

**Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, October 8, 2019**

Present: Regina Wexler, Chairman; Members Reggie Smith, Steve Tuxbury, Ben Witte, Kerry Guilfoyle; Alternates Lourena Helt, Bart Baxter; First Selectman Dan Jerram, Bookkeeper Annie Witte, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican-American).

Call to Order:

Chairman Wexler called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Seating of Alternates:

Chairman Wexler seated Alternate Baxter for absent member Dan Charest.

Adoption/Revision of Agenda:

MOTION: Smith to adopt the agenda as proposed; seconded by Witte.

Chairman Wexler asked if there were any changes/additions/revisions to the agenda and hearing no comments ruled the agenda approved.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: by Guilfoyle to approve the minutes dated September 10, 2019 as presented; seconded by Smith.

Hearing no objections to the approval of the minutes, Chairman Wexler ruled the minutes approved.

Communications and Other Items presented to the Board:

Chairman Wexler stated that she had forwarded email correspondence sent to her from Debbie Franklin of King and King CPAS to all members of the Board and asked if there was any discussion of that correspondence. No discussion

Opportunity for Public Comment:

No public present.

Reports:

Bookkeeper: Revenue and Expenditures Fiscal YTD and Previous Fiscal YTD:

Bookkeeper Annie presented her monthly report to the Board of Finance. She noted that the tax collection rate is right on target as to where it should be at this point of the fiscal year. Ms. Witte stated that the only state revenue received to date is the adult education grant in the amount of \$2,007.00. Chairman Wexler asked if that seems to be a problem and Ms. Witte replied that she is not concerned yet. She will keep an eye on things and if nothing is received by January/February, she will start worrying.

Ms. Witte informed the Finance Board members that personnel changes will have an effect on some salary line items. She stated that First Selectman Jerram will get into additional detail in his report. Ms. Witte noted that a question had been posed last meeting regarding the projected revenues and expenses of Pass Through Grants. She clarified with the Town of New Hartford's CPA consultant her

understanding of pass-through grants and was able to confirm that they are designed to be a “wash” but that the expenses can occur over a two -year period. The consultant does keep track of these and reconciles this line and it is presented in the annual audit.

Member Tuxbury asked to have a discussion regarding salary line items. Mr. Jerram replied that he would address that in his report and if there were no further questions for Ms. Witte regarding the expenditure and revenue reports, he would move on to present his report.

First Selectman’s report: Line item Transfers:

Mr. Jerram began his report by informing the Board that the Assessor has resigned from her position with New Hartford to be employed in a neighboring community for “more money, less hours and less premium share for insurance.” The position was posted in-house and interest was expressed by a current employee. This will require training by a certified assessor. Mr. Jerram noted that the current budget salary for the Assessor is \$28.00 /hour. He stated that there are Assessor’s earning \$62.00/ hour and also noted that Danbury currently is advertising for an Assessor and is offering in excess of \$100,000 for the position. There is a shortage of certified assessors due to transition. Certified Assessors are retiring and there is a lack of trained personnel to take the vacancies.

Mr. Jerram has reached out to a certified Assessor to see if there is interest in providing training to the interested candidate. This will require a commitment to not only train, but also be willing to sign the Grand List for the next few years. Becoming a certified assessor is a long term commitment and the training period covers a couple of years. Jerram noted that typically change in Assessor’s takes place following the finalization of the Grand List (February). Not many are willing to take on the responsibility of signing a Grand List where most of the information has been gathered by another individual. Mr. Jerram stated that there are multiple classes that are required in order to become a Certified Assessor. It is his hope that a good relationship can be established between a mentor and the assessor in training. He alerted the Board that this will be a costly endeavor; but should be beneficial in the end.

Member Tuxbury noted that the Zoning Officer salary line item shows that it is over expended and there will be a large deficit in this line at the end of the year. He wanted to know if there is a plan in place to cover this excess cost. Ms. Witte explained that payroll line items automatically accrue to the end of the year. Currently, there are two individuals being paid out of that line item. The current Zoning Officer and the person who has been training him are booked to that line. The Consultant’s hours have diminished considerably and the actual expenses are not in line with the accrued expense. Once the consultant is no longer needed and the wage can be removed from that line item, there will be a noticeable difference.

Carpenter Road Bridge has re-opened. The bridge construction is complete. Mr. Jerram noted that correspondence has been sent to the Contractor regarding late fees. The most recent payment requisition did not result in any payment being made to the contractor as they were notified that late fees were deducted from the amount due.

Member Smith asked if the project remains within budget. Mr. Jerram replied that there has been no approved change orders; therefore the contracted price remains the same. The project is still within the allocated budget.

Member Tuxbury asked if there was any exposure to the town at this time. Jerram replied that there is always exposure – but there is nothing firm at this time. Chairman Wexler asked if they have threatened with a lawsuit? Jerram replied that the contract specifies mediation. Jerram noted that the Town maintains that fulfillment of the contract is two years late. There are late fees to contend with. There

are no approved change orders to have an effect on the total cost of the project.

The First Selectman informed the Board that the paving of West Road is complete, with the exception of adding aprons.

Member Guilfoyle commented that the resurfacing of Cedar Lane has led to an increase in police coverage. She is pleased to see that they have been proactive with speed enforcement on this newly paved roadway.

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that Route 202 is in the process of being resurfaced from the Torrington town line to Steele Road. This is a state highway project, not a local project; but it will have an effect on local residents and school buses.

The Trails Committee has made a recommendation to engage the services of Anchor Engineering Inc. to perform a routing study and develop a trail route for a proposed multi use trail that would eventually connect New Hartford to the Farmington River trail in Canton/Collinsville.

The First Selectman noted that he has almost completed compiling the requested documentation to be forwarded to Region 7 to have available for contract negotiation purposes. Jerram asked the Finance Board members for assistance in compiling any information they may be privy to with respect to wages in the private sector.

Line Item Transfers:

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that the Line Item Transfers distributed to the Board were approved by the Board of Selectmen at their meeting in September. He stated that he was being transparent by informing the Finance Board of the action taken by the Selectmen. Chairman Wexler asked if all of the transfers were intradepartment; to which Jerram replied that they were. No transfers were done between departments; all were within departments, clarified Jerram.

Member Smith stated that there is no need for the Board of Finance to approve the transfers. Jerram replied that he was "just being transparent."

Member Witte commented that according to the correspondence sent from the auditors, it appears that they are looking to have the Board of Finance approve the Line item transfers.

MOTION: by Tuxbury to approve the line item transfers, seconded by Witte.

Discussion ensued regarding approval of line item transfers. Chairman Wexler stated that in light of the most recent opinion regarding this matter tended by corporation counsel that the Board of finance has no authority to approve or disapprove of the intradepartmental line item transfers, she does not feel that the Board of Finance should vote on the matter. She stated that she personally does not agree with the ruling, but he is the town attorney and therefore she will follow his guidance. Member Tuxbury added that this Board has no attorney of its own to refute the ruling and therefore, he would like to see it taken to a vote rather than have the minutes reflect that this Board takes the view that the Selectmen approve the transfers.

Chairman Wexler stated that she does not understand why the Auditor is expecting the Board to vote on line item transfers when legal counsel has ruled that there is no authority of this Board with respect to interdepartmental transfers. She stated that she intends to have a conversation with the auditors to find out what is going on.

Bookkeeper Witter commented that line item transfers are an accounting procedure used to zero out line items and the auditors are following Government Accounting Principles. She stated that this should

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not be a political matter. “it’s a matter of accounting principles only” she repeated.

Chairman Wexler reiterated her discomfort with voting on matters that the attorney has opined is out of the purview of the Board.

MOTION: Smith to move the question; seconded by Witte.

AYE: Smith, Tuxbury, Wittte, Wexler, Baxter

Abstain: Guilfoyle

Vote on the original motion to approve the line item transfers.

AYE: Witte, Baxter

Opposed: Guilfoyle, Tuxbury, Wexler, Smith

Motion fails; no approval of line item transfers by the Board of Finance

Treasurer’s Report:

No report

Discussion re: ongoing NH Board of Education and NW Regional 7 contract negotiations

Wexler and Guilfoyle commented that they have not been involved in any discussions thus far.

Tuxbury stated that the local Board of Education teachers contract enters into mediation on October 25, 2019. He noted that it is a Friday night, but he will be in attendance.

MOTION: by Smith to adjourn at 7:36 PM; seconded by Wexler.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

Substituting for Recording Secretary Penny Miller

Attachments: (available upon request from the Town Clerk)

Email correspondence from Deborah Franklin, King & King CPAs to Chairman Wexler

Bookkeepers Report – October 2019

Line Item Transfers –approved by BOS September 2019

Revenue and Expenditure reports for September – available upon request in the Office of the First Selectman