



Town of Madison, CT

Board of Finance

Draft

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Finance held on November 18, 2020, 7:00 p.m. via teleconference - Zoom

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

Also present: Peggy Lyons, First Selectwoman; Stacy Nobitz, Finance Director; Lauren Rhines, Town Services Coordinator/Risk Manager; Samuel DeBurra, Emergency Management Director; Catherine Barden, Assistant Director Community Support; Trent Joseph, Director of Health

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 – October 21, 2020, special meeting. On motion made by Mr. McPherson and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 21, 2020 as corrected.

Corrections:

Page 2, second paragraph, second line should be “Paycheck Protection Program” rather than “Personal Protective Equipment”

Page 3, first paragraph 4th line, should read “85%” rather than “80%”

Page 3, fourth paragraph, 6th line should read “PPP” rather than “PPE”

3. Chairman’s comments. Ms. Fitzgerald recommended that, in response to a request from the Town and Board of Education, the Board of Finance consider providing guidelines on a target for the FY 2021-22 budget that the Board believes is appropriate during these times.

Mr. Kaminsky, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Picard and Mr. McPherson all agreed that providing an expectation based on taxes and what the Town can afford, would be helpful. Ms. Nobitz was asked to provide budget forecasting information on the status of the budget for the current fiscal year to assist in discussions on expectations for next fiscal year.

4. Citizen and Finance member comments. There were no citizen or Finance member comments.

NEW BUSINESS

5. Discuss and take action to approve a donation in the amount of \$10,000 from Madison Neighbor to Neighbor for the discretionary fund: \$5,000 for rental assistance to a specific resident and \$5,000 into the fund for use by the Department to help families in need. Ms. Barden noted that the discretionary fund provides flexibility to help families in need for a variety of assistance. Currently there is a need for assistance with paying rent for two families. Providing these funds can help families remain in their homes in the community during a difficult time. The Board members expressed their gratitude for the support Neighbor to Neighbor provides to residents of Madison in need.

On motion made by Mr. Picard and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to approve a donation totaling \$10,000 from Neighbor to Neighbor for the discretionary fund: \$5,000 for rental assistance to a specific resident and \$5,000 into the fund for use by the Department to help families in need.

6. Discuss and take action to approve accepting a STEAP Grant award in the amount of \$128,205.00 pending Board of Selectmen approval; the grant requires matching funds of \$11,795.00. Ms. Nobitz noted that this STEAP grant will be used for the construction of a timber pedestrian walkway to replace the Bauer Park Walkway. She noted that the grant will offset 90% of the cost of the project. The \$11,795.00 match in Town funds is available.

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve accepting a STEAP Grant award in the amount of \$128,205.00 pending Board of Selectmen approval with a notation that the grant requires matching funds of \$11,795.00.

7. Discuss and take action to approve accepting the Year 1ELC Enhancing Detection Funding grant in the amount of \$27,377.00 to fund work towards the enhanced detection, response, surveillance, and prevention of COVID-19. Mr. Joseph noted that the Year 1ELC Enhancing Detection Funding grant will be used to hire a part time public nurse to assist with contact tracing and vaccination of First Responders.

On motion made by Mr. Murphy, and seconded by Mr. Picard, the Board voted unanimously to approve accepting the Year 1ELC Enhancing Detection Funding Grant in the amount of \$27,377.00 to fund work towards the enhanced detection, response, surveillance, and prevention of COVID -19.

8. Discuss and take action to approve accepting a Historic Document Preservation Program Grant in the amount of \$5,500. Ms. Rhines noted that the Historic Document Preservation Program Grant is received annually to assist with digitizing documents in the Town Clerk's Office.

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to approve accepting a Historic Document Preservation Program Grant in the amount of \$5,500.

9. Discuss and take action to approve a Line Item Transfer request from Beach & Recreation in the amount of \$3,300 to fund increase in cable and internet costs. Ms. Nobitz noted that the increase in cable and internet costs is from a rate increase that went into effect after the budget was approved and also for service to the new maintenance garage.

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Kaminsky, the Board voted unanimously to approve a Line Item Transfer request from Beach & Recreation in the amount of \$4,400 to fund increases in cable and internet costs.

10. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$6,000 to fund a fire inspector for 8 hours a week from January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$6,000 to fund a fire inspector for 8 hours a week from January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

11. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$9,500, to come from the Contingency Account, for satellite internet for the EOC. A motion was made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Picard, to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$9,500, to come from the Contingency Account, for satellite internet for the Emergency Operations Center.

In discussion, Mr. McPherson noted that there had been some discussion about Madison coordinating with the State grid through Clinton to secure wi fi through the State network. He questioned if this idea had been unsuccessful thus necessitating the look toward satellite internet coverage.

Mr. DeBurra noted that the State system will be able to connect dispatchers with the fire station and radios using microwaves, however, the internet cannot run off of this system. The current wire internet system is vulnerable in a storm. During Hurricane Sandy, the internet went out for two days so they are looking at a satellite system as an alternative

that would be less vulnerable and more reliably provide internet service for the Emergency Operations Center. He believes there is an important cost benefit for this service which is so critical in an emergency situation. He noted that Guilford has been utilizing this system and is satisfied.

Mr. McPherson requested that a report on the different levels of capacity to communicate with Public Safety Departments be included for discussion at a future meeting.

First Selectwoman Lyons noted that many of the emergency services systems are web based so it is important that a back-up for the internet is in place.

Mr. Murphy questioned if it would be possible to hold off on this purchase until next year so it can be funded through the budget rather than a special appropriation. Mr. DeBurra stressed the importance of approving this item now to insure coverage in the event that the Town Hall internet system is lost.

After discussion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Picard, to approve a Special Appropriation request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$9,500, to come from the Contingency Account, for satellite internet for the EOC.

12. Discuss and take action to approve a Special Appropriation Request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$45,000, to come from the Contingency Account, for Emergency Management Software for storm data tracking. A motion was made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Picard, to approve a Special Appropriation Request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$45,000, to come from the Contingency Account, for Emergency Management Software for storm data tracking.

In discussion Mr. McPherson noted that he had attended a presentation on the storm data tracking software and noted that this system provides a way to have information on important storm data, such as downed trees and blocked roads, available to public safety crews as well as the public. This system has been used successfully in Guilford.

Mr. DeBurra noted that the system is able to operate fairly independently, once the data is input, to notify the appropriate Departments as well as providing a public interface.

Mr. Joseph noted that the Veoci system also has some application for COVID 19 with the ability to accept self-reporting of positive cases to help with contact tracing.

Mr. Picard commented that he agrees this sounds like a beneficial system but he questioned if the number of applications would be increased over time driving the cost up. Mr. DeBurra noted that the Town would have the ability to control how much the uses of the system are expanded. First Selectwoman Lyons noted that a technology

review is planned to be conducted and a review of this system will be included. She also noted that because of its application for the Covid 19 tracing it might be possible to apply for reimbursement from FEMA or the State.

In response to a question by Ms. Fitzgerald, Mr. DeBurra noted that there is an annual cost for the system.

In response to a question by Mr. Kaminsky Mr. DeBurra recommended that this system be purchased this year by special appropriation rather than waiting for the budget next fiscal year since there have already been a number of storms this year and having this system would have assisted in speeding up the communication process.

After discussion the Board voted unanimously to approve the motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Picard, to approve a Special Appropriation Request from the Emergency Management Department in the amount of \$45,000, to come from the Contingency Account, for Emergency Management Software for storm data tracking.

13. Discuss and take action to approve Special Appropriation request as follows for expenses incurred due to Tropical Storm Isaias:

- From the Risk Manager in the amount of \$15,250.00 to fund additional costs for Storm Isaias tree removal and clean-up
- From the Risk Manager in the amount of \$5,668.00 to fund additional costs for Storm Isaias tree removal and clean-up
- From the Social Services Department in the amount of \$525.00 to fund lodging for residents with qualified need, due to the storm.
- From the Police Department in the amount of \$7,943.19 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up.
- From the Beach and Recreation Department in the amount of \$634.50 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up
- From the Public Works Department in the amount of \$12,880.85 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up

Ms. Nobitz requested that the Board approve bullets 1 – 6 as a separate action and then act on the final request from the Public Works Department as a separate action

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve Special Appropriations requests, to come from fund balance, as follows for expenses incurred due to Tropical Storm Isaias:

- From the Risk Manager in the amount of \$15,250.00 to fund additional costs for Storm Isaias tree removal and clean-up

- From the Risk Manager in the amount of \$5,668.00 to fund additional costs for Storm Isaias tree removal and clean-up
- From the Social Services Department in the amount of \$525.00 to fund lodging for residents with qualified need, due to the storm.
- From the Police Department in the amount of \$7,943.19 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up.
- From the Beach and Recreation Department in the amount of \$634.50 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up
- From the Public “Works Department in the amount of \$12,880.85 to fund overtime wages due to storm clean-up

On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to approve a Special Appropriation request, to come from fund balance, as follows for expenses incurred due to Tropical Storm Isaias:

- From the Public Works Department in the amount of \$35,000 to fund brush removal at the Bulky Waste site due to debris removed during storm clean-up: with a notation that this action will satisfy all requirement for a Town Meeting under State of Connecticut Executive Order 71.

14. Discuss and take action to approve the FY 2021-2022 Budget Workshop Schedule. On motion made by Mr. Picard, and seconded by Mr. McPherson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the FY 2021-22 Budget Workshop Schedule.

15. Discuss and take action to approve the 2021 Board of Finance Meeting Schedule. Ms. Nobitz noted that there will be a special meeting on May 19, 2021 to set the mill rate and, the way the schedule is currently set, the regular meeting would be scheduled for 7:00 p.m. that evening. She asked if the Board would prefer to amend the schedule to hold the special meeting at 8:30 a.m. and the regular meeting at 9:00 a.m. on that date. The Board members agreed that this change should be made.

On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Board voted unanimously to approve the 2021 Board of Finance Meeting Schedule with the time of the May 19, 2021 regular meeting changed from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m.

16. Review FY 2021-2022 CIP Committee process and Budget process. Ms. Nobitz noted that a public hearing will be held on the CIP projects proposed by the Board of Selectmen and at this meeting they will present the schedule going forward and encourage the public to become involved in the process.

17. Review Financials. Ms. Nobitz highlighted the following items in the Financial Reports:

- The Health Insurance Reserve Fund is becoming very healthy with the balance currently above the goal of 25% above expected claims, due to lower than anticipated claims. She suggested that a discussion on the current build-up of this account be held during the budget process.
- As follow-up to the October Board of Finance meeting, the Library has opted to reduce their remaining payments by \$150,000 to pay back the allocation made by the Town of quarter four expenses related to the new Library building start-up. They have also agreed to provide \$6,000 they received in savings for refinancing the house behind the Library.

18. Liaison Reports and Report from First Selectman. Mr. McPherson noted that two vendors who had submitted proposals for the solar panels at Polson School were brought in for a presentation. The proposals indicate potential savings from the use of solar.

Mr. McPherson also noted that the Library budget is on track but they still need to raise additional funds for the capital fund raising effort.

Mr. McPherson further noted that the pensions are healthy with good reserves and an actuarial report will be conducted.

First Selectwoman Lyons highlighted the following items:

- Madison had submitted \$200,000 in expenses to FEMA for reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenses. The Town received a quick response but FEMA indicated that \$70,000 was approved but they are not currently accepting a number of the items totaling \$130,000 so the Town had requested a review. She also noted that the State received \$40 million from the CARES Act. The deadline for applying for funds under the CARES Act was the end of October so a decision was made to withdraw the request for the \$130,000 balance from FEMA and request reimbursement for these expenses from the State. They are pretty confident that the \$130,000 will be approved by the State. After June 30th any remaining CARES Act funds will be distributed to towns through block grants so it is possible that Madison will receive additional funds for COVID-19 related expenses.
- First Selectwoman Lyons advised that the Beach and Recreation Department will be submitting a special appropriation request for approximately \$16,000 for the additional cost of the contract with Sweitzer for trash removal in the downtown area. There was only one bid and it was higher than anticipated.
- In addition, the Beach and Recreation might be requesting a special appropriation for the additional staffing needed for this budget year due the pandemic. The Director will work to try to absorb these added expenses with line item transfers if possible.
- First Selectwoman Lyons noted that she has issued a mandatory freeze on overtime unless she grants approval. In response to a question by Ms. Fitzgerald, Ms. Lyons

noted that she has not implemented a general spending freeze. She agreed to review Department budgets with Ms. Nobitz to determine if a freeze is needed at this time. Ms. Fitzgerald expressed concern that the Town budget for next year will be starting out behind and next year could be a tough budget year so she suggested that consideration be given to a freeze in an effort to help next year.

- First Selectwoman Lyons noted that the RFP for the Ambulance Study came back and two bids were received. The prices are in the \$40,000 range so we will be looking for some modifications. She requested that a member of the Board of Finance serve as part of the RFP Committee. Mr. Murphy will serve as the Board of Finance representative on the RFP Committee.

19. Citizen comments. Mr. Horvath noted that there have been a substantial number of special appropriation requests this year. This has brought up the issue of use of contingency versus fund balance for special appropriations. Madison has a low threshold for when a special appropriation request needs to go to Town Meeting and often there is not a quorum. He noted that Guilford had made an adjustment to their charter and set a percentage of budget rather than a specific amount as their threshold for Town Meeting approval. He noted that Madison will be having a Charter Review Committee appointed in the near future and he suggested that the special appropriation issue be addressed. He also noted that the Town used to carry 1% of the approved budget in Contingency and this provided adequate funds for many special requests so there was not the need to continually go to Town Meeting.

20. Adjourn. On motion made by Mr. McPherson, and seconded by Mr. Picard, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Terry Holland-Buckley
Clerk