

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 20, 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; Richard Szegda; Kelley Peck; Dean Toepfer. **Absent:** Todd Shepard

Also Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance; Town Administrator Mark Walter; Superintendent Lol Fearon; Finance Director Bev Ciurylo; BOE Chairman Christopher Lent; Paul Ramsey; Joan Hill; Shirley King.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Welcome Mark Walter:** FiPAC welcomed Mark Walter.
4. **Audience of Citizens:** None.
5. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - 5.1 **Approval of FiPAC June 15, 2016 Meeting Minutes:** R. Szegda MOVED to approve the FiPAC minutes of June 15, 2016. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 5:0:1 with K. Peck abstaining.
6. **Correspondence:**
 - 6.1 **Ordinance #8-13 entitled "Land Acquisition Fund":** Discussion regarding the Land Acquisition funds ensued. The ordinance states that the Open Space committee's duty is to make recommendations to the BOS regarding acquisition of "Open Space" and other proper uses of the Land Acquisition Fund. Appropriations from the Fund may be made upon recommendation of the BOS, and FiPAC approval (followed by an affirmative vote at town meeting). Discussion followed. M. Walter will seek clarification from the town attorney and bring this back to FiPAC at its next meeting.
 - 6.2 **BOS Regular Meeting Minutes of 6/7/16**
 - 6.3 **BOE Regular Meeting Minutes of 5/9/16-** J. Viens spoke about BOE Member Remarks regarding the Non-Lapsing Fund account discussion at the Fiscal Policy meeting in May. J. Viens explained that this account is new to FiPAC, hence the "frustration" in the process as mentioned in the BOE minutes.
 - 6.4 **Fiscal Policy Regular Meeting Minutes of 5/11/16**
7. **BOE:**
 - 7.1 **Certified Union Negotiations:** L. Fearon passed out negotiation information to FiPAC. He explained that the initiation date is set for September 18, 2016, which is when negotiations will officially begin. L. Fearon stated that the BOE invites a FiPAC member to participate in the caucuses during the negotiation session as a non-speaking observer. Caucuses will be held on Thursdays in September, with the exception of September 8, 2016. At this time, no one on FiPAC is able to attend the negotiations. FiPAC has until September 1st to volunteer a commission member to observe at the negotiations.
L. Fearon explained that several towns are in the negotiation process at this time however, he is unsure of where settlements are falling. Once the negotiations get underway he will have a better idea. K. Peck asked about Exhibit 1 entitled "Salary Settlement History." L. Fearon stated the percentages include increments. C. Vance discussed a town meeting that was held several years ago to vote on an education contract that consisted of some individuals receiving 20% - 25% raises when taking into account step increases, degree changes, and cost of living

increases. She asked L. Fearon whether or not increases of this high percentage still stand true. L. Fearon stated the highest proposed increases are in the 4-5% range. Discussion followed.

J. Viens asked L. Fearon if he is confident that the BOE's attorney will be look out for the best interest of the town during negotiations. L. Fearon said yes.

- 7.2 Non-Lapsing Education Account:** Discussion ensued regarding the creation of a non-lapsing education account. L. Fearon stated that up to 1% of the prior year BOE appropriations may be deposited into said account. He explained that this may occur every year, allowing accrual. L. Fearon discussed the benefits of such an account. For example, if there were to be a surplus, the funds could be used for extraordinary issues that may arise like capital projects, special ed, etc. M. Walter stated that East Haddam had a non-lapsing account, and was able to utilize funds from this account for a roof project that was underfunded. Another major benefit is that this account does not and will not impact the MBR.

Discussion regarding the BOE's proposed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) pertaining to a non-lapsing account took place. FiPAC would like to establish specific guidelines to be included in the MOA. L. Fearon stated that there must be an understanding among all three boards, the BOS, FiPAC and the BOE that "any monies allocated into non-lapsing account would be spent judiciously." K. Peck supports the idea of a non-lapsing account but would like to see a subcommittee of some sort to create the MOA. L. Fearon feels that over the past couple of years, the BOE has been very conscious of its spending and has returned money when allowed to do so and hopes that FiPAC recognizes this. L. Fearon expressed that he hopes to find trust amongst the boards. D. Toepfer stressed the importance of trust among the boards. Discussion followed. B. Ciurylo stated that the audit is scheduled for October. L. Fearon expressed that the non-lapsing account should be created before the audit. Discussion followed. E. Sharpe stated that there are other options as well, such as coming up with something "conditional." K. Peck will think more about this and discuss with FiPAC at the next meeting.

8. Old Business:

8.1 2015-16 Year End Numbers: B. Ciurylo reviewed year end numbers. She gave preliminary numbers for both the BOE and the BOS. Year end balancing, June postings and year end postings still needed to be done. As of the meeting date, she stated the BOE has a surplus of approximately \$57,122. The Town has a revenue surplus of approximately \$290,000. However, the portion of the state grant for the Library Project that is applicable to 2015-2016 has yet to be finalized. There is also an anticipated under-spending of the budget of approximately \$420,712 to the Town that is currently showing as of 06/30/16. B. Ciurylo mentioned the BOS expenditure budget still needed to be finalized and some of the under-spending was in the health insurance and salary lines. B. Ciurylo also stated that for 2015-2016, the spending on Capital Projects was approximately \$1,373,538.

8.2 2016-17 Budget Follow-up

- Health Insurance: B. Ciurylo stated that the overall increase in health insurance was 8.4%. Next year, the town will look at other plan options again. K. Peck asked if \$25,000 were to be given to each employee for insurance, would they be able to spend it on insurance health exchange as they wish. M. Walter will look into this.

- Open Space: (continued) E. Sharpe stated that after the last FiPAC meeting there seemed to be confusion about the total scope of the process regarding purchasing Open Space. E. Sharpe stated that a solid process is important so the average person understands everything associated with it. Paul Ramsey stated that he feels the results' generated from the survey that was sent to town citizens reflects how important they feel Open Space is. E. Sharpe stated that was a Land Use survey. E. Sharpe stated that he is not saying that Open Space is not important, however, if it were to come down to having to pick whether or not to fund for education, facilities or open space, he does not feel that Open Space would be the first choice of town people. K. Peck stated that Open Space is NOT the only thing that FiPAC has to consider. She explained that FiPAC must weigh out the pros and cons and then compare them with the other costs that are mandatory and must be paid. Discussion followed.

E. Sharpe asked why the open space proposals can't be presented to townspeople. P. Ramsey said because it will get back to the landowners and then the asking price for the land will skyrocket. J. Hill stated that the score-sheet for properties shows why and how each parcel is valued as it is, and this has been provided to FiPAC. E. Sharpe would like Open Space to go back and review their 10 year plan request for what they want from the town since they were declined (50%) state money for certain properties. He stated that the assumption for grant monies should NOT be projected in the total cost. E. Sharpe asked Open Space to review and produce revised numbers. Open Space will check the state law as well.

- State Budget: B. Ciurylo stated that she has not received any updates regarding the state budget since April. She is waiting to receive an update from CCM.

9. New Business:

9.1 Transfers: None.

10. Next Meeting: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, August 17, 2016 at 7 pm.

11. Adjournment: J. Viens MOVED to ADJOURN at 8:56 pm and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly A. Bona