

Town of Columbia
Special Meeting Minutes
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Wednesday, April 23, 2014 at 7 pm
Horace Porter Cafetorium
3 Schoolhouse Road, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe; Judy Ortiz; Jeff Viens; Kelley Peck; Todd Shepard; Richard Szegda; Linette Dooley.

Also Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance; Selectman William O'Brien; Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz; Superintendent Lol Fearon; Finance Director Bev Ciurylo; BOE Chair Kerry Hoffman; members of the BOE; and others.

1. **CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** E. Sharpe called the Financial Planning and Allocation Commission (FiPAC) meeting to order at 7:10 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. **PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FY 2014-15 BUDGET**
 - 2.1 **Presentations of the proposed budget by representatives of the BOE and the BOS:** L. Fearon presented the FY 14-15 BOE budget. He discussed long range planning and community engagement, stating that demographic projections for grades Pre-K thru 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 the overall BOE request is \$11,585,955, which is a 3% increase. He discussed the areas of significant increases, including a 17.35% increase in employee health benefits. He spoke of areas of decrease and stated that two teacher positions and two full time para-educator positions will be eliminated. L. Fearon discussed enrollment and contractual tuition increases with Bolton, E.O. Smith and Windham High Schools. L. Fearon spoke about grant offsets, totaling \$216,913. L. Fearon explained that without the grant offsets the BOE increase would be an increase of 4.81%.

J. Luiz presented the FY 14-15 BOS budget. He spoke about three major points which included the following: 1) Appropriations; 2) Non Property Tax Revenues; and 3) Amount to be raised by property taxes. He stated that there will be no mill rate increase in this proposed budget. He discussed appropriations for the BOE, BOS, debt services, capital projects and other (mainly contingency). He stated that the increase in appropriations totals 5.87%. He discussed notable appropriation increases in the BOS budget (greater than 5,000 and 4%). He discussed notable appropriation decreases in the BOS budget (greater than 2,000 and 4%). J. Luiz discussed salaries and benefits for town employees. J. Luiz stated that a 2% GWI was negotiated for union employees and that most non-union employees would receive the same increase. 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 stated that \$17,500 will be taken from the Undesignated Fund Balance to support appropriations for this year's budget. J. Luiz spoke about the grand list and stated that it has grown by 0.5%. He reviewed the tax collection rate, which is assumed to be 97.5%. Lastly, J. Luiz stated that the current mill rate is 27.13 and will remain at 27.13.

2.2 Opportunity for any elector or qualified voter to be heard regarding the recommended appropriations: C. Vance stated that she feels this is a good budget and thanked J. Luiz for a job well done. K. Hoffman thanked L. Fearon for his work on the budget and stated that she feels this budget will help Porter continue to excel.

Paula Shepard of 2 Bears Den Way compared the proposed funding between the Senior Center and Recreation. She stated that she feels as though Recreation offers services to 100% of town residents and that the Senior Center only offers services to those who are over the age of 55. She explained that more funding is being spent in proportion on senior services and would like consideration to be given to increase Recreation spending.

Bill Ross of 183 Route 87 inquired about how the school lunch program has reduced its operational deficit. L. Fearon explained that the school has found ways to bring in new revenue such as supplying lunch for the senior center a couple times each month. He explained that the school is continuing to look for ways to improve the lunch program.

Kathy Tolsdorf of 104 Hunt Road thanked FiPAC for granting the Open Space acquisition request. She inquired about the Undesignated Fund Balance and asked for clarification on how it is used. J. Luiz explained the Undesignated Fund Balance.

John Allen of 65 Lake Road spoke about the Senior Center. He explained that the Senior Service Director oversees the building and has a lot of responsibilities and deserves the wage increase that is being proposed.

Vera Englert of 33 Sleepy Hollow Road asked whether or not the town has looked into refinancing and paying off the debt at a lower rate. J. Luiz stated that refinancing is a possibility. V. Englert suggested forming a committee to discuss possibilities regarding utilizing the unused space in the school and town due to the decrease in student populations. J. Luiz stated that after the November vote takes place regarding the proposed Library expansion and renovation project, the town will have a clearer idea on what facilities are available for use in town. C. Vance stated that she has spent time walking through the school with the former Superintendent. She explained that she does not feel it would be realistic to utilize a portion of the school as a "library" or "department." She stated that by creating an actual department, etc. would require new restrooms, security updates, new offices, etc. C. Vance stated that perhaps utilizing the space for a single office here and there may be an option.

Maureen Allen of 65 Lake Road stated that there are over 360 members at the Senior Center. She feels that when you reach a certain age, and would like a bit of peace and interaction with other folks in the same age range it can be found at the Senior Center. She stated that the programs offered at the Center are wonderful and asked that they are not taken away.

E. Sharpe stated that he does not believe P. Shepard's comment was not intended to appear as a threat to take away programs from the seniors. P. Shepard concurred.

Steve Piro of 58 Laurel Lane stated that he feels the senior programs are wonderful. He explained that a lot of rec programs are created by Rec Commission and the Rec Director and that many of them are offered to a wide range of ages. He feels that if the Rec Director were granted more hours it would be beneficial to the town.

Ron Creese of 27 Samuel Hill Road inquired about the student/teacher ratio and whether or not the number of taxpayers is increasing or decreasing. L. Fearon spoke to the student/teacher ration being appropriate. J. Luiz stated that he believes that over the past 5 years, there may be have been a slight increase in population but stated that every year a few more homes are being built in town.

Nikki Keldsen of 5 Baker Hill asked for clarification on how the budget tracks the changes in the Undesignated Fund Balance (UFB). J. Luiz pointed out the proposed budget's information concerning the UFB.

3. RECESS:

4. OLD BUSINESS

4.1 Modification of the proposed FY 14-15 budget, as FiPAC deems advisable: E. Sharpe MOVED to approve the proposed budget as presented. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0. The Town Budget Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 13, 2014 at 7 pm in the Horace W. Porter Cafetorium.

K. Peck stated that perhaps more consideration should be focused on evaluating Recreation needs in the future. J. Luiz said that the Board of Selectmen will likely review Rec Department staffing on an annual basis.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.1 FiPAC Special Meeting Minutes of April 2, 2014: T. Shepard MOVED to accept the FiPAC Special Meeting Minutes of April 2, 2014 as presented. K. Peck SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0:1 with L. Dooley abstaining.

6. NEW BUSINESS

7. TRANSFERS: J. Luiz reviewed the FY 14-15 transfers with FiPAC. R. Szegda MOVED to approve the following transfers:

AMOUNT	FROM A/C #, DESCRIPTION	TO A/C #, DESCRIPTION
\$97	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4117-240, Fuel
\$189	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4112-240, Fuel

\$1,000	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4420-011, Tran Station Salaries, OT
\$412	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4210-500, Prof/Tech
\$42.29	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4640-240, Fuel
\$100	10-4800-900, Contingency	10-4640-230, Electricity

J. Ortiz SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0.

8. **NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be the Town Budget Vote on Tuesday, May 13, 2014 at 7 pm. in the Porter Cafetorium.
9. **ADJOURNMENT:** J. Viens MOVED to adjourn at 8:42 pm and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Kimberly A. Bona