

SPECIAL MEETING - APPROVED MINUTES
Columbia Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Wednesday, April 1, 2009, 7:30 p.m.
Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Earnest Sharpe (Chairman), Carol Wiggins (Vice-Chairman), Gregory Roy, Henry Reed, Joanne Gyure, Marcia Morrison, Scott Petrequin.

Others Present: Donald Cianci (First Selectman), Carmen Vance (Selectman), Richard Szegda, Jonathan Luiz (Town Administrator) Dr. Richard Saddlemire (Superintendent), Francine Coss (Principal), Carol Coley, Nelson Petrone, Cheryl Parrott, Mary Latour.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman, E. Sharpe. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1. 2008-2009 Budget Evaluation-
2. 2009-2010 Budget Evaluation and Approval-

BOE Chairman, N. Petrone explained that a series of cuts were discussed at the BOE meeting that was held on Monday, March 23, 2009. These cuts include eliminating one third grade teacher, some sports programs, the Student Services Director's hours to be reduced from 5 days to 4 days a week, and cutting approximately 2-3 non-certified staff employees. He expressed that the BOE had proposed a fair budget and is concerned that the decrease of \$ 160,000 will have an impact on the students. C. Coley stated that a lot of time was spent on the budget and pointed out that she also felt the need to express that she feels as though the cuts amongst staff cuts is a loss to the students. She explained that she does not feel that, for example, reducing the hours of the Town Planner can be compared to cutting the hours of the School Nurse. In addition, she stated that the teachers have made an effort as well by receiving their increases at a later time. C. Coley concluded by expressing that she feels as though an additional \$ 160,000 in cuts will affect the kids negatively and directly.

R. Saddlemire discussed with the Commission the option of buying into next year's BOE budget. He explained that particular areas of spending such as office and custodial supplies, textbooks, magazines, etc. could be purchased this year in order to make next years budget work. Discussion followed.

M. Morrison shared facts with the Commission regarding the BOE budget history. She discussed an increase over the past 5 years of approximately 29.01%, a decrease in the number of students and a per person cost of \$12,815 which is the 3rd highest in pupil expenditure out of seven surrounding towns. She also pointed out that the current union contract gives a 2.7% increase to teachers, and over the past 2 years teachers have received an increase of 3.5%. Discussion followed.

Vice-Chairperson C. Wiggins explained that there have been times in the past where the Commission has cut the budget increase request, but that this is the first time in 12 years where the budget has actually been cut. F. Coss stated that the BOE is making decisions regarding education. She expressed that she feels that both parties, the BOF and the BOE, must trust each other and make a decision regarding the budget. H. Reed MOVED to approve that the BOE reduce their proposed budget by \$160,000. E. Sharpe SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

Town Administrator J. Luiz discussed with the Commission an increase in the Salary line item within the Public Works Department. He explained that the increase would consist of \$1,511 so that the Rec Park Gatekeeper position will be funded. He went on to explain that this is an existing position and was not included in the originally submitted budget by the BOS due to oversight. S. Petrequin MOVED to accept the adjusted BOS budget of \$3,122,617. E. Sharpe SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

C. Wiggins questioned the reluctance from the BOS and the Town Administrator regarding spending TAR funds for projects. First Selectman D. Cianci explained concern over using all of the TAR funding and not having enough to care for roads. E. Sharpe suggested we could use LOCIP funds. D. Cianci explained that LOCIP money is frozen and that it must be applied for and is not granted until after a project is completed. He expressed that he feels using up all of the TAR funding would be penurious. Town Administrator suggested that if all of the TAR money begins to be used for road necessities such as sand, salt, etc. and the actual roads need attention, then citizens will be complaining. D. Cianci requested that no more money be taken from TAR other than the original \$69,750 that was originally voted on at the March 25, 2009 meeting. E. Sharpe questioned whether or not we could apply for LOCIP funds. D. Cianci stated that the funds are frozen, but it cannot hurt by applying. J. Luiz put forth the idea of applying for LOCIP funding to cover Fiscal Year 2008-2009 road expenditures by the town.

Discussion regarding the Collection Rate took place. G. Roy expressed that he felt that with the Collection Rate remaining at 98%, it would assist in keeping the Mill Rate down and would prevent the scenario of "digging a hole again". D. Cianci stated that the economy is getting worse and feels it would be unrealistic to keep it at 98% if we are unable to get to 98%. M. Morrison MOVED to decrease the Collection Rate from 98% to 97.5%. C. Wiggins SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to cancel the Special Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2009 and the Regular Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2009 and hold a Special Meeting on April 22, 2009 following the Budget Hearing. G. Roy SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

3. Approve Minutes of March 25, 2009- Approval of the Minutes of March 25, 2009 has been tabled until the next meeting scheduled for April 22, 2009 due to the fact that not all Commission members have had a chance to review the Minutes of March 25, 2009.

4. Adjournment- M. Morrison MOVED to adjourn and the MOTION CARRIED 7:0. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at 7:30 P.M

Respectfully Submitted, Kim Bona