

Board of Finance Special Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2022 6 PM

Meeting held remotely due to Covid 19

1. **Call to order:** Board of Finance Chair Rone Baldwin called the meeting to order at 6pm, also in attendance were Board of Finance members Steve Ezzes, Amy Gare, Michael Imber, Dick Bochinski, Jeff Farr and Jamie Zeppernick, First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Finance Director, Rick Darling, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Weston Public Schools Finance Director Phil Cross, Facilities Manager Michael Del Mastro, Town of Weston Department Heads.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Discussion/ Decision concerning the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget for FY 2022-2023:** First Selectwoman Nestor provided highlights from the proposed Board of Selectmen Budget to the Board of Finance via Powerpoint presentation. The Board of Finance had questions on the following:
 - Mr. Baldwin asked about the amount of the revenue reduction to Weston if the Governor's car tax relief proposal actually becomes reality. Mr. Darling responded saying it is a little over a half a million dollars.
 - Summary Section: Mr. Farr asked a question about tax collections and the amount assumed for uncollected taxes. There was a discussion around the next year's forecast. Mr. Darling said he estimates the current year projection at 98.3%.
 - Administration and Finance: Ms. Gare asked about the need for hiring a records coordinator. First Selectwoman Nestor provided background information for this position, also mentioning that the FOIA requests they have received are very voluminous.
 - General Administration: Mr. Baldwin asked about the gas and heating costs and whether this had been locked in. Mr. Luiz mentioned a consortium that we participate in, and they are not recommending locking in the fuel prices now based on the volatility of the market with the war in Ukraine. Mr. Imber asked about the annual pension budget amount having gone up by 34% over the past couple of years. Mr. Darling answered this. Mr. Imber asked questions about the OPEB Trust. Mr. Darling answered these questions.
 - Assessor: Mr. Farr asked about the contractual services item. Mr. Luiz answered that this was for field inspections by outside entities.
 - Tax Collector: Mr. Baldwin asked about the staff being part time employees. Mr. Luiz responded saying that while they are part time they are part of the Town Hall Union and both receive benefits.
 - Land Use Department: There was a question on the mandatory new state training. Mr. Luiz said it was training to make sure they understand the law and their obligations under that. Land Use Director, Tracy Kulikowski provided further details saying that this was to ensure the team understood the current land use laws and obligations.
 - Police Services: Mr. Farr asked why there was an increase in overtime. Police Chief Ed Henion went into detail saying that there is a minimum of two officers required per shift, most of the overtime hours are due to this requirement in conjunction with the number of officers out. The Chief highlighted a number of measures they had implemented to help track and predict the overtime trends. Mr. Zeppernick asked what the expectations were for contractual services increases going

forward. Mr. Luiz responded saying that the majority of the new costs are related to body camera data storage and management. Mr. Imber asked about law firm selection and contracting for policy work. Chief Henion said that this was reviewed by the Police Commission and that this was the only firm in Connecticut working on Police policy and procedures

- WVFD: Mr. Imber asked about the jump in contractual services, Mr. Luiz answered saying that the Firehouse software vendor had raised its fees significantly. He is exploring options for consortium purchasing.
- Communications: Mr. Farr asked about the contractual services increase due to copier and scanner costs. Mr. Luiz said that a new multifunction device was purchased and the new costs associated with it are for an IT company to maintain it. Dispatch Director, Larry Roberts confirmed this. Mr. Baldwin asked about one of the cell carriers not renewing their contracts – Mr. Luiz went into detail on the different towers and discussions on a potential replacement carrier. Mr. Ezzes asked about dispatch salaries – Mr. Luiz mentioned that Mr. Roberts was hired late in the budget season, and that Mr. Roberts was hired at a slightly lower salary but that never got reflected in the final budget document.
- Public Works: Mr. Imber asked about the increase in overtime amount requested. Mr. Darling mentioned that this was due to major storm overtime; Mr. Imber asked about general drainage costs. Mr. Luiz went into detail on the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems or MS4 program . Mr. Farr asked about the request for an additional maintainer – Mr. Luiz said that this was to fill a position and get back to full staffing.
- Tree warden: Mr. Farr asked why the proposed budget request is lower than what the Tree Warden suggested and how we would manage without the requested funding. Mr. Luiz answered saying that we are doing a lower number of days of tree work that what was proposed. Mr. Farr asked if we can have the DPW department dedicate 55 days to tree work. Mr. Luiz responded saying that they have had success having one of the two DPW crews focused on trees this year.
- Weston Water Utility: Mr. Imber asked if it was in good repair or if there was anything to be aware of in the near future. Mr. Luiz said that there are repairs that will need to be made due to the age of the system and a future refurbishment. Mr. Luiz referenced a capital project listed in the proposed capital budget. Mr. Imber asked about testing of the water. Mr. Luiz mentioned that we would be doing advanced testing in the near future.
- Solid Waste Disposal: Mr. Farr asked if there would be an increase in the sticker price. Mr. Luiz said there was no increase planned for next year.
- Social Services: Ms. Gare asked about the additional part time position and whether the social services department will be assuming the Youth Director role. Social Services Director Alison Lisbon answered saying that there was an increase in social services needs across the board. Ms. Gare asked questions about not replacing the Youth Services Director. First Selectwoman Nestor said they had worked closely with the previous Youth Services Director to reallocate resources. Mr. Farr asked about the Youth Services fund balance. Mr. Luiz mentioned that they are comfortable with where it is given the recent surge in program registrations.
- Public Library: Mr. Imber asked about the projected salary expenses coming in higher this fiscal year than what was budgeted. Mr. Luiz answered saying the driver is a vacation and sick time payout for

an employee who recently retired. Mr. Imber asked about the proposed increase in salaries. Mr. Luiz said the proposal is to increase hours for a number of part timers that do not get benefits.

- Middle School Pool: Mr. Baldwin asked about the frequency of the painting of the pool. Parks and Recreation Director, Dave Ungar explained that the painting cycle is normally every four years, but the caulking and grouting of the race lines normally falls every 10 years or and they are coinciding this year. Mr. Imber asked about the rise in the revenue offset. Mr. Luiz responded saying that the program registrations are very robust right now and we take from that fund to offset some of the operating costs of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Debt Service: Mr. Farr asked about the decision on how to use the proceeds from the Fromson Strassler property sale. Mr. Luiz said that there was no vote taken in the past on this issue, but that the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance previously discussed the concept of using the sale proceeds towards debt service.
- Capital Budget BOE: Mr. Michael DelMastro went over priority items for the Board of Education Capital Budget. Mr. Zeppernick asked about the resurfacing to the tennis courts, Mr. Del Mastro said that this had not been done in a few years, and that it was due to be done. Mr. Baldwin asked about the e-wing project and the size of this project. Mr. Del Mastro answered saying there is nothing currently in capital for the project. They are looking to start the project with materials they already have. Mr. Baldwin asked about ventilator charges for North House. Mr. DelMastro replied. Mr. Farr asked about the school lockers and if they could be repurposed if necessary. Mr. Del Mastro said yes, these can be repurposed and later moved. Mr. Zeppernick had questions on the Turf Replacement fund. First Selectwoman Nestor provided background into this, saying that each year funds are set aside to fund the eventual replacement. Mr. Ungar went into further detail.
- Capital Budget Town: Mr. Luiz went over the items on the Town Capital Budget request. Mr. Baldwin asked for clarification on the Senior Center updates. Mr. Luiz went into detail on the bathrooms and a new hybrid vehicle replacement. Mr. Baldwin asked why the Police vehicle was not included in the Police vehicle fund; Mr. Luiz said that there was not enough money in the fund for this purchase, so Capital was selected as the funding mechanism. Mr. Baldwin asked about the current pricing for the roads, Mr. Luiz answered saying that pricing is volatile at the moment due to the cost of oil. Mr. Farr asked about log disposal. Mr. Luiz and DPW Director John Conte provided details. Mr. Baldwin asked about the increase in pricing on the bridge work. Mr. Luiz responded that the scope of the work has changed. Mr. Baldwin asked about the project management line item. Mr. Luiz said this would be through a consulting firm and not by an employee.

4. Adjourn: Mr. Imber moved to adjourn at 9.04pm. Ms. Gare seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Sara Beer, Executive Administrative Assistant