

**Town of Columbia**  
**Financial Planning and Allocation Commission**  
**Special Meeting Budget Workshop Agenda**  
**Wednesday, April 22, 2020 – 7:00**  
**Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room**  
**And Zoom Video Conferencing**  
**323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237**

To join the FiPAC meeting please use the link below. If the direct link does not work, copy and paste into your browser.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98629246070?pwd=NU1GWFFpQOVFvK2tYOVJuOXBQeGdxZD09>

Meeting ID: 986 2924 6070

Password: 479263

One tap mobile +16465588656

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/actdlm3E5>

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Approval of Minutes**

2.1. Approval of FiPAC Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2020.

**3. Budget Workshop with FiPAC Discussion**

**4. Next Meeting**

4.1. 04/29/20 FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget Workshop

4.2. 5/06//20 FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget Workshop

**5. Adjournment**

**Town of Columbia**  
**Financial Planning and Allocation Commission**  
**Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes**  
**Wednesday, April 15, 2020 – 7:00**  
**Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room**  
**And Zoom Video Conferencing**  
**323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. 06237**

**Members Present:** Ernie Sharpe, Chairman; Kelly Peck Co-Vice Chairman; Richard Szegda, Co-Vice Chairman; Jeff Viens; Judith Jordan; Brian Pedersen.

**Members Absent:** Mike Patel.

**Also Present:** Mark Walter, Town Administrator, Bev Ciurylo, Finance Director, Maria Geryk, Superintendent

1. **Call to Order.** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. M. Walter read the following: “This is a web-based call, so we are operating under the following procedures: This session is being both video and audio-recorded. Commissioners and staff will generally remain on mute except when speaking or voting and will generally be keeping video of themselves on throughout the meeting. There will not be any public comment during this Budget Workshop Meeting. If a member of the public creates an audio or video disruption, they may be manually ejected from the meeting upon recommendation of staff or the chair.”

E. Sharpe stated that we will be having a Public Meeting and we will be posting the login information once the date has been established.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** E. Sharpe asked for a moment of silence.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

- 3.1. **Approval of FiPAC Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2020.** E. Sharpe MOVED to Approve the Minutes of April 8, 2020. R. Szegda SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6.0.

4. **Budget Workshop with FiPAC Discussion.**

**BOE:** M. Geryk provided an update to the FiPAC committee on the school’s protocols and preparation for the COVID-19 emergency and its impact on the teachers and students. As of March 16<sup>th</sup> students were no longer in school, staff and leadership teams put together remote on-line learning for students. 200 devices were provided to students. EastConn is providing meals for anyone under the age 18 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Costs associated with the COVID-19 emergency are at \$15,000. M. Geryk explained that the costs included some overtime hours to get up and running, purchasing of online platforms, and the devices provided to students. She did not feel that there would be further additional costs.

J. Viens questioned if the closure were to continue into the next school year, is there a need for full staff with the online teaching. M. Geryk stated yes and by contract, will need to continue to pay staff as is. J. Viens also asked about

the additional of one teacher. M. Geryk noted that there was a need in Grade 4.

J. Jordan was very supportive of the online teaching and noted it was a difficult task for the teachers.

B. Pedersen asked if there would be more costs savings or additional costs on top of the COVID costs that M. Geryk noted earlier. She is not anticipating that the number she gave would change by much. B. Pedersen also thanked Maria for the devices and online programs being provided to families. He noted that the teachers have been great.

J. Viens asked if there would be any savings on busing. M. Geryk stated that she has been directed to enter into negotiations with the bus providers but would guess that there would not be any substantial savings, but maybe some savings.

J. Viens asked about the Capital request of \$50,000 to upgrade the track. M. Geryk explained that the question is whether the track should be renovated or a brand new one put in. She explained that a study will need be conducted to determine that.

R. Szegda stated that the track is not only used by the students, but other residents use the track. E. Sharpe stated that it might make sense to put the track somewhere else if we are looking to put in a standard size track, since the current track is not a standard size and is used by both the school and residents.

E. Sharpe asked about how much research has gone into the track. M. Geryk explained that a study will need to be done and it was her hope that it was under \$50,000, but she will have to look it up and get back to FiPAC. M. Walter stated that he thinks that the study would be under \$10,000.

J. Viens asked about the student enrollment. M. Geryk explained that a projection on student enrollment was completed in 2016 and that the numbers projected showed a decrease at the elementary and middle school level. She explained that 243 is projected for the high school, but we anticipate 233. The numbers are already accounted for in tuition. 414 students are anticipated at the elementary level. E. Sharpe asked for clarification on the details on tuition and if it is going to hold. M. Geryk said yes. In the next week or so we should have a better idea.

E. Sharpe asked what it actually cost to run the school. M. Geryk said about \$600,000. M. Geryk stated that in year two, she has a fairly strong handle on the budget. Expenditure lines have been fairly consistent from last year. The school had 4 or 5 retirements last year and this year which saved a fair amount of money with the staff turnovers.

**BOS:** K. Peck asked for an explanation on the related staff increases for a Social Worker, Public Works Administrative Assistant, Transfer Station Attendant and Seasonal employee. M. Walter explained that the emergency personnel brought to his attention that there are pockets of social isolation in our community and residents that are in need of more professional help. The Board of Selectman were challenged to find a solution to this problem. We

received a quote for AHM for a Social Worker that would work 2 days a week for a budget of \$25,000. We are also looking at two other agencies with similar services and the Town will be advertising for a social worker. The Public Works Director requested an assistant to help with fielding phone calls and to process paperwork so that he has more availability to be out of the office for projects. We have increased the hours of the existing Accounts Payable clerk to fill this position. The additional Transfer Station Attendant is to help with proper recycling guidelines to avoid fines and the seasonal Public Works employee will help with work that needs to be accomplished at Rec Park. All these positions are not receiving benefits.

B. Pedersen asked about the increase of 19.5% for the group health benefit. M. Walter explained we went out to bid with a five-town consortium to reduce the costs. He explained that in the first year, we did really well in cost. Unfortunately, in the past seven months we had high costs due to an increase in health coverage for complicated health issues. M. Walter explained that we have started an extensive wellness program to help keep costs down.

R. Szegda asked how much money did we spend this past year in the Rec Department. M. Walter explained that we are still going to be spending on projects that were slated to be completed, which includes the guardrail in the park at an estimate of \$40,000 to \$50,000 and the road is not yet completed. Discussion ensued about the current improvements to the park and what might be cut. M. Walter shared that there may be items that can be moved a year, which include the pavilion by the playscape at \$35,000, the pickleball court at \$35,000, the Bocce court at \$5,000 and the additional playscape equipment at \$50,000. Another \$50,000 is being budgeted for the maintenance facility to house equipment for rec park which can be deferred if needed.

J. Jordan asked if revenue is down should we prioritize what projects get done based on revenue coming in significantly lower. K. Peck think it's important to prioritize and understand how much of the \$175,000 Rec Park Improvement budget is essential and what can be deferred until next year based on what is currently happening.

B. Pedersen asked S. Everett what could be deferred in the Operating and Capital budgets. S. Everett explained that the Hunt Rd. culvert could potentially be pushed off another year at \$175,000, the maintenance garage at Rec Park at \$50,000 and perhaps another \$2,000 somewhere else.

J. Viens asked what vehicle is replacing the Public Works Director vehicle. M. Walter explained that the DPW Directors truck will go to the Public Works Forman because his vehicle is not in good shape and needs replacement. The DPW Director's vehicle will be replaced with a SUV.

K. Peck stated she felt a no increase in the mill rate and that it is important to prioritize capital projects. We should not be raising taxes if we can afford not to. Jeff Viens agreed.

Discussion ensued about the fund balance and what is considered a healthy fund balance.

J. Jordan asked about the State Municipal Aid and if that was changing. M. Geryk commented that she had heard that school funding should be staying consistent.

M. Walter stated that there is Tax Deferral Program being set up which will give residents an extension for property tax payments for up to 90 days. THE BOS will be discussing this at their meeting next week.

E. Sharpe requested that FiPAC members direct all questions regarding the 20/21 budget to him. He also mentioned that FiPAC should be ready to discuss the timeline of the budget approval at the next meeting.

**Next Meeting**

**4.1.** 04/22/20 FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget Workshop

**4.2.** 04/29/20 FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget Workshop

**4.3.** 5/06//20 FiPAC Special Meeting – Budget Workshop

**5. Adjournment:** E. Sharpe MOVED to Adjourn at 8:35 PM. J. Viens seconded. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie