

Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

Gayle Furman
GAYLE FURMAN
TOWN CLERK

2022 JUN 28 AM 8:45

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT

BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING June 22nd, 2022 – In Person – 7:00 PM - ZOOM Minutes

Meeting was recorded

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88200354027?pwd=GjV9sYGVxqrY9_HfDvHvF5_XMAInFd.1

Webinar ID: 882 0035 4027

Passcode: 178676

Or Telephone:

US: +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 929 205 6099 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799

BOF Members Present: Andrea Migliaccio, John Thomas, Art Shilosky, John Thomas, Tim Vaillancourt, Mike Egan, Mike Hayes

BOF Members Absent: None

Also Present: First Selectman: Andreas Bisbikos, Finance Director: Debbie Kratochvil, Tax Collector: Michelle Wyatt, Town Clerk: Gayle Furman.

1. CALL TO ORDER: BOF Chair A. Migliaccio called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. The BOF Chair A. Migliaccio reviewed emails received regarding an FOI concern. The Board reviewed and discussed the data and agreed 5 to 1 that the meeting should continue. The BOF Chair A. Migliaccio suggested any party believing that this was an illegal meeting should disconnect, and all board members remained.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE: BOF Chair A. Migliaccio mentioned that the new Finance Director Debbie Kratochvil, Tax Collector, Michelle Wyatt and Town Clerk, Gayle Furman were in attendance.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The board decided to hold off on approving the minute until the next BOF meeting.
 - a. BOF Special Meeting 5/31/22
 - b. BOF Special Meeting 6/15/22
5. CORRESPONDENCE: A. Migliaccio spoke about two emails that were sent to her. One from Jason Lachapelle and one from Stephanie Armstrong. She also mentioned that both of the correspondence emails will be uploaded.
6. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:
 - a. Finance: Debbie Kratochvil - Seated that there is a lot to work for the finance team since taking over the financial director position but they will get through the transition. D. Kratochvil stated that any of the board members can email her for reports or any other materials her department could provide to the board.
 - b. Tax Collector: Michelle Wyatt - BOF Chair A. Migliaccio asked Michelle Wyatt to provide an update on the status of the tax bills. M. Wyatt said that the tax bills using the approved mil rate of 27.08 for real estate only were going well and that once the budget is passed the motor vehicle and personal property tax bills can be sent out.
7. FIRST SELECTMAN:
 - a. Transfers: None
 - b. First Selectman Report: A. Bisbikos shared his first selectman's report with the board including updates on the budgets, ARPA initiatives, new town Finance Director, proclamation for Colchester Hayward Fire Department and the Colchester Memorial Day Parade on Sunday May 29th, 2022.

8. BUDGET DISCUSSION

- a. General Comments: T. Vaillancourt commented he is listening to the public on the results of the referendum and believes substantial cuts may be needed. Will wait for the First Selectman to propose the new budget before discussing cuts. J.Thomas was disappointed that the budget did not pass and wants to start looking into the options of what needs to be done. A. Shilosky expressed concern over the failed budget. M. Egan commented on looking at the possibilities of town departments becoming more efficient to try and reduce spending before cutting services. M. Hayes said that he will need time to understand why the budget vote failed. Commented that re-evaluations are the biggest reason behind any tax increases and not necessarily the spending of the town. Said he would like to see the public give suggestions on what the public would want in order to get the budget passed.
- b. Budget Forum: Possible Dates: Gayle Furman advised July 13th as the soonest possible date, the next possible date being July 19th however 1 registrar will not be available during that time and could create more work for her department. Advised that three weeks after July 19th is the federal primary and the department will be counting the absentee ballots during that time. M.Hayes commented that he believed those dates would not provide enough time for the board to meet the expectations of the residents and gather the information required to make the necessary cuts and or reductions.A.Migliaccio commend that the board will continue the conversation to the net meeting to decide on dates.
- c. Expectations: BOF Chair A.Migliaccio all future meetings will be on zoom. She also said that the next regular meeting on July 13th, the board will discuss the operating budget and she asked the board to send emails with any ideas or questions to her.
- d. Next Steps: BOF Chair A.Migliaccio said that all future meetings will be on zoom. A.Bisbikos spoke about bringing in department heads to discuss budget reductions. He also said that he is not interested in arbitrary numbers or percentages and wants to see tangible solutions on reductions. He also encouraged the board to research and bring ideas forward. He also advised considering a budget forum to allow the public to give input. A.Migliaccio agreed and added that the board is thinking about having a joint meeting with the board of selectmen.


9. LIAISON REPORTS

- a. Commission on aging - A. Migliaccio informed the board about the commission's booth at the tag sale on the green.
- b. Board of Education - M. Egan updated the board on the introduction of the new business director for the school system. He also updated the board on the oil tank and its associated costs. He also discussed the BOE attempt to receive an abatement or extension on the existing in-ground tank, which was denied. He also spoke about various transfers that the BOE approved and using the lunch budget surplus to help pay for the new oil tank.

10. CITIZENS COMMENTS: J. Lachapelle - expressed concern to the board about the 48 hour FOI rule for zoom meetings. He also commented on his correspondence rephrasing. He also said that the public did not support the budget from the second referendum and made a comment about the May 25th minutes not including details. D. Bouchard-sanchez - Commented on the hypocrisy of the meetings with the previous first selectman. She also spoke about the FOI requirements and FOI violations and discussed the importance of the FOI requirements. M. Prevetti - Commented on the board doing a good job and stated that he didn't know why the last budget did not pass. Also commented on the last two citizens that had commented. He spoke about his long tenured career with the town and that he would like to see an increase in the budget because the town is losing good people. He also spoke about wanting to meet with the BOF and First Selectman on ideas to get the budget to pass. M. Gignac - Thanked the board for their efforts and spoke about being hopeful that there will not be many more cuts to the budget. C. D. O'Donal - Spoke about his support for the budget and hopes for bipartisan unification to pass the budget. J. Cox - Spoke about citizen attendance at the BOF meeting after the referendum and is in support of the meetings being on zoom. She also asked if the board could speak about ARPA funds and why the budget increased when the town received the ARPPA funds.

11. ADJOURNMENT: No motion was made, all members of the board agreed to end the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Submitted By,
Megan Trujillo, BOF Clerk

From: Hennick, Thomas A <Thomas.Hennick@ct.gov> 
Subject: RE: BOF Meeting 6/22/2022
Date: June 22, 2022 at 11:12 AM
To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Hello Andreas,

The new provisions governing meetings held using electronic equipment can be a little challenging. If the meeting is a regular meeting, the public and board members must be notified at least 48 hours in advance. The agenda with the appropriate link must be available at least 24 hours in advance. Available means in the office of the agency and posted on the website if the website is available. The 48-hour requirement does not apply to special meetings, only the 24-hour requirement for the agenda and the remote link. I can't tell from what you've sent whether all the requirements have been met. If they haven't, it is entirely up to the board whether or not it goes forward. The board would be vulnerable to an FOI complaint, but the decision would be up to the board.

Tom

From: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 10:46 AM
To: Hennick, Thomas A <Thomas.Hennick@ct.gov>
Cc: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: FW: BOF Meeting 6/22/2022

EXTERNAL EMAIL: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Tom,

The meeting has been published online with a zoom link available. Monday was a holiday, so nothing could be posted then. Can Andrea still proceed with the Board of Finance meeting?

Sincerely,

Andreas

From: First Selectman
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 10:41 AM
To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

TO: Andrea Mignacco <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Subject: FW: BOF Meeting 6/22/2022

<https://www.colchesterct.gov/board-finance/agenda/bof-meeting-agenda>

From: deee bouchard <deeedeee1963@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 10:38 AM

To: First Selectman <selectman@colchesterct.gov>; bofchair@colchester.gov

Cc: thomas.hennick@ct.gov

Subject: BOF Meeting 6/22/2022

To Colchester BOF Chairman:

Please note that the public notice for the BOF meeting scheduled for tonight 6/22/22 does not meet CT FOI requirements for a ZOOM meeting.


Per CT FOI requirements: if a board intends to conduct a remote or hybrid regular meeting, it must provide at LEAST 48 HOURS 1) advance written or electronic notification to each board member and 2) notice to the PUBLIC, posted in its office and on its website.

Below is are two (2) copies of the public notice both of which are time stamped 6/21 - the notice requirement does NOT meet FOI requirements for a regular meeting to be conducted via ZOOM (remote).

This is the website as of 2:21pm on 6/21 - there is no public notice of a BOF meeting at this time

TFW

2:21 PM

42% 

 colchesterct.gov

2022 Board of Finance Meeting Agendas

 Agendas & Minutes Archive

Board Of Finance: Special Meeting Agenda

June 15, 2022 - 8:00pm

Board of Finance: Special Meeting Agenda

Tuesday • Jun 21, 2022 • 2:21 PM

Below is the public notice of the BOF meeting that was posted yesterday time stamped at 4:01pm - this notice:

- 1) does NOT meet the 48 hour notice requirement per FOI
- 2) does NOT provide the public with the link or instructions to attend the meeting remotely (the link in the agenda is NOT a hyperlink)



Yesterday
4:44 PM

Edit




Home » Board of Finance

BOF Meeting Agenda

SUBMITTED ON JUNE 21, 2022 - 4:01PM

Upload file:

 bof_6-22-22-06212022155859.pdf

Date: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 -
7:00pm

Related Event: Board of Finance



May 31st Audio File

StephanieArmstrong <apinkswan@gmail.com>

Fri 6/10/2022 4:30 PM

To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>

Good afternoon,

I would like to know why the audio file for your May 31st meeting has yet to be uploaded to the town website? Also, I am requesting that the audio file for your May 31st meeting be made available on the town website, as soon as possible. May 25th finally made its way on to the site and I thank you for that. I believe it's extremely important to have the audio, as the minutes are very basic.

I look forward to hearing from you, and for you taking action on this matter.

Thank you,
Stephanie Armstrong
8B Westchester Hill
Colchester, CT

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: Jason LaChapelle <LaChapelle@colchesterct.gov>
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 8:42 AM
To: Andrea Migliaccio <BOFChair@colchesterct.gov>; John Thomas <jthomas@colchesterct.gov>
Cc: Tim Vaillancourt <Vaillancourt@ColchesterCT.gov>; Mike Egan <megan@colchesterct.gov>; Mike Hayes <mhayes@colchesterct.gov>; Art Shlosky <aShlosky@colchesterct.gov>
Subject: May 25th and May 31st meeting records

Good Morning Board of Finance Chairman Andrea Migliaccio, Board of Finance Vice Chairman John Thomas and Board of Finance members:

I am requesting that the recording from the May 25th, and the recording from the May 31st, Board of Finance meetings are made available on the Town of Colchester website as soon as possible. The minutes, which have been made available, from both meetings state in the header that the "Meeting was recorded". And while the minutes have been uploaded, the minutes provide no details about all the discussions that happened during these meetings. There were breakdowns of line item changes, questions and answers with both the CFO and the Tax Assessor, and countless thoughts shared by our BOF members.

Not only have I had multiple citizens reach out to ask me when the meeting recordings will be available, these recordings provide vital details our citizens need in order to make an informed decision about our budget. While it is commendable, and appreciated, that the Board of Finance worked with the Town in order to put out a "Questions & Answers" document, without providing the documentation and conversations that support the answers given the people have no reason to believe they are anything more than the government saying what it needs to say in order to get what it wants.

The previous two Board of Finance meetings, which have no publicly available recordings, discussed at length the budget you are now asking the citizens to vote on. The minutes from those meetings contain no details about any of the topics discussed. The lack of public access to these recordings is denying the citizens their right to cross reference the answers provided by the First Selectman in his "Q&A document", to seek answers to questions they may have, and get general clarification about the budget leading into Wednesday evening's Town Meeting. Beyond that, the lack of publicly available documentation to support the words of the Board of Finance and the First Selectman about the budget calls into serious question this administration's supposed commitment to transparency and truth in government.

As elected officials our only goal is to represent the people of Colchester. Part of doing that is fulfilling our obligation to ensure that the citizens have every single piece of information and data that exists before we ask them to make any decision, especially when we are asking them to spend even more of their hard money under this 8% inflation.

This email, and the supporting screenshots, will be made public.

Sincerely,

Jason LaChapelle
Board of Selectmen