

**Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 27, 2022
Cafeteria - Preston Plains Middle School**

Call to Order - John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:35 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

Alternates

John Moulson - Chairman
Robert Congdon - Vice Chairman
Stacey Becker
Andy Depta
Denise Beale -
Zachary Maurice

Andrew Sawyer
Kayla Thompson - Clerk

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier - Selectwoman
Jerry Grabarek - Selectman
Ken Zachem - Selectman
Cindy Varricchio - Finance Director
Dr. Seitsinger - Superintendent of Schools
Sean Nugent - Chairman of the Board of Education
Jim Corley - Public Works Director
14 members of the public

2. Public Comment

Nicole Hinks, 159 Branch Hill Road, stated that she felt that the Board of Education and Dr. Seitsinger have worked hard to put together a reasonable budget. And that it saddened her to hear at the last Board of Finance meeting that the BoF is not responsible if the preschool program is cut from the budget. She went on to state that she has seen firsthand the benefits of such a vital program to young students and hopes the Board will reconsider their position on this program and the entire Education budget. Preston doesn't want the bare minimum.

Susan Strader, 463 Route 164, read her email that was previously sent into the record. She then stated that it's vital for education to continue to recover from the pandemic and they will need funds to do so. The town needs to think to the future and rather than tax increases only when major events occur that require a large increase, it's far better to make yearly small increases to maintain the continual growth of the town.

With no other public comments, a motion was made to alter the order of the meeting.

Bob Congdon moved to waive the order of the agenda to number 6 Old Business letter b. 2021 Audit Status, and then a. 2022-23 Proposed Budgets. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice voted in favor of the motion and Andy Depta voted against the motion. The motion carried 5 to 1.

6. Old Business

b. 2021 Audit Status Update

Cindy Varricchio stated that work continues regarding the 2021 audit and that steps are being taken now to put policies and procedures in place to assure that the 2022 audit goes smoothly. She stated that while it's imperative that the 2021 audit be completed, it's critical that best practices be established moving forward to prevent future delays. She also stated that an independent evaluation needs to be done in order to complete this year's audit. OPEB is scheduled to conduct its review on May 13th. At that time the review for the 2022 audit will be scheduled for sometime this summer in order to keep that audit on track. She stated that an additional extension until May 30, 2022, has been requested. She also pointed out that 22% of Connecticut towns have yet to complete their audit so, Preston is not alone in its efforts. Ms. Varricchio shared a spreadsheet showing the progress of the Corrective Action Plan as of April 27, 2022. She stated that there needs to be greater control of funds and more accountability in the procedures that are followed. There has to be clear internal control and duties need to be split into smaller increments for a better system of checks and balances.

Stacey Becker requested an updated Revenue report for the May meeting.

a. 2022-2023 Proposed Budgets Education and Town

Stacey Becker motioned to cut the salary raises from 4% to 2.5%. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion was withdrawn.

Stacey Becker stated she felt 4% was too high and not fiscally responsible.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that the raise was needed to maintain morale and that it seemed short-sighted to make cuts at this point.

Bob Congdon stated that it was difficult to make any decisions without a completed audit, a complete revenue report, and other vital information and projections need to make a responsible decision.

Bob Congdon motioned to move the Public Hearing to May 26, 2022, at 7:30 in Veteran's Memorial; Town Meeting to June 9, 2022, at 7:30 in Veteran's Memorial; and the Referendum to June 21, 2022. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Sean Nugent clarified that the Board will meet on May 18, 2022, for their Regular Meeting at 7:30 at Preston Plains Middle School and would meet on May 19, 2022, if needed.

3. Correspondence

- April 22, 2022 - CCM - email: Municipal Voice
- April 22, 2022 - CCM - email: information on the upcoming workshop later in May
- Mar. 30, 2022 - CCM - email: Virtual Session on Energy Market Updates
- April 19, 2022 - CCM - email: Monthly Newsletter
- March 24, 2022 - CCM - email: 2022 CT Emergency Management Symposium
- March 25, 2022 - CCM - email: Municipal Voice
- April 8, 2022, 2022 - CCM - email: Municipal Voice
- March 23, 2022 - CCM - email: Webinar on Customer Service for Municipal Personnel
- March 24, 2022 - CCM - email: Webinar: Technology Foundation You Need to Comply with the New Police Accountability Law

4. Approval of Minutes

a. BoF Regular Meeting of March 16, 2022

The following correction was noted: Bob Congdon was excused not absent.

Stacey Becker motioned to approve the amended Regular Meeting Minutes of March 16, 2022. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. BoF Special Meeting April 13, 2022

Bob Congdon motioned to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of April 13, 2022. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

c. BoF Special Meeting April 14, 2022

Andy Depta motioned to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2022. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

5. Financial Reports

a. Board of Education Report

Cindy Varricchio stated that they continue to make progress on the audit and look forward to its completion. At this point, the Board of Education has expended \$9,155,969.36, or 74% of their budget with three months of the year remaining. The budget will be continually monitored closely.

b. Board of Education Liasion Report

Zach Maurice stated the Board of Education has completed its budget and presented it to the Board of Finance two weeks ago.

c. Town Revenue Report

Cindy Varricchio fielded a few questions about the presented Revenue Report. She explained that Miscellaneous Grants are one-time grants and would be listed outside the General Budget because the funds are received and spent on special projects. The next line item, Other, is the Fire Department's installments to the budget.

d. Town Expenditure Report

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that 38% of the budget remains, however, the bill for the Resident State Trooper will come in June and that will take a large portion of the remaining budget. Pensions continue to track higher than expected due to the overtime required this past year to deal with an unusual number of weather events. The gas and diesel lines look incorrect, but when the Board of Education and the Fire Dept. pay for their usage it should be back on track.

Andy Depta questioned that several lines are showing 100% of their funds, meaning no expenditures. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that the reason is that some will have pay outs in June, some will be moved to more appropriate lines, and some have expenditures that are earmarked for specific expenditures that haven't occurred yet.

Stacey Becker asked if she had an estimate of what if any funds will be returned to the town at the end of the year. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that she hopes that they have that figure by the Board of Finance's May meeting.

7. New Business

Jim Corley distributed a handout to the Board and explained that on April 14, 2022, the Public Works responded to concerns regarding a culvert in the area of 24 Brand Road. Upon inspection of the culvert, it was found that one of the culvert's headwalls had failed and had pulled away from the road leaving a substantial hole along the edge of the road. After consulting Suchocki & Sons, Inc., it was discovered that it was not cost-effective to repair because of the original construction. It would be best to replace the culvert. The cost would be \$19,400 for labor and \$4,000 for materials. The materials cost can be managed within the current Public Works budget, however, the labor costs can not. Jim Corley stated he was requesting the Board of Finance to appropriate funds to cover the cost of the labor, \$19,400.

It was asked if that amount covers the worst-case scenario. It does.

It was asked if the funds could come from the Town's remaining budget. It was stated that if that were done it leave the Town in a precarious position if something unforeseen were to occur.

Stacey Becker motioned to appropriate \$19,400 from the Unassigned Fund for culvert repair on Brand Road. Zach Maurice seconded. John Moulson, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, Andy Depta, and Zach Maurice voted in favor of the motion. Bob Congdon voted against the motion. The motion was carried 5 to 1.

8. Public Comment -

Susan Strader, 463 Route 164, stated she was in favor of the full 4% increase in salaries. She stated that the town needs to retain employees, and with the present work shortages the town needs to stay competitive in order to keep our experienced staff. These are good hard-working people that don't deserve to be nickel and dimed.

9. Adjournment -

Andy Depta motioned to adjourn at 8:52 P.M. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary