

Town of Columbia
Special Meeting Minutes
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Wednesday, March 12, 2014

7:00 pm

HW Porter Cafetorium, 3 Schoolhouse Road, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe; Judy Ortiz; Nancy Hammarstrom; Jeffrey Viens; Kelley Peck; Todd Shepard; Richard Szegda.

Also Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance; Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz; Superintendent Lol Fearon; Principal Alyssa Gwinnell; Finance Director Bev Ciurylo; BOE Chair Kerry Hoffman, members of the BOE and numerous citizens.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Audience of Citizens: on matters not pertaining to budget presentations:** None.

4. New Business

4.1 FY 2014-2015 budget presentations by the Board of Education (BOE) and the Board of Selectmen (BOS): L. Fearon presented the FY 14-15 BOE budget to FiPAC. He discussed long range planning and community engagement, stating that demographic projections for grades PK-12 is a major focus of the BOE. L. Fearon discussed the implementation of state-wide initiatives, including common core state standards, Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Professional Educator Evaluation and Support program. L. Fearon stated that there will be no change in programs and staffing and that the BOE would like to continue the Pre-K and after school programs. He stated that magnet schools will still be an option for students. L. Fearon spoke about tuition as well as the Pre-K program and the afterschool program. L. Fearon stated that the overall BOE budget request is \$12,057,847 which is a 5.25% increase or \$601,870. He stated that this increase is driven by certified salaries, non certified salaries, employee health benefits and tuition. L. Fearon discussed areas of decrease including pupil transportation, BOE legal services, other benefits, the hot lunch program and staff development. L. Fearon thanked former interim superintendent Mark Winzler and Finance Director B. Ciurylo for their hard work on the budget. Lastly, L. Fearon spoke to the Commission regarding grant offsets and stated that without the grant offsets the increase in town appropriations to the BOE would be 5.75%.

J. Luiz presented the FY 14-15 BOS budget to FiPAC. J. Luiz stated that the overall increase in all appropriations is 14.2%. J. Luiz spoke about the Operating Budget and discussed significant appropriation increases and decreases. J. Luiz discussed salaries and benefits for town employees. He explained that several Public Works employees and the Director of Senior Services would receive salary adjustments in consideration of a salary study performed. He also said that the Tax Collector, Assistant Town Clerk, Town Planner and Zoning Enforcement Officer would get

additional hours based on departmental need. He stated that in Fiscal Year '13-'14 the BOS Operating Budget did not contain funds for general wage increase due to collective bargaining. J. Luiz discussed the debt schedule and went over each of the items that would receive funding in the town capital budget. J. Luiz reviewed the budgeted and actual tax collection rates from FY 11-12 to the present. He stated that the FY 14-15 proposed collection rate is 97.5%. He stated that the Grand List has increased by 0.5% and that he is making no assumptions about future decreases in the Grand List. J. Luiz stated that the current mill rate is 27.13 and that the proposed mill rate is 28.99 which equals a mill rate increase of 1.86 mills or 6.86%.

C. Vance stated that over the past few years the town has done a good job of maintaining a 0 % increase in the mill rate and that having no tax increase cannot be done every year. She does not feel that it is possible to propose a 0 % increase in the mill rate for FY 14-15.

Kerry Hoffman explained that the proposed BOE budget does not create additional programs at the school. She stated that the BOE is asking FiPAC to continue its commitment from last year in order to provide what is best for the children.

4.2 Audience response to the budget presentations: Jennifer Lent of 12 Randazzo Road she said that she would like to see the BOE proposed budget approved in order to provide what is best for the school and children.

4.3 FiPAC response to the budget presentations: R. Szegda spoke about the health insurance costs and asked how much flexibility there is on the cost. L. Fearon stated that there is not all that much flexibility but the town has gone out to bid in the hope that a new carrier will provide better pricing.

5. Approval of Minutes

5.1 FiPAC Meeting Minutes of 2/19/14: T. Shepard MOVED to approve the FiPAC meeting minutes of 2/19/14. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0:1 with N. Hammarstrom abstaining.

6. Correspondence

- 6.1 BOS Regular Meeting Minutes of 2/18/14**
- 6.2 BOS Special Meeting Minutes of 2/25/14**
- 6.3 BOS Special Meeting Minutes of 3/1/14**
- 6.4 BOE Special Meeting Minutes of 2/10/14**
- 6.5 BOE Special Meeting Minutes of 2/24/14**
- 6.6 Fiscal Policy Regular Meeting Minutes of 2/12/14**

7. New Business (continued)

7.1 Transfers: R. Szegda MOVED to approve the following transfers:

AMOUNT	FROM A/C #, DESCRIPTION	TO A/C#, DESCRIPTION
\$1,000	Contingency	Old Firehouse, Fuel
\$1,000	Contingency	Tax Collector, Salaries

J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

- 8. Old Business: Miscellaneous discussion:** R. Szegda pointed out the reduction in student enrollment and the BOE request for a 6% increase. Discussion followed. E. Sharpe asked for clarification on the BOE insurance plans. B. Ciurylo stated that there are three different insurance categories and discussed them with the Commission. Discussion followed.
- 9. Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19, 2014 at 7:00 pm.
- 10. Adjournment:** N. Hammarstrom MOVED to adjourn at 9:16 pm and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly A. Bona