

Board of Finance Special Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2021 at 6:00 pm
(via remote conference)

Call to order: Board of Finance Chair Steve Ezzes called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. Also in attendance were Board of Finance members Jeff Farr, Dick Bochinski, Rone Baldwin, Michael Imber, Jamie Zeppernick, as well as Finance Director Rick Darling, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Fire Chief John Pokorny, EMS Chief Michael Schlechter, Dispatch Director Larry Roberts.

Mr. Ezzes welcomed new Board of Finance members Michael Imber and Jamie Zeppernick.

- 1. Discussion/decision regarding a supplemental appropriation request in the amount of \$5,000 to the Assessor's office to perform real estate inspections. Denise Hames, Assessor/Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator:** Mr. Ezzes introduced Town Administrator, Jonathan Luiz to explain the supplemental ask. Mr. Bochinski said that this had already been approved by the Board of Selectmen and does not need to be brought before the Board of Finance. Mr. Luiz explained that this was the second supplemental request for the Assessor's department. The first request has already been approved by the Board of Selectmen and did not require Board of Finance approval. Mr. Imber asked several data-driven questions. Mr. Luiz answered these. There was much discussion on the subject of the consultant with their being a request for further details. Mr. Imber moved to table the request a supplemental appropriation request in the amount of \$5,000 to the Assessor's office to perform real estate inspections. Mr. Baldwin seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.
- 2. Discussion regarding the Tax Collector's collection report as of 8/31/21. Rick Darling, Finance Director:** Mr. Darling explained that the first couple of months have been very positive. Actual initial tax levy was \$126 thousand favorable due to the fact that abatement programs came in less than budgeted and we were very conservative when budgeting the grand list. Collections this year compared to last year are up by about \$2 million.
- 3. Discussion/decision regarding a request to utilize \$38,250 from the Communications Tower fund to hire a consultant for the Land Mobile Radio project. Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator:** Mr. Ezzes introduced Dispatch Director Larry Roberts, Fire Chief John Pokorny, and EMS Chief Michael Schlechter. Mr. Luiz gave a brief overview of the Land Mobile Radio Project. Mr. Roberts went into further details on the radio communications systems, explaining that these systems are antiquated and need to be replaced. He said that hiring a consultant will help with the scope of what is needed. Mr. Roberts explained the details of the selection process of New England Radio as well as the timeframe for the work. He estimates that within 5 months we would have a final number for the cost of this project. Mr. Imber offered his compliments to Mr. Roberts and Mr. Luiz for their hard work in the selection process. Mr. Bochinski moved to approve the utilization of \$38,250 from the Communications Tower fund to hire a consultant for the Land Mobile Radio project. Mr. Farr seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.
- 4. Discussion regarding the eligible use of Fromson-Strassler sale proceeds. Rick Darling, Finance Director; Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator:** Mr. Ezzes explained that there was a machine ballot vote this Saturday on September 18th, 2021 on whether or not to sell the Fromson-Strassler property. He introduced Mr. Darling to go

into further detail. Mr. Darling went over the various options of how the Town could spend the potential sales proceeds within the limits of the law. Mr. Baldwin reiterated a point from the last meeting during which the Board discussed offsetting debt service in the FY 22-23 budget. Mr. Bochinski asked about a closing timeline. Mr. Luiz said that he expects the sale to be fully transacted before January 1, 2022. Mr. Ezzes asked if the voters approve the sale of the property, then who would decide how to spend the money. Mr. Luiz mentioned that it would most likely be a decision for both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance, and that the decision would be a part of the budgeting process for the next fiscal year. Mr. Darling said the sale proceeds would be escrowed and would need to be spent within two years.

5. Discussion regarding the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator, Rick Darling, Finance Director. Mr. Luiz said that he and Finance Director Rick Darling had been following the guidelines as to when and how to use the funding coming to various towns, with the final ruling by the U.S. Treasury expected shortly. In the meantime the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen have received summaries of how to properly utilize the funds. Mr. Darling explained that Weston was allotted just over \$3 Million and that they had already received the first tranche of \$1.5million before the end of the fiscal year, it has been accounted for in a differed revenue account per the auditors recommendations because the funds have not yet been utilized. The second tranche will be received next June. Mr. Luiz said he has been advised that the monies should be handled in the same manner as a supplemental appropriation if they are to be appropriated outside of the normal budget process. Mr. Baldwin commented on the restrictiveness of how the dollars could be spent under the ARPA program. Mr. Darling said he estimates that the ARPA lost revenue provision may allow the Town to claim lost revenue of approximately \$3 Million. He mentioned that we have until Dec 2024 to incur expenses and until Dec 2026 to spend the funds.

6. Approval of minutes from the July 8th and July 28th special meetings: Mr. Farr asked for clarification on the supplemental appropriations – would like to amend the minutes to show which budget year each supplemental appropriation was attributed to. Mr. Farr moved to approve the minutes of July 8 with an amendment indicating that the special appropriations of \$95,000 for FOC Project and \$259,703 for police body cameras were against Fiscal year 2020-21 while the part time document coordinator increase of \$10,000 was against fiscal year 2021-22. Mr. Bochinski seconded this. The motion carried 4 -2 with Mr. Imber and Mr. Zeppernick abstaining. Mr. Bochinski moved to approve the minutes from July 28th 2021 meeting as submitted. Mr. Farr seconded this. The motion carried 4 -2 with Mr. Imber and Mr. Zeppernick abstaining.

Mr. Farr addressed voting against the additional supplemental appropriation for road work. He was dismayed that we were not following the plan laid out by the consultant and felt that just focusing on milling and paving will not result in the town's overall road conditions improving soon enough. He also felt that the 10% reserve was not sufficient for the scope of the project. He expressed his support for repairing the roads in the town but would like to see it done in a way that makes engineering and cost sense.

7. Adjourn: Mr. Bochinski moved to adjourn at 7.29pm. Mr. Farr seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Sara Beer, Executive Administrative Assistant.