



## **Town of Ridgefield**

### **Board of Finance**

#### **Approved Meeting Minutes**

Monday April 1, 2019

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

D. Ulmer called to order the regular meeting of the Board of Finance at 7:30 PM on April 1, 2019 at Ridgefield Town Hall Meeting Room, 400 Main St., Ridgefield, CT.

Board Members D. Ulmer, J. Mancini, A. Freidenrich, S. Connelly, D. Moccia were in attendance

#### **II. Review of Capital Budget**

Interest income is up, Parks & Rec is budget to budget, permits up 25%, supplemental motor vehicle up 25%, conveyance is down but still above this year's expectations. Tuition line is down, skate park is down, Parks & Rec is up. The non-fund balance revenue is \$13,390,107. Currently almost \$1 million more than last year from a conservative approach and trying to make figures as realistic as possible. D. Ulmer moved and J. Mancini seconded.

#### **III. Board of Education follow up:**

In attendance, Dr. William Collins, Dawn Norton, Doug Silver, Margaret Samatis.

Discussion on line item #12 from budget 2019-2020.

How much will we spend in FY20? What money and what parts of the program are being restored?

What was promised by letter to families for FY20? Is there a contract yet?

To be further discussed by the BOE. CCSN spending around \$100,000.

Discussion on line item # 16 from budget 2019-2020.

What is in the \$55k for Magnet schools? Is it required?

We are not responsible for transporting students to out of town magnet schools. The magnet schools are responsible for this. We would like to see the tuition cost increase and we're responsible for that portion. The \$55,000 represents the van/bus that operates several tiers, one of them being the magnet school. We could stop providing the transportation but the cost for the van/bus would still be \$55,000. The Magnet school transportation is still within the contract.

Special Ed-J. Mancini asked "The proposed number is almost \$1 million more than the past. What's the driver?" Per Dawn Norton- "The allocation for special ed isn't appropriate. It fits

individual needs. Per Dr. Collins- "It's an accurate reflection of current students." Fiscal Y19 was under budget in this area. This number should continue to go down but it's not. There is a national phenomenon in the rise of special ed students. The BOE is doing everything and what's best for the students. Numbers are changing due to more autism diagnosis after the definition of autism has changed. High needs and high intensity kids are increasing. More investment in in-house special ed is necessary. It's hard to predict because we don't know the number of incoming students into the program. Autism is on the rise and kids have different needs. This can be done better and less expensive if done in-house. The amount of money from the state hasn't changed in years.

Amy Freidenrich- "If kids leave the district do they ever come back?" Per D.Silver "yes, for various reasons.

D. Moccia requested an explanation of substitute teachers. "How much has been spent on subs since school started?" He feels the subs requests are too high and he would like to see the sub budget. We need to see how the numbers are managed, when subs are used and how they're used. He would like to see subs report and how we compare to other towns. Too much money is spent on subs for 475 teachers. We're trying to protect the tax payers and have a fiduciary responsibility to the town.

Special Projects-Discussion on line item #15 from budget 2019-2020. "Can you explain what is behind the 4500 projects account by school, especially the \$85,000 at RHS and reduction at SRMS? Is there any relation between the 4200 building repairs vs the 4500 projects account? The \$8500 for RHS was allocated for the bathroom renovation work identified by the tri-board committee. The reduction at SRMS was due to last year's amount for the single project to replace the fire alarm panel. The building repairs line is used for routine maintenance, scheduled repairs and anticipated repairs. The projects line is for school specific projects for upgrades, renovations, large repairs and medium scope projects that would normally fall below the \$50,000 threshold and life cycle for capital. A state contractor was used.

Per Dr. Collins "it's hard to predict due to limited resources for maintenance and we're seeing the impact. We're left with a challenge to find the resources for repairs. The budget cuts interfere with maintenance and large cuts in capital maintenance follows the same pattern.

D. Moccia- "Is there a reporting/tracking system for repairs? There must be a better way of reporting."

S. Connelly "Is this figure an expectation for every year?" Per D. Silver "There is a greater increase in technology with greater rates for technology. The extra costs go towards the payment for technology."

D. Moccia-discussion on line item #8 from budget 2019-2020. Some BOF members question how other DRGA schools calculate their per pupil expenses. Are they including things Ridgefield does not?" All school districts in CT report all expenditures, in kind services, debt services etc. The state determines the per pupil amount once the information is equalized. Ridgefield does not get to assign its own dollar amount. Per D. Silver-Our performance hasn't improved. Our DRGA is

not spending enough money and there's a direct correlation that we're not improving enough. We must address the shifts in the curriculum."

J. Mancini-in regards to the Humanities Director "Is there data showing that that position has added to student growth?" Per D. Silver "The ELS scores stayed flat in relation to comparison of the DRGA.

J. Mancini- "How will the STEM Director help the students?" Per Dr. Collins "We need to get all teachers on the same page, unwrap the standards and re-write the curriculum. Grading also needs to be changed.

J. Mancini- "Are we re-inventing the wheel?" Per Dr. Collins "The curriculum must be re-written locally with the teachers buying into it."

Amy Freidenrich- "Are we duplicating the STEM services?" Per D. Silver "All districts have different histories, parent etc."

S.Connelly-"We have much ground work to make up. There are budget implications with hiring new people. The challenge is if we're spending more money, how do we better manage the budget? How do we make the investments and maintain the budget? This is the challenge looking forward."

M. Samatis read a compelling letter to the BOF asking to allow the voters to vote on the town's biggest asset.

#### **IV. Concerns**

D. Moccia-concerned regarding seniors living on a fixed income in regards to taxes and their activities such as Pickleball. There has to be a better procedure with maintenance issues, communication has to improve. Home values are dropping; could it be from education? He appreciated a better budget and better communication.

#### **V. Adjournment**

D. Moccia moved and J. Mancini seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM. Motion carried 5-0

Next meeting April 1, 2019

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Mia Belanger