

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 30, 2016 - 7 pm
Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe, Vice Chairman Jeff Viens, Judy Ortiz, Kelley Peck, Todd Shepard, Richard Szegda, Dean Toepfer.

Also Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance, Superintendent Lol Fearon, Town Administrator Natasha Nau, Principal Alyssa Gwinnell, Finance Director Bev Ciurylo, Public Works Director George Murphy, Director of Parks and Recreation Marc Volza, BOE Chair Chris Lent, numerous members of the BOE, Student Service Director Mary Kate Farley, CONA Chair Cathie Rowe, members of CONA, Ann Dunnack, Joan Hill, Don Schofield, Chris Tolsdorf and numerous other citizens.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **FiPAC Budget Discussion (continued):** D. Toepfer recommends reducing the town and BOE budgets by \$150,000 each, as well as the additional \$73,000 that has already been cut from the town budget and allocate \$400,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB) to support the Operating Budget costs. He explained that by incorporating these changes, the mill rate should drop from a 3.32% increase to an increase of approximately 1.5 %. D. Toepfer stated he feels as though it should be up to the BOS and BOE as to what they cut in order to accomplish this but that he would personally like to see the funding for a new senior van remain in the Capital Budget.

J. Ortiz asked for an update regarding the new quote for the playscape at Rec Park. N. Nau stated that the new quote came in at \$85,000 and would cover the cost for both purchase and installation. N. Nau explained that if the town were to purchase the two playscapes at the same time (one for Rec Park, one for the school) then the cost would total \$135,000. Discussion followed.

BOE:

Discussion ensued regarding the BOE budget. J. Viens stated he feels the BOE budget should be reduced by 2 %, which is approximately \$240,000. T. Shepard expressed his concern regarding MBR. He feels that it is important to try to resolve this issue and perhaps a larger cut to the BOE budget is necessary in order to do something about the MBR policy. K. Peck feels that 2% reduction to the BOE is an appropriate number. R. Szegda feels as though this is too large of a cut. He stated that the BOE has impacted the budget in a big way but no one has any control over this. He feels that it is important to keep in mind the impact cutting the BOE budget will have on the children. R. Szegda feels the most important thing in a community is to meet the needs of children and seniors. He does not think the BOE budget should be reduced by more than by \$50,000.

CAPITAL:

J. Viens agrees with J. Ortiz in regards to funding for the playscapes. R. Szegda feels that the playscape should not be funded at all. K. Peck suggested funding for half of \$85,000 which would allow the Rec Department to make an effort to raise funds for the remaining cost. If the Rec Department then came to FiPAC at the end of the year and still are in need of funding, perhaps FiPAC can assist in funding the remaining cost. R. Szegda and D. Toepfer thought this was a good idea. J. Ortiz suggested funding \$70,000 each year. C. Vance explained that currently the town has a Request for Proposal and Qualifications (RFP/RFQ) to develop a master plan for Rec Park and stated that perhaps the playscape could be included in this master plan. She explained that there is money set aside for recreational purposes such as the Brand funds and Bell funds. Discussion followed.

J. Ortiz would like to reduce the funding for Land Acquisition from \$200,000 to \$100,000. R. Szegda stated that he does not feel anything should be funded this year for Open Space/Land Acquisition. K. Peck and J. Viens concurred stating they feel Land Acquisition should be removed from the proposed FY 16-17 Budget.

Discussion regarding the Undesignated Fund Balance ensued. T. Shepard suggested funding \$500,000 from the UFB. R. Szegda suggested funding 1.4 million from the UFB. D. Toepfer suggested \$400,000 from the UFB. K. Peck stated that she feels that the maximum taken from the UFB should be \$500,000. J. Ortiz concurred with K. Peck. E. Sharpe stated that it is important to be cautious of what is taken from the UFB.

Discussion regarding the senior transportation took place. N. Nau explained that in order to apply for the grant, the funds must be allocated for the van operations and purchase. K. Peck clarified that if we do not get the grant then the town will not purchase the van. N. Nau stated that if the grant is not awarded to the town then she would like to pursue acquiring a used van from WRTD at no purchase cost and the capital funds would then not be spent. She explained that WRTD may be willing to donate a used van to Columbia however maintenance and salary for drivers would still need to be budgeted for. E. Sharpe asked if BOS would be in agreement if new van was cut but WRTD donates used van. C. Vance said she feels that it would move forward. D. Toepfer MOVED to keep the \$20,000 in the Capital Budget for a new senior transportation van. D. Toepfer withdrew the MOTION. K. Peck and J. Viens against funding for van. Discussion followed.

J. Viens MOVED to cut the BOE Operating Budget by \$200,000. R. Szegda feels this is too high of a cut for the BOE. D. Toepfer does not feel that the school should be punished because of the current problems with the State. D. Toepfer would be in favor of a reduction of \$150,000. J. Ortiz agreed. K. Peck stated that the school will still be getting a 4.65 % increase and although it is unfortunate, FiPAC must look at the big picture. MOTION CARRIED 4:3:0 with E. Sharpe, K. Peck, J. Viens, T. Shepard in FAVOR and D. Toepfer, J. Ortiz, R. Szegda OPPOSED. L. Fearon stated that with this reduction the BOE will be forced to look at reducing programs because there is no cushion in the current Operating Budget. This cut will require a substantial cut in programs.

R. Szegda asked G. Murphy about the request for a salt shed. G. Murphy stated that the current shed is too small to handle the required amount of salt/sand for the winter season. He also explained that in the chance that the town does away with the Old Firehouse, the current salt shed could provide for storing equipment that is currently housed at the Old Firehouse.

J. Viens MOVED to accept current cuts to the Capital Budget subtotaling \$635,000. Some significant cuts in the Capital Budget include the following: \$175,000 for the DPW salt shed, \$25,000 from the total \$125,000 for playscapes, \$200,000 for Land Acquisition, \$20,000 for the Annex, \$25,000 for revaluation, \$150,000 for Hop River Bridge and others. K. Peck SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to remove \$10,000 from the town's Internal Service Fund. K. Peck SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

E. Sharpe MOVED to ask the Town Administrator to reflect revenue changes in budget document. J. Viens SECONDED and the MOTION CARRIED 7:0.

D. Toepfer MOVED to allocate \$400,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to support operating expenses in the proposed FY 16-17 budget. MOTION CARRIED 7:0.

At this time, the proposed mill rate is roughly 27.76, which is about a 2.30% increase from 15-16.

E. Sharpe explained that if the BOE chooses to do so they will have an opportunity to come before FiPAC next week at an additional Budget Workshop for discussion. L. Fearon requested to do so.

4. **Next Meeting:** The next special meeting will be held on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 7 pm.
5. **Adjournment:** T. Shepard MOVED to adjourn at 8:43 pm. and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly A. Bona