



## **Town of Ridgefield Tri-Board Meeting**

### **Approved Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday November 17, 2020

#### **I. Call to order**

Dave Ulmer called to order the Tri-Board meeting at 7:00 PM November 17, 2020 via Zoom due to Coronavirus. BOF Board Members Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Mike Rettger, Amy Freidenrich, Karen Ogden present.

#### Other's present:

BOE Members: Dr. DaSilva, Superintendent, Dawn Norton, Business Manager, Margaret Stamatis, Jonathan Steckler, Ken Sjoberg, Rachael Ruggeri, Kathleen Holtz, Sean McEvoy, Nora Gaydos, Elizabeth Floegel, Tina Malhotra.

BOS Members Present: Rudy Marconi, Sean Connelly, Maureen Kozlark, Barbara Manners, Robert Hebert

Town Official: Kevin Redmond, Controller

#### **II. Overview of Current Budget:**

Dawn Norton, BOE Business Manager: For the period ending September 30, 2020 the BOE has expended or obligated \$84,475,578 of their \$99,912,151 budget representing approximately 85% of their appropriation. This is comprised of Certified and non-certified salaries, Medical Benefits, Other Benefits, FICA/Medicare, Special Education, Transportation, Energy and COVID 19 expenses. As of October 26, 2020, a total of \$1,015,513.22 has been used for the purchase of COVID 19 expenses. In addition to these purchases, an additional amount of \$1,684,200 is being discussed for the purchase of additional expenditures in order to open and maintain safe buildings for staff and students. Two grants have been applied for: School Based COVID 19 Relief Grant applied for and received \$94,454.00 and a COVID Relief Fund (CRF) in the amount of \$118,722 which has been applied for but not received at this time. The BOE will continue to monitor and maintain specific details on COVID 19 related expenditures.

Kevin Redmond, Controller: For fiscal 2020, revenue is unfavorable by \$800,000 which is COVID 19 driven. Expenses are favorable by \$1.8 million for schools and \$500,000 for Parks & Rec. \$450,000 is COVID cost as a 2020 expense which is hoped to be recovered for in 2021. The undesignated fund balance of about 8.7% of expenses is better than expected. For fiscal 2021 revenue, taxes are better than budgeted. Parks & Rec, ambulance and interest income are below budget and golf and conveyance are above budget surplus. The collection rate for Property tax is between 98-98.7%. The debt service is \$58 million outstanding. There is a decrease expected of about \$400,000 in long term debt in fiscal 21, and then further declines expected afterwards.

### **III. Public Comments-None**

### **IV. General Discussion from three boards:**

Rudy Marconi- First Selectman: He thanks Dr. DaSilva and her team for their COVID work. The town is not doing well in relation to COVID. There are currently 10.2 cases per 100,000 people. Projects that are moving forward are the Governor St. parking lot. People are coming back into town to shop. We need to support our down town. The Branchville bridge, Main St. and Venus buildings projects are also moving along forward. The Venus building project is for the purpose of relocating the BOE. In regards to the Tax Deferral program, a reduction of tax interest rate has been made available which has done well. Almost all payments have been made to date with only a few outstanding. The Fiscal 2022 PDFP (Police dept, Fire dept) new building project meeting is scheduled for November 23, 2020 for the purpose of reviewing research for the approval of needs assessment, analysis and site options. A \$2.3 million approval request has been made for this project which includes P&Z, construction and the build out. The spread of COVID doesn't seem to be coming from schools but gatherings and family events. A testing facility for teachers and first responders is to be made available. In regards to working remotely, bandwidth issues are being discussed and looking into for the future.

Dr. Susie DaSilva-Superintendent: She appreciates the BOS and town officials who work with the BOE. Their focus is on prioritizing the health and safety of students and faculty for as long as possible. Things have become more challenging with staffing. The work outside of COVID is in the early stage of the budget process. The BOE is unaware of the effects on students of being out of the school buildings. There is no substitute for attending a physical school with teachers and resources. The circumstances don't appear to be in our favor. We need to consider the impact of the children and plan accordingly. Every budget discussion impacts students now and in the future. There is a meeting scheduled with principals to discuss the budget. Health benefits are expected to increase by 8% and 2.5% increase expected in Worker's Comp. We're working to catch up and create environments of joy for the students. The students are the heart of the budget. The BOE is welcome to thoughts, comments and feedback from other board members.

Dave Ulmer-BOF Chairman: Unemployment is about 6% and there has been a significant decline in the work force. About 1000 in Ridgefield are not working who were working last year at this time. 2600 unemployment applications have been received. The recovery is not where it should be in order to get back to where we were. The budget has many moving parts with plus's and minus'. A \$440,000 reduction in debt services is expected for this year and 3-4% possible increase in taxes. A full discussion into next year's budget by the town and residents will occur.

Margaret Stamatis BOE Chairman: A demographer report has been prepared. The numbers are trends due to the pandemic showing a withdrawal of students due to the pandemic mostly from Kindergarten and first grade classes. Rudy Marconi commented that conveyance has had a significant increase due to sales and Dr. DaSilva commented that the number of students increase and decrease in population is due to families moving in and out of town.

**V. Adjournment**-motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm by Mike Rettger, seconded by Greg Kabasakalian. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Mia Belanger

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