

Tri-Board

7 DECEMBER 2017 | 7:30 PM | LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM

BOE Offices | 70 PROSPECT STREET RIDGEFIELD, CT 06877

APPROVED MINUTES

Attendees

In attendance: R. Marconi, S. Zemo, M. Kozlark, B. Hebert, J. Mancini, D. Ulmer, D. Moccia, A. Freidenrich, D. Silver, K. Baldwin, P. Hendrickson, M. Stamatis, T. O'Connor, F. Walton.

Absent: B. Manners, S. Connelly

Agenda

Call to Order

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and the Board of Education was called to order at 7:30 pm by D. Ulmer.

Overview of Current Budget: Kevin Redmond, Controller, Town of Ridgefield and Paul Hendrickson, Business Manager, BOE

Kevin Redmond

- For FY2017, both the town and the Board of Education were both favorably impacted by the tax sale. The sale brings in approximately \$1.5M, some of which will be carried over into FY2018. The Board of Finance was conservative in regards to the FY2018 budget, and the numbers will be slightly better than what was initially projected. At this time, there are no anticipated events similar to a tax sale for FY2018. The current debt position is very good and being aggressively paid down. Currently, the debt figure for 2017 is approximately \$61M, and is estimated to be decreased to \$50M by 2021. K. Redmond will send long-term debt forecast to D. Ulmer.
- A. Freidenrich asks about potential upcoming projects, which include Schlumberger and Branchville improvements. R. Marconi states that the state may fund it and that we may be able to write those improvements off against the LOCIP, rather than being bonded.
- The panel briefly discussed the sewer transfer, which was first done in 1990. We anticipate receiving funding from the State of Connecticut Clean Water Act; however there is a firm deadline for starting the project in order to receive funding. R. Marconi states that the projected revenue could total \$500,000 per year. Taxes secondary to this project will be based on the number of units.

Paul Hendrickson

- The current energy generation contract expires in December, hence the BOE is seeking to secure rates for the new year.
- The BOE also met with Rob Fitzpatrick, Healthcare Consultant. It was determined that loss history has improved; however they still saw a double digit premium increase. The meeting concluded with a discussion centered around the Administration and Nurses Union. The respective agreements align with surrounding districts.
- Energy Assistance Payments are expected to be \$78,857 for completing all 25 projects.
 - Total for all \$1,195,652
- Special Education expenses- additional \$6.5M
- Hiring freeze is still in place secondary to special education expo ensues.
- The BOE submitted an ECR request on December 1st, 2017 which aligned with what was budgeted.
- Nurses contract was negotiated but has not been ratified. A vote will be held on December 11, 2017. For 2018/2019, there will be a shift in retirement costs in addition to an increased premium cost share. The current cost share is the highest in Fairfield County, smoking in at about 25%. The BOE continues with the high-deductible/HSA health plan and reviewed deductible and contribution values.

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, and Board of Finance: Karen Baldwin, Superintendent, Rudy Marconi, First Selectman, and Dave Ulmer, Board of Finance, Chairman

BOE

- BOE discussed the demographic report and enrollment projections. In 2017, they had 24 more Kindergarten students; however they saw a 30 student decline in overall students. They will be looking at inward migration as a possible driver. It appears that families are moving into the school system in the years following kindergarten, which could be an indication of students transferring from private school to public. The 2018 budget will be based off of projection numbers. As of now, demographers predict that from 2021-2028 elementary school enrollment will see an uptick.
- BOE is seeking to make capital improvements totaling \$1.4M, which will be voted on next week. These improvements include core infrastructure, specifically, heating, ventilation, and security. A proposed playground upgrade at Ridgebury Elementary will come out to the BOE budget and will later shift over to the town budget (ADA project line).
- Health Insurance- The discussion centered around the improvement in claims.
- Superintendent Budget is expected on January 2, 2018.

- Committee meeting will be held next week meant to discuss infrastructure, operations, and personnel costs.
- BOE is currently working on initiatives relative to their mission, technological improvements, children with disabilities. The proposed budget will work to advance all of these initiatives within this complex global society.

BOS

- Revenue meeting was a held yesterday to discuss the Old Quarry projects. The buildings prove to be in good shape.
- Conveyance- \$26M for November, compared to \$20M last November. Last year, 30-40 homes were sold between \$0-\$700,000. This year, 36-45 home were sold within that price range. Most sales are coming from the lower part of the market. Jane Barrinson-Hill reports collections are good and are currently at 54%.
- P&R is running flat due to the bridge; however their post-recession growth has been favorable.
- Expense- The hiring freeze imposed in July is still in effect. Vacancies have not been filled, as state cuts are still anticipated.
- Current Projects include the newly formed Charter Revision Commission. Boards are asked to evaluate the existing Charter and make modification recommendations. Please e-mail recommended changes to either R. Marconi or the CRC.
- Buildings- Capital Budget will begin to evaluate how to address the Fire Dept, Police Dept, and EMS. Work on Schlumberger is currently out to bid. Philip Johnson Building nearly complete. ACT completely gutted and are restructuring to allow for Broadway shows. Chef's Warehouse will expand at the Venus Building, as well as the Ridgefield Playhouse Resulting in the relocation of the BOE offices. TOD and FLBP projects for Branchville are in the design phase. Main Street project will be mill and pave project and is expected to start in 2019. Parking in town is being reevaluated to expand the Governor Street lot behind Casey Fuel.
- Lights on Main Street will be reprogrammed to synchronize.
- Roads
 - The projects on Sunset Lane and Old Quarry Road may potentially generate \$500k-\$600k.
 - The Highway Department is looking for four people, as they have fewer employees now than in the 1980's.
 - The department encumbered \$400,000 in terms of paving.

Pensions

- D. Ulmer asks about pensions, which went from \$1.25M to \$900,000 and have gone actuarial. D. Ulmer states this has been a tremendous help in offsetting some of the increases. Pension report has been good overall.

BOF

State/Town Budget

- D. Ulmer discussed the state and town budget. He discusses that conveyance is still a bit of a challenge. Bottom line- there was a big surplus this year, but in the draft CAFR it shows a strong gain and no need to use the \$1.95M in the general fund. We added an additional \$1.8M this year and still ended up with excess from the tax sale. The General Fund will be around 10% and our guidelines as a Board are between 8-9%. R. Marconi states concerned when the surplus runs out. The discussion turned to our bond rating which is AAA. R. Marconi discusses the Boehringer-Ingelheim tax abatement which will be removed in 2020.
- D. Moccia states that he doesn't foresee things getting better for Ridgefield in terms of state aid. He also feels that the Tri-Board is in tune with with the understanding of moving cautiously. Current statistics reflect that income tax revenues are dropping because residents are leaving the state. D. Moccia also goes on to discuss social security tax and the difficulty of keeping seniors in the State of Connecticut.
- The panel discussed the most important product in Ridgefield, to which J. Mancini replied, "the kids", which speaks to our educational system.
- D. Silver talks about preschool tuition which is received by the town; however the BOE provides the education. that tuition goes to the town but the BOE educates the children. The BOE wants educational fees to possibly offset the cost of the preschool. D. Ulmer states that this will be a reduction in town revenue; however he will review and discuss.

General Discussion from All Three Boards

None

Adjournment

D. Ulmer moved and J. Mancini seconded the motion to adjourn at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Freda