

Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
Meeting held March 31, 2022 at 6 PM
Meeting held remotely due to Covid 19

Call to order: Mr. Baldwin called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Also in attendance were Board of Finance members Steve Ezzes, Michael Imber, Dick Bochinski, Jeff Farr, Amy Gare and Jamie Zeppernick. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Finance Director Rick Darling, WPS Finance Director Phil Cross, WPS Superintendent Lisa Wolak, Board of Education Chair Tony Pesco, First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Robert Lessard from Hooker and Holcombe, and Weston Town Department Heads.

1. **Discussion regarding the Board of Education's budget mitigation proposals:** Mr. Baldwin introduced Mr. Phil Cross to discuss the mitigation proposal which he summarized for the Board. Mr. Baldwin moved to establish a non-lapsing account in the amount of \$140,031 using the projected Board of Education budget surplus to the end of the year and that account being used solely to satisfy ERIP (Early Retirement Incentive Program) obligations in fiscal year 2022-23 with any remaining balance to be returned to the overall Weston Unassigned Fund Balance by end of Fiscal year '23. Mr. Bochinski seconded this. There was further discussion on this topic. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Discussion regarding Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) including the status of the OPEB trust, 7/1/21 valuation and potential funding from the trust to cover benefits:** Mr. Imber presented a scenario analysis of the OPEB Trust, presenting the Board of Finance with three options for potential funding utilization from the trust to offset Town and Board of Education benefit expenses. Mr. Baldwin introduced Actuary Rob Lessard from Hooker and Holcombe to answer questions. Mr. Ezzes expressed his concern about using these funds and explained the risks involved. Further discussion on using trust assets to pay FY 22 retiree medical expenses took place. Ms. Gare asked Mr. Lessard for his opinion. Mr. Lessard concurred that the fund could be used to pay the FY 22 retiree medical benefits. There was a discussion around the pros and cons of this. Mr. Imber moved to reduce the recommended Town and BOE operating budgets by \$631K less the Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) of \$244k for a net of \$387k combined reduction in the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education operating budgets. Seconded by Steve Ezzes. Mr. Baldwin pointed out that the \$387k reduction needs to be allocated between the BOE and Town. Mr. Imber moved to modify the previous motion by allocating the reduction based on the pro rata share of retiree expenses which is 17.4% for the Town and the balance out of the Board of Education. Mr. Farr seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.
3. **Discussion/Decision regarding the proposed Board of Education's operating budget for FY 2022-23:** There were questions from Mr. Farr on fuel costs and the internal services fund and discussion on these and other areas of the Board of Education's operating budget. Superintendent Lisa Wolak, WPS Finance Director Phil Cross and Board of Education chair Tony Pesco provided answers and comments. Mr. Baldwin calculated the total number based on the BOE mitigation reduction and the OPEB reduction. Mr. Baldwin moved to approve the recommended Board of Education operating budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 of \$56,391,182 reflecting the reduction from the mitigation plan and from the OPEB transfer. Mr. Bochinski seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.
4. **Discussion/Decision regarding the proposed Town operating budget for FY 2022-23:** There was a brief discussion concerning the retiree medical expense reduction, pension reduction (MERS) and an increase in various energy expenses related to recent world events. Mr. Farr and Mr. Zeppernick had follow up questions from the Public Hearing on personnel situations at the Library, Assessor and Youth Services departments. Mr. Luiz explained that even though there are discussions going on with the Town Hall Union, he is comfortable with the proposed salary numbers for each of those departments. Mr. Ezzes moved to approve the recommended

Town operating budget of \$14,685,746 for Fiscal Year 2022-23. Mr. Imber seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.

5. **Discussion/Decision regarding the proposed Town and BOE capital budget for FY 2022-23:** Mr. Farr asked about the consultant fees for the redesign of the school bathrooms, Mr. Delmastro answered. Mr. Ezzes moved to approve the recommended gross Town and BOE Capital budgets of \$2,875,838 reduced by Capital reserve offsets in the amount of \$444,767 which resulted in a net capital budget of \$2,431,071. Mr. Bochinski seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.
6. **Discussion/Decision of the Town Debt Service budget for FY 2022-2023:** Mr. Farr had questions on the use of the Fromson Strassler property sale proceeds. Mr. Luiz and Mr. Baldwin each spoke on this issue. Mr. Baldwin said the proposed budget would utilize the proceeds to reduce the tax burden this year and help bridge the gap for when there is a decrease in the debt service in Fiscal Year '24. Mr. Bochinski moved to approve a recommended Total Debt Service budget of \$5,531,395 offset by proceeds from the Fromson Strassler sale of \$1,143,750 resulting in a net debt service budget of \$4,387,645. Mr. Zeppernick seconded this. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Ezzes moved to adopt the total gross budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 of \$77,895,644. Mr. Imber seconded. The motion carried unanimously.
7. Adjourn: Mr. Ezzes moved to adjourn at 8.26pm. Ms. Gare seconded this. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Sara Beer, Executive Administrative Assistant