

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
MAY 1, 2017**

The annual budget meeting of the Town of Fairfield was held on Monday, May 1st, 2017 at 8 PM at the Penfield Pavilion, 323 Fairfield Beach Road, Fairfield CT.

The meeting was called to order at 8 PM by Moderator Pamela Iacono.

PRESENT: 40 ABSENT: 0 VACANCY: 0

PRESENT: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Gerber, Lynch, Newman, Perham, Dean, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Hochberg, Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskof, Smey, Way, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, Neuberger, McCarthy, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman, Farnen, Georgiadis, Lee, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley, Sundman

ABSENT: None

ITEM NO. 1 ON CALL: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Body observed a moment of silence in recognition of the losses incurred by the Flynn, Garskoff Tetreau and Lesser families.

ITEM NO. 2 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE SELF SUPPORTING FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5,450,320 FOR THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF JULY 1, 2017 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018.

Mary McCullough, District 1 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

VOTE: WPCA budget for FY17/18 passed by unanimous voice vote.

Tom McCarthy, District 7 moved to suspend Rule 26 to hold unlimited political caucuses, duly seconded and carried unanimously.

ITEM NO. 3 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$299,459,597 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF JULY 1, 2017 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE, FOR ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. THE TOTAL BUDGET AS PROPOSED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Board of Finance Recommended Budget	<u>\$299,459,597</u>
Less: Non-Current Tax Year Revenue	<u>(26,420,277)</u>
Net Revenue to be raised by Current Year Taxation	273,039,320
Plus: Senior Tax Relief	3,713,000
Plus: Reserve for Uncollected Taxes/Other Credits	<u>4,863,573</u>

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

Gross Amount to be raised by Taxation \$281,615,893

Philip Pires, District 4 moved this item as distributed with the call, duly seconded.

Thomas McCarthy, District 7 moved to reduce the Town of Fairfield proposed budget in the amount of \$1,050,511.50 by designating that the following line items be reduced or eliminated, duly seconded:

Department 1010 First Selectman's Office:

Line 51010 Payroll: reduced \$47,754.50 to reflect a reduction in Chief of Staff from Full-Time with benefits to part-time with no benefits

Department 1070 Registrar of Voters:

Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$60,706 to reflect elimination of the Administrative Assistant position

Department 3090 Tax Collector:

Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$51,156 to reflect the elimination of 1 Clerk/Typist position

Department 1320 Active Employee Benefits:

Line 52100 Health Self Insurance: reduced by \$65,895 to reflect the elimination of benefits for three positions

Department 2010 Contingency: reduced by \$825,000

Mr. McCarthy stated that some work in the Tax Collector's office has been shifted to Peoples Bank. He also stated that in the Registrar of Voters office much of the work done by the Administrative Assistant can be assigned to the Deputy Registrars. Mr. McCarthy said he does not feel the taxpayers can continue to afford the taxes necessary to continue increasing the contingency fund year after year.

Mr. Pires asked the Registrars of Voters how this potential cut will affect the office operations in an election season. ROVs Steve Elworthy and Matthew Waggner stated that the Administrative Assistant is the only full time, year round employee, and in their opinion, it would be very difficult to keep their office open to the public during elections without full time staff.

Mr. Pires asked the Tax Collector to explain the impact the loss of the Clerk Typist position would have on his office. Mr. David Kluczowski, Tax Collector was present and stated that while there is a kiosk in the Town Hall which residents can use to pay taxes with their credit card, there is still a great deal of customer service involved as the public needs to be educated in the use of the kiosk. He stated that a survey of other towns' Tax Collector offices show that they often have larger staffs and in his opinion, the current number of staff is in line with cities and towns the size of Fairfield.

Representative Pires asked Mr. Tetreau about the Chief of Staff position. Mr. Tetreau stated that the functions of the Chief of Staff responds to residents' inquiries and is a liaison between department heads. The Town has already found economies in governance by reducing the number of staff in Town departments; any future economization will only come from cooperation between departments, a function of this position.

Mr. Pires asked the Moderator to restate the motion as it pertained to the active employee benefits.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

Michael Herley, District 10, noted for the Moderator that Representative Pires had already held the floor for fifteen minutes, and stated that under Robert's Rules, no member was supposed to exceed 10 minutes. The Moderator noted Mr. Herley's objection, but giving consideration to the complexity of this motion allowed Mr. Pires to continue.

Mr. Pires asked CFO Bob Mayer if it was appropriate to reduce this line item if there is a reduction in staff.

Mr. Mayer replied that the cost of health care for all employees is in the internal service fund, and that while it is possible to calculate the number of employees covered by the health insurance program and therefore the average cost to the health insurance, the actual cost to the Town varies from employee to employee, as some people use their health insurance more than others, and some use it less.

BOF Chair Tom Flynn explained that the BOF considered several factors when establishing the amount of the contingency fund, especially the uncertainty of state funding. The BOF decided to place funds that had been budgeted for several projects into the Contingency Fund to offset revenue shortfalls.

Mr. Pires asked Chairman Flynn if it were fair to say that he was in opposition to the proposed amendment, and Mr. Flynn indicated that he was in opposition.

Mr. Pires asked if there was any news from the State regarding its budget that would affect the discussion of the Body at this meeting.

First Selectman Tetreau advised that the State has announced that it is \$450 million short of revenue and has 60 days within which it must make up that amount of money. The Town expects \$700,000 and the Board of Education expects \$800,000 by 6/30. He acknowledged that while this revenue shortfall does not affect next year's budget, if the Town does not receive any money to make up this shortfall then the Town will be forced to dip into its surplus.

Mr. Tetreau noted that all future budgets will be affected by the decrease in income tax that the State has announced, and that these cuts make it much more difficult for the Town to react to any emergency. He asked the Body to consider the need of the Town to have flexibility in its ability to react to the uncertainty of State funding

MOTION: Hannah Gale, District 6 moved to divide the question

The Motion to reduce line item 51010 in Department 1010 First Selectman by \$47,754.50 to reflect a reduction in Chief of Staff from full-time with benefits to part-time no benefits.

VOTE: The motion to reduce Line Item 51010 Dept. 1010 by \$47,754.50 passed with 21 in favor and 19 opposed:

In Favor: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Lynch, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Way, Neuberger, McCarthy, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman, Farnen, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley, Sundman.

Opposed: Gerber, Newman, Perham, Dean, Hochberg Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskof, Smey, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Georgiadis, Lee.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

The Moderator restated the motion to reduce staff in the Registrar of Voters.

Department 1070 Registrar of Voters: Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$60,706 to reflect elimination of the Administrative Assistant position

Karen Wackerman, District 7 stated that she was opposed to this motion as she felt it irresponsible.

Kenneth Lee, District 9 stated that he believes public's right to vote would be adversely affected through the lack of a full time employee in this office at all times, since a potential voter coming to Town Hall might find the Registrar's office unmanned.

Bill Gerber, District 2, asked to have the Registrars describe the duties of this position. He stated that he was dismayed that the department heads had not known of this proposal before tonight's meeting.

Messrs. Elworthy and Waggnar stated is responsible for checking DMV records for voter information, transactions from other states, and performs necessary organization for Election Day so that the Registrars can service voters rapidly. They stated that while people can vote and register online, this position does a lot of customer service throughout the entire calendar year.

Jay Wolk, District 5, stated that he has walked onto this office with an important question and the incumbent of this position was the only staff in the office. He felt that the loss of this position would cause chaos during election season.

Michael Herley, District 10 stated that he supports this motion as he felt that having 2 Registrars and 2 Deputies was sufficient staffing to service the Towns' voters. He further stated that all of the Towns' departments would have to learn to function more efficiently.

Jill Vergara, District 7, asked the size of the staffs in the Registrars offices of comparably sized towns. Mr. Waggnar answered that in Fairfield there is an equivalent of 2.5 staffers while other towns have between 4 and 6 staff. Ms. Vergara stated that the right to vote is a basic right and that she finds it offensive to reduce funding in this office.

First Selectman Tetreau noted that the Registrar of Voters office had been dealing with a great deal of dysfunction and that this position allowed information to be disseminated.

Erin Lopez, District 4 asked about unemployment benefits for this position. Bob Mayer, CFO explained Union bumping rights which this union position has.

Ms. Lopez asked the Registrars for the costs incurred in training the deputy registrars to take on the duties of this position. Messrs. Waggnar and Elworthy replied that they have no funding for training. Ms. Lopez noted that she was opposed to this motion.

Dru Georgiadis, District 9 stated this position is the only nonpartisan position in this office and that the public deserves to have customer service.

Speaking in opposition to the reduction were Carlyle Spivey, Kim Johnson, Holly Lanese and Jim Walsh.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

VOTE: The motion to reduce staff in Department 1070 Registrar of Voters: Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$60,706 to reflect elimination of the Administrative Assistant position failed with 20 in favor to 20 opposed.

In Favor: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Lynch, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Way, Neuberger, McCarthy, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman. Farnen, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley

Opposed: Gerber, Newman, Perham, Dean, Hochberg Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskof, Smey, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Georgiadis, Lee, Sundman

The Moderator restated the motion to reduce the budget in Department 3090 Tax Collector: Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$51,156 to reflect the elimination of 1 Clerk/Typist. This motion had been moved and seconded.

Phil Pires asked the Tax Collector if this Department services the senior population. Tax Collector David Kluczowski replied that many senior citizens are unwilling to pay taxes online, as someone paying online must use a credit card and there is a surcharge. His department is charged with processing tax payments which will be difficult for him to do with fewer staff. Mr. Kluczowski stated that his department collects 92% of the Town revenues.

Thomas McCarthy, stated that he did find any of these cuts easy, and that while he personally hates making cuts it must be done, especially in cases where the Town can take advantage of having more work done by automation.

Dru Georgiadis stated that while no one likes paying taxes, given the problems in Hartford we have to maximize the collection of revenues by having the most efficient tax collection department possible. She said that reducing the department's staff will make it less efficient and so she is opposed to this measure.

Bill Gerber, District 2 stated that while he has no problem with making departments more efficient he is not sure if the members of the Body are expert in the functioning of this department. Peoples Bank may bring a cost savings this amendment should wait for a year to determine if enough taxpayers use the service through an efficiency analysis.

Brian Farnen, District 9 stated that he has heard from the public asking the Body to not cut education spending, and to cut taxes. The reality is the Town needs to get its budget in check, and that all the employees affected by these proposals have bumping rights. Mr. Farnen said that the departments need to learn how to do more with less.

Speaking in opposition was Mark Patton.

Michael Herley, District 10 stated that he supports the reduction in staff because the Town needs to reduce its cost basis, and he is convinced that more of the population is doing everything online.

VOTE: the motion to reduce staff in Department 3090 Tax Collector: Line 51010 Payroll: reduced by \$51,156 to reflect the elimination of 1 Clerk/Typist position passed with a vote of 21 to 19.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

In Favor: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Lynch, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Way, Neuberger, McCarthy, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman, Farnen, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley, Sundman

Opposed: Gerber, Newman, Perham, Dean, Hochberg Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskoff, Smey, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Georgiadis, Lee

Recess was called at 9:30 by the Moderator. The meeting reconvened at 9:33 PM. Mr. McCarthy moved for a 10-minute caucus at 9:33 PM. The meeting reconvened at 9:44 PM.

The Moderator restated the motion to reduce the budget in Department 1320 Active Employee Benefits: Line 52100 Health Self Insurance: reduced by \$43,930 to reflect the elimination of benefits for two positions. This motion was moved and seconded

VOTE: The motion to reduce the budget in Department 1320 was passed by unanimous voice vote.

The Moderator restated the motion to reduce the budget in Department 2010 Contingency by \$825,000. This motion was duly moved and seconded.

Elizabeth Zezima, District 4, stated that District 4 is the home of the Fairfield Woods Library, and that the proposed motion will further reduce the Library's budget, which hurts her constituency.

Bill Gerber, District 2, asked Mr. Tetreau to address the shortfall due to the States' fiscal problems. Mr. Tetreau stated that the contingency has 3 components usually, first the contract reserve, put aside to fund any new CBA, and what is considered the "normal contingency" of about \$300,000, put aside to deal with issues such as snow plowing, and the third, which is what had been apportioned by the Board of Finance, which removed monies already budgeted for paving, the purchase of new trucks and the Library. This proposal will also cause the Town to have to look at cutting the budgets for Recreation and Parks and the Library budgets further as those are the only two functions the Town is not legally required to provide.

Mr. Gerber asked the First Selectman what he thought the risk of the State cutting out aid the Town is slated to receive. Mr. Tetreau replied it is a very high risk that the Town will not receive the expected aid. Mr. Gerber asked what the total Contingency fund was currently, and Mr. Tetreau replied there is the \$300,000 in the normal fund, plus the \$825,000 added by the Board of Finance so that would leave the Town with approximately \$650,000-\$700,000 in the Contingency fund if this measure passes.

Karen Wackerman, District 7, stated that she felt this proposal is irresponsible in that it removes any cushion in spending despite the Towns' long term plan, and she is opposed.

Heather Dean, District 3 stated that she has received e-mails from their constituents which are more concerned with saving our schools and libraries. She noted that this is the 12th budget process she has been involved with, and that she cannot support this measure as she sees it as a cut to the library budget and probably the education budget as well.

Tom McCarthy stated that he felt there was confusion as to what the contingency fund is. He said that this fund is a cushion for problems that occur that are unforeseen, and is not money that has been put aside for projects such as paving, the purchase of trucks or library projects. The overwhelming majority of e-mails he has received ask for help in cutting taxes. He noted that the budget is twice the size it was 15 years ago. He said that Fairfield is already seen as a town that cannot control its budget, which is negatively affecting home values and that we don't lack the flexibility to have more of a contingency.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

Dru Georgiadis sees it as a failure to fund. She asked BOF Chair Tom Flynn the BOF put monies into the contingency fund instead of into a specific line item. Mr. Flynn responded that the intent was to allow the Town more flexibility in apportioning funds because of the concerns caused by the States instability, as well as expense and investment concerns. He also added there was no guarantee where the monies would be spent. Ms. Georgiadis asked if Mr. Flynn felt it was smart to have a contingency cushion. Mr. Flynn noted that the way the contingency is handled this year could be different from any other year.

Peter Ambrose, District 1, stated that he felt the contingency fund is there because of the States' broken promises and that the States' failure has put the RTM into this position of having to make these cuts. He stated that the states failures are forcing our Town to help fund other less fiscally prudent towns and cities. Mr. Ambrose said that he is in favor of this cut to the contingency fund.

Kenneth Lee, District 9 stated he agrees with Representative Ambrose that the Town has been put into a position it doesn't deserve to be in, and agrees with Representative McCarthy that it is difficult to make tough choices. He felt that deferred maintenance is a poor governmental choice, and that the Body voted for a budget last year that was known to be a couple of million dollars short, and that the same thing is being done this year.

Jim Walsh stated that while he acknowledged the Body has the right to decide what services the Town can provide its citizens, the other BOF members convinced him that the State's budget problems meant the Town should have a larger contingency than usual. He acknowledged that this move to defund DPW and the Library will cause next year's budget to be more costly, with higher taxes, and that by using all of the Towns reserves the BOF will have to find fresh cash next year to fund next years reserve funds.

Speaking in opposition were Charles O'Connor and Kevin Kiley.

Pamela Iacono, District 8 noted that the DPW employees do a great job for the Town year round. She noted further that her understanding of "financial flexibility" means to raise taxes but while she doesn't like having to remove money from the contingency fund, she sees no other choice to keep taxes down.

Matt Ambrose, District 6 stated that while he would love to cut taxes, he doesn't believe we should jeopardize safety, and so opposed this motion.

VOTE: The motion to reduce the budget in Department 2010 Contingency by \$825,000 was passed with 21 in favor and 19 opposed.

In Favor: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Lynch, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Way, Neuberger, McCarthy, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman, Farnen, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley, Sundman

Opposed: Gerber, Newman, Perham, Dean, Hochberg Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskof, Smey, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Georgiadis, Lee

Michael Herley moved to approve the budget as amended, duly seconded.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

May 1, 2017

VOTE: The motion to pass the budget in the amount of \$298,491,556 for the Fiscal Year of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 passed with 21 in favor and 19 opposed.

In Favor: P. Ambrose, J. Jones, McCullough, Varian, Lynch, Durrell, Orriss, Pine, Way, Neuberger, McCarthy, Ference, Iacono, Messina, Tallman, Farnen, Perugini, Cargill, Fattibene, Herley, Sundman

Opposed: Gerber, Newman, Perham, Dean, Hochberg Lopez, Pires, Zezima, Garskof, Smey, Wolk, M. Ambrose, Gale, P. Jones, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Georgiadis, Lee

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, CMC, MCTC
Town Clerk

Recorded by: Frances Daly