

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

OCTOBER 5, 2020

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VOTE: The appointment of Timothy Bezler to the Solid Waste & Recycling Commission was approved by unanimous voice vote. (Messrs. Ambrose & Petise were not present to vote).

ITEM NO. 6 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, A 2020 CONNECTICUT STEAP GRANT UP TO \$128,205 FOR FAIRFIELD CENTER PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS, AND FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO AND EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS AND DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN SAID 2020 STEAP GRANT WITH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.”

Marisa Ringel, District 10 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

VOTE: The STEAP Grant for Fairfield Center Pedestrian Improvements was approved by unanimous voice vote. (Messrs. Ambrose & Petise were not present to vote).

ITEM NO. 7 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: “WHEREAS, THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD WISHES TO EXERCISE ITS OPTION TO PURCHASE 350 QUINCY STREET FROM LISA HEADLY FOR THE SUM OF \$295,000 AS MORE PARTICULARLY SET FORTH IN THE REAL ESTATE SALES AGREEMENT BETWEEN SAID PARTIES, AND WHEREAS, FUNDS FOR THE PURCHASE OF SAID PROPERTY MAY BE TAKEN FROM THE HOUSING TRUST FUND, AS APPROVED BY THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE AT ITS MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2020, NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO AND SIGN CONTRACTS AND EXPEND SUCH MONIES ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD FOR THE PURPOSE OF PURCHASING SAID PROPERTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ABOVE AND THE ATTACHED AGREEMENT.”

Alice Kelly, District 4 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

VOTE: The Resolution to enter into contracts and expend funds to purchase 350 Quincy Street was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 8 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE FIRST SELECTWOMAN: “RESOLVED, TO FUND AND APPROVE THE ATTACHED AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD

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("TOWN") AND THE UNITED PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION #454, THE FAIRFIELD PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES UNION AND UNITED PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION #222 INCLUDING NON-UNION ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES FOR A VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT INCENTIVE PLAN ("VERIP") FOR ELIGIBLE MEMBERS."

Hannah Gale, District 6 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

Bill Gerber, District 2 said it is always exciting when an administration says they will be restructuring to find efficiencies in town government, etc., however, a \$20 million exposure is concerning and would like a more detailed presentation including what the objectives and cost savings will be.

First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick explained they are looking at consolidating positions, having "floating" administrative assistants. Some positions will be filled right away; there will be additional professional development and training for managers with a focus on customer service. Ms. Kupchick noted that the RTM is doing its due diligence asking for input from the actuaries and also noted that the administration would like to fill certain vacancies prior to the long, arduous budget process.

Sharon Pistilli, District 3 asked about the return on investment and investing in technology to modernize offices instead of hiring employees. Karen Wackerman, District 7 clarified that the RTM is asking the Pension Board what the impact is, they are not asking for a second opinion.

Mr. Gerber said they are looking for cohesive information on the payback on this. Ms. Kupchick explained that the RTM must approve the package proposal before they can look at the reorganization. Jim Haselkamp reviewed the VERIP Financial Summary that was included in the backup regarding the FY20/21 & FY21/22 impacts on the pension and OPEB along with savings estimates. There is no impact in this FY regarding pension and OPEB. Mr. Gerber indicated his concerns regarding underfunding and the 7% yield and whether it will come down because of Covid-19.

Jill Vergara, District 7 asked where the vacation and comp time payments come from in the budget. Jared Schmidt, CFO indicated there will be savings in various department budgets as to the timing of filling the vacancies. At the end of the fiscal year, the Board of Finance makes budgetary transfers.

Steve Chykirda of Hooker & Holcomb gave an overview of the impacts in FY22 & FY23. There is an annual discussion on the mortality rate and discount rate. Currently the pension is \$40 million underfunded so any increase is going to increase that.

Laura Karson, District 4 asked what the genesis was for the project. Mr. Haselkamp said the goal is to restructure and have employees move on in a compassionate way. Each town has different circumstances. The Administration and Department Heads will make the organizational decisions.

Ms. Vergara asked Mr. Haselkamp to compare the packages for the other municipalities he was involved with. Mr. Haselkamp noted that Trumbull was primarily for healthcare costs, but the three municipalities' packages were 10-20 years ago so he couldn't compare them. There was no analysis nor approval for the early-retirement incentive in 2009. Ms. Vergara asked why we don't incorporate the pension liability now to project long-term liabilities. Mr. Chykirda said the 2-3 year window gives towns ample time to prepare for it. Pre-payment is certainly an option, but

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comparing retirement incentives with other towns is comparing apples & oranges because the “carrot” is different.

Veronica Monahan, District 1 asked when the last re-structuring of town government was; she noted that change is hard, but the costs seem to be reasonable. The last early-retirement incentive was 2009.

Karen McCormack, District 2 said the Administration is trying to fix the problems and what’s broken in Town government especially those that have come to light in the recent audit.

Marisa Ringel, District 10 said there is also a cost to not upgrading technology and acquiring workers with a higher skill set. Ms. Wackerman noted that it would be great to find more efficiencies.

Jay Wolk, District 5 said that he doesn’t know enough about the package to vote tonight and would like to get more information so he would support postponing to another meeting.

Dru Georgiadis, District 9 noted that many employees feel that this has already been approved and questioned the timeline. Mr. Haselkamp said there would be a window of time for employees to decide if they want to retire and the effective retirement date would be determined which was outlined to the employees.

Jeff Steele, District 2 asked where some of the gaps are for improvement to which Mr. Haselkamp replied managers need more training, upgrades in computers and technology, and there is a lack in Town-wide personnel policies.

Alex Durrell, District 3 asked what would happen if the RTM rejected the proposal to which Mr. Haselkamp said it would be the end of the early retirement package.

Motion: Jill Vergara moved postpone the item to the next meeting of the RTM so that the Pension Board and Board of Finance can review the plan and report to the RTM, duly seconded.

Ms. Iacono asked what the timeline would be for the Boards. Brian Vahey, Employees Retirement Board Chair said a special meeting is scheduled for October 12 so they can engage an actuary and it would take two weeks to compile the report. Jim Brown, BOF Chair said he would expedite a thorough review of the numbers by the BOF.

VOTE: The motion to postpone item to the next meeting of the RTM so that the Pension Board and Board of Finance can review the plan and report to the RTM was approved by unanimous voice vote.

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ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MCTC, MMC
Town Clerk