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

Members Absent: 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, Elizabeth Nord and Miriam Underwood-BOE Members, Timothy Webb-DPW Director, Susan Phillips*-HML Director, Mary Blanchette*-HML Board Chairman*, David Palshaw, Jeremy Galeota, Kevin Regan-JRego’s Restaurant, Eric Santini and Eric Santini Jr-Santini Homes

*Via Zoom

Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman’s Report

The Chairman told the Board that Mr. Wehr was absent due to some health issues and wished him a speedy recovery. He thanked Mr. Webb for the good job the crew did in clearing the streets during this weekend’s storm. He attended the Superintendent’s Budget Presentation to the BOE and stated that they reduced their budget by $182,200 for an overall increase of 3.8%. As a result of last month’s meeting regarding the Library’s accounting of special revenue funds, he has looked into it and found that there are endowment funds available for repairs and maintenance to the Library. He stated that the boiler replacement is an appropriate use of the funds.

First Selectman, Lori Spielman informed the Board that the committee that was researching whether Ellington should have a town administrator has voted to go forward with it. There is a meeting on February 14 at 6:30 PM to discuss the details and move it along. If this comes to fruition, the First Selectman position would be part time and the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance would still be in place.
Presentations:

Kevin Regan, owner of JRego’s at Meadowview Plaza stated that he owns a landscape service in Ellington, was owner of Hometown Pizza and now he has opened JRego’s also in Meadowview Plaza. He stated that the only obstacle to opening his new business was the Health Department. He feels that the town would benefit from having its own Sanitarian. North Central Health slowed him down waiting for signatures and approvals. He was asked why he chose Ellington and he responded that Ellington is his home and he wants to give back to the community. He also commended town officials and the Town Planner’s office as well as the Building Official for their help and cooperation.

Eric Santini stated that they own Santini Homes including Deer Valley and Deer Valley North. They love Ellington and have been in town for many years; however, their frustration is the taxes. After the revaluation, their tax bill increased 36%. They would like to see more collaboration between Town officials and themselves. 20% of their rental revenues are going to pay their town property taxes. They try not to raise their rents too much and this increase is hard on them and their residents. Their impression is that the people doing the revaluation do not know the area and are basing their values on more affluent towns. Eric Santini Sr. stated his agreement.

Citizen’s Forum

James Maitland, 35 Charter Rd spoke in favor of the lighting project that is going to referendum on March 1. He is working with other various sports sectors in Town to promote passage of this item. He would like more information because they are asking him and he does not have the answers. He suggested that the Board of Finance facilitate an informational meeting before the referendum to get the questions answered. Mr. Purcaro agreed to facilitate this.

Executive Session – Potential Litigation

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 6:43 PM TO DISCUSS POTENTIAL LITIGATION.

In Attendance: Michael Purcaro, James Fay, David Oleneder, Douglas Harding, Barry Pinto, Tiffany Pignataro and Lori Spielman

The Board of Finance came out of Executive Session at 7:26 PM.

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN THAT THEY ADOPT A POLICY OF CREATING A CHECKLIST FOR ALL BUILDING PROJECTS THAT WILL BE USED WHEN DETERMINING IF PROJECT PHASES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND BEFORE PAYMENTS ARE ISSUED AND TO RECOMMEND BEFORE ANY MAINTENANCE BONDS ARE RELEASED, THAT A REPORT BE ISSUED TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN, BOARD OF FINANCE, PERMANENT BUILDING COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF EDUCATION AS APPLICABLE REGARDING THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE BUILDING.

Financial Statements

Ms. Pignataro highlighted her report summary as of December 31, 2021. Collections are better than the prior year at this time, revenue is moving toward budget and the expenses are still good. The budget for
Emergency Management is off because of the hiring of a full time employee as opposed to the former director being a part time employee. She stated that the insurance budget may be tight but is looking good at this time.

Mr. Purcaro asked if the Emergency Management budget will be offset by revenue from Homeland Security and Mr. Olenczer asked if there is any cost sharing with the Board of Education for this position. Mr. Harding asked if there should be an additional appropriation from Salary Adjustment to this account. Ms. Pignataro stated that she will look into the Homeland Security offset and a possible $5,000 in additional funds that Mr. Purcaro asked about. She stated that the Board of Education will share some expenses based on the work he does for them. She stated that a transfer from the Salary Adjustment account will be done but the Charter states that it cannot be done before the last three months of the fiscal year. Ms. Spielman stated that the Emergency Management Director is starting to work on the Ambulance fee collections also. Mr. Fay asked about the Recreation Dept. revenues and Ms. Pignataro stated that they have taken in $68,000 YTD and that they are looking at their fees for the upcoming budget year.

New Business

Zero Based Budgeting

Mr. Purcaro stated that he met with the Fire Department on their budget and the Finance Office is working with all the departments. The Library asked for assistance from him and he will be contacting Ms. Phillips tomorrow to schedule that. Mr. Pignataro stated that all departments are working on their budgets and the overall theme from the departments is inflation.

Board of Education Approved Proposed Budget

Ms. Nord, Chairman of the BOE Finance Committee stated that the budget was difficult, but it honors the contracts and maintains programs. There are some needs they wanted to address, but could not at this time. The insurance is a variable that is hard to pinpoint. The reserve needs to be brought up. Mr. Purcaro thanked her and her committee for their hard work.

Board of Finance Budget

Mr. Pignataro outlined the Board of Finance proposed budget. She stated that the Town Attorney is being consulted on the options to establish a trust for the OPEB contributions. Mr. Purcaro asked if $100,000 was enough and she stated that she is comfortable with it. She is recommending funding the Contingency and Capital Reserve Funds in the amount of $200,000 each.

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (PINTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO SET THE BOARD OF FINANCE FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 BUDGET AS FOLLOWS: ACCOUNT 120 - $11,350; ACCOUNT 121 - $55,300; ACCOUNT 122 - $1,000; ACCOUNT 1010 - $200,000; ACCOUNT 1011 - $200,000; ACCOUNT 1045 - $100,000.

Windermere School Project
Bonding Costs and Interest

Mr. Purcaro asked for a range of the bonding and interest costs for the project so that the public is informed of the total cost. However the total costs are unknown at this time so a range will be sufficient. Ms. Pignataro stated that over the life of the debt, the school project will pay between $13.5 and $15.5
million in interest over a 20-24 year borrowing period. The mill rate is affected by one year of interest payments. She stated that the debt will not be on the books until 2024. There will also be debt coming off the books.

Proposed Conceptual Design and Value Engineering

A motion was made by the Board of Education regarding the conceptual design and value engineering (Attached). Mr. Greenleaf stated that the Permanent Building Committee makes the final design decision and footprint. Mr. Palshaw was concerned with the Permanent Building Committee having enough time to do this before the deadlines. Mr. Greenleaf stated that the Permanent Building Committee will engage an architect through the bidding process and has a 2023 time frame to complete the design.

Unfinished Business – None

Committee Updates
American Rescue Plan Act

Mr. Olender told the Board that the committee met on January 6 and reviewed the submissions. 19 submissions were received. The next meeting is March 3 and since their January meeting, the guidelines have changed so they will be applying these new guidelines to the applications received.

Shared Services

Mr. Purcaro told the Board that the first meeting is tomorrow.

Permanent Building Committee

Mr. Fay stated that there is nothing currently scheduled.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (FAY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 5, 2022 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

Adjournment

MOVED (OLENDER) SECONDED (PINTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Lori Smith, Recording Secretary
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In the spirit of collaboration and recognition of the scale of proposed Windermere project, the Board of Education, as aligned with state statute and the Town’s Charter, hereby recommends that the Permanent Building Committee, along with its chosen architect for the Windermere Project, assess the proposed conceptual design to ensure the maximum value for the Ellington taxpayer while balancing educational impacts on students and the long-term needs of the school and district and share its findings with the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education.

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