

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 24, 2010 7:30 pm.
Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe, Vice Chairman Cindy Harrison, Scott Petrequin, Joanne Gyure, Mike Robertson, Judy Ortiz and Al Smith.

Others Present: Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Superintendent of School Francine Coss and others.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Approval of Minutes – 3/17/10:** E. Sharpe MOVED to TABLE the approval of the 3/17/10 Minutes. MOTION CARRIED 7:0.

4. **Old Business**

4.1 **FY '09-'10 Budget:**

4.2 **FY '10-'11 Budget:**

BOS Budget- J. Luiz discussed a bill that is currently before the legislature that will allow a town to reduce its Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Board of Education operating budget by \$ 3,000 for each reduction in student enrollment from the Fiscal Year prior. He explained that this will impact both the FY '09-'10 and FY '10-'11 budgets, possibly saving the Town from being penalized ECS revenues in Fiscal year 2011-2012. J. Luiz discussed the Capital budget, explaining that the amount stated for the Breathing Air Compressor originally stated \$47,546 and it should state \$50,000. He explained that the \$47,546 is the grant money received by the state and that the actual cost for the Breathing Air Compressor is \$50,000. J. Luiz stated that the difference of \$2,454 is expected to be reimbursed through LOCIP funds.

He explained that the expenditure summary in Department 230 (salaries/wages line item) increased slightly in order to include the \$4,968 salary amount for the Meals on Wheels driver. J. Luiz stated percentage errors in the total operating and capital budget, as well as the Fire Prevention Services Department will be corrected. He stated that the revenue for Special Education for both FY 09-10 and FY 10-11 will be updated and that the FY 09-10 ECS revenue has decreases by approximately \$50,000 from budgeted projections. J. Luiz stated that after the updates are made to the budget, he anticipates a new mill rate increase of approximately 3.25%.

A. Smith discussed several questions concerning the budget with the Commission. He suggested programmable thermostats be installed in the Senior Center so the

temperature may be controlled by certain staff only. Discussion followed regarding numerous questions A. Smith had pertaining to the budget. C. Vance stated that she reviewed the budget line item by line item for each department and feels that the appropriate cuts have been made and if more were made she feels it would have been very harmful to both the school and town. A. Smith discussed the library and feels that library is overstaffed and underused. A. Smith MOVED to cut the library budget by \$100,000. MOTION FAILED 1:6:0 with A. Smith voting in favor.

M. Robertson discussed the proposed Assistant to the Town Clerk II. M. Robertson suggested utilizing the ability to pull someone in from another town for help as needed instead of bringing back the 8 hour position. J. Luiz stated he does not have a date of when or if the current assistant will vacate the position. J. Luiz will try to find out if a clerk from another community would be interested in picking up hours in Columbia if/when the current Columbia Assistant Town Clerk vacates the position. M. Robertson also inquired about the building official's position and why the town is proposing to increase his hours when the amounts of permits have decreased? J. Luiz will gather data from the Building Department.

M. Robertson asked about the proposed \$130,000 for a new fire truck. J. Luiz explained the truck has been delayed considerably over time. C. Vance explained that the new truck has been necessary for quite some time in order to meet state codes in regards to safety. C. Vance stated that if the budget is approved then they anticipate that the truck should be here by the end of next year. E. Sharpe explained that this item was discussed at length last year and feels that the new fire truck is a necessity.

M. Robertson questioned the \$20,000 for Open Space. He feels this is not a practical proposal in this economic time. C. Vance stated that last year the town did not contribute to Open Space, and that for development rights, this will contribute something to the larger pool of money that would be used if the need to purchase land arose.

M. Robertson asked about approximate \$100,000 liability the BOE may be faced with due to a pending lawsuit with the Town of Lebanon. F. Coss stated they have been served with a summons. M. Robertson explained that he feels this cost needs to be identified and allocated in the budget. Discussion followed. J. Gyure suggested putting it into the designated fund balance. J. Luiz asked if a tuition check is sent to the Lebanon BOE or to the Town of Lebanon. F. Coss stated more than likely it goes to the BOE. Discussion followed.

M. Robertson asked about the BOE capital projects and the town's contingency fund. Discussion followed.

J. Ortiz spoke about the real estate conveyance fees and the increase from last year to this year. She asked what old firehouse building is used for. J. Luiz stated

that first floor is for storage of town vehicles and equipment, and other half is used for a workshop for the municipal government and BOE. He explained that the upstairs is a storage area for records and furniture. J. Luiz said that there is no heat upstairs and that the building is heated minimally downstairs. J. Ortiz stated that she feels programmable thermostats are a good idea.

C. Harrison asked about the transfer station Prof/Tech line item and revenues. She asked if the proposed "Pay-As-You-Throw" trash service was considered when figuring the budget. J. Luiz explained that currently no consideration to "Pay-As-You-Throw" went into the proposed FY 10-11 budget. J. Luiz said that "Pay-As-You-Throw" has the possibility of bringing the Prof/Tech line item down considerably depending on how the bags would be priced. C. Harrison discussed the variability in Beach Pass revenue. J. Luiz will adjust the revenue projections for FY 09-10 based on statistics from previous years.

BOE Budget-

F. Coss discussed a decrease of approximately \$32,528 that was made to the unemployment line item. A. Smith asked why three music teachers are necessary. F. Coss explained that there is a band teacher, a music teacher for Pre-K – grade 4, and a music teacher for grades 5-8.

M. Robertson asked about the 4% decline in enrollment. F. Coss confirmed this decrease. M. Robertson expressed that he feels the amount for transportation is excessive. A. Smith explained that approximately 2-3% is for the transportation increase, and that the rest is for Special Education transportation. F. Coss stated there were previously 10 buses running and there are now 9.

J. Ortiz asked if the BOE purchases a group health insurance in order to reduce the cost. F. Coss explained that the town and the BOE currently share health insurance to help with cost reduction.

C. Harrison stated that she feels there may be balances left over in the transportation and tuition line items. F. Coss explained that transportation is funded in 10 payments and they are currently on payment number 7, and that tuition is paid in 3 allotments and may be adjusted as necessary.

S. Petrequin asked about grants and reimbursements and questioned how the funds are assigned to education once it is received. F. Coss explained that this money is already designated by the BOE when it is applied for. She stated that the funds come in and go to the town, and then they are transferred to the school as necessary. S. Petrequin asked how optimistic the BOE is that this type of funding will continue. F. Coss stated that they are not very optimistic at all.

J. Gyure stated that she feels the BOE budget is responsible.

E. Sharpe complimented the BOE on their creative approach to a reasonable budget for FY '10-'11. F. Coss thanked E. Sharpe and stated that the compliment shall be extended to all the staff that helped put together the budget.

E. Sharpe MOVED to approve the BOE spending plan presented with the amendment of \$32,528 in unemployment. MOTION CARRIED 7:0.

M. Robertson MOVED to remove the \$20,000 for Open Space from the proposed BOS budget. MOTION CARRIED 5:1:1 with A. Smith opposing and E. Sharpe abstaining.

E. Sharpe reminded J. Luiz to post the Annual Letter on the town website when it is completed.

- 4.3 Transfers:** S. Petrequin MOVED to approve the following transfers: \$200 from 10-4132-520, Printing, \$200 from 10-4132-130, Legal Notices and \$200 from 10-4132-110, Postage TO 10-4132-770, Transportation; and \$150 from 10-4800-900, Contingency, TO 10-4330-770, Transportation. MOTION CARRIED 6:1:0 with A. Smith opposing.
- 5. Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 31, 2010 at 7:30 pm in the Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room.
- 6. Adjournment:** S. Petrequin MOVED to adjourn. MOTION CARRIED 7:0. The meeting adjourned at 9:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly A. Bona