

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

FEBRUARY 22, 2021

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VOTE: The resolution to expend funds and apply for a traditional 5310 capital senior bus grant was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 5 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH A REQUEST FROM THE WPCA, \$115,000 BE, AND HEREBY IS, APPROPRIATED FROM THE WPCA FUND BALANCE, FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING, MONITORING, EXCAVATION AND DISPOSAL OF CONTAMINATED SOILS FOR THE MICROGRID PROJECT - THE TREATMENT PLANT, FIRE ACADEMY, CONSERVATION BUILDING AND ANIMAL CONTROL BUILDING - DUE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONTAMINATED SOIL.”

Lauren Bove, District 7 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

VOTE: The resolution appropriating \$115,000 from the WPCA fund balance for the microgrid project was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 6 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH A REQUEST FROM THE WPCA, \$53,595 BE, AND HEREBY IS, APPROPRIATED FROM THE WPCA FUND BALANCE, FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING AND MONITORING OF A GAS LINE TRENCH AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW GAS LINE TO THE WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT GENERATOR.”

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

VOTE: The resolution appropriating \$53,595 from the WPCA fund balance for the gas line to the WPCF generator was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 7 ON CALL: TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH A REQUEST FROM THE WPCA, \$135,950 BE, AND HEREBY IS, APPROPRIATED FROM THE WPCA FUND BALANCE, FOR THE DESIGN TO REPLACE 311 FEET OF THE EAST TRUNK SEWER WETLAND CROSSING INTERCEPTOR FROM THE METRO CENTER, 210 ASH CREEK BOULEVARD, TO THE INTERSECTION OF KENARD STREET AND KENWOOD AVENUE IN ACCORDANCE WITH BID# 2021-36.”

Sharon Pistilli, District 3 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

Hannah Gale, District 6 noted that there is \$150,000 set aside when TPZ approved this as part of the metro center project and questioned why that money is not being utilized.

VOTE: The resolution appropriating \$135,950 from the WPCA fund balance for the design for the replacement of a section of the east sewer trunkline in accordance with bid 2021-36 was approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM NO. 8 ON CALL: TO HEAR AND CONSIDER FOR THE FIRST TIME AMENDMENTS TO THE TAX RELIEF FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED HOMEOWNERS ORDINANCE, SECTION 95-8 TO SECTION 95-15 OF CHAPTER 95,

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ARTICLE III, OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE.

Chris DeWitt, Vice Chair of the BOF gave an overview of the amendments to the senior & disabled tax relief program. The tax credit program and the qualifying income limits are at the heart of the program. The BOF wanted to bolster and give the most relief to those with qualifying income as of 2019 of 0-\$18,000. The highest qualifying income is \$77,300.

Section 95-15.1 was amended so the assessor will give the annual report to the RTM and BOF in June.

Section 95.15.4 New Title Senior & Disabled Tax Relief Review Committee – the initiator can be the assessor, BOF or RTM; the process will be a joint effort.

Jill Vergara, District 7 thanked Mr. DeWitt for his review. She noted a constituent's experience with the medical deductions and its negative impact which was rectified by the RTM Committee and BOF with these proposed amendments that were fast tracked. She continued that one of the goals should be to maximize the number of seniors who take advantage of the program; currently the participation rate is lower than that in 1982.

Mr. DeWitt said the most benefit should be to those who are most-needy while keeping it affordable for Fairfield as \$3.9 million of revenue does not come to the Town in FY21/22. Moving the income limit to \$90,000 puts more of a burden on the town taxpayers. Members of the BOF subcommittee went to the senior center on three occasions and asked seniors how they could make the program better and if they even were aware of it. 1,300 people benefitting from the program is a lot of people. Ms. Vergara felt there was still a participation gap and felt that adjusting the asset levels could be reviewed in order to increase participation.

Cindy Perham, District 2 noted that income and times have changed. The income limit has not been changed since 2013. The program should change with the times especially when cost of living adjustments kick in. She asked how many seniors were interviewed at the senior center to which Mr. DeWitt replied about 60.

Laura Karson, District 4 noted that participation has diminished even though the cap had been increased. Mr. DeWitt noted that the program loses people by attrition through death. The impact is not linear. Many people worked very hard on this from the RTM and BOF. He wants to get the amendments approved and see how many people take advantage of the program and the next Committee can go from there and tweak it. Ms. Vergara said to raise the income limit to \$90,000 it would be a \$210k revenue loss. Mr. DeWitt said then the program would cost \$4.1 million.

Lauren Bove, District 7 stressed the importance of keeping our seniors in town. Sharon Pistilli, District 3 asked if assets could be included as a qualifier. Mr. DeWitt noted there is a QTAV of \$650,000. Ms. Vergara said an IRA or 401 is included but pension is not. The Committee would like to use an assessment limit. Mr. DeWitt said in 2019 the CFO put a cap on the program when the RTM proposed eliminating the QTAV; later the assessor changed his mind that the QTAV not be eliminated.

Bill Gerber, District 2 asked how much savings there is because of the program. Mr. DeWitt said the assessor provides the statistics but that is not part of the BOF analysis. He said in speaking with some seniors the \$600 is keeping them in their home. Mr. Gerber suggested it may be worthwhile capturing that statistic.

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NEW BUSINESS:

Jeff Steele reminded the Body there is a FOIA & Roberts Rules of Order workshop next week. Mr. Steele discussed the teenage suicide that occurred last week and how there should not be a stigma associated with depression, mental illness or suicide and that the community should take an active role in discussing depression openly.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MMC, MCTC
Town Clerk