

Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, August 17, 2022
Preston Plains Cafeteria

Call to Order - John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:38 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson - Chairman

Robert Congdon - V. Chairman -arrived at 7:47 P.M.

Kayla Thompson - Clerk

Stacey Becker

Denise Beale

Zachary Maurice - excused

Alternates

Andrew Sawyer - seated for Zach Maurice

Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier - Selectwoman

Jerry Grabarek - Selectman

Ken Zachem - Selectman

Cindy Varricchio - Finance Director

Jim Corley - Public Works Director

Kathy Warzecha - Town Planner

Kate Rattan - Transportation Project Manager for SCCOG

4 members of the public

2. Public Comment

Nick Vegliante, 359 Old Jewett City Road and Democratic Town Committee Chairman, stated that he felt to preserve the integrity of the Board of Finance that the vacancy should be filled by someone other than a Republican. He stated that he saw no urgency to fill the position tonight and would ask that the Board delay their decision until next month in order to allow the Board to have a choice of candidates rather than having to fill the vacancy with the only person who has stepped forward at this point. It is summer time and people are away so finding someone is difficult with so many people away.

Jill Keith, 26 Candlewood Drive, stated that she is interested in the vacancy and that the entire town has had the same opportunity that she has had to step forward to fill the vacancy and confirmed her interest in the position. She is familiar with the new accounting system and feels that knowledge would be an asset to the Board.

3. Correspondence

- July 27 - CCM's MRSC Newsletter July 2022
- July 29 - 2022 CCM Innovative Ideas
- July 29 - State of State - OPM Undersecretary Martin Heft joins Municipal Voice on Aug. 3rd
- Aug. 2 - The 7th Annual Municipal Excellence Awards Are Now Open for Submissions!
- Aug. 3 - CCM Services Series: Renewable Energy Procurement and Electric Vehicle Charging with Titan Energy
- Aug. 9 - Letter of Interest, Board of Finance Alternate position - JSK
- Aug. 10 - CCM Webinar: The Nuts and Bolts of Being a Supervisor
- Aug. 11 - Great Scott! Registration for the 2022 CCM Conventions Now Open!
- Aug. 11 - The Collins Center Report
- Aug. 12 - Scout's Honor: Steven Smith of Boy Scouts of Connecticut joins the Municipal Voice next week

Andrew Sawyer motioned to move agenda items #6c forward in the meeting's order. Kayla Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

After a brief discussion it was decided that first the LOTCIP and STEAP Grants would be discussed and then the Planning and Zoning Commission's request.

Andrew Sawyer motioned to move agenda items #7a and #7b forward in the meeting's order. Kayla Thompson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

LOTCIP Grant

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared a brief background of events that has brought these items to the agenda tonight. The Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTCIP) given through CTDOT allows towns to perform capital infrastructure improvements with less burdensome requirements. During multiple meetings multi-department collaboration took place to apply for a grant that focuses on calming the traffic in Poquetanuck Village. The thought was by slowing and calming the traffic and enhancing pedestrian accommodation and connectivity within the Village that would help with possible diverse economic growth in the area. This is only the first phase of a bigger plan that would eventually connect the senior housing, the town park, Tri-Town Trail, the Village, and eventually the cove. One the group developed their thoughts, the plan was submitted June 15, 2022, and about a month later the Town was informed that their application was chosen as the number 1 project for the region. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier then explained that the Grant provides 100% of the construction costs, but does not cover the design and engineering cost of the project.

Kate Rattan, Transportation Project Manager for SCCOG, then explained the Grant and their process for selecting projects to move forward on. She stated that SCCOG has roughly 9 million to invest in infrastructure improvements in the area. The grants are awarded to projects that meet the requirements of improving major collector or major arterial roads and promote safety by reducing congestion in an area. Three towns, Preston, East Lyme, and Montville have been asked to prepare full applications for the next round of funding. The expected timeline is: 1-2 years for the engineer's design to be developed; construction bidding takes approximately 90 days; and the time of the year dictates the start of the project. All plans need to meet DOT standards. Included in the grant is 10% for Incidentals (construction inspection) that the state provides and 10% Contingency (change orders) both the state and local government are responsible for.

There was a brief discussion as to when differing amounts of money need to be distributed and in what amounts. It was clarified that to move to the next phase \$10,000 would be needed, which will indicate a commitment to funding.

Bob Congdon asked if SCCOG had the funds to support all three projects. He was told there was. There was a brief discussion of the topic, ending with the project being funded there are just formalities that need to be followed.

Kathy Warzecha then shared that this plan meets a goal that is part of the POCD. The project has parts that will accentuate the historical significance of the Village. Eventually it is hoped that there will be walkways that connect to the elderly housing, the Town Park, and the Tri-Town Trail. Subsequent projects to the area could include bike paths, access to Poquetanuck Cove, public parking, and perhaps connection to RiverWalk. There has been discussion of underground utilities, but this phase is concentrating on calming/slowing the traffic through the area through lights, crosswalks, and possible speed humps. It also includes sidewalks on one side of the roadway and decorative lighting to preserve the historical integrity of the Village. These were the ideas of the group, however the engineers will come up with other ideas.

It was questioned whether the cost of purchasing right of ways was included in the Grant or is that a separate cost. It was stated that the cost of purchasing the right of ways is part of the Grant and would need to be done before finalizing the Grant.

It was asked how the group came up with the estimated cost for this project. Jim Corley stated that he looked at similar projects in the state and that this phase would extend from Route 117 and 2A westward to Middle Road. He shared that he's walked the site with DOT and they have assured him that it will cost all of that estimated figure.

Kathy Warzecha shared that \$10,000 is needed to move the project to the next level and that the deadline is Sept. 15, 2022.

Bob Congdon motioned that not more than \$11,500 from the Undesignated Fund be used to pay for Phase 1 of the LOTCIP Grant from SCCOG. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Kayla Thompson, Stacey Becker, and Andrew Sawyer voted in favor of

the motion, while Denise Beale recused herself because she sits on the Planning and Zoning Commission. The motion carried 5-0-1.

Planning and Zoning Commission Request for Review of Board of Finance Goals in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

Kathy Warzecha stated that she needs the Board of Finance to look over their previous goals and revise them as needed. They are also asked to outline steps that will need to be taken in order to move towards obtaining the goals stated. She will need these as she prepares the POCD 2024 Document so it would be appreciated if they could complete this as soon as possible. Other Boards and Commissions are working on this too, and the completion of the POCD helps obtain grants like the ones presented tonight.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Board of Finance Regular Meeting July 20, 2022

Kayla Thompson motioned to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 20, 2022 as presented. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

5. Finance Reports

a. Board of Education Report

Cindy Varricchio shared that the Board of Education has spent 96.8% of their budget. At the end of June there was \$210,442 remaining. Since the end of June additional invoices have been received reducing the remaining funds to \$173,477. The school has received one tuition bill that was not anticipated and we are working to rectify that in the future.

They have expended \$984,203 or 7.3% of the 2023 budget. It was noted that not all salaries were encumbered because new staff is still being added. The Board of Education does not encumber for substitutes. During the coming year there may be a need to relocate the Central Office to accommodate additional students.

1. Board of Education Liaison Report - None

b. Town Revenue Report

Cindy Varricchio reported that revenues collected are 100.4% of budget and that expenditures are at 98.2%. Her report showed that revenues are \$68,939 over budget and that \$311,668 remains in the budget. Once again the Fund Balance monies were not used for the 2021-2022 budget. There isn't a final report because we are still waiting to receive the Housing Pilot Payment and a Library Grant to ensure we are reporting all the Revenues that the Town has received.

Because of the timing of the referendum taxes have not been listed yet. At this point staff is making sure that entries into the system are accurate and not needing corrections. We're following the corrective plan given to us by the auditors so that future audits will go smoothly

and that our booking keeping is accurate. There are a few places where numbers are not matching or making sense. It's just because of timing.

c. Town Expenditure Report

Cindy Varricchio and Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that by next month they should have an accurate summary of FY2022. It was mentioned that the Park & Rec salaries are not recorded following best practices, but going forward that will be corrected. In collaboration with Jill Keith, Tax Collector, going forward they will prepare a monthly Tax Collection Report for the Board which is another good checks and balance practice and will show that aspect of revenues as they come in.

6. Old Business

a. Board of Finance Alternate Vacancy

For the benefit of members both Nick Vegliante and Jill Keith restated their earlier comments. There was a brief discussion about Ms. Keith switching political parties, however, many were unclear of the process and the timing of such an action.

Bob Congdon motioned to appoint Jill Keith as the Board of Finance Alternate subject to her becoming an Independent.

Lack of a second the motion failed.

b. 2020-2021 Audit Corrective Action Plan

Cindy Varricchio stated that they continue to work on the Corrective Action Plan. One audit finding was that the filing of Form OPM-DE-2017 be done by July 31, 2022. That was completed before that. The Town will ensure timing filings of this form in the future. Another audit finding was the Board of Education Scholarships were not being recorded in Infinite Vision nor reconciled and balanced. That has been correct and completed as well. The staff continues to follow best practices which are establishing accountability and internal controls.

c. Planning and Zoning Commission Request for Review of Board of Finance Goals in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) - previously discussed

d. Bridge Grant Update

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that previous meetings the shape of bridges were brought up and the costly replacement and repairs of those bridges. Jim Corley has some good news to share about a grant.

Jim Corley shared that he worked with the DOT on different possible grants from both State and Federal programs. The first step was to look at the bridge work that needs to be done and decide which bridges fit which grants. It was decided that DOT was interested in full

replacement of Parks Road and Cooktown Road bridges under the Federal Overhaul Bridge Program. We met last November and found out that the grant would cover 80% and the Town would cover 20%. The estimated replacement construction cost is 2-3 million a bridge. We would need between 800,000 to 1.2 million to cover that 20%. In February DOT reached out sharing some changes to the new Federal Infrastructure Bill. Last month it was confirmed that with the new Federal Bill, the two bridges are covered 100%, DOT has gone a step further and has filled out the application, and we should be signing off on it shortly. So that's two less projects the Town will need to find money for. There was a brief discussion to identify exactly which bridges would be replaced.

Stacey Becker waived onto the agenda the Board of Finance laptop licenses. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

There has been no progress, Kayla Thompson stated that she would follow up with Cindy Varricchio next week so that there is progress before the next meeting.

7. New Business

a. LOTCIP Grant Application - previously discussed

b. STEAP Grant Application -

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that again working with multiple departments a grant application was put together for the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP). Last year we were able to work on the town park - the basketball and tennis courts and a few other things. They have changed the guidelines and the way funds are distributed. The Public Works Dept. recently completed a Capital Improvement study of the Preston Transfer Station (TFS). All the upgrades and improvements needed exceed the \$500,000 STEAP Grant being offered so the project has been broken down into at least two phases. The first will concentrate on the retaining wall and pedestrian railing as well as addressing a few other safety and environmental concerns.

We won't know if we've been approved for this grant until mid-Sept.. As the case with many of these grant there's not a lot of time between the grant being posted and the deadline to turn in a proposal, so fortunately there was already a capital improvement study done on this project and the fact that it can be broken down into phase to stay within the dollar amount of the grant has allowed us to move forward with this. STEAP is usually not this amount, but if we are approved this will significantly reduce our Capital Improvement obligations.

The Board asked if food traps would be part of the improvements. It was explained that in the next stage that will happen. There have already been talks with Blue Earth and discussions that the compost that is made could come back to the town for citizen's use.

As with other grants if we are approved this will need \$34,000 in engineering fees to be paid for by the Town. We have been looking for ways to fund the engineering cost. It was thought that this could be taken from either the Capital Improvement Study fund or the LoCIP funds. At this point the Board of Finance is just being made aware of the possible project and expenditure.

Kayla Thompson waived the King & King audit invoice onto the agenda. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

After a brief discussion as to the amount owed after the Board of Educations portion is taken out the Board decided their portion to pay was \$5,000.

Kayla Thompson motioned to approve the King & King invoice for the 2022 audit in the amount of \$5,000. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

8. Public Comment

Jill Keith, 26 Tanglewood Drive, asked what the interview process would be so that she is fully prepared next month. She reiterated that she is interested in filling the vacancy. She stated that she felt that the Board of Finance should correct on the Town website it still states the Board meets at the Town Hall.

9. Adjournment

Andrew Sawyer motioned to adjourn at 9:01 P.M. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary