

**BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 23, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. via GoToMeeting by Chairman Thomas Harrison. Members present: Chairman Thomas Harrison, Vice Chairman/Secretary Catherine Durdan, Ellen Retelle, Ken Birk, Cathy Salchert, Katrina Marin, and Margaret Bratton. A quorum was present.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Thomas Harrison.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM THE AUDIENCE - None

IV. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING:

October 26, 2020 Meeting

1st page, item I, remove Vice Chair/Secretary Catherine Durdan as present; she was absent.

On a motion made by Tom Harrison, seconded by Katrina Marin, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance approves the minutes of the October 26, 2020 Meeting minutes as amended.

Messrs: Harrison, Birk, and Mmes: Bratton, Salchert, Marin, and Retelle voted in favor. Ms. Durdan abstained.

V. OLD BUSINESS

20/21-05 Review and Discussion: FY 21/22 Budget

In response to a question from Ms. Durdan, Mr. Robertson responded that he read the article regarding the State's teacher pension coming back to the towns again during the upcoming budget cycle but it is too early to tell what will happen.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

20/21-07 Lights at AHS Synthetic Turf Field and Track

Chairman Harrison reported that he received several e-mails from residents requesting support for the lights.

Ms. Salchert thanked everyone for the e-mails received, especially the High School Girls' Field Hockey team and a senior at Avon High School; it is great to hear from the students directly on this; she was concerned we did not hear from anyone who might be opposed; prior to the Town Council special meeting held a week ago the last time this issue was in the public eye was at Council's July 30, 2020 meeting. She is troubled that on the Monday before Thanksgiving we are voting on something that is popular, the right thing to do, but would have preferred having this discussion at a different time. In response to a question from Ms. Salchert, Mr. Robertson responded that when we went out to bid this item was included as an add alternate; Musco Lighting has a cooperative contract which complies with our purchasing regulations hence no need to go through the whole competitive bid process; we requested updated pricing on the original bid; design and costs were reviewed by the architect and they were appropriate. In response to a question from Ms. Salchert, Mr. Robertson responded that buffering will have to be part of this, but we do not yet have a cost estimate, pending a design; if the Board of Finance approves this, at some point we will be back requesting additional funding for buffering. Ms. Salchert commented that she would rather be approving the whole thing and know what the final cost is going to be. She referred to Mr. Harvell's letter and stated

that it is still taxpayers' money even though it is money that came back from the original authorization; it is important that when we are making decisions on capital expenditures of tax dollars we have our ducks in a row at one time; we keep doing this in a piece meal fashion and then need to figure out what the final cost was. In response to a question from Ms. Salchert, Mr. Robertson responded that we have to get it approved first, then we work out the schedule to install the lights. He noted it wasn't possible to have an estimate for the buffering at the same time as the lights (inaudible). Ms. Salchert added that some people are going to be troubled about not doing the buffering until later; we are getting ahead by approving money before we have the final project cost, a date, or if we will get the lights. Mr. Robertson responded that we will get the lights.

Ms. Bratton commented that when the project went out to referendum, she agreed with the bases and conduits for the lighting being installed as part of the portion that the Town pays for, but is uncomfortable with the rest of it. She noted that businesses are having a hard time, some individuals are having a tough time and she is not comfortable adding this as an expense when there could be other things in Town that people think are a higher priority; she appreciates all the work that ACORN has done and the past eight months have probably been difficult but more of a reason to postpone and try to do it all through fundraising instead of coming back to the Town and taxpayers for the additional amount.

Mr. Birk thanked everyone for their good work. In response to a question from Mr. Birk, Mr. Robertson responded that there is an opportunity cost; if the decision is made not to appropriate the bond premium funds for this project then they would be applied to debt service which would create opportunities in other areas, i.e. offset tax increase or for additional capital spending. Mr. Birk noted that the Town Council was unanimous on their vote and it was put forward by Mr. Robertson as a recommendation. In response to a question from Mr. Birk, Mr. Robertson responded that the driving catalyst for deploying the funds in this fashion is that there is an opportunity now given where the fundraisers are with their efforts; it bears some resemblance to the original idea behind this project with public funds and private funds; if it is not taken advantage of now it may not be there in the future.

Ms. Retelle shared similar reservations given the vote at the FY 20/21 budget meeting resulting in no tax increase and also had reservation about approving it now as it feels a little bit rushed even though there has been work done around it prior to this. She noted that it is important for the high school and kids to have this as it will benefit the programs, the kids, and the Town.

Mrs. Marin agreed with Ms. Bratton's comments. She noted that we are in the midst of a pandemic, an economical whirlwind, of which we still haven't seen the full impact of it; the most fiscally responsible decision is to pay off debt to ensure long-term financial stability; paying off the tax increase is inevitable as we start the budget process. She added that she is in support of the lights, but would like to see ACORN resume their efforts, it may take more time to do it, but would like to have them see it through. She asked before this project went to referendum why the lights were not included and the Board was told that ACORN took on that responsibility to raise the funds and now we are being asked for the remaining funding needed.

Ms. Durdan expressed that after reading the residents' e-mails and listening to members who have spoken tonight she is very much in favor and supports the lights.

Ms. Bratton inquired about portable lights being used for the turf field in the interim. Town Council Chairperson Heather Maguire responded that a concern about portable lights is that the generator could leak oil on the turf field, in addition to their weight, and would affect the field warranty. She also noted that light have always been part of this project from day one; something we planned for when we out to referendum, we planned the conduits when we built the field, we did some add alternates to do some buffering and put in the foundations for the lights. She added that the bond premium is good towards debt service or a capital related expense. She noted that we could check off our list and have something we really need in this Town, it completes the project, and will benefit the kids and the community. She added that we will still use half of the bond premium towards debt service; ACORN will continue to fundraise

and have already raised \$140,000 which is no small change; we have historically partnered with ACORN on projects like this, i.e. Avon Middle School tennis courts lights of which the Town also helped out. Mr. Harrison thanked Mrs. Maguire for her comments. Mr. Birk shared concern regarding doing this now; what is the risk when it comes to meeting our financial obligations, building up our Unassigned Fund Balance and making sure there are no surprises in April during budget discussions. Mrs. Maguire responded that she would not put this through if she did not think we could handle it; we are collecting taxes; this is as good a time as any; we received a slightly reduced rate on the lights from what we anticipated, \$375,000; this seems like a time we can utilize these unplanned funds, and she feels very comfortable and confident that this is the right time to do this; we have institutional knowledge of this project, equipment we started to put in the ground and not to wait for it to become obsolete; this is the perfect time to do it.

On a motion made by Ellen Retelle, seconded by Cathy Durdan, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance approve an appropriation not to exceed \$235,000 to fund the lights project for the Avon High School Synthetic Turf Field and Track.

Mr. Harrison, and Mmes: Retelle, Salchert, and Durdan voted in favor. Mmes: Bratton and Marin voted nay. Mr. Birk abstained. Motion carried 4-2-1.

20/21-08 Supplemental Appropriation: Avon Village Center, \$90,607.55

On a motion made by Ellen Retelle, seconded by Katrina Marin, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance hereby amends the FY 20/21 Budget by increasing:

REVENUES

CNREF, Other Local Revenues, Refunds & Reimbursements, Account #03-0360-43612 in the amount of \$90,607.55 and increasing

APPROPRIATIONS

CNREF, Avon Village Center, Service & Consultant, Account #03-4858-52184, in the amount of \$90,607.55, for the purpose of recording reimbursement(s) for project costs.

Messrs: Harrison, Birk, and Mmes: Bratton, Salchert, Retelle, Durdan, and Marin voted in favor.

20/21-09 Supplemental Appropriation: Old Farms Road Project: CEPA Process, \$34,450

On a motion made by Margaret Bratton, seconded by Ellen Retelle, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance hereby amends the FY 20/21 Budget by increasing:

REVENUES

CNREF, Other Local Revenues, Old Farms Rd CEPA Revenue, Account #03-0360-43668 in the amount of \$34,450.00 and increasing

APPROPRIATIONS

CNREF, Town CNREF- Road Reloc. Study, Old Farms Rd CEPA Expenditure, Account #03-4992-53201, in the amount of \$34,450.00, for the purpose of recording reimbursement(s) for project costs.

Messrs: Harrison and Birk, and Mmes: Bratton, Durdan, Marin, Retelle, and Salchert voted in favor.

20/21-10 Appropriation from Sewer Fund (Fund 05) for Farmington Treatment Plant Upgrade, \$461,040.11

On a motion made by Ellen Retelle, seconded by Margaret Bratton, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance hereby appropriates a sum not to exceed \$461,040.11 from Sewer Fund, Other Financing Sources, Unassigned Fund Balance, Account #05-0390-43913 and to Sewer Fund, Sewer Coll. & Disp., Treatment Plant Upgrade, Account #05-3205-53458, for the purpose of funding the initial payment for the Farmington 2020 Treatment Plant Upgrade.

Messrs: Harrison and Birk, Mmes: Bratton, Durdan, Marin, Retelle, and Salchert voted in favor.

Ms. Salchert commented that during the last budget process we talked about sewer fees and sewer use fees. She noted that at the July 9th AWPCA Meeting there was discussion which included concern about capital

improvement project funding and its effect on the sewer use fund; establishing reserve for future expenditures rather than increasing sewer use fees is prudent. She inquired about the status regarding the agreement with Farmington; how much money will be putting in to this legal matter. She requested that before being asked again to take action regarding this item that we have a little more background with some direction and other options; it is big capital expenditure and does not seem fair to put it on the users of the system of a partially built out sewer system. It was decided that this item would be discussed under executive session at a Board meeting following the New Year.

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Monthly Financial Report Summary

Details were included in the packet report dated period ended 10/31/20 prepared and reported by Margaret Colligan. The Board of Education financial summary report to be sent to the Board via e-mail. In response to a question from Ms. Bratton, Ms. Colligan responded that the \$200,000 Appropriation from Fund Balance assigned to Pension Contributions was put on a year ago out of our sources for our FY 18/19 budget for Town employees. Ms. Retelle requested detail for Unexpended Fund Balance on future report summaries.

B. Finance Director Introduction

Mr. Robertson introduced Tom DiStasio. Tom DiStasio shared a brief bio with the Board of Finance. The Board welcomed him aboard.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS - None

IX. ADJOURN

On a motion made by Cathy Salchert, seconded by Katrina Marin, it was voted:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Finance adjourn the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Messrs: Harrison, Birk and Mmes: Bratton, Salchert, Marin, Retelle, and Durdan voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Durdan, Vice Chair/Secretary

Attest: Jennifer Worsman, Clerk

All referenced material is available to the public in the Town Manager's Office.