



BOARD OF FINANCE

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

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

7:00 p.m.

CJH Municipal Center – Meeting Room “A”

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TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

PRESENT: William Kingston, Chairman, Bruce Cornwell, Patricia Smithwick, Eileen Freebairn, Claudia Stephan, Gary Regan and Timothy Draper. Also in attendance were First Selectman Knickerbocker and Selectman Szatkowski, Comptroller Robert Kozlowski and Assistant Comptroller Brad Heering.

William Kingston called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Joint Session with the Board of Selectmen to discuss town finances and explore opportunities to reduce expenditures and/or generate savings for the Town of Bethel.

First Selectman Knickerbocker and Comptroller Robert Kozlowski presented information on a variety of cost saving measures that have already taken place. This includes items such as the conversion from fuel oil to gas at municipal and school buildings; they noted a significant savings to the IT department with the hiring of a full time employee versus consultant services. Rates have been increased for water / sewer users which have enabled the debt owed to the town by the utility department to be reduced – currently the sewer debt is paid and the water debt has been reduced as well. Noted that the refunding of debt realized savings of approximately \$625,000 and that significant savings are expected with the upcoming Ameresco (energy) contract. He noted that both liability/worker's compensation insurance and health benefits continues to be a challenge for all...collective bargaining negotiations are ongoing to see about switching to a HSA accounts.

A general roundtable type discussion took place. Many different ideas and suggestions were discussed, some include, for example, Selectman Szatkowski questioned the need for departments to have town vehicles, suggesting instead that they use their own vehicles and receive a mileage reimbursement. The concern has always been that the town insurance does not cover use of a personal vehicle for town business. Timothy Draper suggested the option of using older police vehicles instead of leases in lieu of the relatively low trade in value.

Union negotiations have moved towards new employees being in a defined contribution retirement savings plan versus the standard defined benefit plan. It was noted that this is a savings that would be seen in the future, not necessarily now. Also discussed was the elimination of longevity for new employees.

William Kingston questioned the Board of Education about several savings ideas, which when discussed, were either not possible or already considered.

Question was raised as to whether there is a benefit to having an on staff Fleet Maintenance Department versus contracting this service out. First Selectman Knickerbocker used an example, that during a recent snow storm, one of the plow trucks, during a middle of the night snow plowing, had a problem with the transmission and one of the mechanics was able to get out and address the problem immediately; we might not have that kind of service with a repair shop.

It was suggested that perhaps savings could be found by combining purchases for the fire departments for equipment. Engine purchases tend to be more specific in their specifications than generic so it is generally better to purchase separately but they will look at it.

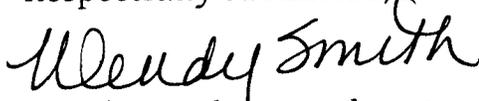
A new software program being considered will essentially link the land use agencies, building, health, etc. departments; it is estimated that this will save time for residents seeking those types of services. Consideration should be given to fees associated with these types of service should be looked at so that the "user" pays the full cost rather than increasing department costs.

A review of fees associated with programs, like Parks & Recreation should be reviewed and it was suggested that perhaps, these programs, instead of being self sustaining, can be profit making to offset other costs associated with the particular department.

It was agreed by all that this was a good first meeting discussion.

As there was no further business on tonight's agenda, Patricia Smithwick made a motion, which was seconded by Eileen Freebairn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Vote, all in favor, motion unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary