

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 29, 2017 - 7 pm
Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237

Members Present: Chairman Earnest Sharpe; Kelley Peck; Todd Shepard; Judy Ortiz; Dean Toepfer; Richard Szegda.

Member Absent: Jeff Viens

Also Present: First Selectman Carmen Vance, Town Administrator Mark Walter, Finance Director Beverly Ciurylo; Superintendent Lol Fearon; Principal Alyssa Gwinnell; Vice Principal Michael Kenyon; Director of Student Services Barbara Wilson; BOE Chair Chris Lent; Linette Dooley; Millie Ramsey; Paul Ramsey; Shirley King; Don Schofield; Nikki Keldsen; Steve Piro.

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. **FiPAC Budget Discussion (continued):** C. Vance distributed a memo to FiPAC discussing the outcome of the special BOS meeting of 3/27/17. She explained that after consideration, the BOS has proposed to bond 5.4 million dollars for the Rec Park Master Plan project and the new Public Works facility. (See attached memo.) R. Szegda thanked C. Vance and the BOS and stated that he strongly supports bonding the Rec Park improvements and Public Works facility. He would like the town to be careful not to drain the general fund.

B. Ciurylo reviewed changes in the budget since FiPAC's last meeting. M. Walter stated that a report provided by the Council of Small Towns (COST) house speakers announced they do not have the votes to move forward with the teachers' pension proposal. R. Szegda stated that based on his experience working for the state, he believes that this will change and FiPAC should budget for the teachers' pension. K. Peck agrees that the pension is dead for this year and spoke about possible ways to achieve reducing the mill rate increase to no more than 1.5 mills. Discussion followed.

R. Szegda and J. Ortiz expressed concern with cutting the BOE budget.

Discussion regarding the proposed for the Old Firehouse/Maintenance Garage took place. E. Sharpe stated he does not feel that aesthetic changes to the exterior of the building will have an impact of how staff is able to functionally work inside. M. Walter stated that the door structure is changing to convert this into a maintenance facility and that one end of the building will be designated for welding facility. E. Sharpe and K. Peck feel that this is not critical and can be deferred for a year. Discussion followed.

R. Szegda expressed that he feels that 6% should remain budgeted for teachers' pension. K. Peck feels that the undesignated fund balance could be used towards the teachers' pension if the proposal from the state passes. T. Shepard agreed. J. Ortiz feels that it would be safe to remove the 6% for pension. L. Fearon explained that the 30% requested

from the state does not represent what the teachers pay into the pension fund. He feels that the town could be responsible for 6% of the current proposal of \$613,199 which would amount to approximately \$38,000, not the current proposed appropriation of \$259,607. E. Sharpe asked FiPAC what they feel should be done regarding the pension and stated he trusts L. Fearon's recommendation. He suggested FiPAC leave \$50,000 in the pension line, and remove the remaining \$209,607. FiPAC concurred.

K. Peck MOVED to reduce the proposed BOS Operating Budget by a total of \$249,607, which includes a \$40,000 reduction from Contingency and a \$209,607 reduction from the Teacher's Pension. J. Ortiz SECONDED and it CARRIED 6:0.

T. Shepard MOVED to decrease the proposed BOE Operating Budget by \$40,000. K. Peck SECONDED the MOTION. R. Szegda and J. Ortiz expressed that they do not feel the BOE Operating Budget should be cut. MOTION CARRIED 4:2 with J. Ortiz and R. Szegda OPPOSING.

R. Szegda MOVED to approve the proposed Capital Budget with A \$44,000 reduction to the proposed Old Firehouse/Maintenance Garage project. R. Szegda WITHDREW MOTION. T. Shepard asked C. Vance about the proposed beach project. Discussion followed. R. Szegda MOVED to resubmit MOTION to approve the proposed Capital Budget with a reduction of \$44,000 to the proposed Old Firehouse/Maintenance Garage project. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0.

J. Ortiz MOVED to expend \$472,000 out of General Fund to offset the budget. R. Szegda SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0. D. Toepfer asked if this can be adjusted pending updates from the state, etc. E. Sharpe said that FiPAC will have the chance to make changes to the proposed budget at their special meeting following the Public Hearing on April 19th.

4. Approval of Oberlander to Town Meeting: C. Vance stated that per statute, BOS must forward the request for Open Space purchases to PZC and FiPAC for approval prior to sending the purchase request to a town meeting. There is currently funding in the Open Space Land Acquisition account in Capital to pay for this purchase. There is no need to take funds from the General Fund for this purchase. E. Sharpe would like to see that FiPAC be included by the courtesy of communication, to receive updates on this property and other properties that are of interest to Open Space to purchase. P. Ramsey said that he felt the commission will be more than happy to provide a presentation to FiPAC. R. Szegda MOVED to approve the purchase of the Oberlander Property from the Land Acquisition Fund and to send to Town Meeting for a vote. J. Ortiz SECONDED the MOTION and it CARRIED 6:0.

5. Next Meeting: E. Sharpe explained that both the BOS and the BOE will have a chance to bring any budget change requests back to FiPAC on April 5, 2017 if they choose to.

6. Adjournment T. Shepard MOVED to ADJOURN at 9:18 pm and the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.