

Town of Colchester
Board of Finance Public Forum Minutes
Wednesday, January 15, 2020
Town Hall Meeting
6:30p.m.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: First Selectman Mary Bylone, CFO Maggie Cosgrove, Tax Collector Michelle Wyatt, Town Clerk Gayle Furman, Selectmen: Rosemary Coyle, Denise Mizla, Board of Education Members: Mary Tomasi, Joanne Rose, Amy Domeika, Chris McGlynn, Jessica Morozowich; Superintendent Jeff Burt

1. OPEN DISCUSSION OF TOPICS RELATED TO THE UPCOMING BUDGET-Opportunity for taxpayers to ask questions including, but not limited to the following items:
 - a. Board of Education Budget
 - b. Police Protection
 - c. Fire Protection
 - d. Paramedic Services
 - e. Road and Bridge Maintenance
 - f. Field Maintenance
 - g. 57 Fest
 - h. Open Spaces/Land Preservation
 - i. Open Gov Software

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2020 JAN 22 PM 2:13
Gayle Furman
GAYLE FURMAN
TOWN CLERK

Open Space

Leslie Curtis - Spoke on behalf of the Land Trust. We need to be proactive or we will be like Glastonbury as they were like us 50 years ago. She would like to see the Charter updated with specific wording to allow the town to be more proactive in ways it can act in order to preserve open space. If keeping the rural character is important then a way should be found. Based on the Viability Grant and the Cost of Community Services study conducted using 2011 numbers, for every \$1.00 of property taxes paid by residential property owners, \$1.14 was spent by the town to service. For every \$1.00 of property taxes paid by both commercial property owners and the owners of open space and farmland, \$.18 was spent on services. She would like a question as part of the budget survey to gauge the level of commitment the citizens have to open space.

Rosemary Coyle said she had just come from Open Space Commission meeting and they are looking at grants available for open space. Grant process is opening up probably around June
Mike Egan suggested Leslie have a conversation with Economic Development.

Fields

Alex Faber spoke regarding the condition of the sports fields. The fields are in poor condition. Painting of the lines were taken out of the town budget and parents now have to paint the fields themselves. He would like the BOF to consider a budget where line striping and field maintenance is included. This is included in other towns.

Paula McDowell requested an extra person be hired and additional money budgeted for field maintenance.

Rob Tarlov said that last year Jim Paggioli had requested two additional people for field maintenance but was only given one.

Alex Faber clarified that an extra person had been gained for field maintenance but yet parents now have to do their own striping and fields aren't being mowed as frequently as they need to be. An additional person was hired but services were lost.

Andreas Bisbikos asked Tiffany Quinn about the field fund. Tiffany explained that the field fund is not for maintenance but is for upgrades. The money is being put aside for the field irrigation system.

A citizen said Marlborough mows their fields twice a week. Cody Camp had knee-high grass this past season. Parents are raking and moving around dirt trying to make the fields playable. The fields are being seeded and irrigated while they are being used. The fields are being seeded while the kids are on them for soccer.

A citizen said he moved to town because of the rec programs and sports. The condition of the fields is disappointing.

Another citizen spoke saying parents are having to fill holes in on fields as well as put down the lines. Fields are used and abused by sports.

Jason LaChapelle said the biggest complaint he gets from parents is all the money they are spending and how bad the fields are.

Jeff Collins felt families should be able to go to a facility and not have to worry about falling in holes. There are safety and liability issues. He agrees the servicing of the fields has declined in the last 18 months.

Tiffany Quinn clarified that the funds that are paid to the leagues do not go to the fields. Parents are charged a \$10 fee that goes to the field fund and is earmarked for field irrigation but that is the only money that comes to the Town out of what parents pay.

Mike Egan asked if fields are rested at all anymore

Rob Tarlov said we do not have enough fields to rest them.

Andreas Bibiskos talked about a UCONN study done on the fields a few years ago that had rated our fields poorly and as a liability to the town. He asked parents if the fields are safe. Parents responded they are not.

Jeff Collins said R7 has irrigation but it is his understanding that the pump broke and it was never replaced.

Amy Domeika clarified that there is a sprinkler system on R7 and it hasn't worked in 20 years.

Alex Buyniski agreed that the fields are a safety issue and liability. He recalled two issues where kids were hurt because of field conditions. One was on Cody Camp and one on R1. He also questioned why parents cannot maintain the fields because of unions. He stated that in most towns, the little league can maintain the fields themselves. There are also union issues with basketball. Basketball has to pay for set up and breakdown, an hour before and hour after the time they use the gyms, because of unions, but there is no setup. He is taking his team out of town for practices so he does not have to deal with it.

Mike Egan pointed out that the tournaments the leagues hold impact the businesses in town.

The soccer tournament had 57 outside teams this past year.

A citizen spoke saying the fact that the fields don't have time to rest can be seen as a good thing. It means that there are lots of people being active and using them, not just by sports.

Paula McDowell said there used to be tarps put down in the winter. Seed was put down, tarped, and then taken up in March or April. This is no longer done. Crabgrass is so bad that it eats any new grass that does come up.

C3

Brittany Manville expressed thanks for C3. She said it has impacted her family and provides family support. She asked what the plans are to continue funding and if there is any way to increase funding. Rob Tarlov said Cindy Praisner is always approaching the boards for money. C3 started with a lot of grant funding and the town has increased the money they budget for C3 but have not been able to reach the level in which the grant was. The boards have talked about sustainability and have been behind the program. For years the board thought it was just education but learned in a recent presentation it is more social services.

Mike Egan said Cindy Praisner gave a very good presentation and it really is a collaborative effort with the Town and Board of Education. Feedback on the benefits of C3 needs to continue to be provided. Laurie Buyniski wished to echo what Brittany said. C3 has had a huge impact on her family. It does make a difference.

Jessica Morozowich said she is a product of C3 and it's PEP program. It has benefits and through PEP it is growing the next generation of leaders.

57 Fest

Tiffany Quinn does not feel that 57 Fest is sustainable unless there is a way to put it in the budget. Special revenue can't afford it. It is driven by the fireworks.

Jessica Morozowich said her family enjoyed the concerts on the green and asked if they could be combined with the fireworks instead of 57 Fest.

Tiffany Quinn said that concerts were done with sponsorship. She is looking into holding regional concerns with Salem and Marlborough.

Rob Tarlov asked families if anyone feels strongly about 57 Fest.

A citizen said his kids look forward to it and part of the reason they live in Colchester is because of the community events.

Mike Egan added that it is these things that enhance the quality of life in the town.

Paula McDowell wish to clarify that Tim Angell, Jim Paggioli, and Tiffany Quinn are all great to work with.

Alex Buyniski said 57 Fest is unique to Colchester. You see all ages there. He doesn't think people would object to an admission fee. He also suggested that the town and sports leagues take over concessions at the RecPlex to raise revenue.

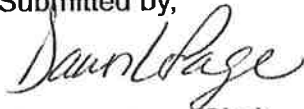
A citizen pointed out that they suspect a lot of out of town people come to 57 Fest so charging a fee would be good.

First Selectman Bylone encouraged those in attendance to help other citizens understand what they have spoken and feel strongly about, and to get people to vote.

Mike Egan said feedback from citizens really helps how things are prioritized.

The Public Forum ended at 7:37

Submitted by,



Dawn LePage, Clerk