

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0pJjNU3Rkw>

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: IN LIGHT OF COVID-19, AND PURSUANT TO EXECUTIVE ORDERS 7B and 9H, THE TOWN IS CONDUCTING THIS MEETING VIA WEBEX AND TAKING LIVE PUBLIC COMMENT VIA WEBEX DURING THE MEETING.

- ✓ Back-up documents relating to the agenda items can be found at [www.fairfieldct.org/bof](http://www.fairfieldct.org/bof).

**Special Board of Finance Capital Plan Workshop Final Minutes  
Wednesday, December 9, 2020  
7:00 pm**

A Special Board of Finance Capital Plan Workshop was held virtually on Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 7:00 pm in Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Edward Bateson, Jim Brown-Chair, Lori Charlton, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, Town Attorney Jim Baldwin, CFO Jared Schmitt, Auditor Connie Saxl, RTM Members Sharon Pistilli, Bill Gerber, Pam Iacono and Jeff Steele, DPW Director, John Marsilio, DPW Superintendent Doug Novak, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Assistant Fire Chief Kyran Dunn, CAO Tom Bremer, P&R Director Anthony Calabrese, Engineering Manager Bill Hurley, Police Chief Chris Lyddy, Deputy Chief Smith, Human and Social Services Director Julie DeMarco, Superintendent of Schools Mike Cummings, Director of Operations for FPS Angelus Papageorge, BOE Chair Christine Vitale, FairTV

1. Call to Order- Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance- Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance
3. To Review and Discuss Town and BOE Non-Recurring Capital and Capital Projects Planning Document, Their Timing and Related Subsequent Bonding Requirements and Estimated Impact on Debt Service Levels Over the Next Several Years

**Ms. Charlton motioned to approve Item 3. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion.**

Mr. Brown started by saying the Board usually have this information in September, but 2020 isn't a usual year. He said this is a meeting to review capital projects and non-recurring capital. He thanked representatives from the BOS, RTM, BOE, and the Town for being on the call during such a busy time of year. Mr. Brown said debt funding scenarios and long-term planning and allocation will be reviewed. He said the Town has a bonding policy which is adhered to and influences decisions. Mr. Brown said the Long Term Facilities and Waterfall Chart and the 10-year outlay to potential costs has not been updated. He said this is related to COVID. He said the 2021-2022 numbers are accurate, but the 2022-2023 numbers will get updated in early 2021 and will need to include any work that needs to be done on the former Giant Steps property. Mr. Cummings said he will have those updated numbers by February 1, 2021 so the BOF can vote in February.

Mr. Papageorge went over the BOE proposed capital and non-re-curing projects.

He said there were a few schools on the waterfall chart. He said he thought that instead of doing a few schools a year, all of them should be done. Mr. Cummings said some of the projects included replacing the roof at Burr Elementary School and the Fairfield Ludlowe High School bathroom renovation which are necessary projects to move forward.

Mr. Mitola asked if the retro air conditioning is permanent and if it is being done because of COVID. Mr. Papageorge said this was done 12-14 years ago with some other buildings. He said only one school had been done since then and the BOE is catching up to where it should be. He said this will benefit schools going forward, but either Mill Hill nor Holland Hill needs it.

Mr. Gerber said the pandemic has changed the way air conditioning is looked at. He said it is a disadvantage to not have it in all schools and asked if the district considered making it a priority and evaluating the schools with partial AC. Mr. Papageorge said the RFP has been sent out and 10 companies sent proposals and there is a timeline to get it on the waterfall chart.

Ms. Vitale said it will cost \$100,000 for a consultant to evaluate the buildings. She said the money from that budget was used for the Osborn Hill roof and then COVID happened. Ms. Vitale said the BOE wanted to get accurate figures to move forward with the AC as it is a priority. She said the pandemic makes it more of a priority as health and safety are at the forefront.

Mr. Walsh asked Mr. Cummings if that was his highest priority to which Mr. Cummings replied that safety and security issues, physical entry plans and how to keep kids safe are his high priorities. Mr. Walsh asked if the vaccine is coming, is the AC still a priority. Mr. Cummings said it is because of the air quality due to mold and not so much the pandemic. Mr. Walsh asked Mr. Papageorge if the updated figures will include the AC. Mr. Papageorge said the work won't be done until the first week of July, so that will be in the next budget.

Selectman Flynn commented that the Burr Elementary School roof is not new, but it's not old. He said the Town has done well with plans and repairs, but he was surprised to see a full replacement for the Burr roof in the budget. He said he wanted to know if the BOE has exhausted options like warranties for the roof. Mr. DeWitt said he looked at last year's waterfall and this year's, but there is nothing for Burr except a warranty. He said there is no mention of Burr and the number on this report is high. Mr. Papageorge said that a big concern is that there is no line for roof or boiler replacements. He said there is a lot of missing data and inaccurate numbers. He said his goal was to make numbers accurate, but COVID delayed the process and opening the schools took priority.

Mr. Brown said he wants to change priorities for the next 10 years so the Board can address them at the February meeting with the understanding of what the priorities are for the next 10 years. Mr. Papageorge said he thought there were shortfalls and he wanted to present to the Town an accurate representation. Mr. Cummings said the BOE is committed to giving the BOF the best numbers going forward.

Mr. DeWitt said he supports AC, but it must be on the report and the numbers must be accurate. Mr. Gerber said AC is important because of health and the Town shouldn't be moving renovations out to get AC; both should be done. Mr. DeWitt responded that it must go on the waterfall.

First Selectwoman Kupchick talked about the next presentation that she asked Selectman Flynn to make.

She thanked Mr. Bremer, Mr. Schmitt and Selectman Flynn for their hard work on the presentation and meeting with department heads to come up with a list.

Selectman Flynn said the presentation is a working document for discussion purposes. He said in the past, the Town was basing things on what would be approved versus the true needs of the Town. He said the information presented to the boards were lacking. Selectman Flynn said the Town was not proactively maintaining town buildings such as Old Town Hall which is a historic building. He said currently, there isn't enough staff or resources to see what needs to be done. He said the Town needs to hire professionals to get those needs addressed. Selectman Flynn said the money is there, but the studies are incomplete and there needs to be more information. He said the numbers are directionally correct, but they won't be right. He said the fill pile will draw on the bonding capacity, but it is unknown until the Town knows what remediation will be like. Selectman Flynn went through the power point presentation. He said the debt service should be less than 10% of the budget. He pointed out the current conditions of the town buildings and bridges by referring to photos in the presentation. Selectman Flynn said there will be difficult choices ahead as the Town looks at almost a \$320 million investment over the next 10 years. He said that number doesn't include the fill pile, but it does have \$400,000 for the study. He also said WPCA funding decisions will need to be made.

Mr. Testani asked if there was updated information on the fill pile costs and potential lawsuits. Selectman Flynn responded that there is no new knowledge on the fill pile and being that there are several lawsuits, it would not be appropriate to discuss in a public format. Mr. Mitola said there were placeholders put on items if there wasn't a number and asked why that wasn't done for the fill pile. Mr. Walsh said the Town needs to go back to the placeholder because a number needs to go there. He suggested to go conservative and put \$10 million there. Mr. Schmitt said that number will be added in and there will be a new version in February.

Mr. Gerber asked if bonding can be done over 30 years or if 20 years is required by rating agencies. Mr. Brown replied that 20 years is the max that the Board set and then asked if the State reimburses for bridge repairs. Mr. Schmitt said there are programs that will reimburse the Town and the cost will determine what program to use.

Mr. Mitola asked about the WPCA project and if it will be paid by WPCA rate payers and who decides that. Selectman Flynn said it would go before the BOS, BOF and RTM. After presenting Exhibit 1, BOE, Town and WPCF, Mr. Schmitt said he will email a breakdown of the WPCF to the BOF.

The Board then reviewed Exhibit 2, Department Basis and Classification for Determining Anticipated Cost of Projects by request year. Mr. Mitola said he thought the Town was reimbursed for some projects and asked why that didn't appear on the report. Mr. Schmitt said that not all projects are reimbursed and suggested he look further down the sheet. Mr. DeWitt asked why capital equipment came with a truck replacement plan. Mr. Marsilio said in reviewing a budget he did not create he was prepared to discuss items like capital equipment. He said he met two times with fleet manager and will have backup for that and prices for something that won't be purchased until April/May. Mr. Walsh commented that trucks appear every year under non-recurring, but it recurs every year. He said a realistic plan is needed and to look at the last plan put together where the Town bonded trucks. Mr. Marsilio said he will share the report when it's developed.

Fire Station renovations were discussed with Chief McCarthy. Placeholders were put for amounts unknown.

Mr. Dick Dmochowski, Flood and Erosion Control Board secretary, had sent an email earlier requesting to comment during the meeting. He read his email below.

Dick Dmochowski  
241 Colonial Drive, Fairfield  
Member, Flood and Erosion Control Board

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Dmochowski <r.dmochowski@sbcglobal.net>  
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 9:30 AM  
To: Carpenter, Jennifer <JCarpenter@fairfieldct.org>  
Subject: Re: BOF meeting Dmochowski\_desire to speak

Jen,

I will speak on behalf of the FECB and simply comment that:

**We appreciate the opportunity to have worked with DPW, Engineering and Conservation to include the 13 items in the capital plan that will improve our resilience to Coastal storms and severe rain events. The most critical items are the 5 Tide Gate restorations because these are our existing first line of defense against Coastal Storms. We urge you to support all of these 13 storm related items as the Plan works its way through to adoption.**

As far as which item I might comment after, not sure? My comments pertain to a few different ones and is more a general comment on "DPW" section. Bill Hurley can speak to all of them individually. So, I'll be available.."whenever".

Dick

Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Dmochowski for his comments and said he was the first person to make a public comment at a BOF meeting since March.

Mr. Brown then asked Mr. Calabrese for a background on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan of \$150,000. Mr. Calabrese said he looked back to every Commission meeting to the early 1940's and never saw anything for a master plan or strategic plan. He said he asked surrounding town directors and they had done a comprehensive master plan. Mr. Calabrese said he tried to evaluate and get an unbiased plan for all the recreation facilities in Town. Mr. Brown asked why the town-wide audit facility plan for \$400,000 can't cover this. Selectman Flynn said it is specific to town buildings and the \$150,000 is specifically related to recreation. Mr. Testani asked if the master plan will result in lower costs. He referred to light upgrades and also asked about a show mobile. Mr. Calabrese told him a show mobile is a mobile stage that is good for graduations and other events. Mr. Walsh asked about the Jacky Durrell Pavilion upgrades. Mr. Calabrese said they were for kitchen and bathroom renovations for after July 1. Mr. Walsh asked about the splash pad replacement for \$150,000. Mr. Calabrese said it is to replace what the Town already has and is not changing the footprint. Mr. Walsh also asked about the lights at the Dougiello Softball Field.

Mr. Calabrese said there is a commitment from the girls' little league to pay for replacing the lights on the softball field and it will be a net zero. He said the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the funding in August. Mr. Walsh asked about the effect the lights would have on the neighbors and if there would be a zoning issue. Mr. Calabrese said he spoke with the town departments and nothing was needed. He said he hasn't spoken with the neighbors and they would have to be vetted and heard. He said the project would be bonded by the Town, but paid for by the league.

Mr. Mitola asked if the P&R master plan was for programming. Mr. Calabrese said it is an overview of everything the department does including, programming, facilities, fields, staffing, to help plan projects in the future. He said there are some playgrounds on the waterfall chart that need to be replaced. He said they all actually need to be replaced, but he can't come in and ask for that money. Ms. Iacono commented that the master plan is excellent and asked if it is typical for master plans to be bonded. Mr. Brown said there might be examples of bonded plans. Mr. Schmitt said there have been plans bonded and gave the examples of the Rooster River project and the WPCA facilities study so there is a precedent for it. Selectman Flynn said it is typically tied to capital projects. Mr. Calabrese said he is looking for a plan for programs and not facilities. Mr. Walsh asked if the Rooster River plan was reimbursable. Mr. Hurley said the capital project was unable to get grant money for that.

Mr. Mitola asked for an explanation on expanding Burr Mansion. Mr. Marsilio said the History Center wants to extend the building to replace the tent that is there now. First Selectwoman Kupchick stated that a lot of renovations came through a grant because it is a historical building. She said the Town does make money from the rentals, but it needs to prioritize. She said this will change with more priorities she has. She said the profit from the Burr Mansion goes to the History Center. First Selectwoman Kupchick said there will be long-range plans with the Chamber, Burr Gardens Advisory Committee and the History Center for a master plan to improve the grounds of the entire area over a period of time. Ms. Iacono asked if the History Center is willing to contribute to the expense to which First Selectwoman Kupchick responded yes. Mr. Walsh commented that the History Center had almost a million dollars of work done in the kitchen and with adding an elevator. He said now, the History Center is asking for a million more and when that is weighed against AC, the AC is more important. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she just wanted to have this information in front of the town bodies. She said she wouldn't put something like this above more critical needs.

Mr. DeWitt said the 2021 budget is being crafted now and all but two projects are proposed. He said he supports the Old Town Hall renovation and the purchase of the former Giant Steps property. How asked how this is to be handled in the current budget. First Selectwoman Kupchick said it was her understanding that the whole plan be put together and then it will be prioritized. There are still discussions yet to be had, but we know Giant Steps is coming. We will be doing a presentation on that tonight. Mr. DeWitt said he is concerned that 2021 has \$20 million in unfunded projects. Mr. Schmitt said there are a limited amount of projects that could be done this current fiscal year. He said there wouldn't be any budget impact if they are done through bonding in the current year.

Mr. Brown said Exhibit 3, BOE, Town and WPCA Debt Service as a percent of the budget would need to be updated when more information is received from the BOE and regarding the fill pile. He then referred to Exhibit 5, Town of Fairfield changes to the Capital Plan – All projects in October 2019 compared to October 2020. He said there is an increase of \$22 million.

Ms. Charlton asked that in the updated version if dates/years could be added. Mr. Testani commented on the new HVAC for the Police Department and asked if that was the only improvement the building needed. Mr. Marsilio said that is the critical element of that building. He said the building maintenance foreman said this needs to get done. Police Chief Lyddy said the building is in good shape except for the AC and he appreciates the DPW and all its hard work. Ms. Charlton requested the updated version show how debt reconciles to audit to understand the running total.

First Selectwoman Kupchick presented the item regarding the former Giant Steps property. She said this is a long-term solution for the alternative high school. She said the Town looked into purchasing the current location, but the building is not in good condition. First Selectman Kupchick said the price was too high and needed too much repair. She said it was suggested to her to tour the former Giant Steps school. She said originally the price was \$10 million, but it came down. She said it is a large piece of property in Southport and a turnkey building. First Selectwoman Kupchick said there is an outbuilding that is structurally sound, but not in great shape. She said the Town will need to get estimates to demolish or use as useable space for DPW equipment. She said the property could be a potential use for soccer fields and other town needs. First Selectwoman said this is a prime piece of property to give our alternative students a good facility and for the Town to keep the property under Town control and keep it from developers. She said the purchase would be \$4.9 million; the Walter Fitzgerald High School would relocate to the Southport location when the lease expires. First Selectwoman Kupchick confirmed that most of the land is buildable. She said use of this land needs to be discussed as a community. Mr. Cummings commented that there is a lot of opportunity to a turnkey facility. He said it is a significant upgrade to the current site and it is a long-term investment. He said the systems are relatively new, it is already air conditioned and even though it has less square footage than the current property, it is perfectly fine for the needs of the Walter Fitzgerald students. BOE Chairwoman Vitale thanked the First Selectwoman for being so open to this and said she is very happy for the opportunity. She said it will provide wonderful space for the students and she is excited about the possibilities. Ms. Vitale noted there are other offers coming in on the property.

Ms. Charlton asked about moving costs associated with Walter Fitzgerald and if the Town is liable in any way to restore the current building to its original state. Mr. Papageorge said he had conversations with the Bridgeport Archdiocese and there are no concerns. Mr. Testani said over \$200,000 to move seems excessive. Mr. Papageorge said the details are in the capital book based on the numbers seen and used. He said the biggest moving cost is the security upgrades to bring the school up to district standards. Town Attorney Baldwin also said there are no issues or anticipated costs associated with leaving the St. Emery's building. Mr. Brown suggested breaking down the \$200,000 into moving costs and security upgrades. Ms. Vitale confirmed that this amount includes security on the abandoned building on the property. Mr. Cummings pointed out that on page 11 of the presentation, the costs are broken out between the move, security, fencing around the property, landscaping and fiber optics. He said the moving cost is relatively minor. Ms. Marmion said for the discussions next week, she'd like to see specific opportunities for this property. In addition to moving Walter Fitzgerald, she said she would like a list of other ideas for the school space and the other piece of property.

Mr. Brown stated that the total cash flow required stands at \$311 million and it will increase when the Board gets the updated numbers from the BOE. He said other schedules will be adjusted as well, including the waterfall chart.

Mr. Brown said the Board will have a better understanding of the 21-22 capital projects and the next 10 years. He said he looks forward to hearing from the BOE and knows that Mr. Papageorge's plans for the next 10 years will be different. He said the BOF will meet before February and go through all of this.

4. Adjourn

**With no further business to come before the board, Mr. DeWitt motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 pm. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion which carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary