

**ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Ashford Town Hall, Room 104  
5 Town Hall Road, Ashford, CT 06278  
March 3, 2016**

**Present:** Cathryn Silver-Smith (Chairperson), Susan Eastwood (Clerk), Judi Austin, Gail Zaicek, Jesse Burnham (alt.), Angie DeSanto (alt.), Chuck Funk, Carl Pfalzgraf (alt.), Mike Zambo (Selectman and Ex-Officio), Francine Hodovan (Recording Secretary).

**Guests:** Ashford School Superintendent: James Longo.

Ashford School Board of Education: Jim Rupert (Chairperson), John Calarese, John Lippert, Lisa McDougal-Adams, Kimberly Rourke, Kay Warren.

Ashford School Business Manager: Don Neel.

1. **Call to Order:** Chairperson Cathryn Silver-Smith called the Regular Meeting of the Ashford Board of Finance to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. **Seating of Alternates:** Mr. Pfalzgraf was seated for Mr. Simpson.
3. **Approve Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 18, 2016:**  
**MR. FUNK MOVED AND MS. EASTWOOD SECONDED A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 2016 BOF REGULAR MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.**

Page 2, section d, (4 lines from the bottom) should read: "He is still awaiting the Grand List but should have it by next Thursday, 2/25, and he believes it should be a bit larger than last year's".

Page 2, section d, the last line should read "Town roads were discussed and Mr. Kalinowski stated that his crew repaired about 7.43 miles in FY 15-16 and he expects to repair about 7.5 miles by the end of the fiscal year 2015."

Page 2, item 9 Agenda Items for Next Meeting should read: "The February 25, 2016 BOF meeting will in all probability be cancelled. It is anticipated that the March 10, 2016 agenda will include the following:"

4. **Hear From Public:** None.
5. **Communications:**  
Ms. Silver-Smith stated that there was some confusion about a communication from Dr. Longo requesting that the BOF partner in an RFP to find an engineer/designer to develop a plan for renovating the school's former technical education space. This will be covered under agenda item 7d.  
  
To date, neither Ms. Silver-Smith nor Mr. Zambo have received any communication from Maureen Barber concerning the status of the Policies and Procedures Manual.  
  
Ms. Silver-Smith provided board members with her communications with the Town Clerk, Sherri Mutch concerning issues with BOE meeting minute amendments and filings.
6. **Unfinished Business:** None.
7. **New Business:**
  - a. **Selectman's Update:**  
Mr. Zambo provided preliminary Grand List 2015, pre-BAA, [which] is compared with the final values post BAA for Grand List 2014" prior to assessments appeals. There is an expected increase of \$1M, which results in approximately \$33k in revenue. He also handed out a memo of the corrective actions to be taken by the

town per the Auditor's Report for FYE 2015. He then reported that yesterday he received a resignation and 2-week notice from the floating clerk who worked in the Assessor's Office, Land Use Office and with the Tax Collector. He is sorry to see her go.

**b. Presentation of Proposed FY 2017 Ashford Board of Education Budget:**

The proposed budget for Ashford School for FY 2016-17 was presented by Dr. Longo, Superintendent; Mr. Neel, School Business Manager; and Mr. Rupert, Chairperson of the BOE.

It was noted that Mr. Neel started with a "zero budget", not using last year's numbers as a guide. He stated that he feels that this is a more accurate portrayal of the needs of the school. It was also noted that the school received a very favorable insurance rate this year that is actually almost one-half of one percent lower than last year's which accounts for the BOE's ability to bring in a budget which is 0.4% less than last FY. The presenters stated that they are very proud of the school and its' teachers. These teachers are currently teaching at EastConn and other conventions. The school has great community support, good volunteerism, dedicated BOE members, and this works to make a very positive difference. It was explained that two teaching positions were eliminated because student numbers are also down approximately 5%. As of October 1, 2015 there are approximately 400 students at the school, down from 420, and only 397 are expected to be attending during 2016-17 school year. They have also decided to move the remedial reading programs to a lower grade level so that the children have the necessary building blocks earlier in their studies. It was noted that the Assistant Principal is also a curriculum coach for writing.

The after school clubs program that started last year is going very well and a lot of children are able to participate. Dr. Longo noted that anyone can offer a club at the school. An individual would only have to lay out their plan for consideration by the school, and if it is viable, the Staff will work with that person to develop, guide and support him/her in their program.

Ms. Matthews (BOE) and Ms. Ford (Director, Pupil Personnel) arrived at 7:28 p.m.

Dr. Longo, the administrators and the BOE are very proud of the Special Education Department which is doing an excellent job. The school now has 50 to 60 Smart Boards but the bulbs for them cost approximately \$100 each and they have been in place about 5 to 6 years so the BOE has to take into account the replacement of them. The School is devoted to building a solid, effective STEAM-oriented program.

Mr. Zambo excused himself at 7:37 p.m.

Ashford School partnered with Willington, Coventry, Bolton and two other towns to get the best rates for fuel. It was suggested that an article be written to advertise the work that School and Town have done to save money. The school received a technology grant which will be used to update the old network and server. Their technology plan is to have no computer in the school that is older than 5 to 6 years. The technology budget plan goes out 4 to 5 years so now it is maintenance-based. Purchasing ahead this year (as was done last year) should lighten the load for next year's budget burden.

Ms. Silver-Smith asked for the MBR figure. Mr. Neel stated that the State number was different from the total number of students in E.O.Smith and Ashford School. The Board of Finance needs the MBR figure as soon as possible.

Dr. Longo stated that all involved did a wonderful job and it is to be celebrated that the BOE came in with a budget that has a less than zero increase. The school's greatest goal is "to move the school forward in service to our students". Ms. Austin and Ms. Zaicek both commented that this was an excellent presentation.

**c. Financial System Replacement:**

Ms. Silver-Smith will follow up with the BOS regarding the formation of the Committee to review the options. Mr. Neel stated that he is qualified to be the consultant for the Committee and would be happy to do so. Mr. Neel also feels strongly that site visits should be made by the people who will be using the new system so they can get a feel of the features of the programs and what they are capable of. He noted that Woodstock, Marlboro and Andover each have different systems and all are willing to allow Ashford to come in and look them over. Both the school and the town finance departments have discussed their needs and have finalized a

list of necessary features. The group should be kept to a minimum with knowledgeable people, i.e., those who will actually be working with the system. Mr. Neel stated that he created a combined UCOA for the RHAM School System and may be able to start with one off of the 3 towns they will look at. Town and school charts would be combined but different as the two entities use different objects. Mr. Rupert noted that the Town of Bolton is currently going through this upgrade so Mr. Neel may speak with them.

**d. Capital Improvement Planning and Funding – Ashford School:**

Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the BOF will release monies from the Unexpended Education Fund once the BOE and BOS have an agreed upon and documented plan and formal estimate for its use, just as is required for all capital improvement projects and purchases. The school would like to use some of the available funds to hire an engineer/designer to plan the repurposing of the space that formally housed the industrial technology program into a special services suite of classrooms. It was noted that Mr. Zambo has already met with Dr. Longo and Mr. Neel regarding the Capital Improvement Plan, and CIP Committee documents show this work being included on the 2017 list. Dr. Longo stated that he is concerned because there are funds that need to be spent by the end of next year and Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the fund has no expiration date on any of the monies in it. Dr. Longo also stated that he doesn't want to have to lump this project in with other Capital Improvement Plans for the school because this could delay the renovation for 2 or 3 years if they wait and bundle it with others that are less pressing.

Ms. Silver-Smith suggested having the engineer/designer assess all school projects on the proposed FY 2017 Capital Improvement Plan, then they can be combine for bonding and to maximize state reimbursement. Mr. Neel will reach out to Mr. Zambo to discuss what is being planned for the school. He is already aware that it will cost the BOE approximately \$20k to 30k to have the engineer/designer develop a detailed plan for the special services classrooms, although a conceptual plan and estimate will be free of charge.

**e. Review of FY 2015 Audit Corrective Action Plans:**

The Board reviewed corrective action plans submitted by the school and town. Mr. Neel said that the school's plan included some of the features the school finance department would like to see in the new financial system. Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the analysis was a nicely done and that both plans will be acceptable to the auditors.

All guests left at 9:40 p.m.

**8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting:**

- Budget Requests requiring additional information.
- Library Board regarding facilities planning.
- Tax Assessor regarding audits of personal property.
- Senior Center Director regarding spending of the appropriation for programs for fiscal year 2015-16.

**9. Remarks for the Good of the Board:**

Mr. Burnham stated that he attended an ethics session conducted by CCM. He stated that there was a lot of discussion on the car tax that is being collected by the State, and about how having a lot of non-profit organizations in a town impact its budget. Ms. Silver-Smith stated that this is especially impactful to Ashford's, as approximately 30% of the town's land is owned by on-profits; while we do get some services, contributions, goodwill, and other non-tangibles, no money is collected in taxes and therefore, less money is available to offset the tax base.

**10. Adjournment:**

**MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MR. PFALZGRAF SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 3, 2016 REGULAR MEETING OF THE ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.**

The Ashford Board of Finance Regular Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathryn Silver-Smith (for BOF Clerk)