user/61/contact>) at Colchester CT.

Message:

How do the residents of Colchester know about the budget survey?

How do you promote public awareness of the survey if they do not attend the Town meetings or do not go on the town website for information?

How do you promote the survey and encourage residents to participate when you do not foster good communication to boost involvement?

Please respond back to me via email. I am very interested in how you all promote such a great tool BUT do not want honest input if know one knows about it

From: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 1:22 PM

To: Demma.Susan@yahoo.com <Demma.Susan@yahoo.com>

Subject: Fw: [Colchester CT] Finance Budget Survey (Sent by Susan Demma, Demma.Susan@yahoo.com)

Hi Susan,

Maggie Cosgrove asked me to respond to your questions.

We have attempted to reach taxpayers/voters regarding the budget survey in a number of ways:

- Letters to the Editor in the River East
- The First Selectmen sends out an email newsletter on Fridays. The budget survey has been promoted over the last several weeks
- Town web site landing page
- I do not have children in the schools, but was told the survey would be promoted in the digital backpack.
- The Senior Center sent out an email blast to its over 1000 members. Although computers are available at the Center, we supplied paper surveys to the Senior Center for seniors who were not comfortable or were unable to use a computer.
- First Selectman's Office Town of Colchester Facebook page.
- The link for the survey was put in some of the Colchester Facebook Groups, like Keeping It All in Colchester

Finding the best ways to communicate to the public is a challenge. If you have other ways we can use to reach more people in the future, please let us know, we are looking for more ways to reach out on many important issues.

Rob

Rob Tarlov, Chairman, Board of Finance

From: Leslie Curtis <lesliescurtis@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 11:16 PM

To: Robert Tarlov <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Cc: Lisa Hageman <lterrillhageman@comcast.net>; John Barnowski <johnbarn@comcast.net>; Steve Marcoux <steve.marcoux@cbia.com>; Kevin Byrne <byrnekm@aetna.com>; Danny Albert <daniela345@sbcglobal.net>; Maureen Noonan <noonan37@comcast.net>; Catherine Shea <catherine.shea@hotmail.com>; Cindy Praisner <praisner@comcast.net>; David Levine <dlevine@hubbell.com>; Andrea Stannard <ags1059@comcast.net>; Maureen Noonan <noonanma@aetna.com>

Subject: Re: Question for Possible Inclusion in the 2020 the Board of Finance Budget Survey

F.Y.I.

On Tuesday, January 14, 2020, 11:25:43 AM EST, Leslie Curtis <lesliescurtis@yahoo.com> wrote:

Hi Rob,

Mary and I met last week to discuss possible ways that our town can work pro-actively to retain its rural character in the years to come by a plan to change what needs to be changed so that our

municipal government can participate more strategically in funding open space and farmland preservation, including working in collaboration with charitable land conservation groups.

We agreed that a good first step would be to have the Board of Finance 2020 Survey include the following question that folks can rank on a scale of one to ten (or whatever scale is supported by the Survey Monkey software):

"How important to you is preserving the rural character of Colchester through open space and farmland preservation efforts?"

I plan to attend the meeting tomorrow evening to advocate for this question in person, but it would probably be a good idea to have all the Board of Finance budget survey sub-committee budget members have a printed copy of this question in their meeting packets as an official basis for my advocacy of including it in the survey from the Colchester Land Trust point of view.

Please let me know if this is possible. And thanks for your encouragement that we have representation at this public meeting for a question of this sort.

Regards,
Leslie Curtis