



Town of Ridgefield Board of Finance

Approved Tri Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 16, 2021

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called to order the Tri Board meeting at 6:34 PM November 16, 2021 via Zoom. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Greg Kabasakalian, Mike Rettger, Andrew Okrongly and Karen Ogden present.

Others Present:

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

Town Officials: Kevin Redmond Controller, Jane Berendsen Hill Tax Collector.

Board of Education members: Jonathan Steckler, Tom Colin, Sean McEvoy, Rachel Ruggeri, Selina Bell, Ken Sjoberg, Amy Casey.

RPS Staff: Dr. Susie DaSilva, Superintendent, Dawn Norton, Karen Dewing, Joe Morits, Cory Gillette, Dr. Elizabeth Hanaway.

II. Overview of Current Budgets:

Kevin Redmond, Controller - Mr. Redmond reported on Fiscal Year 2020-21 results. Revenues were favorable by \$2 million which was driven by favorable tax collections and conveyance and recording fees. Covid costs were able to be covered within budget. Overall, the fiscal year produced a surplus of \$2.7 million, resulting in a fund balance of \$15 million or 10% of Fiscal 22 expenses. The current 2021-2022 year is seeing continued strong tax collections, recording fees, and conveyance fees, partially offset by high tree removal expenses

Mr. Redmond also reported that the 2012 and 2013 debt issuances were recently subject to a refunding transaction, with a net savings of \$1 million that will be spread over the next 10-11 years. In response to a question, he reported that current outstanding debt is approximately \$55 million, with annual debt services running at \$9.8 million.

Dawn Norton, RPS Business Manager - Ms. Norton provided a brief overview of the school district's financials for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. The BOE is currently projecting spending their full budget appropriation and currently all cost centers are trending within their appropriated

budgets. Some areas being watched are utilities, with electric and oil prices much higher than anticipated, as well as Special Education, due to many new students with special needs within the district.

III. Public Comments-None

IV. Comments from BOS, BOF and BOE

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman - Looking ahead to the coming budget, Mr. Marconi highlighted tree removal costs and Fire Department OT due to vacancies as areas of concern. He also provided details on major projects including the combined Fire Department and Police Department facilities project, the work being done on the Branchville sidewalk project on the west side of Route 7 and up to Florida Road, and the replacements of the Depot Road and Portland Avenue bridges. Mr. Marconi also reported that a recent town meeting approved use of up to \$2.9 million of ARPA funds for second stage of the sewer project. and that the project plan has been submitted to the DEEP for review. In response to a question, he also provided an update on the Main Street realignment project and noted that the total funding project for the project is 80% Federal and 20% State of CT.

Dave Ulmer, BOF Chairman - Mr. Ulmer noted that the current unemployment rate for the town is about 4% and the housing market is strong, but we remain unsure of post pandemic budget results. Debt service costs will decline in the next budget. Mr. Ulmer also provided estimates of the potential impact on the mill rate for various levels of budget increases for town and school operations.

Dr. Susie DaSilva, BOE Superintendent - Dr. DaSilva noted that the district has stable leadership, schools are open, and students are attending in person. The residual effects of Covid remain to be seen, but many students have been impacted socially and emotionally. The Bridge Learning program has been helpful to many students. Looking ahead to the coming budget, there are a number of factors that may impact the school budget, including a growing population of Special Education students, an increase in pre-school population which may require increased space, textbooks which are outdated and no longer relevant, and continuing technology needs. The Alternative High School facility is outgrowing its space and the BOE needs to look for an alternative with the goal of keeping the students in district. In response to a question, Ms. Da Silva noted that new teachers are harder to recruit for existing vacancies and that the historical savings in salaries from staff turnover may not be achieved in the future.

V. General Discussion from All Three Boards- In response to a question there was a general discussion about future inflation and its potential impact on budget forecasts and predictions, as well as future turnover and hiring of replacement staff.

VI-Adjournment-Motion to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. by Mike Rettger, seconded by Dave Ulmer. All in favor.