



Town of Madison, CT

Board of Finance

Draft

Minutes of a special meeting of the Board of Finance held on February 19, 2020, 7:00 p.m. at the Town Campus

Present: Jean Fitzgerald, Judith Friedman, Ken Kaminsky, Fillmore McPherson, Justin Murphy and John Picard

Also present: Stacy Nobitz, Finance Director; Kristen Bartosic, Accountant; First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons; MCTV

Ms. Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

1. Pledge of Allegiance. The Board of Finance and members of the audience stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of minutes – January 15, 2020. On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Ms. Friedman, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the special meeting of January 15, 2020 as submitted.
3. Chairman's comments. There were no Chairman's comments.
4. Citizen and Finance member comments. There were no Citizen or Finance member comments.

NEW BUSINESS

5. Review Referendum timeline information from Bond Counsel. Members were provided with comparative calendars, prepared by bond counsel, for the school bond referendum. One option is for a stand-alone referendum with the schedule starting on May 11th with the Board of Selectmen initiating action that would create a timeline that would lead to a Special Town Meeting on September 29th and a referendum on October 6. The second option is for a referendum connected with the November 3rd election day which would start on May 11th with the Board of Selectmen initiating action that would create a timeline that would lead to a Special Town Meeting on October 27 and a referendum on election day on November 3rd.

Ms. Lyons provided input on the two options noting that a stand-alone referendum will provide more flexibility and would provide more time for advocacy efforts since the action for the Board of Selectmen to recommend Appropriation and Borrowing, approving the text of the resolution, setting the special Town Meeting and authorizing the explanatory text would not need to occur until September 14th, which would be after families are back from summer vacation and back in regular communication with the schools. A referendum scheduled for Election Day would be more complex since it would need to go to the State. In addition, there would be a limited amount of time for advocacy efforts since action by the Board of Selectmen to recommend Appropriation and Borrowing, approving the text of the resolution, setting the special Town Meeting and authorizing the explanatory text would need to be completed by August 24th, which is while families are still away for summer vacation and not in regular communication with the schools. The benefit to having the referendum on Election Day is that it will draw more people to vote since this is a presidential election. A concern is that people who come primarily to vote in a national election might not take the time to educate themselves on the local school bond referendum questions. It is important that people who come to vote on this question are knowledgeable on the issue and came to vote for the right reason.

It was noted that the only recent time that a referendum question was included with a presidential election was in 2008 for the Library project and this question failed.

Mr. Kaminsky commented that a bond referendum should, if possible, be included as a question with a general election to be able to draw people and adding questions to a presidential election should help improve turn-out.

Mr. Friedman commented that she has a mixed opinion noting that, although turnout would be higher if the question is included with the November Presidential election, many people will primarily be focusing on this controversial election rather than the local issues. In addition, she believes it is important to provide for as much time as possible to educate the public after the summer vacation and this would be accommodated with the stand-alone option.

Mr. McPherson questioned if there was any chance to have the referendum question with the budget vote this May? Ms. Lyons noted that this is not possible due to the tight timeline.

In response to a question by Ms. Fitzgerald, Ms. Lyons noted that a stand-alone referendum would cost \$7,000 - \$10,000 as per the Town Clerk.

Mr. McPherson noted that it is possible that a primary will be held in August as well as April and this is another option to look at as a way to attach the school bond referendum question to another vote.

Ms. Lyons noted that another issue to consider is that there are some restrictions on the timing for use of the voting machines so the stand-alone referendum cannot go beyond October 6th to allow the voting machines to be available for the November 3rd general election.

Mr. Picard commented that he agrees that having the referendum questions with the presidential election would draw more people but he also has concerns about whether all of these voters would take the time to become knowledgeable about the referendum questions.

In response to a question by Ms. Friedman, Ms. Lyons noted that if the school bond referendum questions are included with the presidential election there will need to be a separate ballot since property owners who are taxpayers will be allowed to vote on the referendum questions even if they are not residents of Madison and will be voting in the presidential election at another location.

Ms. Lyons noted that the Board of Selectmen will be discussing the two options and making a decision on how to move forward at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting.

6. Discuss and take action to accept a donation from Neighbor to Neighbor to the Madison Youth and Family Services Department in the amount of \$10,000 to be used for individuals and families in need of emergency financial assistance. On motion made by Ms. Friedman, and seconded by Mr. Picard the Board voted unanimously to accept a donation from Neighbor to Neighbor to the Madison Youth and Family Services Department in the amount of \$10,000 to be used for individuals and families in need of emergency financial assistance.

7. Review FY 2020-2021 Budget Process. The Board of Selectmen is continuing with their meetings with Departments to review budgets. Tomorrow there will be meetings with Youth and Family Services and the Board of Education. Meetings will continue leading up to the March 4th Board of Finance public hearing at 7:00 p.m. at Polson School with presentations by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education. Board of Finance budget workshops will be held on March 10th and 12th with a public hearing to be held on April 29th. The referendum will be held on May 5th and the Board of Finance meeting to set the Mil rate is scheduled for May 6th.

8. Review of Financials. Ms. Nobitz reported that there has been no change in the Fund Balance. Ms. Nobitz reviewed the health insurance account noting that, while the account remains healthy in practice, the Board will need to make some decisions moving forward.

9. Citizen comments. There were no citizen comments.

10. Liaison Reports and Report from First Selectman. Ms. Lyons noted that a public information session will be held on beach pass, fees, operation and a staffing model for the upcoming season. A more general discussion on other forms of Town revenue will also be included to provide additional helpful information

Mr. Kaminsky questioned if there has been any movement on the 10 year strategic plan that will provide valuable information moving forward and direction based on feedback provided. Ms. noted that work on the plan started last year and they do not believe adequate public input was provided on this first step. The Comprehensive Plan of Development is the base of the Strategic Plan so it might be beneficial to look at these together. This should include a discussion on setting up a new strategy to align and have the two plans work together. The Board of Education has done substantial amount of work about the school needs over the next 10 years but this has not been done yet on the Town side so consideration should be given to hiring a consultant to review the Town facilities. Education of the public on the plan will be an important step as the plans move forward.

Ms. Lyons noted that there has been substantial discussion about a proposal for use of the Academy School as a Community Center. There is a need to refine this concept to make it more sustainable. Mr. Murphy suggested that any discussion on the Community Center concept should include the Senior Center.

Ms. Friedman commented that the public wants to receive more information on the Community Center concept so efforts to education the public should continue. She noted that she agrees that a comprehensive study of Town facilities would be beneficial. The study should also look at ways to generate income from facilities to assist with increased costs of managing these facilities. The information provided by a study will help the town and residents understand all of the facilities owned by the Town and how they are utilized.

Ms. Lyons agrees that a complete study of Town facilities is an important piece of information to have before making any decision.

11. Adjourn. On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk