



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Unapproved Tri Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 15, 2022

DRAFT Final

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called the Tri Board meeting to order at 6:30 PM on November 15, 2022 in the Town Hall Annex conference room. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Mike Rettger, Andrew Okrongly, Greg Kabasakalian and Joe Shapiro present.

Others Present:

Board of Selectmen members: Rudy Marconi, First Selectman; Maureen Kozlark, Bob Hebert, Sean Connelly, members of the Board of Selectmen

Town Officials: Kevin Redmond Controller; Molly McGeehin, Town Treasurer.

RPS Staff: Dr. Susie DaSilva, Superintendent; Jill Browne, Business Manager; Joe Morits, Facilities Manager

BOE Members: Jonathan Steckler, chair; Tina Malhotra, Selina Bell, Amy Casey, Thomas Colin, Divya Dorairrajan, Sean McEvoy, Rachel Ruggeri.

II. Overview of Current Budget and Outlook for Next Year:

Mr. Redmond reported on Fiscal Year 2021-2022 results. Revenues were strong, with Conveyance, Recording Fees, Golf Revenues, and Ambulance Fees contributing favorable variances relative to the revenue budget. Expenses are up due to inflation in many areas, but still it was a favorable year overall for total expenses relative to budget. Total Debt is at \$55 million. Debt service will decline for one more year but is then expected to increase in FY2025. FY2024 revenues and taxes are expected to be strong. Many areas are back to pre-pandemic levels of activity, and the town is keeping an eye on expenses.

Ms. Browne provided a brief overview of the school district's financials for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, reporting that the school budget will have a favorable budget variance of approximately \$800,000. As of October 31, 2022, the BOE has expended and obligated approximately 91% of their appropriation for the current year, with most areas trending on budget. Areas of concern are volatility of Special Education, transportation which will exceed budget allocation, and the

costs of rising energy. The BOE is just beginning its annual budget planning cycle, and these three areas will also be a focus in those discussions.

III. Public Comments

None

IV. Comments from BOS, BOF and BOE

Dr. Da Silva noted that the BOE's goal is to communicate often and provide transparency in relation to the school system budget. In addition to the areas of budget focus covered by Ms. Browne, Dr. Da Silva highlighted areas that will have budget impact for next year, including the need to deal with the residual impact of the pandemic for a population of students, trends in the declining number of students who are transitioning out of special services as well as the increasing number needing special services, special education transportation costs, aging furniture and facilities across the district, and continued need to address building security. Dr. Da Silva reported that results from the district's pilot program with district-owned special ed transportation vans has been encouraging and they are looking to expand the pilot.

Mr. Marconi reported that expenses have increased due to inflation effects in many areas, and the BOS members are having discussions on how to address this from a budget planning perspective. High level planning for a possible new combined PD/FD building continues, with any realization being probably 2-3 years down the road, subject to voter support. FD overtime has been running high but will continue to improve with two new people having been hired. Golf has experienced the 3rd highest revenues over the past 10 years. Conveyance has slowed, which will have implications for next year's revenue. The town is looking into the possibility of a 4-day work week, but this is only a high-level discussion of the potential benefits in terms of hiring as well as service implications for town residents, and no changes are specifically planned at this time. Further discussion would involve the full BOS.

Mr. Ulmer noted that the town has kept the Mill Rate within a 1% increase for several years now. Fiscal Year 2022 has had a positive result in terms of revenue surplus and favorable expense variances, so the town has added to the fund balance. As of July 1, 2022, \$16.4 million is in the unassigned fund balance, which represents about 10.5% of budget, compared with the informal target of 8% to 9%. There are some positive conditions when looking at the coming fiscal year, including the level of unassigned surplus, the continued decline of debt service costs, and some growth in the Grand List. However, the BOF and the town need to also look out to FY 2025, where there are a number of financial challenges potentially emerging.

Following Mr. Ulmer's remarks, the other members of the BOF offered their comments, including concern about the direction of the economy over the next several years, the need to recognize areas where town costs are not as much subject to general inflation going into next year due to in-place labor contracts when looking at the budget, and the likely effects of recent investment market results on the town and BOE's pension costs for next year.

XII. Adjournment- Motion to adjourn at 8:10 by Mike Rettger, seconded by Andrew Okrongly. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Mia Belanger