

Town of Columbia
Tri-Board Meeting Minutes
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Wednesday, January 19, 2011 - 7:30 pm
Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237

FiPAC Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe, Vice-Chairman Cindy Harrison, Scott Petrequin, Judy Szegda-Ortiz, Pam Missal, Al Smith.

Board of Selectmen Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance, Selectmen R. Szegda, Rob Hellstrom, William O'Brien.

Board of Education Present: Superintendent Francine Coss, BOE Chair Lauren Perrotti-Verboven, Vice-Chair Lisa Juravoty, John Schroder, Bill Mulcahy. Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz and Finance Director Bev Ciurylo.

Also Present: Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz and others.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe call the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.
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3. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. E. Sharpe welcomed P. Missal to the Financial Planning and Allocation Commission.
4. **Tri-Board Open Budget Discussion:** E. Sharpe asked F. Coss and J. Luiz to present separate budget updates for Fiscal Year 2010-2011. F. Coss said that she expects the FY 10-11 BOE budget to finish the fiscal year with a zero balance. F. Coss stated that the BOE still has some federal grant money left over from last year and hopes to use that money to be able to present a 0% budget increase for Fiscal Year 2011-2010. She explained that there may be a possible outplacement next fiscal year which could cost anywhere between \$70,000 and \$200,000. She explained that going forward after this current year, high school students will have the options of attending Windham, Windham Tech, Bolton and possibly E.O. Smith. E. Sharpe asked about the left over grant money F. Coss referred to. She explained that it is left over ARRA, IDEA and TITLE money and stated that she is unsure at this time whether or not the BOE will be penalized by the state in terms of ECS funding for carrying the grant money into Fiscal Year 11-12. Discussion ensued regarding ECS money. J. Luiz defined it as "Education Cost Sharing" and said that it is money the state of Connecticut provided to a municipality to support general education expenses. He explained that the state will determine how much the town will get in ECS money. E. Sharpe asked about unemployment costs. F. Coss stated they are not over the budget limit at this time, but there are currently two individuals on the unemployment list that have secured

employment and explained that this will hopefully save some money. Discussion followed.

J. Luiz discussed the Fiscal Year 2010-2011 second quarter analysis report that he provided to FiPAC. He stated that the transfer station revenues and expenditures will depend on whether or not the Pay-As-You-Throw trash program is approved at Town Meeting in February. He discussed litigation fees that the town has incurred and explained that a transfer from Contingency into Judicial/Legal Services will be needed in order to cover future litigation fees for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2010-2011. J. Luiz stated that the tax collection rate should remain the same this Fiscal Year as it was last year. J. Luiz explained that LOCIP reimbursements that were supposed to be received this fiscal year were not received, because the Town received them at the end of the previous fiscal year. He explained that the absence of the LOCIP funds may have a negative effect on the town revenue budget. J. Luiz stated that at this time, it appears that the town will have a surplus this year. He explained that the surplus may be larger or smaller depending on whether or not significant property taxes are paid prior to July 1. He stated that based on his conversations with the Tax Collector, the town will likely not suffer a reduction in the successful collection rate. J. Luiz discussed Town Aid Road (TAR) and Local Capital Improvement Plan (LOCIP) revenues from the State of Connecticut and explained that neither may be issued next Fiscal Year. J. Luiz discussed the Town's undesignated fund balance and stated that it is at a significant level compared to the past few years. R. Szegda expressed that he feels the town financial state is good and asked J. Luiz for his opinion on this matter. J. Luiz stated that feels as though the town is also in fairly good shape and explained that the town currently does not have any outstanding pension obligations, etc. which is in the town's favor. J. Luiz discussed the Moody's bond rating and explained that there are certain grades on outstanding debt (low, medium, high grade) for towns and stated that Columbia is currently in the "high grade" caliber. Discussion followed.

P. Missal asked F. Coss about an over-funding issue in the BOE budget. F. Coss explained that the \$over-funding was caused by an error in the student count projection. She stated that the BOE did over-project a student count by 13. F. Coss went on to say that the over-funding was used to settle a lawsuit with Lebanon. F. Coss explained that part of the "gentlemen's agreement" is that if the BOE tuition line is underfunded then the town will fund it, but if there is extra funding in the tuition line, it goes back to the town. Therefore, instead of giving the money back to the town, they BOE paid the lawsuit. F. Coss stated that all legal fees were paid out of the BOE legal fees line item. Discussion followed.

A. Smith asked if the lawsuit with Lebanon is completely done. F. Coss stated it has been settled.

C. Vance discussed two potential capital projects that will affect future bonding costs- renovation/expansion of the Saxton B. Little Free Library and the roof replacement on H. W. Porter School. She stated that these two potential projects will not impact the upcoming budget. Discussion followed.

E. Sharpe stated that the current year budget may be impacted by state grants, Special Ed grants and the MBR (minimum budget requirement). J. Luiz explained the MBR will expire on June 30, 2011 if no action is taken by the state legislature.

Discussion ensued regarding student counts. E. Sharpe requested the variance in high school student count projected for the next fiscal year. F. Coss and L. Juravoty explained that there will be 33 less high school students after graduation. Ernie pointed out that everyone should acknowledge the significant tuition savings that would come about with a variance of minus 33 high school students. E. Sharpe said the savings would be roughly \$ 330,000. F. Coss explained that there will be more students graduating then there will be entering freshmen. She stated that this does not mean that this will be cost saving to the BOE because the services required for the special education students entering as freshmen may be more time and resource consuming than the services required for those special education students graduating. .

S. Petrequin asked F. Coss what changes are anticipated for upcoming student counts in the K-8 grades. F. Coss stated that she does not anticipate much change. She said there may be a very slight decrease. A. Smith asked if the BOE is planning on doing anything regarding the student/teacher ratio. He explained that there are currently 9 students to each teacher. F. Coss stated that the average class consists of 18 students. She explained that teachers required for intervention, special ed, library, art, music, etc. and these teachers are also included in the ratio; therefore, classroom size differs from teacher/student ratio. Discussion followed.

J. Luiz explained that he and B. Ciurylo will try to find projects eligible for submission for LoCIP grant reimbursements. E. Sharpe encouraged the BOS to apply for as much LoCIP grant reimbursements as possible.

The BOE, BOS and FiPAC discussed the budget schedule. J. Luiz will revise the schedule and distribute copies to the Boards and Commission. The Public Budget Hearing has been re-scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 13, 2011 at 7:30 pm. in the H.W. Porter Cafetorium.

5. **Election of Officers:** A. Smith MOVED to re-elect E. Sharpe as Chairman and C. Harrison as Vice-Chairman. S. Petrequin SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0 (P. Missal will be an active member once oath is taken).

6. **Approval of FiPAC 12/15/10 Regular Meeting Minutes:** A. Smith MOVED to approve the Minutes of 12/15/10. Ernie SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 5:0:1 with C. Harrison abstaining.

7. **Correspondence**

8.1 **BOS Regular Meeting Minutes of 1/4/11**

8.2 **BOE Regular Meeting Minutes of 12/13/10**

8.3 **BOE Regular Meeting Minutes of 1/3/11**

8.4 **Fiscal Policy Regular Meeting Minutes of 12/15/10**

8.5 **Courant Article on Minimum Budget Required:**

8.6 **Letter dated 1/3/11 from Troy and Banks re: Telephone Review**

8. **Follow up on Tri-Board Budget Discussion:** Discussion took place regarding the Tri-Board Budget discussion.

9. **Old Business**

10.1 **Audit:** The Commission reviewed and discussed the audit.

11. **New Business**

11.1 **Review of FY 10-11 Actuals**

11.2 **Approval of Transfers:** A. Smith MOVED to approve the following transfers:

AMOUNT	FROM A/C	DESCRIPTION	TO A/C	DESCRIPTION
\$128	10-4800-900	Contingency	10-4250-540	Celebration
\$668.50	10-4800-900	Contingency	10-4112-130	Legal Notices

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

11.3 **Moody's Bond Rating:** The Commission briefly discussed Moody's Bond Rating.

12. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 7:30 pm.

13. **Adjournment:** MOTION to ADJOURN CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. The meeting adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly Bona.