

**Town of Columbia**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**Financial Planning and Allocation Commission**  
**Wednesday, April 24, 2013 at 7:00 pm.**  
Horace W. Porter School Cafe  
2 Schoolhouse Road, Columbia, CT. 06237

**Members Present:** Chairman Earnest Sharpe; Vice Chairman Mike Robertson; Judy Ortiz; Al Smith; Steve Everett; Nancy Hammarstrom; Pat Gabel.

**Also Present:** First Selectman Carmen Vance; Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz; Selectman Bill O'Brien; Superintendent Francine Coss; BOE Chair Lauren Perrotti-Verboven; members of the BOE and others.

**1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**2. Public Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Budget**

**2.1 Presentations of the proposed budget by representatives of the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen:** L. Perrotti-Verboven thanked the BOE members and F. Coss for the hard work put forth in creating the FY '13-'14 BOE budget. She stated that she feels the BOE and FiPAC worked well together this year and even with almost a 0% increase in the BOE allocation from the town, she explained that the BOE was still able to extend the after school program, maintain a life skills class, maintain skilled staff, etc. L. Perrotti-Verboven thanked the public for all the support that was given to the BOE.

F. Coss presented FiPAC's proposed FY '13-'14 BOE budget. She stated that the largest proportions of the BOE budget consist of salaries and tuition. F. Coss reviewed the operating budget and spoke about the approximate \$30,000 that has been allocated for a possible new lunch program next year and explained that the current lunch program has been declining. F. Coss discussed the Professional Services line and explained that majority of these funds are for special education.

N. Hammarstrom arrived at 7:13 pm.

F. Coss discussed the BOE equipment line and explained that both custodial and computer related equipment are included in this line item. She stated that electronics required for the 2013 CT Mastery Testing will be purchased from this line. F. Coss spoke about the Capital Improvement budget and explained that the BOE has made it a priority to replace doors, locks, etc, at the school to ensure the safety of the children. F. Coss spoke of other capital funded projects such as coating of the potable drinking water storage tank, window replacement, and flooring replacement.

J. Luiz presented FiPAC's proposed FY '13-'14 town budget. J. Luiz explained that there would be a decrease in total appropriations for '13-'14 from '12-'13, and stated that the mil rate would remain that same. J. Luiz spoke about the appropriations decrease in the capital budget and the appropriation increase in the grouping of budgets consisting of the town's contingency fund, dog fund and internal service fund. He explained that the appropriations to the '12-'13 capital budget was very large due to the H.W. Porter roof project. J. Luiz discussed notable appropriation increases and decreases in the town's operating budget. J. Luiz stated that requests were denied for additional or increased staff at the Senior Center, Rec Department and Town Clerk's Office. J. Luiz stated that at this time, general wage increases (GWI) are undetermined due to bargaining with organized labor. He explained that once the bargaining is complete, the BOS will act in terms of addressing GWI's for all employees. J. Luiz stated that there would be a decrease in the debt services payment. J. Luiz discussed the town's Capital Budget. He explained that the tennis courts at Rec Park will be improved, and a new fence will be installed bordering the Porter School playground. J. Luiz stated that an electronic gate will also be installed at the lake's boat launch in order to prevent invasive species being brought into Columbia Lake. J. Luiz spoke about other Capital projects as well. J. Luiz stated that the amount to be raised by property taxes will be approximately \$28,366 less than last year. He stated that the mil rate will remain the same, at 27.13.

Paul Kubala of 37 Lake Road stated that he is glad to see the mil rate remain the same. He also feels that lowering expenditures each year would be good because things are going to get a lot worse in this state and country. P. Kubala inquired about the Columbia Volunteer Fire Department assets. John Hahn explained that the amount of money the Department has in their accounts depends on money received from ambulance service billing. P. Kubala asked about the increase in the BOE equipment line. F. Coss explained that the increase is for purchasing technology for students and that it should not be a reoccurring expense.

Vera Englert of 33 Sleepy Hollow Road asked for details on the after school program. F. Coss stated that the program is currently run by volunteers and is not open on a daily basis. She stated that next year the program would operate daily and that three certified staff members would oversee the program. She stated that the program is open to all Porter students. V. Englert is happy with the 0% change in the mil rate but would like to have seen a decrease. She stated that she feels the gate at the boat launch is a necessary purchase and said that she would like to see the town inquire about the hours of protection it receives from the Resident State Trooper.

Laurie Rogers of 14 Hennequin Road expressed thanks to all for the work put forth during this budget process. She stated that she feels it is very important for the school to flourish and would like to see more funding put into the town in order to attract families.

Nikki Keldsen of 5 Baker Hill Road asked when the new doors will be installed at the school. F. Coss stated they will be done as soon as possible.

V. Englert asked about the project tax collection rate and mentioned the numerous tax sales posted on the bulletin board in Town Hall. C. Vance stated that there were originally 11 tax sales, and that the sales are decreased. E. Sharpe stated that FiPAC does not like adjust the collection rate number a lot, but that FiPAC has monitored over the years and unless there is a drastic change in the collection rate, he feels it is best to try to maintain the number as is.

Karen Vertefeuille of 2 Fox Run thanked FiPAC and the BOE for all the work put into this budget.

E. Sharpe stated that he feels this year's budget process went smoother than it has in the past and thanked the BOE for its work and cooperation.

The Public Hearing ended at 8:13 pm.

## **2.2 Opportunity for any elector or qualified voter to be heard regarding the recommended appropriations.**

### **3. Recess**

### **4. Old Business**

#### **4.1 Modification of the proposed FY '13-'14 budget, as FiPAC deems advisable:**

J. Ortiz MOVED to approve Town, BOE and Capital Budgets as presented with the following revisions: 1) That a capital account entitled "Ron Szegda Development Rights" be created; 2) that \$57,980 be moved from the "Open Space Acquisition Fund" to the capital account entitled "Ron Szegda Development Rights" and; 3) that \$140,810 be moved from the capital account entitled "Land Acquisition" to the capital account entitled "Ron Szegda Development Rights." J. Luiz explained that the BOS and Ronald Szegda have entered into a contract for the purchase of farm development rights and that the signed contract calls for payment to be issued over a time period of 10 years. The first payment is due on January 15, 2014 in the amount of \$19,878.97. Payments in identical amounts are due on January 15<sup>th</sup> during years 2015 through 2022. The last payment, in the amount of \$19,878.93 is due on January 15, 2023. The total of all payments is \$198,789.66. No interest of any kind is to be paid to Ronald Szegda. J. Luiz stated that he would like to transfer these funds into a Capital Account solely entitled "Ron Szegda Development Rights." Once the account is created, the funds will be transferred. J. Luiz explained that the funding is currently there and this account would be created for presentation and control. E. Sharpe SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 7:0.

#### **4.2 Discussion on MBR: None.**

### **5. Approval of Minutes**

**5.1 FiPAC Special Meeting Minutes of April 10, 2013: TABLED.**

**6. New Business**

**6.1 Transfers**

**7. Next Meeting**

**8. Adjournment:** J. Ortiz MOVED to ADJOURN and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Kimberly A. Bona.