



BOARD OF FINANCE

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street
Bethel, Connecticut 06801 Telephone: (203) 794-8501

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, February 21, 2012
6:30 p.m.

CJH Municipal Center - Meeting Room "A"

RECEIVED

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TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

PRESENT: William Kingston, Chairman, J. Philip Gallagher, Patricia Smithwick, Eileen Freebairn, Claudia Stephan, Gary Regan and Timothy Draper. Also in attendance were Comptroller Robert Kozlowski, First Selectman Knickerbocker, Selectman Straiton, Selectman Szatkowski, Town Counsel Martin J. Lawlor and Treasurer Thomas O'Leary.

William Kingston called the Special Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

1) Introduction - Dr. Kevin J. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Lawrence Craybas, Chairman of the Board of Education, Dr. Kevin Smith, Superintendent of Schools and Theresa Yonsky, Director of Fiscal Services for the Board of Education, were present at tonight's meeting. Dr. Smith began as Superintendent of Bethel schools on February 1st. All welcomed him aboard.

2) Consideration of proposal for establishing Board of Education Unexpended Funds Account - Connecticut General Statute's 10-248a

Recent legislation provides the ability for Boards of Education to have an account which can "hold" unexpended funds from a fiscal year. These typically would be funds budgeted but not spent in any given year for a variety of reasons. The amount cannot exceed one per cent of the total budgeted appropriation for education. This account would have to be established by the Board of Finance.

If this fund were created, any Board of Education funds budgeted but not used would go into this account rather than back to the fund balance. Town Counsel Martin J. Lawlor had prepared a proposed resolution for the creation of this account by the Board of Finance. It contains provisions for the establishment, timeframes, use of the funds, monitoring, etc.

Board of Finance members wanted time to review the proposed resolution.

After discussion, J. Philip Gallagher made a motion, which was seconded by Timothy Draper, to table this topic. Vote, all in favor, motion unanimously approved.

3) **FY 2012-2013 BUDGET PRESENTATIONS BY DEPARTMENT – 7:00 p.m.**

First Selectman Knickerbocker advised that he has, again this year, requested department heads to prepare budgets that reflect the needs of the departments and that these requests, are not necessarily the requests that will be presented by the Board of Selectmen when they complete their budget deliberations.

130 Town Clerk Requested FY 2012-2013 \$218,378

Lisa Bergh, Town Clerk, presented her department budget request. She noted an increase to election expense due to increased costs for legal notices and added expenses associated with elections. They are continuing on with their quest to scan and re-index all records, made possible by a grant. She noted a reduction in the various revenues collected by her office.

140 Assessor Requested FY 2012-2013 \$195,738

Ann Marie Heering, Assessor, presented her department budget request. She noted that again this year, she was requesting a full-time employee, advising that they can't complete the work without the added help. She advised that she is trying a cost saving measure which is to send out a post card to personal property accounts with a link to the forms necessary for them to complete and return to the Assessor's office. This will save postage and printing costs.

150 Tax Collector Requested FY 2012-2013 \$185,144

Ann Scacco, Tax Collector, presented her department budget request. She noted that tax collections are strong; over 99%, she held a successful tax sale which resulted in significant back tax revenue, two of her staff are paid through the utility department budget. She did note an increase to postage due to the rise in postage rates. She also reported \$10,000 in delinquent motor vehicle fee revenue that offsets the cost of the motor vehicle reporting. She urged the continued funding of dues and education as there are continuing changes to state statutes and laws that her office must abide by.

180 Building Department Requested FY 2012-2013 \$209,933

Gary Boughton, Building Official, presented his department budget request. He noted that he would like to initiate a system of scanning documents as they are being inundated with paper files. These files are shared by many of the town regulatory departments. Presently, they have over 30 file cabinets and unless the document scanning is initiated, will require more.

200 Social Services Requested FY 2012-2013 \$60,267

Kathleen Gillen, Social Services Director, presented her department budget request. She noted a shift in funds from the office expense to the emergency fund. She requested funds be restored to the dues and education account as there is not enough funding to allow for attendance at many important seminars; laws and services keep changing that she must be aware of.

330 Registrar of Voters Requested FY 2012-2013 \$102,386

Mary O'Leary and Mary Legnard, Registrar of Voters, presented the department budget request. They noted an increase to their account, one of the contributors to this increase is the cost of tabulator maintenance at \$200 per tabulator. They have budgeted for two primaries, a presidential election and budget referendum.

405 Intra Govt. Subsidies (VNA) Requested FY 2012-2013 \$377,519

Judith Malin, Director of the Visiting Nurse Association, presented the VNA request; she noted that the VNA provide many services to residents, including in-home patient care, screening clinics, flu clinics, immunizations, etc. They also work with the Health Department on an as needed basis and are part of the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

Also discussed in the 405 Intra Government Subsidies account is the cost for HART Bus and SweetHart Bus service. The request has increased although the appropriation had been reduced last budget year. The Senior Center Director will be asked to provide usage information on the SweetHart bus.

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski advised that he has included the same funding request for the Paramedic Intercept. Currently there is a shortfall in this account. At the present time, a RFP is being prepared, which hopefully will reduce the cost.

340 Boards & Commissions Requested FY 2012-2013 \$113,350

Hilda DeLucia, Teen Center Director along with Youth Commission members, Robert Korin and Lisa Bergh, presented the budget request for the Teen Center. They noted that several years ago, the budget was reduced, and they are asking for the funding to be restored. The Teen Center Director is a sub-contractor and provides her own insurances, payroll, etc., these costs continue to increase. The participation, number of programs offered by the Teen Center and the activity of the center continue to grow.

100 Selectman Requested FY 2012-2013 \$193,103

First Selectman Knickerbocker presented the budget request and noted that there was no significant change to this request.

110 Treasurer Requested FY 2012-2013 \$2,593

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted an increase to the postage account to reflect the increase in postage rates.

120 Finance Requested FY 2012-2013 \$372,914

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted several increases to the Finance Department budget request for postage, dues and education and the cost of the town audit.

160 Legal Requested FY 2012-2013 \$212,680

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted no change to this account. Legal fees associated with work for the Public Utilities Commission does not come from this account.

170 Probate Requested FY 2012-2013 \$5,711

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted that there was no change to this request. Bethel shares the Probate Court with Redding, Newtown and Ridgefield. Each town pays a proportional share of the cost to run the court.

190 Data Processing Requested FY 2012-2013 \$271,468

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted that this account has increased; five different accounts have IT related items which were transferred from their accounts to this account. J. Philip

Gallagher offered that he did not recall approving an employee with benefits. First Selectman Knickerbocker advised that this position is substantially less than what was paid out for the consultant and was included in last year's budget.

210 Town Insurance Requested FY 2012-2013 \$925,990

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted a 20% increase to the workers' compensation premium based on our recent history and that our broker is currently looking at other carriers to see about a better rate. There is an 8% increase in the liability and property.

390 Employee Benefits Requested FY 2012-2013 \$5,350,697

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski presented the budget request. He noted an increase to the FICA account as a result of increased wages for the current year. The actuarial recommended contribution to the town and police pension moves us closer to filling the gaps. Town pension is approximately 59.11% and the Police 82-83%. LOSAP is still being investigated.

400 Non-Government Subsidies Requested FY 2012-2013 \$28,838

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski advised that he included a funding request from only the organizations that sent in a request.

410 Utilities & other Charges Requested FY 2012-2013 \$2,666,440

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski advised that funding is included in the capital plan for conversion to gas boilers at the schools, it was noted that once converted, we would see savings right away.

420 Misc. Charges & Transfers Requested FY 2012-2013 \$436,069

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski presented the budget request. Discussion took place on seeking alternatives to the cost for publication of legal notices. Comptroller Robert Kozlowski noted that funds are included in wage contingency for potential additional help at the Library when the addition is completed.

440 Debt Service **Requested FY 2012-2013** **\$4,324,436**

Comptroller Robert Kozlowski presented the budget request. He noted that the town has \$33,090,000 in outstanding general fund supported long term debt and \$5,100,000 in short term bond anticipation notes.

4) Consideration of recommendation from Board of Selectmen to use accumulated interest funds from the Stony Hill Sewer Project for sewer project construction costs.

The Board of Selectmen had recommended the accumulated interest funds from the Stony Hill Sewer Project of approximately \$751,371.32 (earned between July 2006 and December 31, 2011) be used for sewer project construction costs. This would allow for the completion of work for portions of Phase 2 and 3 and, when completed, would allow for the assessments to be levied. The assessments for these phases are necessary to pay for the costs associated with the bonding. The resolution for the original bond amount provides that the interest earned would reduce the bonding debt; the Board of Selectmen request (which requires Special Town Meeting approval) would allow for the use of these funds for construction purposes rather than reducing the bonding debt.

Gary Regan made a motion, which was seconded by Timothy Draper, to concur with the Board of Selectmen's recommendation to utilize the interest earnings for construction costs associated with the Stony Hill Sewer Project. Vote, all in favor, motion unanimously approved. A Special Town Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 6, 2012.

5) Consideration of disposition of "old" town hall

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the "old" town hall. The Board of Selectmen will be holding a Public Hearing on February 29th. Town Counsel Martin J. Lawlor has ruled that the demolition of the old town hall does not require Board of Finance nor Town Meeting approval. If funding was required for demolition, then the Board of Finance would be involved. First Selectman Knickerbocker has advised that there is a grant which would cover the cost of demolition and parking lot construction.

Timothy Draper believes that there is adequate parking to accommodate a housing unit or similar project; Town Counsel Martin J. Lawlor disagrees. J. Philip Gallagher, William Kingston and Timothy Draper all offered that they would like to see the building sold and put on the tax rolls. William Kingston believes that the building should be put on the market, in "as-is" condition for several months.

First Selectman Knickerbocker offered that the sewer allocation to the old town hall building could be put into a sewer bank to allow for development in another area. He stressed that the old town hall property has no parking, P&Z supports the intent to demolish the building based on its lack of parking, and the grant would provide the funding to raze the building. He pointed out the similarities to the Masonic Temple and building at Chestnut/Greenwood, these properties have been on the market for a considerable time and have not sold since there is no parking associated with them.

J. Philip Gallagher made a motion, which was seconded by Timothy Draper, "that the Board of Finance goes on record as stating that the spirit and letter of the Charter of the Town of Bethel requires that the Bethel Board of Selectmen send to the Bethel Board of Finance, for their review and recommendation, the Selectmen's proposed resolution to demolish the building that served as Bethel's Town Hall from 1961 to 1996". Voting in favor of the motion: J. Philip Gallagher, William Kingston, Gary Regan and Timothy Draper. Voting against the motion: Patricia Smithwick, Eileen Freebairn and Claudia Stephan. Motion passed. It was clarified that that the motion is only an advisory motion.

As there was no further business on tonight's agenda, J. Philip Gallagher made a motion, which was seconded by Timothy Draper, to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m. Vote, all in favor, motion unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary