

**Preston Board of Finance  
Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, January 18, 2023  
Preston Plains Cafeteria**

**Call to Order** - John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

**1. Roll Call**

**Members**

John Moulson - Chairman  
Robert Congdon - V. Chairman  
Kayla Thompson - Clerk  
Stacey Becker  
Denise Beale  
Zachary Maurice

**Alternates**

Robert Castronova  
Andrew Sawyer

***Also Present***

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier - Selectwoman  
Jerry Grabarek - Selectman  
Cindy Varricchio - Finance Director  
Keith Wucik - Fire Chief  
Jill S. Keith

**2. Public Comment -**

Jill Keith, 26 Tanglewood Drive, thanked the Board for updating the Town's website by removing John Spang's name and their efforts to keep citizens informed. She also shared her desire to see postings as to how citizens can expect to be informed of meetings throughout the budget process.

**3. Correspondence**

→ Dec. 27, 2022 - Email: Jill Keith regarding the need for a website update and inquiry on the progress of developing the Board of Finance Policies.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**a. Board of Finance Special Meeting December 21, 2022**

***Kayla Thompson motioned to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of December 21, 2022 as presented. Denise Beale seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Kayla Thompson,***

*Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice voted in favor; while Stacey Becker abstained. The motion was carried 5-0-1.*

**b. Board of Finance Regular Meeting December 21, 2022**

*Denise Beale motioned to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 21, 2022 as presented. Kayla Thompson seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Kayla Thompson, Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice voted in favor; while Stacey Becker abstained. The motion was carried 5-0-1.*

After the vote Bob Congdon noted that the last word on page 2 of those minutes should read nominated rather than dominated.

**8. Financial Reports**

**a. Board of Education Liaison Report**

Zach Maurice stated that the last meeting was dominated by a presentation on where the central office could be located in the near future due to the need for space in Preston Plains Middle School as a group of students moves through the system. The Board of Education was presented with several options. Modules and building options are cost prohibitive; so they are looking at renting at a cost of \$5,500 a month.

**b. Board of Education Financial Report**

Cindy Varricchio stated that the Board of Education Budget is tracking well, however, she pointed they are watching salaries very closely; with 4 long-term substitutes that line will exceed what was originally budgeted. She also stated that preschool collections are doing better than expected with 47.3% of the budgeted tuition received. She did state that after speaking to the Special Education Director there could be additional Special Education expenses in the future.

Andrew Sawyer asked about the deficiency to the Nursing line. It was explained that the two new hires were more expensive than anticipated. It was also stated that the bus driver situation will have more transitioning due to a recent resignation.

Once again encumbrance was brought up. Ms. Varricchio stated that she is waiting for Sean O'Grady(auditor) to give a definition that will work for both the auditors and Boards to use. She felt that anything that the Boards are obligated to pay should be encumbered to alleviate the misunderstanding that there are more funds available than there truly are.

**c. Town Revenue Report**

Cindy Varricchio shared that the Town is doing well and that in the next report the Board will see a significant increase in Property Tax Prior Years due to a recent tax sale. She stated that Town Clerk fees have an additional \$14,000. Building Permits are up as well as Interest Income.

Ms. Varricchio stated that Building Permits and Building Educational Fees are both expenses and revenues and that they will need to be built into next year's budget as such.

She stated that the Town has received \$91,690 of unexpected State funding, the State advised not to budget for this State funding. Ms. Varricchio pointed out that the Resident Trooper DUI Enforcement line is showing a revenue, however there will be an upcoming expense that will offset that.

#### **d. Town Expenditure Report**

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared that there are no major issues and that the town finances are tracking favorably. She then pointed out several areas of interest:

- Pension has 44% remaining but the Library has that built into their budget so when a journal entry is made that should bring it back in line with what's expected.
- PRA Legal Services fees; with the closure of the DEEP FAA the roughly \$38,000 in legal fees were paid out of the PRA budget. That will be taken out of their overall budget.
- Public Works: Gasoline and Diesel - once they collect Fire Department and School pay their portions that line item will have about 60% remaining.
- Public Works: Road Resurfacing - is about \$6,000 over budget They have done a lot of culvert and road repairs and hopefully any overages can be offset with grants.
- Parks & Rec summer salaries will be offset with a \$5,000 grant.

She concluded that overall the Town is on track.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared several updates and pieces of information with the Board in order to keep them apprised as to the status of several grants and programs.

1. Ms. Allyn-Gauthier shared that the Community Investment Fund 2030 grants were submitted January 6th. She reviewed that one application for \$400,000 covers the engineering and design costs for Phase I and Phase II of the *Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming* project; and that the other application for \$700,000 would cover the cost of Phase II of the Transfer Station upgrades that would allow the area to be safer for use and to bring the area up to DEEP standards.

Both applications had many letters of support from both tribes, residents, and businesses, and various state and federal representatives and senators, which should add weight to the applications.

2. The other application supported by SCCOG which was due January 10th is a pre application stage for TRIP, Transportation Rural Improvement Project. It was pointed out that Mathewson Mill Road is a minor collector road and so the million dollar project

would include reclaim, repave, add width to the road to accommodate possible bike lanes, and guide rails.

She will keep the Board aware of any movement or developments as those grants are moved forward.

3. For both Cooktown Road and Park Road bridges there was a planning meeting before Christmas where all the documents were reviewed and the Town's obligations were online for that project to move forward.
4. The Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education are looking into solar energy. Commissioner Dyke suggested contacting Green Bank, a solar company with a quasi relationship with the state. A meeting with Green Bank's, Mike House, Roy Seitsinger, Jim Corley, Cindy Varricchio, and Sandra Allyn-Gauthier to discuss what solar options the Town and schools might have. Thoughts are that perhaps the large fields behind the Transfer Station and the PPMS could be used for solar farming and looking at all the buildings the Town owns (Town Hall, both fire houses and schools, Library, Town Garage). They will be looking at the options to see if it's a viable option for the Town, that they are looking at both land and buildings, and she shared that it is in the preliminary stages and that it would be a 20 year commitment. She added all the technical and feasibility evaluation is at no cost so it doesn't hurt to evaluate it.

Bob Congdon reminded everyone of the land where the Poquetanuck School once was also be considered.

5. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that the Town and the school are looking to partner with each other to develop a cohesive Strategic Plan. She shared that she and Roy Seitsinger are reaching out to those suggested by CCM and the Chamber of Commerce to obtain the cost for such a plan. Ms. Allyn-Gauthier will keep the Board posted as the process moves forward.

Before leaving the topic of Town Expenditures Andrew Sawyer asked about how the Parks and Recs fees collected for programs are accounted for. It was explained that fees that are collected are put in a special Revenue Fund account and then are offset with expenses or grants that are received for the various programs.

## **9. Old Business**

### **a. Audit Update**

Ms. Varricchio shared that everything has been turned into the auditors and now they are working through the information to complete the audit by the end of the month. She shared that only 38% of the Towns have filed their audits on time; this is largely due to the COVID grant funds that towns have received require State Single Audits as well as Federal Single Audits. It

was stated that both the auditors and the staff are working towards completing the audit by January 31st, if not then certainly by February 28th.

It was asked if the \$80,000 "Do to/Do from" had cleared up. The response was that it has been resolved with a lot of effort.

It was asked if they have requested another one month extension. Ms. Varricchio stated that they have not as of yet and are hoping there won't be a need to. It was also stated that Sean O'Grady will be asked to attend either the February or March meeting to present the completed audit.

## **10. New Business**

### **a. Fire Department Request for Transfer of ARPA Funds**

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that the Fire Department was approved \$45,000 to purchase a large diameter hose and there was a savings during that purchase. The Fire Department is now requesting to use the remaining ARPA funds of \$6,270.00 to be used to purchase a new thermal imaging camera. It was clarified that the present thermal imaging camera is inoperable and needs to be replaced and that the Board of Selectmen have already approved the purchase at their meeting last week.

***Bob Congdon motioned to transfer the remaining ARPA funds of \$6,270.00 appropriated for the large diameter hose, to be used to purchase a new thermal imaging camera. Kayla Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.***

### **b. Board of Finance Budget**

The Board briefly discussed their budget for FY 2023-2024. It was decided that Ms. Varricchio would verify the auditor's cost so the proper amount could be budgeted. She also stated that the Board would need to budget for a Federal Single Audit and possibly a State Single Audit. The State Single Audit may already be built into their pricing as part of a traditional audit. Due to the many grants that the Town has received and the continued COVID funds the Town and school district will be receiving over the next several years a Federal Single Audit will need to be part of the budget over the next several years. It was decided that the budget would be finalized at the February meeting.

### **c. Invoice Approval**

There was a brief discussion regarding the Progress Payment and the amount the Board of Finance was responsible for in order to clarify the amount left to be paid.

***Bob Congdon motioned to approve the Progress Payment of \$2,000 payment to King, King, & Associates, CPAs. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.***

**11. Public Comment**

Jill Keith, 26 Tanglewood Drive, questioned the reassessment differences between residential and commercial.

Ms. Keith also asked about what, if any, progress that has been made on the Board of Finance Policy Handbook.

Bob Congdon shared that most commercial businesses are evaluated on their revenue rather than their property value. Andrew Sawyer, owner of a local business stated that his taxes on his business were up 10% so the shift of tax burden seems to be to the residential and away from the commercial.

It was then stated that once the Assessor has finalized the reassessments that she would be willing to attend a Board of Finance's February meeting to answer any questions.

**12. Adjournment**

***Denise Beale motioned to adjourn at 8:16 P.M. Kayla Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.***

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kimberly Lang*

Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

2023 JAN 25 A 10:15

*Jill Keith*  
PRESTON TOWN CLERK