



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Approved BOF Meeting Minutes Tuesday March 15, 2022

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 PM on March 15, 2022 in the Town Hall large conference room. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Mike Rettger, Andrew Okrongly and Karen Ogden present.

Others Participating:

Town Staff: Kevin Redmond, Controller; Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector; Molly McGeehin, Town Treasurer (joined meeting at 7:30); Steven Lavaton, Tree Warden

II. Public Comments-None

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Ms. Ogden to accept February 15, 2022 minutes with no changes, seconded by Mr. Rettger. All in favor.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Members reviewed the February 28, 2022 Treasurer's Report, which had been distributed in advance of the meeting**.

V. Tax Collector Report

Ms. Berendsen-Hill presented the Tax Collector Report which had been distributed in advance of the meeting**. There are currently no large supplemental real estate tax bills. There is a lack of real estate inventory for sale, but houses are selling at all price ranges. This is more an issue for conveyance taxes than for property taxes.

Deferred Tax Bill Interest Rate – Ms. Berendsen-Hill summarized the deferral program, which is available for homeowners 65 years of age or older with \$65,000 or less in income, and which

enables them to defer their taxes. Billings can be deferred until the owner moves, sells, or passes away. There are not many people in this program. Approximately 40-50 apply per year. The deferred bills are charged interest. This is simple interest, not compounded, and is set based on the year of the tax bill. After discussion, Mr. Rettger moved to establish an interest rate of 3% per year for deferred tax bills under the program applying to the 2021 Grand List billings. Seconded by Ms. Ogden, all in favor.

*Motion at this time by Mr. Kabasakalian, to move Tree Warden forward in the meeting agenda, seconded by Mr. Rettger. All in favor.

VI. Budget Transfer for Tree Warden -Tree Warden Steve Lavatori was present at meeting. Mr. Redmond stated that this proposed budget transfer was a recommendation from Board of Selectmen, to allocate \$100,000 from the recent FEMA recovery to be allocated \$85,000 for general town tree removal and \$15,000 cemetery tree removal, primarily Branchville. Motion to approve transfer by Mr. Okrongly, seconded by Ms. Ogden. All in favor.

VII. BOE Financial Report – The members reviewed the BOE budget reports which had been distributed in advance of the meeting**. Mr. Ulmer reported that he had been asked by the BOE if they could be excused from attending the meeting this evening as the staff are in the middle of their office move. Mr. Ulmer asked BOF members to provide any questions/concerns about the report or about the FY23 budget to him or directly to the BOE, prior to the upcoming budget meetings.

VIII. Controller's Report

Mr. Redmond reviewed the town budget report and revenue forecast, which had been distributed in advance of the meeting**. He reported that the town remains favorable by about \$600,000 on property taxes and that conveyance and recording are still strong. Parks and Rec and Golf revenues are also favorable. Mr. Redmond also highlighted major areas of variance in expenses, most of which have been discussed in prior meetings. Unfavorable variances include IT, due to costs to implement two-factor authentication, tree warden, due to volume, and fire department, due to vacancies offset by overtime. Favorable expense areas include civilian dispatch, highway maintenance, and health insurance.

Mr. Redmond highlighted a new entry in the revenue forecast report, which is an estimate of the unrealized gain or loss to the investment portfolio managed by the Treasurer. This estimate currently shows a net unrealized loss, which will get recognized at year end and will run through the income statement. This item will be reported separately from regular investment income. This is the first year the portfolio has coupon bonds and also the first time the portfolio has holdings that were not purchased at par, which is the reason for this new accounting treatment.

It was noted that for those securities in the portfolio purchased at a premium, this unrealized loss will not be made up even if the securities are held to maturity. It was also noted that the premium value of an investment at the time of purchased should be amortized over the remaining life of the security and be recognized as an offset to the coupon income for the security. Mr. Rettger offered to develop a spreadsheet to calculate the amortization, with which Mr. Okrongly offered to assist. Mr. Rettger and Mr. Okrongly will research and report back to Ms. McGeehin and Mr. Redmond.

Bonding Resolutions – Mr. Redmond reported that the town had been advised by town counsel that for the capital budget approvals done by the Board of Finance for the 2020-21 fiscal year under the Governor’s Executive Order 7I, that they would recommend also going through the town meeting process to endorse the capital budget approvals prior to going out for bonding. To accomplish this, the town is planning to schedule three town meetings over the coming weeks, each dealing with a portion of the adopted capital budget. The first of the meetings will be March 16. As part of the process, the Board of Finance is requested to adopt the resolution that had been drafted by counsel and distributed to members in advance of the meeting.

After discussion, Mr. Ulmer made the following motion:

RESOLVED: That the resolution entitled “Resolution Making Appropriations Aggregating \$2,806,050 for the Planning, Design, Acquisition, Installation and Construction Of Various Town Roads And Engineering Projects and Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,806,050 Bonds Of The Town To Meet Said Appropriations And Pending The Issuance Thereof The Making Of Temporary Borrowing For Such Purposes (Provided That The Bonds Shall Be Reduced By The Amount Of Any Grants Received For Such Purposes, Which Are Anticipated To Be \$150,000 For Sidewalk Improvements), a copy of which is attached hereto, be approved and recommended for adoption by the legal voters of the Town by Town Meeting vote.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Rettger. All in favor.

IX. Order of Topics for BOF March Budget Meetings: The members discussed plans for the upcoming budget meetings starting at the end of the month. The following schedule was proposed:

Monday March 28, 2022-Public Hearing, to be held at Veterans Park School.

Tuesday March 29, 2022-BOS. Mr. Redmond to confirm with Mr. Marconi.

Wednesday March 30, 2022-BOE

Thursday March 31, 2022-BOF Discussion of revenue items, with possible vote.

Monday April 4, 2022-Follow up and possible vote on BOS, BOE and capital budget and revenues

Tuesday April 5, 2022- Follow up and possible vote on BOS, BOE and capital budget and revenues

Wednesday April 6, 2022- Follow up and possible vote on BOS, BOE and capital budget and revenues, if necessary

Thursday April 7, 202- Follow up and possible vote on BOS, BOE and capital budget and revenues, if necessary

All meetings will begin at 7pm and except for the public hearing will be held in Town Hall. Mr. Ulmer will request that the Fire Department attend the meeting on 3/29 to discuss staffing and over-time costs.

X. Old Business-ARPA. Mr. Rettger and Mr. Kabasakalian reported that there was a meeting of the ARPA planning group attended by themselves, Selectmen Rudy Marconi and Bob Hebert, and Geoffrey Morris of the Economic Development Commission. The group discussed the need for the Board of Selectmen to set a policy position on the recommended overall distribution of ARPA

funds, reflecting both those funds already committed and those funds remaining. Approximately 55% of ARPA funds have already been committed. The Board of Selectmen has also proposed using \$1.7 of ARPA funds for various capital items, as an alternative to including the projects in the regular annual capital budget. Several members questioned this proposed use. Mr. Ulmer will discuss these concerns with Mr. Marconi and report back to BOF members.

XI. New Business-None

XII. Communications & Correspondence-Mr. Ulmer reported that he had received a communication from a resident expressing concern that Mr. Rettger and Mr. Oksongly had indicated people could contact them via their town email accounts if they wished to receive the budget exhibits recently developed by them, thereby implying endorsement by the Board of Finance. Mr. Ulmer reported that he had responded that there was specific discussion at the previous BOF meeting that the materials were not BOF work-product nor endorsed by the BOF, and that fact had been noted in the recent news report regarding the exhibits. He also explained that “it was his opinion that” town email accounts were provided to members with the intent to capture all email communication by BOF members when communicating among themselves and with the public.

XIII. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m. by Ms. Ogden, seconded by Mr. Oksongly. All in favor. Next meeting Public Hearing March 28, 2022 at Veteran’s Park School.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Mia Belanger

** Materials that were distributed in advance of the meeting in the BOF members’ packets are maintained on file in the Controller’s office.