



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Approved Meeting Minutes Public Hearing on Proposed Budget Monday March 15, 2021

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called to order the Public Hearing on Proposed Budget meeting at 7:00 pm March 15, 2021 via Zoom due to Coronavirus. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Mike Rettger, Karen Ogden, Amy Freidenrich present.

Others Present:

Town Officials: Rudy Marconi-First Selectman, Kevin Redmond-Controller, Susie DaSilva-BOE Superintendent, Dawn Norton-BOE Business Manager, Jonathan Steckler-BOE Chairman,

II. Rudy Marconi-Board of Selectman-The First Selectman is grateful to the community for the past year's hurdles with Covid 19. Town budget overview provided via slides. Overall town expenses increasing 1.97%. Town aid for roads comes every 6 months from state. Components of increase is a net increase of \$762,622. Breakdown of budget is general government 12%, public rec. 16%, public safety police 14%, public safety fire 14%, public works 12%, employee benefits 23%, roads 3%, library 5%, other 1%. Debt service is coming to end of bond bundles. Fire and police buildings need new facilities which can't wait much longer. The next budget cycle for 2023 is to be brought to the voters. Debt service is projected to decrease 9.50% in 2022. With regards to roads, infrastructure is most important to town population. Road/ADA infrastructure costs are projected to decrease 27.55% in 2022 but will be made up with town aid road off budget revenue from the state. Capital is a little lower than last year. The track and turf field and Scotts Ridge projects are to be done with approval. The town may see efficiencies and savings if work is done together as a single project. Capital public recreation is comprised of golf, parks & rec, Tiger Hollow and Norwalk River Valley Trail. Total of \$1,283,377. Capital public safety-all policemen need to be equipped with cameras. The deadline is quickly approaching. Total projected cost for fire and police is \$265,196. Capital public works consists of Highway Dept and Town Engineer with a total projected cost of \$1,131,309. Capital General Government consists of IT, Library/Other with a total projected cost of \$173,345. Capital Education request is for \$1,861,830. The distribution of Capital improvement projects consists of public rec. 27%, public works 24%, general government 4%, public education 39%, other 6%. Fund balance comparison- Ridgefield

total fund balance is at 11.8%. Able to maintain AAA rating and can continue with this layout. Summary-the proposed \$152,693,915 budget represents a 2.13% aggregate increase.

III. Susie DaSilva-Board of Education-Dr Da Silva reviewed the mission statement of the Ridgefield Public Schools, developments of the past year, and details of the RPS budget proposal, which had been distributed prior to the meeting. The budget decision of additions includes a Special Ed teacher (RHS) and increased hours for supervisory paraeducators position. Budget decision reductions include paraeducator (RHS) and elementary curriculum stipends. Other budget additions include hardware equipment technology. Other budget reductions include Math 180 at ERMS and SRMS, RHS equipment replacement, club stipends, special ed legal, ERMS project facilities, software reviews-technology, professional ed services, hardware lease technology. The 2021/2022 (FY22) Superintendent's proposed budget is \$103,364,072 a 3.45% increase.

IV. Dave Ulmer-Board of Finance-the Ridgefield unemployment rate before pandemic was 3%, currently 6%. The work force is down from 11,800 to 10,900; people have quit looking for work. 2,500 Ridgefield residents applied for unemployment benefits which is 20% of the work force. The budgeted tax collection rate was lowered from 98.7% to 98%, the town will be about halfway between these numbers. We're not sure where the town will end up on other revenues but likely to be an improvement versus budget. The fund balance of \$3.5 million was used last year to reduce the tax increase to 0. There is a total of about \$8.9 million and the policy is that the surplus in one year is returned to the town the following year.

V. Public Comments-Kirk Carr question to Dave Ulmer "Do you intend to use all or a portion of the \$3.5 million?" "We are taking all aspects into consideration in BOF discussions. We will be using a substantial amount of the \$3.5 million."

Kirk Carr comment regarding BOE- "Facilities are scaled greater than utilization, enrollment is down, and staffing is up. There is considerable room for cutting overhead."

Public comments emailed in support of the BOE budget:

- Meghan Raymond-178 Holmes Road
- Sarah Pettitt
- Angela Rice-237 Branchville Road
- Mira Jensen
- Alan Hanley 19 Clearview Drive

VI. Adjournment-motion to adjourn at 8:20 pm by Amy Freidenrich, seconded by Karen Ogden. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Mia Belanger

*Thank you to Andrew Nesbit for facilitating the Zoom process.