TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2022
MINUTES

Members Present: Michael Purcaro-Chairman*, James Fay, Douglas Harding, David Olender, Barry Pinto, Joseph Wehr*

Others Present: Lori Spielman-First Selectman, Tiffany Pignataro-Finance Officer, Melinda Ferry* and David Stavens*-Selectmen, Brian Greenleaf-Dir of Finance & Ops, BOE, Jennifer Dzen-BOE Chairman, Timothy Webb-DPW Director, Susan Phillips-HML Director, Mary Blanchette-HML Board Chairman*, Peggy Busse, David Palshaw, David O'Rourke-CEO HVCC*

*Via Zoom

Call to Order

Chairman Michael Purcaro called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Olender requested to add the Crystal Lake Gymnasium Floor to the agenda.

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD THE CRYSTAL LAKE GYMNASIUM FLOOR TO THE AGENDA UNDER NEW BUSINESS.

Chairman’s Report

Chairman Purcaro thanked department heads for changing their budgeting strategy to comply with the zero based budgeting approach approved by the Board of Finance last month. He thanked Ms. Pignataro for working with department heads to help them implement it. He offered any help that he could give for follow up training. He also stated with the Covid variant ramping up, the Board of Finance is here to help the First Selectman and Finance Officer in any way they would deem necessary. He introduced Mr. O’Rourke, CEO of Hockanum Valley Community Council.

Presentations

Hockanum Valley Community Council, Inc.
Mr. O’Rourke explained the role of the Hockanum Valley Community Council. HVCC consists of the Dial a Ride Program, a Food Pantry and Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse services. The clinic is their biggest service and they have found an increase in this service being required since COVID. They have seen an increase in domestic violence and an increase in mental health issues in Senior Citizens. Some changes made due to COVID was that the Dial a Ride staff delivered the food from the pantry and the clinic went virtual. Ellington residents served in 2021 were 100 outpatient services, 120 used the Food Pantry, and 45 residents used the transportation service. Overall, regardless of a person’s ability to pay, they are served. However, HVCC does try to see if the person has insurance that may cover some of the services.

Chairman Purcaro thanked Mr. O’Rourke for his presentation and the members felt they had a better understanding of this service that the Town contributes to through the budget.

Citizens Forum

Ms. Busse, 37 Abbott Rd stated that there was a Library Board of Trustees meeting where she was made aware that there was a failing furnace in the library and that it was proposed to tap into the endowment fund to pay for it. She asked who was aware of this and why it did not go through the normal financial process. Mr. Purcaro thanked her for her comments and stated he would look into it.

Chairman Purcaro asked that the agenda be taken out of order and that Windermere School Building and Athletic Facility Lighting projects be addressed as well as the Medical Reserve Fund so that Mr. Greenleaf and Ms. Dzen could attend a BOE meeting that was scheduled for tonight.

New Business

Windermere School Building

Mr. Greenleaf did a short presentation on the need and cost of the school project. Ms. Pignataro stated that this is a tight timeline and tonight is to secure the possibility of funds. There will be value engineering done. Mr. Greenleaf stated that the project is renovation with a large addition and that it would be 7 years until the renovation status is granted. The BOE is requesting bond approval from the Board of Finance and to PZC for 8-24 referral. The referendum is scheduled for March 1, 2022. He also pointed out that the level of public engagement has been intensive with 5 community forums. Mr. Olender stated that he did not like the process. Mr. Greenleaf explained that this is a conceptual design in order to get State approval which takes a year. If the Town residents approve the project, an architect will be hired and the design could be entirely different based on structure the land and utilities with the Permanent Building Committee having the ultimate design say. Chairman Purcaro agreed with Mr. Olender that he didn’t like the process either but that is what the State requires. Mr. Pinto asked the mill rate increase from the project. It was projected at .2 mills and Ms. Pignataro stated that any mill rate increase will be gradual because of the mill rate stabilization fund.

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

RESOLVED, that the Board of Finance recommends that the Town of Ellington appropriate $61,640,000 for costs related to various renovations, improvements, and additions to Windermere Elementary School consisting of the demolition of a portion of the existing structure, anticipated to include a portion of the north classroom wing and the entire south classroom wing, construction of a new addition, renovations to a portion of the existing structure, anticipated to include the center classroom wing, a portion of the north classroom wing and existing assembly spaces, full roof replacement to the remaining portion of the structure, and various site improvements, anticipated to include lighting and parking lot
improvements, and related work. The appropriation may be spent for acquisition, design, construction and installation costs, equipment, furnishings, materials, utilities, relocation costs, clerk of the works, architects’ fees, engineering fees, consultants’ fees, administrative costs, legal fees, net interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and other expenses related to the project or its financing. The Permanent Building Committee is authorized to determine the scope and particulars of the project, and may reduce or modify the scope of the project including without limitation modifications to the site improvements to reflect any parcel reconfiguration, and the entire appropriation may be spent on the project as so reduced or modified. The Town anticipates receiving an estimated $34,125,000 grants from the State of Connecticut to fund in part the project appropriation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Finance recommends that the Town authorize the issue of $61,640,000 bonds or notes and temporary notes to finance the appropriation, the amount of bonds or notes authorized to be reduced by the amount of grants received for the project and not separately appropriated to pay project appropriation.

Athletic Facilities Lighting Projects

Mr. Webb stated that in the 90’s, the football field was constructed, then through a grant the Tennis Courts were built with the plan for future lighting. There have been discussions regarding additional lights for the football field and Tedford Park has old sodium lights on timers. He stated that he felt the HS football field should be done first, then the tennis courts and then Tedford Park depending on bid prices that are received and funds available. Mr. Purcaro agreed that this is a comprehensive program for all fields but that it is a lot of money. There has not been any community engagement and he felt that the public needed to be engaged. Mr. Greenleaf stated that he agreed that the lights on the football field should be a priority as they rent lights each year for the other side of the field.

Ms. Pignataro stated that the Town is not tied to the $3,000,000+ figure but that it allows the Town to borrow up to that amount and cannot exceed it. The motion states that the First Selectman can determine the scope. First Selectman, Lori Spielman agreed with the project and is on board with it. Mr. Webb felt that by moving this forward tonight would give the residents the final approval on the project. Mr. Harding agreed that interest rates are low now and Ms. Pignataro agreed.

MOVED (FAY) SECONDED (HARDING) AND PASSED

RESOLVED, that the Board of Finance recommends that the Town of Ellington appropriate $3,047,000 for costs related to the acquisition of, installation of and improvements to lighting at various athletic facilities of the Town, including Ellington High School, Tedford Park and Pinney Street Fields. The appropriation may be spent for acquisition, design, construction and installation costs, equipment, materials, utilities, architects’ fees, engineering fees, consultants’ fees, administrative costs, legal fees, net interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and other expenses related to the project or its financing. The First Selectman is authorized to determine the scope and particulars of the project, and may reduce or modify the scope of the project, and the entire appropriation may be spent on the project as so reduced or modified.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Finance recommends that the Town authorize the issue of $3,047,000 bonds or notes and temporary notes to finance the appropriation, the amount of bonds or notes authorized to be reduced by the amount of grants and other funds received for the project and not separately appropriated to pay project appropriation.

VOTE ON THE MOTION: Ayes: Fay, Harding, Pinto; Nays: Oleneder, Wehr
Medical Reserve Fund

Ms. Pignataro stated that the audit just completed shows a $3.5 million unassigned balance and the goal is to have 10% of the operating budget in this account. However, she understands the importance of Brian's request and the funding comes from money that they returned to the Town.

MOVED (FAY) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROPRIATE $300,000 FROM UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE INTO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEDICAL RESERVE ACCOUNT.

Financial Statements

Ms. Pignataro stated that the Financials as of November 30, 2021 show that tax collections are higher than this time last year. She stated that spending has been on target considering that the budget is 6 months into the fiscal year.

American Rescue Plant Act (ARPA)

Ms. Pignataro told the Board that the task force is meeting tomorrow and that there have been many requests received. She will be bringing to the task force a recommendation to hire an ARPA consultant which is an allowed cost through the funds.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Funding

There is no update at this time.

Shared Services

Chairman Purcaro stated that there is a meeting scheduled for February, and that Tiffany and Brian have been meeting regularly on items that can be shared.

Grand List

Chairman Purcaro stated that the Board is very interested in the results sooner than later. Ms. Pignataro stated that they applied for an extension from the State to February because the Tax Assessor is out on medical leave. She will bring the results of the Grand List to the Board as soon as it is completed.

New Business

FY 2022-23 Zero Based Budget Training

Ms. Pignataro stated that she has been meeting with department heads on the zero based budgeting along with the budgeting module in the new accounting system. There has been a learning curve and has been very time consuming.

Crystal Lake Gymnasium Floor

Mr. Olender asked to have this discussion because there are many unanswered questions regarding the state of the gym floor as respects it today and as of the close out of the project.
Mr. Greenleaf told him that there is a report with pictures that he will send to him. Mr. Purcaro stated that it warrants further review and the Board of Finance has the authority under the Town Charter to authorize a special inquiry or audit if deemed necessary. Mr. Greenleaf stated that it may be more costly to go after the vendor than it would be to repair it. All agreed that a special inquiry should be done to get some answers both legally and financially.

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (PINTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO CONDUCT A SPECIAL INQUIRY INTO THE CRYSTAL LAKE GYMNASIUM FLOOR.

Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting December 8, 2021

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (PINTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF DECEMBER 8, 2021 AS WRITTEN.

Adjournment

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Lori Smith
Recording Secretary