

**Preston Board of Finance  
Regular Meeting  
Wednesday, March 15, 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  
Ken Zachem - Selectman  
Cindy Varricchio - Finance Director  
Kimberly Lang - Recording Secretary

**Members of the Public - 1**

***Stacey Becker motioned to move #8 Audit Report by King, King, and Associates, CPAs forward on the agenda. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.***

Zoe Peak and Sean O'Grady presented their findings via ZOOM. The Board members were given copies of the various reports that make up the audit.

First Mr. O'Grady reviewed the audit with the Board pointing out that the Town has a very healthy General Fund Balance of about 4 ½ million. He also pointed out that the higher than usual tax collection has helped the Town. He then reviewed the outstanding liabilities the Town has. Mentioned that although the State hasn't yet mandated towns to contribute to the TRB, the Town needs to be prepared when that happens. He briefly stated the impact RiverWalk will have when that has finally been conveyed to the Mohegan Tribe. He reviewed Non Major Funds which are funds that don't have enough money to warrant separation. He finally mentioned that the average outstanding taxes most towns carry is between 2-8%; however, Preston only carries 1% about \$225,000. He also shared corrective actions that have been

resolved throughout the past year that will make future audits go more smoothly and efficiently.

Zoe Peak then reviewed the State Single Audit pointing out that the Town has received five million dollars in funding: 3 million in Educational Cost Share, 1.6 million from Pequot Grant, \$452,000 from Brownfield RiverWalk, and \$200,000 from Town Aid Road. Ms. Peak then reviewed the findings of the State Single Audit pointing out the internal accounting corrective actions that have occurred during the past year. She mentioned the Board of Education and the Finance Office need to complete formalized accounting policies.

Then the Federal Single Audit was reviewed. The Town can expect to complete a FSA for the next several years due to the ARPA funds received and the multiple grants that the Town has been awarded. Zoe Peak reviewed the expenditures of the approximate 1 million in Federal Funds: \$339,000 for School Nutrition Program, \$259,000 Coronavirus Relief Fund, \$250,000 ESRA Funds. She reviewed weaknesses, deficiencies, and areas of improvements that have been made on the corrective actions which are continually being worked on to be improved.

It was also mentioned that Parks and Recreation finances will be moved within the finance office so uniformed practices are being followed.

The Board had no questions at the end of the presentation. It was noted that the Town will incur some additional fees because of additional work that was done to complete the audit. To help with the writing and adopting of Accounting Policies the auditors agreed to send samples to the Town.

## **2. Public Comment -**

Jill Keith, 26 Tanglewood Drive, requested the progress of the Policy Sub-Committee. It was stated that they have materials to review to begin the process.

## **3. Correspondence**

- Feb. 21, 2023 - Email: Gloria Homiski regarding memo from Roy Seitsinger.
- Feb. 27, 2023 - Email: Transfer Enterprise regarding office furniture
- Mar. 10, 2023 - Email: Jill S. Keith regarding BoE policies and questions that she has regarding identifying student's status
- Mar. 9, 2023 - Email: The Collins Center regarding programs offered
- Feb. 17, 2023 - Letter: Roy Seitsinger regarding Emergency Protocols for School Closing due to physical damage to building or primary systems (heat, water, electrical)

## **4. Approval of Minutes**

### **a. Board of Finance Regular Meeting February 15, 2023**

*Denise Beale motioned to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 15, 2023 as presented. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. John Moulson, Kayla Thompson, Denise Beale, Stacey Becker, and Zach Maurice voted in favor; while Bob Congdon abstained, the motion was carried 5-0-1.*

## **5. First Select Person Report**

### **a. Draft Preston Municipal Building Needs and Assessment Advisory Group**

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier reviewed the proposed guidelines for the *Building Needs and Assessment Advisory Group*. The Group would be composed of 7 members for approximately 12 to 18 months with the purpose of evaluating the needs, analyzing the options and expenses in terms of current and forecasted space for employees and storage, environmental (HVAC), safety and traffic concerns; and to recommend whether to upgrade and maintain existing properties are more feasible than to build new with repurposing or selling of existing properties to better meet the needs of the growing on.

After the review of the draft, the Board was asked for their input and recommendations. It was suggested that rather than 12 to 18 months, to have members serve a 2 year term.

It was also stated that this is a Group should be in place every 5 years so that an assessment of Town properties can be done to better meet the needs of the Town. It was thought that this Advisory Group could be convened about 2 years before the next Capital Plan is done to assist with developing and implementing a strategic spending plan that meets all aspects of the Town's needs.

The discussion then turned to the budget the Advisory Group would need to evaluate the various properties and how quickly this really could occur. It was stated that professionals would probably need to be hired to do thorough evaluation.

With no further suggestions and discussion from the Board the Draft of the Advisory Group would go back to the Board of Selectmen to be voted on as a Resolution.

### **b. Grant Updates**

Ms. Allyn-Gauthier shared the following information about the ongoing grants and funding that the Town is involved in.

- **Community Invest Fund** - \$400,000 to pay for the engineering fees for Phase 1 and 2 of the Poquetanuck Traffic Calming Project. They have received word that the project has been selected and will move to the governor for approval, and should know within 30 days if the governor approves.
- **LOTICIP** - The 3 million grant for the Poquetanuck Traffic Calming Project should be finalized in mid-April.

- **Recreational Trail through DEEP** - Applied for \$554,000 to add 2 kayak launches, parking, fishing area, maintenance of the area, watering system for the hanging planters, and 30 banners to hang throughout Poquetanuck Village.
- **Bridge Grants** - The 5.6 million dollar bridge projects - the following have been completed: notification to all abutters, legal notices, and notification to all required agencies and legislators. At this point, just waiting for the DOT to send the agreement and then the Public Hearings can occur.
- **TRIP Grant** - This is for improvements on Matthewson Mill Road which is due March 20th; this grant is being finalized and packaged to be submitted.
- **Courtney's Community Project Funding** - This is \$279,000 to cover the cost of Public Works area upgrades such as the salt shed improvements, a generator, and security upgrades. There is a quick turnaround time so we should know by March 22nd if we have been granted the funding.
- **The STEAP Grant** - The 1/2 million that was awarded for the Transfer Station is in the final stages because the contract has been received. Those funds should become available soon and the work will be started.
- **Community Challenge Grant** - This is due May 3rd, it is for 1-10 million to cover infrastructure, housing, and interconnective improvements.
- **Community Connectivity** - This is due July 21st, it is for 100-800 thousand to cover improvements to safety like sidewalks, streetscapes, and bike paths.
- **Community Investment Funds** - Looking to partner with the Mohegan Tribe to work on Route 12 and the Phase III of the Poquetanuck Village Traffic Calming Project. Due dates May 1st to June 30th.

She stated that they are busy looking for every opportunity that comes our way!

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier also mentioned the Agricultural Forum that was held at the Ekonk Grange. Preston partnered with North Stonington, Voluntown, Griswold, and Sterling to bring agencies, legislators, and farmers together to discuss area needs and available opportunities. About 60 people attended the Forum that allowed farmers a chance to learn about programs, funding, and grants that are offered. It also allowed them to network and share their concerns and needs with agencies and legislators that could help solve issues.

## 6. Board of Education Liaison Report

Zach Maurice stated that 69% of the pre-k tuition has been collected, which is outstanding. He shared that last year the auditors had 6 recommendations and this year there were only two, a definite step in the right direction. Lastly, the Board of Education has finalized their budget.

## **7. Finance Director's Report**

### **a. Board of Education January 2023 Expenditure Report**

Cindy Varricchio stated that the Board of Education Budget is tracking well, however, they continue to monitor salaries. As has been stated at previous meetings the substitute line is projected to be higher than budgeted due to the need for long-term substitutes. She also stated that preschool collections are better than expected with 69% of the budgeted tuition received.

### **b. Town January 2023 Revenue and Expenditure Report**

Ms. Varricchio reviewed the Town Revenue and Expenditure Reports with the Board. She pointed out that Revenue Sharing Funds have been received, Building Permits and Town Clerk Fees are higher than expected, and the budget on as a whole is tracking well. She went on to note that Investment Income is doing extremely well and that \$22,975 does not include February's interest which is over \$10,000. She feels this is because Town Treasure Erin Gizio is looking at where we're putting our investments and making sure to get the best rates available.

The Tax Collector's Report was reviewed and there were no comments or questions.

Cindy Varricchio stated that the Budget Notebooks contained the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen's proposed budgets. She prepared them for the Board tonight so that they have time to review them before their Budget Workshops on the 29th and 30th. As members review the proposed budgets and have questions they should email them to her so that answers can be addressed at the appropriate budget workshop.

## **8. Old Business**

### **a. Audit Report - King, King, and Associates, CPAs**

This was presented earlier in the meeting.

## **9. New Business**

### **a. Invoice Approval - King, King, and Associates, CPAs**

It was shared that this is the last payment besides the supplemental bill that will be received by April. It was also mentioned that an appropriation will be needed because the audit line item is over budget due to the State Single Audit and the Federal Single Audit that were needed, yet not budgeted for. There was a brief discussion as to how to best handle the overage.

*Denise Beale motioned to approve the King, King, and Associates, CPAs invoice for \$12,157. And noted that next month an appropriation would be needed to cover any budgetary shortfall with the additional supplemental bill that is expected. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

**10. Public Comment**

Jill Keith, 26 Tanglewood Drive, requested the proposed Board of Education budget amount, which was given to her to the best of the ability of those in the room.

Andrew Sawyer questions the checks and balances that are in place to ensure overrides don't occur in the Assessor's office. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier assured him that there are measures in place and that the present Assessor must comply with State standards and regulations therefore such overrides won't happen in the future.

Jerry Grabarek handed a letter signed by himself and Ken Zachem to each member of the Board. It was requesting that the Board of Finance give the office of First Selectman/woman a 10% raise due to the increase in responsibilities and demands of the position in a post-pandemic world.

**11. Adjournment**

*Kayla Thompson motioned to adjourn at 8:55 P.M. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kimberly Lang*

Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

2023 MAR 21 P 1:52

*Jill Keith*  
PRESTON TOWN CLERK