



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Approved Meeting Minutes Board of Finance Budget Deliberations Tuesday March 23, 2021

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called to order the Board of Finance Budget Deliberations meeting at 7:00 pm March 23, 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, Robert Hebert & Maureen Kozark-BOS members, Dr. Susie DaSilva-BOE Superintendent, Dawn Norton-BOE Business Manager, BOE Members-Rachel Ruggeri, Nora Gaydos, Tina Malhotra, Jonathan Steckler, Sean McEvoy, Margaret Stamatias, Ken Sjoberg.

II. Capital-Motion to approve net amount of \$4,715,057 in capital items for fiscal 22 referendumm, by Dave Ulmer, seconded by Mike Rettger. Categories include general government, parks & rec, golf, Tiger Hollow field replacement, public safety, fire, public works, engineering, BOE, library. All in favor.

III. BOS-motion to approve \$39,316,561 town expenses, 1.39% increase. Motion includes \$9,789,668 debt service for a total increase of \$539,008 by Amy Freidenrich, seconded by Karen Ogden. All in favor.

IV. BOE-original request of \$1,359,120 a 3.45% increase. There is concern from BOF members about percentage increases and declining enrollment. At RHS, the student-teacher ratio was around 15 in past years and has been recently declining. The elementary and middle school levels are good. The class sizes are good relative to keeping class sizes down. Last year were huge uncertainties on economics due to Covid and caution was exercised. The greater uncertainty is where students are going. They haven't been in full time classes for a year and there are concerns for the long term. The BOF members appreciate what the schools are doing for the students. A 2.6% decrease in student population is a large number and the town needs to look long term for school stability. The BOF is encouraged with the BOE's savings from health insurance. On other insurances, the BOE can follow suit with the BOS. The BOF is encouraged with the hard work the

BOE has done on the special accounts. It seems that money is found when it has to be found and the savings that has been found doesn't have an impact on teachers or what is important to the schools. A BOE member was disappointed with tonight's discussion. The savings found were due to Covid and the budget is for a program to cover a number of students for an approximate number of students. Motion on the BOE of \$102,260,086.00 budget increase of 2.35% or \$2,347,936 by Mike Rettger, seconded by Karen Ogden. All in favor.

V. Discussion of Other Revenues-

ARP Funds-can be used to offset lost revenues. Categories for usage of the funds include tax collection rate, parks & rec, building rental, BOE rentals, ambulance usage, school lunch program and athletic participation fees. There's a need to be cautious and not overly aggressive on the categories where we may be able to offset lost revenues. ARP funds are expected to be \$7.3 million to the town and \$1.4 million to BOE. Funds can be used through December, 2024. Usage of funds will require reporting. Motion to use \$1,550,000 of expected ARP funds as part of budget calculations, motion for total of expenses \$151,366,315 by Mike Rettger, seconded by Karen Ogden. All in favor.

Use of Fund Balance as Revenue-parameter of 8-9% with carryover surplus into next years budget. Sources of surplus revenues are around \$600,000. The BOE will not use the carryover COVID account. Total surplus around \$1,500,000. Motion to apply \$1,500,000 of fund balance toward the tax rate calculation for 2022 by Mike Rettger, seconded by Karen Ogden. All in favor.

Excel summary charts were made available and can be uploaded to the website. This provides a summary of motions made during the budget deliberations. Next steps are items for the BOS & BOE budget to go to voters. Town meeting scheduled for April 24, 2021 at 3:00 pm. The budgets are to be published in the newspaper mid-end April

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

*Next meeting April 20, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Mia Belanger

*Thank you to Mike Rettger for facilitating the Zoom process.