



# Town of Madison, CT

---

## Board of Finance

Draft

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Board of Finance held on June 17, 2020, 7:00 p.m.  
via teleconference - Zoom

Present: Judith Hession, Fillmore McPherson, Justin Murphy and John Picard

Also present: Stacy Nobitz, Finance Director; Scott Erskine, Director, Beach and Recreation; William McMinn, Facilities; Peggy Lyons, First Selectman; Lauren Rhines, Town Services Coordinator/Risk Manager; Colleen Kieswetter, Tax Collector; Graham Curtis, Island Avenue Future Use Committee

Ms. Hession 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 – May 5, 2020. On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 5, 2020 as submitted.
3. Chairman's comments. There were no Chairman's comments.
4. Citizen and Finance member comments. Mr. McPherson requested that Liaison Reports be added to the agenda at Item #14a.

On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to add to the agenda as Item #14a, Liaison Reports.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

5. Citizen comments. Ms. Rhines noted that there were no members of the public to speak during citizen comments.

6. Discuss and take action to approve funding from the planning reserve not to exceed \$10,000 to hire Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc. to conduct a septic feasibility study of the Island Avenue School. A motion was made by Mr. Murphy, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve funding from the planning reserve not to exceed \$10,000 to hire Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc. to conduct a septic feasibility study of the Island Avenue School.

Mr. Curtis was present from the Island Avenue Future Use Committee requesting Board approval for funding from the planning reserve to hire Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc. to conduct a septic feasibility study of the Island Avenue School.

In response to a question by Mr. Murphy, Mr. Curtis noted that if Thomas A. Stevens & Associates determines that the school will not accommodate the 25 proposed units they will make a recommendation for an appropriate number. In response to another question by Mr. Murphy, Ms. Lyons noted that she is not aware of any restrictions on the property that would provide a right-of-first-refusal to the family. She has not had the opportunity to talk to the family but there might be a need to hire a search company and if they cannot resolve any questions they might need to go to court.

Ms. Hession commented that it is good that this contract went through the bidding process and that a Madison Company is being recommended. She questioned if there is a review process conducted to insure that this company did not have any connections with anyone on the Island Avenue Committee. Mr. Graham noted that he is not aware of any conflict with any of the bidders and members of the Committee. Ms. Lyons commented that there is currently no process for a disclosure agreement but this is something the Town might want to consider putting in place.

Mr. McPherson clarified that it is the purpose of the Board of Finance to simply weigh in on whether the expenditure of \$10,000 for this study is a worthwhile expenditure, not to question the bidding selection process. After discussion a vote was taken on the motion made by Mr. Murphy, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve funding from the planning reserve not to exceed \$10,000 to hire Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc. to conduct a septic feasibility study of the Island Avenue School. The motion was approved with Ms. Hession, Mr. McPherson and Mr. Murphy voting in favor and Mr. Picard abstaining.

7. Discuss and take action to approve accepting a Grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Erwin C. Bauer Charitable Trust to be used for Habitat Exploration programs and interpretive. A motion was made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve accepting a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Erwin C. Bauer Charitable Trust to be used for habitat exploration programs and interpretation.

Ms. Hession questioned if this was a grant that was received on an annual basis. Mr. Erskine noted that the Department has received this grant since the Trust was formed. The Department requested and received \$5,000 which is the maximum amount allowed for this grant. The grant received will be utilized to support scholarships to promote agriculture and agriculture projects. The Department will use funds to help support the cost of instructors to supplement programs.

Ms. Lyons noted that some changes were recently made at the Bauer Farm and the trust is now under professional management, which is broadening their reach with their grants. At the same time some adjustments were made to limit the number and amounts of the scholarships provided to make the fund more sustainable. Mr. McPherson noted that the Library recently received a grant from the Bauer Trust.

After discussion the Board voted on the motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve accepting a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Erwin C. Bauer Charitable Trust to be used for habitat exploration programs and interpretation. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Discuss and take action to approve the transfer of property taxes to suspense based on recommendation from the Tax Collector. A motion was made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, to approve the transfer of property taxes totaling \$72,769.23 to suspense as outlined on the Collector's Certification to the Board of Finance Recommending Transfer of Uncollectible Uncollected Property Taxes to the Suspense Tax Book lists dated June 4, 2020

Ms. Kieswetter noted that the action being requested is a formality as a result of a recommendation from the auditor based on a statute recommending the transfer of uncollectable taxes to suspense. This recommendation is made after multiple efforts to collect the taxes. She noted that collection efforts are generally handled in-house but sometimes there is a need to turn to a Marshal. She noted that the taxes listed on suspense are collectable for 15 years.

After discussion the Board voted on the motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, to approve the transfer of property taxes totaling \$72,769.23 to suspense as outlined on the Collector's Certification to the Board of Finance Recommending Transfer of Uncollectible Uncollected Property Taxes to the Suspense Tax Book lists dated June 4, 2020. The motion was approved unanimously.

9. Discuss and take action to approve awarding the 5-year contract for the collection of facilities refuse and recycling for Town and Board of Education facilities and containers to Hometown Waste, LLC (Sweitzer Waste Removal). Ms. Lyons noted that this item should be removed from the agenda as they look into changing it to a one year contract.

10. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Facilities Department in the amount of \$25,000 to replace a 2005 Chevy Equinox. A motion was made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve the request of the Facilities Department, for a special appropriation of \$25,000 for the purchase of a new vehicle to replace the Department's 2005 Chevy Equinox.

Mr. McMinn, Director of Facilities, noted that the car he is currently driving is 15 years old, has 90,000 miles and the engine has failed and would cost \$8,000 to repair. The replacement of this vehicle is in the CIP for the 2021-22 budget and he believes it makes more economic sense to replace this vehicle a year early rather than spend \$8,000 to repair a vehicle this old. The plan is to purchase a small SUV.

Ms. Nobitz noted that the current CIP project budget does not have adequate funds to cover the cost of the purchase of this vehicle in the current year. She recommended that the funds for the purchase this year come from Contingency, which currently has a balance of \$40,000, and an adjustment will be made in the 2021-22 CIP budget.

A motion was made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson to amend the motion to approve the request of the Facilities Department for a special appropriation of \$25,000, from Contingency, for the purchase of a new vehicle to replace the Department's 2005 Chevy Equinox.

After discussion the Board voted on the amended motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, to approve the request of the Facilities Department, for a special appropriation of \$25,000 from Contingency for the purchase of a new vehicle to replace the Department's 2005 Chevy Equinox. The motion was approved unanimously.

11. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation request from Police Services in the amount of \$32,478 to fund Special Duty wages. Ms. Nobitz explained that the Special Duty wages account covers the wages for officers working at a site for a private contractor who reimburses the account so the cost is neutral since any expenditures in this account are more than offset with revenue.

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson the Board voted unanimously to approve the request of the Police Department for a special appropriation of \$32,478 from Fund Balance to fund Special Duty Wages for the balance of the fiscal year.

12. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation in the amount of \$140,000 for COVID-19 related expenses. A motion was made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the request of the Selectmen's Office for a special appropriation of \$140,000 from Fund Balance for COVID-19 related expenses.

Ms. Nobitz noted that she had sent out detail to the Board of the estimated COVID 19 related expenses to June 30 which total \$134,000. The covered items include PPE, wipes and disinfectants, food for the Senior Center, a rental trailer to store food and zoom licenses. They have submitted an application for reimbursement of these items.

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Murphy the Board voted unanimously to approve the request of the Selectmen's Office for a special appropriation of \$140,000 from Fund Balance for COVID-19 related expenses.

13. Discuss and take action to approve Line Item Transfers totaling \$287,824.92. Ms. Nobitz provided a summary of the items included in this Line Item Transfer total. Larger items include a salary adjustment for Animal Control, and wages for additional days for staff at the beaches due to an increased use of the beaches because of the COVID 19 virus situation. Mr. Erskine noted that they plan to begin full staffing of the beaches starting this Saturday and they will also be staffing on Mondays and Tuesdays now. This transfer will cover the increases through June 30. A decision will need to be made for how much coverage to provide for the balance of the summer. There will be some savings for the security costs that will no longer be needed with the staff on-board. Ms. Nobitz noted that the Line Item Transfers also include funds for the OT Replacement line in the Police Department budget due to vacancies in officers. He noted that the Chief has also added shifts for the beach area to show a presence and to help with the overflow from Hammonasset beach. Another item is the Defined Contribution Plan Pension line in the Finance Department for Health Benefits for retirements submitted after the budget was finalized.

On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve Line Item Transfers totaling \$290,724.92.

14. Update on projected year-end fund balance and cost savings for Fiscal year 2019-2020. Ms. Nobitz reviewed financial projects for FY 2019-20. She noted that the unassigned fund balance as of June 30th is projected at \$16,177,136. If the \$673,000 committed for the 20-21 budget and the 10% reserve of \$8,329,549 are taken out of the equation, this leaves a fund balance projection of \$7,174,587. This is her best projection but she will provide another update next month.

Mr. Picard acknowledged the hard work of the Finance Office during this difficult time of the pandemic.

14a. Liaison Reports. Mr. McPherson noted that the Library had received \$117,000 from the PPE Program for personnel related costs and hope to receive additional funds. He also noted that the Library Capital Campaign has raised \$200,000. The Library is

now offering curbside assistance for their services. In addition, they have postponed the book sale until November.

Mr. McPherson noted that the Pension Committee lowered their earnings projections from 7% to 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>%.

It was noted that the Fire Department will be asking for an increase in their annuity which is currently \$5,000 per year after serving for 20 years.

Ms. Lyons noted that she will be requesting that the funding for the Phase I Downtown Center Project be discussed at the July meeting. The request could be in the \$300,000 range.

15. Citizen comments. Mr. Horvath clarified that the tax bills moved to suspense are only for motor vehicle taxes. Many of these bills are for individuals who moved out of state. The primary way these taxes can be collected in the future is if the individual moves back to Connecticut and tries to register the vehicle.

Mr. Horvath noted that he is on the Bauer Trust Committee and he explained that the IRS requires that the trust distribute a minimum of 5% per year. To take care of a deficit the Committee is providing \$50,000 per year for 3 years which will resolve the deficit.

16. Adjourn. On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley  
Clerk