

Town of Columbia
Financial Planning and Allocation Commission
Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, April 22, 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, Steven Everett, First Selectman.

1. **Call to Order:** E. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 7:05 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.”
2. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - 2.1. **Approval of FiPAC Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2020.** E. Sharpe MOVED to Approve the FiPAC Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2020. J. Jordan SECONDED and the MOTION CARRIED 7.0.
3. **Budget Workshop with FiPAC Discussion:**

M. Walter explained that Board of Selectman (BOS) had decided at the March 31, 2020 meeting to fund \$300,000 from the General Fund for the Rescue Truck replacement and move it to a Town Meeting. He explained that we don’t know when we will be able to have a Town Meeting. Based on the Executive Order 7S which allows a maximum of 1% of the municipal total budget, the BOS decided to reverse the original motion for a Town Meeting for \$300,000 and reduce the original motion to transfer \$175,000 from general fund to capital fund for the Rescue Truck replacement. BOS approved the motion and now have moved to FiPAC for approval. E. Sharpe noted that a \$125,000 adjustment to the fund balance calculation will need to be made based on this.

E. Sharpe reviewed the budget worksheet that he had set up for FiPAC to analyze and use for the budget process. He stated he had made some adjustments such as, BOS commercial insurance could come down by \$3,400.00 and the Town had found \$37,000 for a bulldozer replacement and now those funds are no longer needed.

E. Sharpe started the Budget Workshop with a discussion on the School Budget. E. Sharpe noted that the budget document reflects a \$200,000 positive

variance this year. M. Geryk noted that she is hopeful that it will be over the \$200,000. BOE met last evening to discuss further budget deductions and went line by line and approved additional reductions.

M. Geryk mentioned that the capital request was reduced to \$30,000 in total. The track request was reduced from \$50,000 down to \$10,000 with the Town allowing the BOE to use the \$17,000 available in the Town Capital fund for engineering and design costs. The additional capital is for painting, flooring and ceiling tiles after further reductions were made.

M. Geryk continued with the BOE Operating budget and noted that it was reduced by \$70,258 in a variety of lines; such as, heating, diesel fuel, interns, insurance, music accompaniment and transportation. She also noted that the Enrichment position was reduced to a 0.5 FTE position. The total operating budget reduction was \$70,258 overall and the capital overall reduction was \$60,000. The total BOE budget reduction was \$130,258 which brings the BOE request to -1.6% overall.

These changes were accepted by FiPAC and were entered on the Budget worksheet set up by E. Sharpe.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed changes to the budget with the various cuts from the school and the town budget. E. Sharpe stated that the bottom line is that we can achieve a flat mill rate with no mill increase using approximately \$403,500 from Fund balance – per the budget spreadsheet.

Discussion ensued regarding reducing costs to the proposed Rec Park budget plan. Kelly Peck stated that FiPAC does not tell the BOS which things to eliminate, but an amount should be given to cut and the BOS can decide what projects should be put off so that the Town does not have a tax increase.

B. Pederson asked which projects might be considered to be able to drop the budget to \$70,000 to \$85,000. M. Walter explained only use \$50,000 for the playscape, \$35,000 for pavilion and \$3,500 for pickle ball. Other alternatives to be considered to save money is to use the Public Works department for labor on these projects and not outside contractors.

S. Everett stated that the BOS could meet in the middle at \$100,000 for the Rec Park budget by continuing improvements in the park by finishing the road, soccer field and installing traffic flow stoppage bollards and put in the pavilion, playscape and pickleball. The general agreement was to drop the budget from \$125,000 to \$100,000.

Discussion ensued about the collection rate. M. Walter explained that currently it is at 97.5% collection rate.

Discussion ensued about fund balance at 15% or 15.7% and what FiPAC was comfortable with regarding cuts.

R. Szegda and B. Pedersen were comfortable with the 15% or 15.7%. J. Jordan was concerned about the additional staff salary commitments. E. Sharpe explained that those increases were at \$16,708. K. Peck agreed with J. Jordan that increases during this time are a concern and would like to look at a reasoned analysis on the BOS operating side. J. Viens suggested some cuts to

Information Technology, Hop River capital project and to the senior center. Those suggestions did not proceed.

E. Sharpe stated that FiPAC comes up with the first draft for the public, BOS and BOE to review. Then after FiPAC receives feedback, FiPAC gets another chance to vote again.

Discussion ensued regarding reductions in the operating budget on the Town side. It was a consensus to stay with the suggestions as listed on the budget worksheet as presented.

E. Sharpe stated that the budget will show \$175,000 General Fund for the Rescue Truck and the beginning fund balance as of July 1, 2020 will be adjusted for the change in the transfer amount. Fund balance will reflect \$451,842 being used so that there will be no impact on the mill rate for FY 2020-2021.

E. Sharpe MOVED to have B. Ciurylo to update the budget document to reflect the changes to the BOE, Capital Budget and BOS budget as noted on the Budget Worksheet presented during the meeting. J. Viens Seconded. MOTION CARRIED 6.0.

E. Sharpe stated that FiPAC can set the Public Hearing and possibly budget vote after next week's budget meeting.

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. E. Sharpe Adjourned at 8:28 PM.