

**ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
Ashford Town Hall, Room 104
5 Town Hall Road, Ashford, CT 06278
March 17, 2016**

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

Guests: Wayne Fletcher (AVFD Chief, Kim Rourke (BOE), Don Neel (Ashford School Business Manager), Ralph Fletcher (BOS), Gerry Nagy (Library Board Chair), Catherine Sampson (Library Board Treasurer), William Darcy (Taxpayer).

1. **Call to Order:** Chairperson Cathryn Silver-Smith called the Regular Meeting of the Ashford Board of Finance to order at 7:04 p.m.
2. **Seating of Alternates:** None.
3. **Approve Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 10, 2016:**
MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MS. EASTWOOD SECONDED A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 10, 2016 BOF REGULAR MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

Under Item 7. A. Selectman's Update, correct the spelling of the acronym **STEAP**.

Under Tax Assessor, second paragraph, correct the sentence to read "Mr. Pfalzgraf stated that he would

consider it an affront if someone were to show up **at** his house..."

In the motion that immediately follows, correct the spelling of Ms. **Zaicek**'s name.

4. **Hear From Public:** None.
5. **Communications:** None.
6. **Unfinished Business:**
 - A. **FY 2017 Budget Requests Requiring Additional Information:**
 - **Babcock Library:**

Ms. Zaicek asked if the library has any plans to request modernization of their HVAC system, which is extremely old. She stated that she has seen nothing on the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list. Ms. Sampson stated that their primary concern is the unregulated temperatures and humidity controls in the Special Collections area off of the Conference Room. Some of these collections are originals from when the library opened. Ms. Silver-Smith recommended that Ms. Sampson and Mr. Nagy follow-up with Mr. Zambo who is the Chairperson of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee to ensure that needed improvements to the Library are considered during annual capital improvement planning. Mr. Zambo noted that he had spoken with Library Director, Shadd Jameson and nothing was provided to the CIP as follow up. Mr. Funk suggested that the Library board contact the State Library to obtain help in assessing their needs and recommendations for protecting the Library's assets. The recommendations and associated cost estimates should then be provided to the CIP Committee, along with potential funding sources.

Mr. Zambo noted that the Town had received a Green Energy Grant from the State of CT and they received 2 splits which were used at the Animal Control Office and in the downstairs of the Town Hall for the vault. Ms. Eastwood stated that there may still be additional Green Energy funding

available so if the Library board does not delay too long, the Energy Commission may be able to help as well. Ms. Sampson stated that they will pursue these suggestions and thanked the BOF and the Mr. Zambo for the clarifications and suggestions.

7. New Business:

a. Selectman's Update: None.

b. Financial System Proposal:

Mr. Neel reported that employees in the Ashford School and Town finance offices visited Woodstock on March 17 to learn about the financial management system recently implemented to meet Woodstock's school and town needs. The site visit gave the Ashford team exposure to some of the newer financial system features available and they were impressed with the standard features in Woodstock's system. Woodstock implemented their system in the school before implementing it in the town. Also, Woodstock is not using a shared server as Ashford is considering to facilitate data sharing and consistency. Site visits to other towns are being planned and Mr. Neel is working with our school and town finance offices to document the features required to meet Ashford's unique needs.

c. Capital Projects Authorizations:

The status of all Capital Projects Authorizations reflected in the FYE 2015 Audit was reviewed. Annually the Board needs to determine which projects should be closed and release any unused funds to the Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) account for future capital needs. It was noted that, for grant-funded projects, there is no money to release to CNR, as grants only cover actual cost incurred. Ms. Silver-Smith requested that Mr. Zambo update the Capital Project Authorizations list to reflect funding sources (grants versus other funding sources) and dates of project initiation and completion. It was noted that some projects are ongoing, e.g., road repair, so those projects are not closed even when the specific set of roads included in the project are completed. LOCIP money is only to be used for road repair, so when a particular road project is finished the unspent LOCIP funds can be used for more road repairs. Mr. Zambo will send an updated electronic copy of the Capital Projects Authorizations list to Ms. Silver-Smith for inclusion in the budget package.

Ms. Silver-Smith noted that the Ashford Historical Society is a steward for Ashford Academy, which is town-owned property and they do not receive funding per se to perform repair work. Mr. Zambo stated that the one-line item budget under Ashford Historical Society is for Academy maintenance requested by the Historical Society. The original request for FY 2016-2017 was \$3,000, which the BOS reduced to \$1,000.

d. FY 2017 Budget Discussion:

A. BOS's Recommendations:

- The Grand List was reviewed
- Reval cost is expected to be less than originally estimated
- Mr. Zambo met with the DOT in Hartford on Tuesday and the Senior Center bus was discussed. It is in good condition. The actual cost of the new bus was \$62,127, which included a price of \$49,600 which was paid by the town, plus \$127 that the town went over budget for features updates i.e., mirrors, increased heating and air conditioning. The difference in the costs was provided by a 5210 Grant
- The state mill rate on cars is a flat 32.000
- Recommendation to reduce expected reval costs by \$5,000 and increase the Senior Center bus cost by \$127, resulting in a total of \$686,132

B. Hear from Public:

- Ashford School's Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) threshold is dependent on aspects of the Region 19 budget. Mr. Neel noted that proposed reductions to the Region 19 budget may require that the Ashford BOE budget may need to be raised by approximately \$15K to meet MBR. The Ashford Budget Public Hearing and Special BOF Meeting to finalize Ashford's proposed budget will be held April 5, which is the same evening that the Region 19 Board will meet to finalize their budget.

- Currently, the only school items listed in proposed FY 2017 CIP are a new bus (\$89,000) and a van replacement (25,000). Ms. Silver-Smith asked if any of the Ashford School representatives present had concerns about the FY 2017 CIP, stating that the Board is aware that the Ashford BOE intends to use some of the Unexpended Education Fund to hire an architect to provide recommendations for renovating the Tech Ed Space. Ms. Rourke asked when improvements to the media center and 6 classroom ceilings can be made. Mr. Zambo explained that the CIP Committee requested information concerning insulation for the proposed ceiling improvements during and after last year's CIP planning, no answer has been received to-date and the project was shelved because the BOE has not provided a unified plan for its delivery. During FY 2017 planning, the CIP Committee, which has Ashford BOE representation, decided to try to bundle the school's proposed projects together for possible bonding in the FY 2018 plan in order to save money and take full advantage of grants to offset costs. Mr. Neel expressed concerns that, even if the entire bonding specifications were sent to the state now, no decision would be made before June 30th, it would go on the State's Category B (second round of grants) list, and if approved by the state, work would not commence before FY 2018.

It was reiterated that each proposed capital project must include a vendor quote or an RFP, a plan for delivery and indicate where its funding will come from, which was not provided to the CIP for the school projects. All funding possibilities need to be explored before funding is used from the Town's CNR fund. Mr. Pfalzgraf suggested that the BOE compile the required information for the media center and ceilings improvements and wait until spring to see if they can use a grant to offset some of the cost, and then come to the CIP Committee. Mr. Fletcher stated that under his terms as First Selectman he purposely kept things off of the CIP list knowing that the BOF was trying to keep costs down.

Ms. Silver-Smith stated that she would be in support of hiring an expert to come in and figure out exactly what needs done for these projects, and establishing a sequenced plan for their delivery that aligns with BOE priorities while minimizing overall cost to the town. Mr. Fletcher stated that the BOE is responsible for the school building and should be regularly making the BOS aware of its condition and what needs to be done to keep it in good repair. He stated that it is the town's largest asset and it is imperative that it be kept in good condition, and noted that the name of an architect was forwarded from Bruce Silva, Region 19 Superintendent to the BOE and the school superintendent with no follow up. Concerns were expressed that the BOE needs a building committee to look at the entirety of these projects, and that Mr Rupert, BOE Chair and an expert in building changes should either manage the committee or be an active participant. Ms. Silver-Smith stated that the committee needs to include should include Ms. Eastwood, who is an expert on funding through the Energy Commission, and requested that a member from the BOE, BOF and BOS be included as well as one or two individuals from town who may have expertise in some of the areas involved in the upkeep of this important town asset. All agreed that a legitimate, comprehensive evaluation of the school building is required and that the media center and classroom ceilings and the tech ed space renovations should be given priority. Again, the architect's name was already supplied to the school and a meeting should be held with Dr. Longo and Mr. Rupert to create a formal School Building Committee.

e. Board Action – Proposed FY 2017 Budget (General Government, Ashford School, Region 19/Ashford, Capital Improvements):

The proposed budget was reviewed and finalized and the following motions were made:

MS. EASTWOOD MOVED AND MS. ZAICEK SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET OF \$3,170,403. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MS. AUSTIN SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET OF \$7,391,140. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

MS. EASTWOOD MOVED AD MS. ZAICEK SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2016 -2017 FISCAL YEAR REGION 19 BUDGET OF \$3,429,027. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MS. AUSTIN SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN BUDGET OF \$686,132. THE MOTION PASSED WITH EVERYONE VOTING AFFIRMATIVELY.

8. Agenda Items for Next Meeting: TBD

9. Remarks for the Good of the Board:

Selectman Zambo thanked those present for what they do, stating that many are volunteers who give a lot of time and energy to get a difficult job done, and the town appreciates it. He commended members of the CIP Committee, noting that they took the initiative to meet two extra times to try to combine various projects for maximum reimbursement. Mr. Simpson thanked everyone for tonight's candid and respectful discussion. Board members thanked Mr. Zambo for all of the work he does on behalf of the town.

10. Adjournment:

MS. ZAICEK MOVED AND MS. AUSTIN SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 17, 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 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathryn Silver-Smith (for BOF Clerk)