

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 13, 2011 7:30 pm.
Horace W. Porter School Café
2 Schoolhouse Road, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe, Vice-Chairman Cindy Harrison, Judy Szegda-Ortiz, Allen Smith and Pamela Missal.

Also Present: Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Superintendent Francine Coss and others.

1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance: E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited after the budget presentations were given.

2. Public Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Budget

2.1 Presentations of the proposed budget by representatives of the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen: BOE Chair Lauren Perrotti-Verboven commended both the BOS and the BOE for the amount of work that was put into both budgets. She discussed the difference between the BOE operating budget and the allocation given to the BOE to the audience. She pointed out that the proposed BOE operating budget is necessary in order for the school to run. She explained that this year the BOE cut its operating budget by 1.4%. She also said that if it is cut further, then they will have to begin to cut "staff." She stated that the BOE is asking for an increase in allocation in the amount of .8% from the town. L. Perrotti-Verboven said that the BOE and superintendent have been "planful" with respect to wisely spending the current fiscal year funds, and that the BOE should not be penalized for waiting to spend that money towards the end of the current fiscal year.

F. Coss thanked the Finance Department and Finance Director Bev Ciurylo for their help in preparation of the BOE budget. She discussed tuition. She said that there are more seniors graduating this year than there are freshman entering next year. She discussed special education tuition and explained outplacement/transition services, and explained that the BOE is responsible for paying outplacement fees if a child is placed elsewhere. F. Coss mentioned an increase in utilities and fuel for 2011-2012. F. Coss explained that the large reduction in benefits is due to a double reduction in cost from Anthem. She stated that she removed funding from the health care benefits line item and transferred these monies to the cafeteria cost line item in order to show the true cost of the cafeteria to the district. F. Coss explained that the BOE is anticipating the need for another bus run to E.O. Smith and that is why there is an increase in transportation costs. She discussed salaries, both certified and non-

certified, with the audience. Lastly, F. Coss spoke about the BOE capital improvement budget.

J. Luiz presented the BOS budget to the audience. He focused on three topics: expenditures, non-property tax revenues and new property tax revenues. J. Luiz discussed expenditures for the BOE, BOS, debt, capital projects and all other expenditures. He reviewed the capital budget items with the audience and pointed out several proposed capital items that had been approved and several that had been denied. J. Luiz discussed non-property tax revenues, explaining that those revenues are broken down between grants and other sources. He explained that the growth of the Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB) over the years is due to reasons such as the BOS and BOE operating budgets being under spent, taxes collected being better than projected and the arrival of unbudgeted revenues. J. Luiz concluded by discussing new property tax revenues. He explained that the current mill rate in FY '10-'11 is 23.55 and that the proposed mill rate for FY '11-'12 is 23.55. He said that keeping the mill rate the same will result in a mill rate increase of 0%.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. At this time E. Sharpe opened the floor to the audience for questions or comments.

2.2 Opportunity for any elector or qualified voter to be heard regarding the recommended appropriations: Ann Dunnack of 103 Lake Road questioned the wisdom of eliminating the capital expenditure entitled "Open Land Acquisition." She stated that over the last few years the Open Space Committee has asked FIPAC for a little money, and that the requests are denied. She explained that the BOS has already signed an agreement to partner with the State to purchase development rights in Columbia. She said that the deal would preserve over 100 acres of prime agricultural land. A. Dunnack stated that if this deal falls through the farmer that owns the land will have no choice but to sell the land to a developer. A. Dunnack said that the development of the land will, in the long run, cost the town a lot more money than the cost of paying now to have it remain as open space. She stated that developing this land would allow for the construction of approximately 47 houses. She closed by saying that FIPAC's decision to denying the capital expenditure of open land acquisition is "penny wise and pound foolish."

Donald Cianci of 45 Laurel Lane echoed what A. Dunnack stated. He feels that denying this open land acquisition could open up a plethora of possible development in town. He discussed the amount of money in services that the land would cost if developed. He feels it would be fiscally responsible to include approximately 145,000 in the capital expenditure budget to facilitate the purchase of development rights because failure to do so will result in the town paying dearly.

Joan Hill of 23 Cards Mill Road concurred with D. Cianci and A. Dunnack. She stated that she would like to see the open land acquisition funding placed back into the capital budget to allow the town's people an opportunity to vote on the item.

Paul Kubala of 37 Lake Road feels that it would be a good idea to vote on the land acquisition item via voting machine or at a referendum. P. Kubala asked what the town's plan is if the governor decides to "slash the budget." E. Sharpe explained that the town does not have a specific, detailed plan, but that Columbia is not as dependent on state funding as other towns. E. Sharpe said that in the event grant monies from the state decrease significantly, that the town's Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB) would most likely be able to cover any shortfall. E. Sharpe also said that Columbia could also issue supplemental tax bills. P. Kubala asked about the ambulance service billing, and inquired about the whereabouts of the money after it is paid by a customer. E. Sharpe explained that he does not know those figures. J. Luiz stated that he provided P. Kubala with a copy of the Fire Department audit. P. Kubala stated the audit did not have the figures he wanted to see. Fire Chief Peter Starkel explained that the ambulance service is independent of the Town and that normally insurance pays for the calls. P. Starkel went on to explain billing procedures. E. Sharpe suggested P. Kubala speak with P. Starkel regarding this matter.

Bob Baldwin of 50 Route 87 asked about how the BOS would go about getting approval for the purchase of the property development rights absent funding provided through the town budget process. J. Luiz stated that a town meeting would be called by the BOS for the residents to vote on whether or not this land shall be purchased using funds in the UFB. E. Sharpe said that the purchase of the property development rights is still an option for FIPAC to consider. B. Baldwin stated that he felt the budget presentations given tonight by J. Luiz and F. Coss are the the best budget presentations he has seen since he has resided in Columbia.

C. Vance explained that the BOS discussed dispersing the land contribution over a period of time and stated that the land owner recommended this.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:40 pm.

3. Recess: E. Sharpe called for a brief recess at 8:40 pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:49 pm.

4. Approval of Minutes 4.1 FiPAC Special Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2011: E. Sharpe MOVED to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2011 with the following correction: Page 2, paragraph 5 states, "E. Sharpe spoke about the minimum balance requirement." It should state, "E. Sharpe spoke about the minimum budget requirement." MOTION CARRIED 6:0.

5. New Business

5.1 Transfers: A. Smith MOVED to approve the following transfers:

AMOUNT	FROM A/C #	DESCRIPTION	TO A/C #	DESCRIPTION
\$ 900	10-4800-900	Contingency	10-4116-230	Electricity
\$2,500	10-4800-900	Contingency	10-4410-011	Salaries – OT

J.Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to approve the following transfer:

AMOUNT	FROM A/C #	DESCRIPTION	TO A/C #	DESCRIPTION
\$2,000	10-4800-900	Contingency	10-4260-240	Fuel

C. Harrison SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 5:1:0 with A. Smith opposed.

6. Old Business

6.1 Modification of the proposed FY '11-'12 budget, as FiPAC deems advisable:

P. Missal expressed concern about the BOE operating budget. She said that she would like to see further discussion occur with the BOE on the subject of the variations in the level of special education tuition spending that has occurred. E. Sharpe feels that this issue is not critical to making a decision on the FY '11-'12 budget and that the numbers presented tonight from the BOE should be focused on by FiPAC.

E. Sharpe discussed the math program that the BOE wants to implement beginning next fiscal year and purchase this fiscal year with funds that the BOE currently possesses. E. Sharpe suggested that FiPAC assumes that \$80,000 of currently available funds will be needed for the math program. He explained that doing so will allow approximately \$28,000 remaining in the current budget to be used to offset the costs of BOE operating expenditures in FY '11-'12. E. Sharpe also discussed the previously assumed need to use \$22,000 in EdJOB funds this year. E. Sharpe said that these grant funds can be used to offset the cost of BOE Operating Budget expenditures in FY '11-'12. In consideration of the aforementioned \$28,000 and \$22,000, E. Sharpe MOVED to remove all the new BOE related capital budget requests from the latest proposed budget except for the Whiteboards project and the Roof Architectural Fees project, with the expectation that the BOE will incur the costs of the removed capital projects in its FY '11-'12 operating budget. M. Robertson SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 5:0:1 with P. Missal abstaining. E. Sharpe clarified with J. Luiz and B. Ciurylo that the total amount of BOE related capital items removed from the capital budget is \$51,000.

M. Robertson MOVED to approve town budget as presented. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to approve the most-up-to date version of the capital budget with a reduction of \$39,527 in the account dedicated to Accounting Software Upgrades. M. Robertson SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to allocate and additional \$145,884 for Land Acquisition into the most-up-to-date version of the capital budget. C. Harrison SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 3:2:1 with E. Sharpe, M. Robertson and C. Harrison in favor, J. Ortiz-Szegda and P. Missal abstaining and A. Smith opposed. MOTION PASSES 3:2:1.

E. Sharpe MOVED to designate a total of \$117,277 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the FY '11-'12 Budget in order to keep the tax increase for FY '11-'12 at 0%. M. Roberson SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 5:1:0 with A. Smith opposed.

7. Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 10, 2011 at 7:30 pm. This will be the Annual Town Budget Meeting with a FIPAC meeting scheduled to follow.

8. Adjournment: E. Sharpe MOVED to adjourn. M. Robertson SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0. The meeting adjourned at 10:01 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Kimberly A. Bona